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ROSEALEE HOFFMAN/CITY OF WILLOW PARK

John Schneider (left) will take over as the new fire chief/fire marshal/emergency management coordinator in Willow Park following the retirement of Mike Lenoir on Aug. 2.

WILLOW PARK

## Lenoir announces retirement as fire chief

John Schneider assumes role

By Rick Mauch  
The Community News

Growing up in the little town of Mart, Mike Lenoir knew from a young age that he wanted to be a firefighter.

"I started my drive for the fire service in the early years when I got to ride in my favorite fire truck, 'Big Red,' a 1978 Ford Boardman. I loved watching that fire truck in the parades and got to ride in the Mart Parade," Lenoir recalled. "I was hooked after that."

"During the yearly 1980s I got to ride in the ambulance with my grandfather, who was a true ambulance driver for the local funeral home when they operated as two entities," Lenoir continued.

In the late 1990s he finally was able to get behind the wheel of Big Red and became a volunteer fire fighter. And thus, his career in fighting fires and saving lives began.

But now, Lenoir is moving on to the next adventure in his life, whatever that may be, as he did not reveal what he will be doing next. At Tuesday's Willow Park City Council meeting on July 12 he announced his retirement as the city's fire chief/fire marshal/emergency management coordinator, effective Aug. 2.

"It's been an honor serving this city," Lenoir told the council and those in attendance. "It's a bittersweet thing, but it's time to turn the page to the next chapter."

The 43-year-old Lenoir came to Willow Park in 2015 as a member of the fire department and was promoted to chief a year later. He will be succeeded by current assistant chief John Schneider.

Lenoir opted not to have a retirement reception.

"I attempted the college mindset in 1997-1998, thinking I was going to be some great music composer, and it just was not my cup of tea," Lenoir said. "I knew if I wanted to be a firefighter, I needed to go to emergency medical services school to get my fire certification."

So that's what he did, working his way up to a paramedic certification. He joined Rural Metro Ambulance Service in Waco. He then started his certification class to become a

Turn to CHIEF, page 3

## Willow Park resident recruits senior ladies for pageant

By Randy Keck  
The Community News

The word "pageant" often evokes images of young ladies between the ages of 17 and 25 vying for the crown and bouquet of roses awarded at the end.

But for Dr. Synthia West of Willow Park, that stereotype does not apply.

West is the contestant coordinator for the Ms. Texas Senior America Pageant, which requires entrants to be 60 years old or older.

"I bring the ladies to the stage," West said. "My job is to find them or it won't happen."

According to the organization's website, "This is not a beauty pageant, but an event that represents the 'Age of Elegance.' Our pageant champions healthy aging, wellness, and mental well-being, and our contestants exemplify the 'positive image of aging.'"

The pageant aims to redefine senior women by "motivating and encouraging them to utilize their full potential. We honor all senior women with our pageant, giving the contestants a platform to demonstrate their dignity, maturity, inner beauty and talents."

West has been involved in the senior pageant world since she lived in east Texas in the late 1990s.

"I learned about it when I was 57. And I waited anxiously until the day I turned 60," she said. She entered a 1999 pageant, Ms. Texas Senior Classic, at age 60, and won "Ms. Congeniality" a year later. In 2001 she won the title and made more than 100 personal appearances around the state.



RANDY KECK/THE COMMUNITY NEWS

After a remarkable career, Dr. Synthia West of Willow Park recruits participants for the Ms. Texas Senior America Pageant.

About 2005 a different pageant, the Ms. Texas Senior America pageant was reconstituted, and she entered it. She again won Ms. Congeniality early on, and won the pageant title in 2008.

"I'm one of the two women in the state of Texas who have won both of the pageants," she said.

Turn to WEST, page 3

### HOW TO PARTICIPATE

Time is almost up for ladies who would like to participate in the 2023 Ms. Texas Senior America pageant, which will be held at the Renaissance Dallas North Hotel on Nov. 5.

For more information, call Dr. Synthia West at 817-349-0284 or email drsynhawest@yahoo.com.

## BUSINESS

# New senior community offers open house

## Harvest of Aledo plans fall opening

Fort Worth-based Civitas Senior Living's community, Harvest of Aledo, is almost ready to welcome new residents with a tentative opening date for fall 2022. To celebrate, the community is hosting a sneak peek, hard hat reveal from 4 to 6 p.m. on Friday, July 15, at 1043 Bailey Ranch Road in Aledo.

The reveal will feature food trucks, door prizes, community tours, and special savings for attendees of the event who are interested in becoming a resident soon.

The community will offer independent living, assisted living, and memory care, including 20 independent living villas on campus. Upscale amenities and services include an all-day bistro, personalized care plans, and restaurant-style dining options.

"We are ready to offer worry-free senior living to families in and around Aledo," said Community Relations Director, Lisa Bryant. "It is exciting to be at this point in our opening where families, partners, and more can get a very first look at our upscale community."



Artistic rendering of the new Harvest of Aledo Senior Living

When visiting, COVID-19 safety protocols must be followed such as wearing masks and practicing social distancing.

For more information, visit <https://www.civitaseniorliving.com/harvest-of-aledo/>.



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# In & Around Parker County

Trust your countertops to the experts



DFW Countertop Repair is a small family-owned business owned by Marcus Zurobski and Linda Bannister, who have been married and worked together for nearly 25 years. Zurobski began his career as a woodworker and craftsman making specialty wood crafts for artisans in Deep Ellum. According to Bannister, “Marcus had a following among artists who appreciated the meticulousness in the way he did his work. He carried that same attention to detail over when he expanded his talents into carpentry and remodeling.”

After moving to Weatherford, the pair decided to start their own business, Marz Remodeling, LLC, a BBB accredited business, doing business

as DFW Countertop Repair. “We started out doing full-scale remodeling, but decided to specialize,” said Bannister. “While there are many excellent fabricators out there, few companies focus exclusively on restoration or repair of existing countertops. If you’ve invested thousands of dollars in your home, you want to protect that investment. Our services are designed specifically with that goal in mind.”

Zurobski was trained by leading experts in countertop repair. Continuing education is an important part of the work. “Every day I spend some time learning something new about this work. I love spending time in my shop experimenting with

new techniques, tools, or chemicals honing my skills.” Zurobski said, “It’s an exciting time in the industry as new materials and manufacturing techniques are expanding the types of materials that can be used for

countertops. You have to understand the unique properties of each one to know how to properly work with it. It’s extremely important to keep up with the changes. It’s exciting and I love the challenge.”


DFW Countertop Repair works on most surface materials, including granite, quartz, marble, natural and engineered stone, and solid surface. Besides repair and restorations, they also specialize in modifying countertop to fit new appliances and installing sinks. They service both residential and commercial customers across the DFW area.

“Our focus is our customers. We don’t cut corners or try to rush through jobs,” Bannister said. “We take the time to do the work the way it should be done to achieve the best results possible.”

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CHIEF

from page one

firefighter at McLennan Community College in Waco, and now has an associates degree in fire administration and an associates in fire science, both from Weatherford College.

“I worked at my local Mart EMS ambulance service to continue to service my community because that was the right thing to do,” Lenoir said. “I finally received my first career firefighter job at Hillsboro Fire Department and learned what a career firefighter did on a 24-hour basis.”

He continued to climb in the ranks, working his way to the Kennedale Fire Department, learning more about the fire and ambulance service in the North Texas area. His list of certifications is lengthy.

“My favorite quote that I still hold true comes from a favorite movie of ‘Star Wars’ where the wise Master Yoda tells his student, ‘Do or do not, there is no try,’” Lenoir said.

Budget workshop

The council held its first workshop concerning the 2022-23 city budget. City Manager Bryan Grimes revealed the preliminary projected revenue from property taxes to be \$1.9 million with the projected sales tax revenue being \$1.7 million.

Those numbers are up slightly from the projected \$1.849 million in property tax revenue and \$1.4 million in the 2021-22 budget. Currently, the sales tax revenue is \$1.39 million and now projected to be \$1.6 million by fiscal year’s end.

The next budget workshop, to which the public is invited, will be at 6 p.m. on July 26 as part of the regular city council meeting. A public hearing is set for Aug. 23 and Grimes said he hopes to have the 2022-23 budget finalized by Labor Day (Sept. 5).

Other business

In other business, the council set a public hearing for Sept. 13 to discuss the city’s land use assumptions, capital improvements plan, and updated water and wastewater impact fees, which will be proposed following an impact fees study.

WILLOW PARK

Donation will help first responders save pets

Willow Park Fire-Rescue extended thanks to The Fetch Foundation for their donation that will help the department save four-legged lives. The FIDO Bag Program supplies firefighters with tools to administer medical attention to your family’s pet at the point of rescue.

“In cases such as fire or automobile accidents, firefighters need special tools on their trucks to save your best four-legged friends’ life, just as they do you,” said Marie Peck, founder of the The Fetch Foundation. “There is no doubt in my mind these firefighters will utilize this equipment and training. It is especially gratifying to see equipment go to first responders that understand the value the FIDO program brings to the community they serve.”

For more information on The Fetch Foundation, visit <https://thefetchfoundation.com/home>



J. RAMIREZ

Willow Park firefighter Cody Boone gives a chin scratch to mascot Rookie.

WEST

from page one

West remained active in the latter pageant as a mentor, but she said in 2015 she felt a calling from God.

“I was being led by God’s voice to do a mission,” she said, so she stood in the boardroom of the pageant and said she wanted to volunteer to recruit women to the pageant.

“I’m recruiting to lure them, to motivate them, to know that this is more than just a crown and a sash, that this is what happens after you win or whether you win or not. We have a cameo club that goes all around and participates in motivational speaking, doing their talents, trying to change the image of aging and talk about positive living and how you can wake up every day and what in Latin is ‘carpe diem, seize the day,’” West said.

“And that’s what I do. I wake every day with a ‘seize the day’ attitude.”

At age 83 West has been in the pageant word for 23 years now.

West’s “Ms. Congeniality” personality dates back to the late 1950s when she was a baton twirler at Baylor University.

She twirled all four years of college, and was head twirler her last two years, graduating in 1960.

As if to give credence to her senior citizen pageant work, she still goes back to Baylor and twirls.

That personality serves her well as she travels the state recruiting participants for the pageant.

“I go out and I might be in a store and see someone — I mean, I’m fabulous at picking winners,” West said. “I know what it takes psychologically, internally — I can feel the vibes of these people — whether they got it or not. And I might walk up to someone and say ‘no, no, you can’t possibly be 60. But I have something that might really open a new chapter in your life because it starts at 60’ and that’s kind of the time that people start saying, ‘well, I’ve done a fabulous job with my career. I’ve had I’m an empty nester and now what do I do next?’”

Educational and counseling mindset

West’s job as a recruiter is in many ways an educational endeavor, and she comes by that honestly.

Her father was the superintendent of the Gladewater, Texas, school district, her mother was a teacher, and she went to school in Gladewater until she left for Baylor.

West’s mother had a master’s degree in music, and wanted Synthia to be a concert pianist.

Synthia’s high school band director sent a letter to Baylor recommending her for the band, and that was the start of her collegiate twirling career.

She started out majoring in music and minoring in elementary education. But her personality wasn’t a good fit for the music program.

“Well, I got stuck in these practice halls on the bottom floor. It was like a dungeon. And yet I was a twirler,” she said. “After a semester I called my mother and I said ‘Mother, this is the first decision that I’ve made on my own. I love you with all my heart but I can’t take this music major thing anymore. I need to be out on that field. Because that’s where I’m going to flourish.’”

She switched to elementary education with a minor in music.

While at Baylor Synthia married Royce West, a football player.

Life took them to Terrell where he became an assistant football coach, and while there East Texas State University (now Texas A&M Commerce) came to town offering master’s degree classes. She received a master’s degree in counseling psychology and immediately went into the doctoral program after that

West received her PhD in counseling psychology in 1971 and spent 36 years in public schools as a guidance counselor. She started in Denver because Royce was then playing for the Denver Broncos. Her educational counseling career took her to Longview and Marshall. She also spent time in community mental health.

“Now here I am, counseling if you will, ladies 60 and better. They don’t know when I put a counselor hat on. But you can bet that in the process of trying to recruit that I have screened these women for months that they’re going to eventually share because part of their competition is philosophy of life,” West said. “So you can imagine how they get into that, about the life and things that may have caused them distress, and so I put that counselor’s hat on and here we go. So I’m just perfect for it.”



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# TOTS and summer means youth theatre

By Rick Mauch  
The Community News

Most of the year Theatre Off The Square (TOTS) in Weatherford is known for its adult productions.

But summer is for the kids. TOTS recently concluded its summer camp schedule for youngsters in kindergarten through ninth grades. Next, they have their annual children's production, a musical entitled "The Stinky Cheese Man & Other Fairly Stupid Tales," scheduled for July 29-Aug. 7, featuring performers from ages 8 to 17.

Laurie Jones, a TOTS board member and president of the Parker County Fine Arts Association, doing business as Theatre Off The Square, noted the mission is "to entertain our patrons with quality productions, educate our public about live theatre, and nurture theatrical talent through inclusivity, collaboration, and a strong partnership with our community."

"As you can see, we strive to educate our craft, and this most definitely includes the youth of our community. We have offered summer theatre camp for nine years and successfully, as we have interest in all of our classes each year."

Jones said not only do the campers receive training in aspects of the theatre arts, they form a sense of camaraderie. She noted that many have returned each year until they age out of camp and come back as helpers. Many have also auditioned for adult productions and/or become part of the TOTS production staffs.

Jones explained that attending camp does not mean a youth will subsequently be in the youth production.

"The youth production is run exactly like our other productions, in that there are auditions, then six weeks of evening rehearsals," she said.

"For the first couple of years, we did combine the yearly youth production (a straight play, not



**ABOVE:** Youngsters perform in the 2021 Theatre Off The Square summer children's show "The Rainbow Fish Musical." This year's musical "The Stinky Cheese Man & Other Fairly Stupid Tales" will be performed July 29-Aug. 7. The children's summer performances feature youths ages 8-17. | **BELOW:** Students rehearse dance steps during the Theatre Off The Square annual summer youth camp.

a musical). However, we chose to revamp and make each event separate. In our camp, we have thankfully grown each year to the point that our small space is pretty packed with kiddos during camp."

Jones stressed the importance of youngsters interested in theatre to start learning early. After all, who knows where the next Tom Hanks or Meryl Streep may come from?

"Some children have an innate ability to perform, but need to be guided and taught the basics to ensure a successful venture into the performing arts," she said. "Others are just wanting to do something fun, and perhaps out of the ordinary, and very often find theatre intriguing, thought provoking, and challenging."



Camps for grades 3-9 span two weeks and each class covers a special interest for various age levels. For example, these might include fight choreography, musical theatre, or improvisation.

The camp for grades K-2 is one week with a curriculum specifically designed for that age level. It

introduces small campers to different aspects of creativity in theatre.

Youth who participate in the yearly youth production will experience all that an adult production would experience such as auditions, rehearsals, character analysis, and blocking.

This is only the second time the summer children's production has

been a musical. Last season, after not having summer camp or a children's production in 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic, TOTS performed "The Rainbow Fish Musical" in the summer.

"We were totally closed. In January 2021 we reopened very carefully with a stringent protocol written by a special committee and an infectious disease nurse who was on our board of directors. Thankfully, all went well," Jones said. "So, we decided to proceed with summer camp and then the youth production. We had fewer classes offered that summer in camp, so that we wouldn't be crowded, and by then, we could make mask wearing optional."

"Again, we were blessed to have both of these events turn out successfully."

Currently, masks are optional, and the theatre keeps a box of masks close by in case a patron chooses to wear one. If someone in a production contracts the virus, Jones said they have steps to take with other cast and crew members as a precaution.

"It is understood that most probably we will be dealing with some form of this virus from now on, so we will just adjust accordingly, as other performance venues do as well," she said.

Jones said that many youth from the summer activities have grown up and gone to universities and colleges and majored in theatre, going on to enter the "world of theatre."

"We, at Theatre Off The Square, are most proud!" she exclaimed.

The youth camps and production are also wonderful family opportunities, she said.

"Absolutely. Our youth production, especially, allows for participation from family members in areas of construction, costumes, backstage crew, front of house, and volunteers," she said. "We become one big creative family."

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# Peach Festival - July 9



Gavin McKinley smiled through the "Tubs of Fun" carnival ride.



Rowan Rodriguez of Aledo takes a break for an ice cream treat.



Rylin Ray (left) and Mendi Holaway dished out servings of peach cobbler at the Weatherford Optimist Club booth. About 2,700 servings were sold before the day was complete.



Dwayne Stroman, Raye Bynum



Austin Kennedy of Whiskey Snifter was offering tastings of peach whiskey and wine.



Lisa Jauregui of Weatherford took advantage of a photo opportunity with children Mattis (left) and Lucas.



**LEFT:** Jason Sanders of Mineral Wells, along with Gilly and Peanut, takes a shade break. **| CENTER:** Traci Shipley of Blessings Recycled had plenty of offerings from her shop on the square. **| RIGHT:** Andrew Zinicola of Weatherford feed daughter, Linda. Photos by Randy Keck. More photos can be found at [www.community-news.com](http://www.community-news.com).

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## Capital Highlights

# TEA releases STAAR results for grades 3-8



**Gary Borders**  
gborders@texaspress.com

The Texas Education Agency has released the 2022 State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness

Results for grades 3-8, which showed across-the-board improvements in all grades and subjects, with especially significant gains in reading.

“The investments that the state is making in reading academies and accelerated instruction are clearly paying dividends for our students, and the results are a testament to the hard work of teachers across our state,” Texas Education Commissioner Mike Morath said. “While we still have much work to do to recover from COVID-related learning loss in mathematics, the improvements our students have made in reading are clear.”

The spring results include exams in mathematics and reading for grades 3-8, 5th and 8th grade science, and 8th grade social studies.

### Former NFL player indicted for bogus medical claims

Former NFL player Narond “Roc” Alexander was indicted recently for submitting fraudulent health reimbursement claims totaling more than \$25,000 to a health program for former NFL players. The case was brought by Texas Department of Insurance investigators along with the Bexar County District Attorney’s office.

Alexander allegedly filed the bogus claims between 2014 and 2018 under the Gene Upshaw NFL Player Health Reimbursement Plan, which helps pay certain medical care expenses for former NFL players. He could face up to 10 years in prison and a \$10,000 fine if convicted.

“Insurance fraud hurts the people who actually need these funds to cover their health care costs, like the NFL players who benefit from this particular fund,” Bexar County District Attorney Joe Gonzales said. “This indictment allows us to seek justice on behalf of the NFL players with legitimate claims who rely on these funds.”

After playing for the University of Washington, Alexander signed with the Denver Broncos in 2004 and

later played for the Houston Texans.

### Military bases have big impact on state’s economy

A study analyzing the impact on the state’s economy from U.S. military installations concludes they contributed at least \$114.1 billion to the Texas economy last year and supported more than 600,000 jobs across the state. Texas is home to 15 military installations and the U.S. Army Futures Command, which is located in Austin and runs modernization projects for the U.S. Army.

The study was completed by the comptroller’s office at the behest of the Texas Military Preparedness Commission.

“It is amazing to see the tremendous economic impact these military installations have in Texas,” said Texas Comptroller Glenn Hegar. “The importance of these bases reaches far beyond direct jobs and personal income. The facilities, and the men and women who work and are stationed at them, form the backbone of communities and support countless businesses and induced jobs throughout the state.”

### Grant program to benefit travel industry

The travel industry, hard hit by the COVID-19 pandemic, is set to receive \$180 million of funds under a grant program funded by the federal American Rescue Plan Act of 2021. The program is designed to provide grants for the recovery of Texas businesses in the tourism, travel, and hospitality industry affected by the pandemic.

“Travel and tourism are critical components to both the state and local economies,” said Gov. Greg Abbott. “Visitor spending at Texas destinations brings new money into communities and spurs local job creation across industries in every region of the state.”

A series of webinars are slated to provide information for specific businesses. To get more details and register, go to: [ttir.gov.texas.gov](http://ttir.gov.texas.gov).

### Demographic center analyzes state census results

The U.S. Census Bureau has released its 2021 population estimates, and the Texas Demographic Center has crunched the numbers to determine:

- Texas is growing both older and more diverse. Median age

increased to 35.4 years in 2021, up from 33.6 in 2010.

- Texas has more Black residents than any other state.
- All urban core counties in Texas, except for Travis County, lost non-Hispanic white population.
- The state has the third-largest Asian population in the country.

Harris County has more Black residents than all other counties in the country except Cook County, which includes Chicago.

### Sharing the road with large trucks

Anyone who has driven the state’s major highways recently likely has noticed the number of 18-wheelers on the road has risen as businesses and industries work to fill demand in many sectors. The Texas Department of Transportation is reminding motorists to take extra care when driving around big trucks.

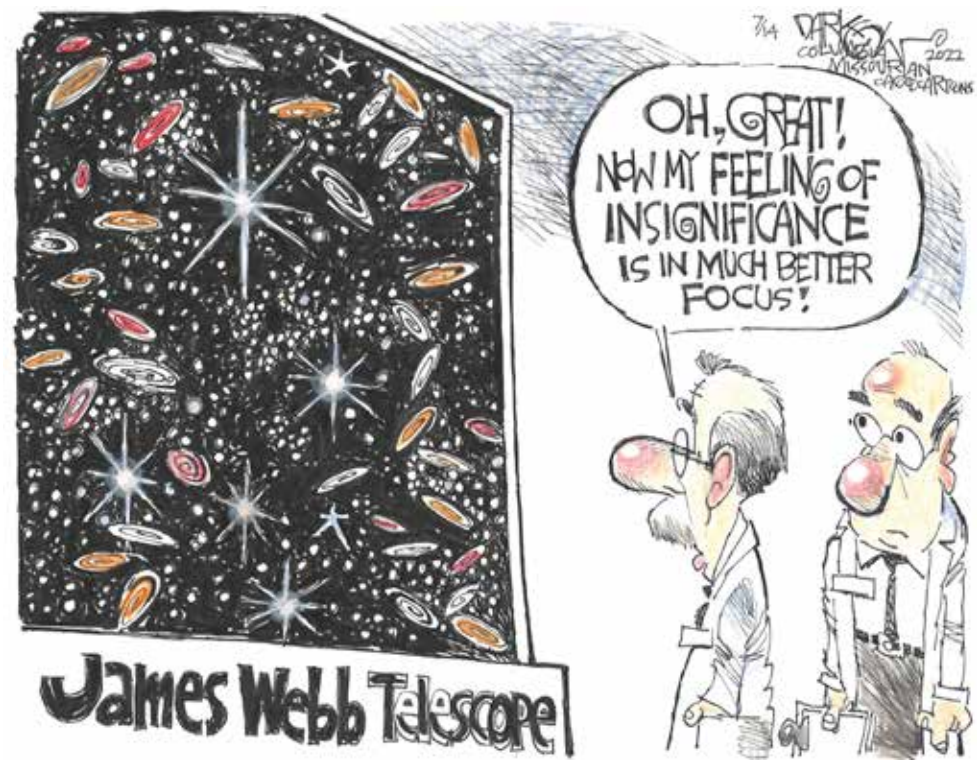
Drivers are especially at risk in the state’s energy sectors, according to TxDOT. Last year, more than 79,000 crashes occurred in the state’s five major energy production areas, resulting in 1,119 deaths — a 20% increase over the previous year.

Among the safety tips offered by TxDOT are staying away from a truck’s blind spot; not tailgating; when passing a truck, making sure you can see both of the truck’s headlights before moving back into your lane; and never crossing behind a truck that is backing up, since the driver can’t see you.

### COVID-19 cases increase again

The number of new COVID-19 cases reported in Texas during the past week by the Coronavirus Resource Center at Johns Hopkins University rose again to 84,417, with 115 deaths recorded. Both numbers are up modestly compared to what was reported the previous week. However, lab-confirmed COVID-19 hospitalizations in the state continue to rise steadily, with 3,007 reported by the Department of State Health Services. That’s up 22% from the previous week and more than double what was reported a month ago.

*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](mailto:gborders@texaspress.com).*



## Guest Column

# Doing our part for first responders



**Dr. Glenn Rogers**  
[glenn.rogers@house.texas.gov](mailto:glenn.rogers@house.texas.gov)

It’s been said many times over that a hero is “someone who runs towards danger, while others run away from it,” and over the course of this summer, it would be hard to look at our volunteer firefighters and other first responders and see them as anything but heroic.

On Thursday, June 23, Palo Pinto Fire 3410, nicknamed the “Dempsey Fire,” began ravaging Palo Pinto County — much of it on my ranch and dangerously close to my home. In just a few short days, the small 300-acre fire expanded over 40 times its original size. The Dempsey Fire burned almost 12,000 acres and, as of July 4, is 100% contained.

I am sure many of my constituents in Eastland and Brown Counties can draw parallels to this past spring when the Eastland Complex Fire decimated more than 50,000 acres before finally being contained in late March. For many of us rural Texans who were, and still are, affected by the destructive wildfires throughout 2022, our first priority is to evacuate and make sure our families are safe from harm.

However, the many first responders who make up our law enforcement officers, medical personnel, and fire departments courageously run headfirst towards the danger and put their lives on the line for our safety. Unlike larger metropolitan areas, rural wildfires tend to be far more widespread, and our resources for combatting them are often underfunded. Many of our local first responders rely heavily on state grants, community donations, and the selflessness of local residents to remain adequately supplied and staffed.

As we worked to make sure my family, pets, and cattle were taken safely off the property, brave men and women

from Palo Pinto county and countless other communities were rushing in the opposite direction to prevent further loss of life or property. The firefighters who served during the Eastland Complex Fire can further attest to ‘round the clock’ shifts with little sleep or time to check in on their families. Time and time again, the volunteer and local fire, medical, and law enforcement responders put themselves on the line to defend our communities from the worst Mother Nature has to offer.

At the same time, it is on the rest of us in the community to do our part in supporting our first responders and be good stewards of the people who take a risk each time they put on the uniform.

The first and most crucial step we must take is common sense in natural disaster prevention and preparedness. Rural Texas is the agricultural heartbeat of the United States, and we sustain our production with large amounts of ranch, farm, and grassland. In dry, hot conditions, much of this land is heavily susceptible to fire — and once a fire starts, it can quickly become unmanageable.

While the cause of the Eastland Complex fire is under investigation, the Dempsey Fire was apparently started by a single errant spark from a welding operation. The fire which burnt down Main Street in Ranger, Texas, was caused by a knocked-over barbecue grill. In a time when our rural towns are more susceptible to wildfire, it is imperative we remain cautious with flammable or volatile materials in our rural areas.

Our first responders have an obligation to fight against the fires that ravage our communities; however, careless actions can create an out-of-control situation that puts our police, medical, and fire personnel at risk and can devastate families’ homes, businesses, and public institutions. It is vital that residents of House District 60 respect local burn bans and keep fire extinguishers or other protective gear on hand when handling an open flame.

Second, it is necessary that we recognize the conditions that plague many of our local volunteer fire departments. As

*Turn to ROGERS, page 7*

# The Community News

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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](mailto: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](http://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.



ROGERS

from page six

mentioned before, many of our rural first responders are underfunded and understaffed. The Rural Volunteer Fire Department Assistance Program assists in securing large grants and donations for rescue equipment, emergency vehicles, technology, and training for VFDs across Texas. However, they cannot do it alone. With current outstanding requests in 2022 exceeding \$200 million during one of the largest wildfire years on record, this program cannot meet the growing necessities of our rural first responders.

It is time for those of us that benefit from these services to take greater responsibility in supporting them. While these departments appreciate the pallets of Gatorade, water, and other snacks, donations of cash, checks, or gas cards are essential to help offset the cost of operations. Civic organizations, local officials, and individuals should, when possible, offer up donations or support to our first responders to assure they are well supplied for the next big emergency. For those who have generously given to our first responders, thank you for your donation!

Across House District 60, our first responders work day in and day out to keep our communities safe, secure, and prosperous. Many in rural communities are volunteers or underpaid, who do this work out of a sense of duty to their community. They rush headfirst into danger to protect the families, property, and businesses of other people — how many of us can confidently say that we would be willing to do the same thing? So, as we head further into a record-temperature summer, it is up to us to make sure that we are not further endangering the lives of these heroes, supporting them like they support us, and appreciate all that they do to keep us safe and secure.

Glenn Rogers is the Texas State Representative for District 60, which now includes Parker County.

Thistles & Roses  
Heat causing  
a multitude of  
problems



Richard Henderson  
richard@rahenderson.com

The excessive Texas heat this summer of 2022 is causing a multitude of problems, especially for Parker County.

Drought and water issues have been especially difficult for those of us in neighborhoods where each house is dependent upon a well. Each household is pumping water from the same underground formation called the Paluxy Aquifer. The Paluxy is a sand formation from ancient sea beds that is porous and stores water. It is not limitless.

This formation is not uniform in width or depth. According to the water well contractor that services our well, we have too many people pumping water from the Paluxy.

Some homes are having more problems than others maintaining water pressure. We simply don't have enough water to keep lawns green and have enough to keep toilets flushing. It is also nice to be able to take a shower and wash our clothes and dishes.

The Paluxy sand has outcroppings of sand at the surface, and depends upon rain, which is not happening right now, to recharge the formation.

Each homeowner is independent but we need

to cooperate by limiting water use As I stated in a previous column, the long-term solution is to connect to the Tarrant Water District surface water. The cities of Aledo, Willow Park, and Hudson Oaks have already done so. These cities have the authority to limit water use.

The rest of us need to wake up and find a permanent solution that doesn't depend on Paluxy wells.

Another problem is fire hazards caused by dry grass and brush. Some fool started a fire last week by shooting off fireworks even though there was a county wide burn ban. Another rocket scientist threw out a cigarette from a vehicle and started another fire.

If I seem a little snarky, it is because I am tired of people not using their common sense when it comes to water usage and fire hazards.

Electricity demand is another state-wide issue. We need to turn off lights and other electrical appliances not in use. We need to turn up the thermostat on the a/c units a few degrees. ERCOT says that these small changes could make a big difference and we save a little money.

We can cope with this heat and drought and electricity shortages if we modify some of our habits and attitudes.

But we better do it sooner than later.



2022 COMPETITION  
**FINAL ROUND**  
JULY 29 - JUNIOR DIVISION  
JULY 30 - YOUNG ARTIST DIVISION  
MARJORIE ALKEK FINE ARTS THEATRE

WEATHERFORD COLLEGE

Finalists announced for  
4th annual International  
Piano Competition

By Crystal Woerly  
Weatherford College

Finalists for the fourth annual Weatherford College International Piano Competition will perform live in the Alkek Fine Arts Center on July 29 and 30.

Contestants from all over the world submitted online entries including pianists from Canada, Poland, China, Korea and the United States.

Preliminary rounds judges selected the top performers in two age divisions: Junior and Young Artist.

"It has been an incredible time for me listening to all the wonderful participants, the levels are very high in both categories, especially the Young Artist Division," said preliminary round judge Dr. Kyra Xuerong Zhao from the New England Conservatory. "Congratulations to all the finalists and best luck in the next round at Weatherford College."

Zhao was joined by Igor Resnianski from West Chester University and Andrew Brownell from the University of Texas at Austin to judge the preliminary round.

Finalists to compete in the WC International Piano Competition are:

Junior Division

- Eric Rudkevich (Texas)
- Matthew Scott (Texas)
- Frederick Chiu (California)
- Kevin Ho (Texas)
- Eugene Wang (Texas)
- Hajun Chang (Canada)
- Brian Lin (California)
- Meining Wu (California)
- Nikita Simonenko (Texas)

- Theresa Tran (Texas)
- Ellen Foreman (Texas)
- Alternate - Oliwia Domagata (Poland)

Young Artist Division

- Hyeseon Jin (Indiana University)
- You Wu (Oberlin Conservatory)
- Michael Lenahan (University of Texas at Austin)
- Seonghun Jeong (Southern Methodist University)
- He Chengzi Li (Cleveland Institute of Music)
- Glara Lee (Cleveland Institute of Music)
- Dailin Zeng (Eastman School of Music)
- Quanzhou Yan (Texas Christian University)
- Chenyu Wang (Ohio State University)
- Xinyue Yang (Eastman School of Music)
- Tian Tang (Northwestern University)
- Charlotte Tang (University of Toronto)
- Alternate - Yi Liu (University of North Texas)
- Alternate - Xu Peng (Rice University)
- Alternate - Zeru Wang (University of Wisconsin-Madison)

Final round judges are Carol Leone from Southern Methodist University, Jose Mendez from Northwestern University and Steven Spooner from the Peabody Institute.

The Junior Division Final Round will begin at 8 a.m. Friday, July 29, followed by an award ceremony and masterclass at 3 p.m. The evening will conclude with a concert by Dr. Steven Spooner at 7 p.m.

Competition will continue Saturday, July 30, with the Young Artist Division also beginning at 8 a.m. followed by an award ceremony and masterclass at 4:30 p.m.

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BASEBALL

# Willems reflects on first year as pro

Focus behind the plate calling a good game

By Nolan Ruth  
The Community News

It is once again time for the Major League Baseball Draft. As hundreds of prospects prepare to learn their fate and baseball pundits predict the results, former Aledo Bearcat catcher Creed Willems is reflecting on his first year in professional baseball.

On July 12, 2021, Willems was selected in the eighth round as the 227th overall pick by the Baltimore Orioles. On July 23 he had officially signed his contract and reported to the Orioles rookie team in the Florida Complex League.

“Rookie ball was great,” Willems said. “The first couple of weeks was just lifting, hitting, bullpen, and seeing live pitching before they got me in a game. Then I finally got into a few games over three or four weeks before the season ended.”

Willems played 10 games behind the plate in Florida before the end of the 2021 baseball season. Despite a batting average of just .167 in 24 at-bats, his game-calling ability impressed the storied club.

Due to the lockout that delayed the start of the MLB season, Willems got to work with the big league coaches and the other catching prospects for Baltimore during spring training.

“It rolls around and you’re among everybody,” Willems recalled. “From Low-A to Triple-A at one complex. Getting to learn from them and how they go about things was incredible. I got to travel with the big league team to four of the major league spring training games, which was a lot of fun.”

On April 28, 2022, he was assigned to Baltimore’s Low-A affiliate in Salisbury, Maryland, the Delmarva Shorebirds of the South Atlantic League.

The season got off to a rocky start at the plate, but on May 15 in front of the home crowd Willems’ stepped to the plate in the bottom of the third inning. The Shorebirds trailed 2-1 to the Salem Red Sox, with



JOEY GARDNER

AHS graduate Creed Willems has found success behind the plate for Baltimore Orioles affiliate Delmarva Shorebirds.

right-hander Wikelman Gonzalez on the mound.

On the first pitch of the at-bat Willems swung wide and hit a two-run opposite-field home run over the left-field wall, giving the Shorebirds a 3-2 lead.

“It was surreal,” Willems recalled. “I was looking for one pitch and one pitch only. I was sitting dead-red on a two-seamer and the first pitch was a 97 mile-per-hour two-seam. I saw it and it just kept going and going. You can dream of it happening, but in the moment it’s a totally different

feeling. It was definitely one of my best memories of my career.”

It is rare in baseball for a batter to get a home run ball back as a personal souvenir, but one young kid came up to the bullpen with Willems’ home run ball so he could have it.

“I traded a few autographed balls by the whole team for it,” Willems said with a chuckle. “So I was able to get that ball back. It’s currently sitting right next to my TV at my house in Delmarva.”

He tripled later in the game, driving in another run and later

scoring again in the 8-7 Delmarva win, snapping a six-game losing skid.

The Shorebirds have eight weeks remaining in the 2022 season and Willems currently holds a .145 batting average with three doubles, two triples, two home runs, 10 RBI and 13 runs scored as of July 11.

Despite a rough early season in the batter’s box, his performance behind the plate has definitely attracted attention as he has thrown out 15 runners trying to steal and has a .988 fielding percentage.

“It’s been a little tough at first,” Willems admitted. “Right now, I’ve adopted the mindset that my first priority is at catcher. You could have a bad day at the plate, and they’re going to happen more often than you would like. But the fact of the matter is you could go 0-for-4, but if you call a good game and your team wins the game, then you did your job that day.”

*Editor’s Note: The Community News will continue to provide occasional updates on Willems’ career as it progresses.*

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WEATHERFORD COLLEGE

# WC, West Texas A&M sign graduate school agreement

Weatherford College and West Texas A&M University have joined forces to expand educational opportunities to students seeking pathways to graduate degrees.

WC President Tod Allen Farmer and WT President Walter V. Wendler signed a memorandum of understanding on Wednesday, June 28, to solidify the partnership.

Qualified graduates of WC's Bachelor of Applied Arts and Sciences in Organizational Leadership program will receive access to graduate advisers with additional individualized application support, financial aid, and scholarship counseling.

In return, WC will provide contact information for eligible students each semester, advise its students of opportunities in graduate studies at WT, work on joint marketing efforts with WT and collaborate with WT faculty to ensure a smooth transition for its students.

"We at Weatherford College are honored to enter this agreement with a graduate institution as prestigious as West Texas A&M University," Farmer said. "Our WC graduates will now have



West Texas A&M University President Walter V. Wendler (left) and Weatherford College President Tod Allen Farmer signed a memorandum of understanding on June 28 for a graduate school transfer agreement between the two schools.

the seamless opportunity to earn a world class graduate school education at WT. The commitment to excellence and focus on student success that our two institutions share makes us natural institutional partners."

Applicants must meet the requirements of admission and deadlines for entrance into the applicable graduate program at WT. Some leveling coursework may be required

depending on the specific pathway.

"WT has set the goal of becoming the most transfer-friendly university in Texas," Wendler said. "This partnership provides more opportunities for students to serve the region, the State of Texas and beyond. We are proud to be the next step in a student's educational and research journey in pursuit of earning a graduate degree."

# TEXAS CROSSWORD

ACROSS

1 hula hoops and mullets, e.g.

5 TX George Jones' "The Race" —

6 "— - - - -at" — (knocking or gunfire)

7 TX Jamie Foxx's first name at birth

8 TXism: "Devil's" (praying mantis)

17 "Texas Tea"

18 TXism: "— — — duck in water"

21 4-term Dallas mayor: — Thornton

22 truck rubber

23 TXism: "he's — — — walk the river with"

24 TX Bob Wills' "Take — — — to Tulsa"

29 Laredo had a large anti-smelter

30 this Bob started a chain of Texas cafeterias

31 big Texas- game

32 TXism: "like two dogs fighting — — —" (vicious)

34 QB Blake for IFL Frisco Fighters

35 — and reel

36 Anglican church service at sunset

37 in Coleman County on U.S. 283

38 TXism: "would — — maggot" (putrid)

39 TXism: "thick as ticks"

41 two- — — (fake)

42 "without further —"

43 TXism: "get your ducks in — —" (get organized)

44 this Warren starred with TX Dennis Quaid in 1983 film "Tough Enough"

45 "The Texas Chain — Massacre" (1972)

46 former Cowboy DE Ed — Tall Jones

47 a birdie is one — par

48 walked ostentatiously

50 " — hunt" (prank)

DOWN

1 crowd pleaser all over Texas on July 4 (2 wds.)

2 TXism: "skinny"

3 TXism: "it'll — — something better comes along"

4 between meals treat

9 TXism: "you can write it — —" (certain)

10 " — a scratch" (unharmd)

11 it's now Verizon

12 "mi casa es — casa" (neighborly)

13 emotional shock

14 poetry metrical foots

15 Henrietta is the seat of this county

16 state where the Chisholm Trail ended (abbr.)

19 "The Three — —"

20 Barbary sheep

22 "shoo" is a word said — —

24 "Mighty — —" does not flow in Texas

25 New Year's

26 UT-Austin mascot

27 AT&T Center and Toyota Center

35 TX A.J. Foyt, e.g.

37 TXism: "dead as — —"

38 a secure Texas subdivision?

40 TXism: "could count the — —" (light rain)

41 TX Buddy Holly's "Not — — Away"

44 TXism: "went to the well — — too often"

47 volunteer worker

49 TX Willie's "Farm — — was in Manor, Texas"

TEXAS CROSSWORD

by Charley & Guy Orbison

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P-1592

## SUMMER HEAT HUMOR

It's a sure sign of summer if the chair gets up when you do."

Walter Winchell



WEATHERFORD COLLEGE

# Foundation honors Bruce and Laura Wiggs with Hartnett Award

The Weatherford College Foundation has recognized Bruce and Laura Wiggs for decades of advocacy and support with the 2022 Carlos Hartnett Award.

Named after the college's first development officer, the award recognizes those who "encourage others, by word and by example, to give from their abundance for the benefit of Weatherford College."

"Bruce and Laura are a special part of Weatherford College and the foundation," said Brent Gough, WC Foundation president. "We are so appreciative of their efforts and dedication. The students of Weatherford College will benefit for years

to come because of their generosity."

Bruce Wiggs is a 1955 graduate of WC. Laura retired as a WC instructor and spent 16 years on the WC Foundation Board, taking an active role in raising funds for scholarships and other student support.

In addition to establishing the Richard "Mac" Wiggs Scholarship Endowment years ago, the couple was instrumental in a \$1 million gift from the Wiggs Family Foundation to support the newly-named Alesia Armstrong Wiggs School of Nursing.

"Bruce and Laura Wiggs are pillars of the Weatherford College community," said WC

President Tod Allen Farmer. "Their decades-long commitment to our noble institution has changed countless lives. This award is an appropriate recognition of the lifelong positive impact they have made on Weatherford College."

The foundation has given the Hartnett Award only 15 times in its history. Previous awardees are Jack Borden, Dr. Jim Boyd, Jean Bryan, Marjorie Kimbrough Dome, Dorothy Doss, Jerry Durant, Roy Eaton, Bob Glenn, Roy Joe Grogan, I.B. Hand, Eddie Kidd, Mark Littleton, Joe Tison, and Dr. Mike White.



The Weatherford College Foundation has recognized Bruce and Laura Wiggs (center) with the Carlos Hartnett Award. Congratulating the Wiggs are WC Foundation President Brent Gough (left) and WC President Tod Allen Farmer (right).



## Take it out for a spin and let us know how it handles!

Our new website goes live this weekend. We know there may be some bumps on the test track, and we appreciate your feedback. Visit [www.community-news.com](http://www.community-news.com). Please send feedback to [rkeck@community-news.com](mailto:rkeck@community-news.com).

### NOTICE FOR REQUEST FOR COMPETITIVE SEALED PROPOSALS FOR GROUP HEALTH, DENTAL, VISION AND LIFE INSURANCE FOR CITY OF WILLOW PARK EMPLOYEES AND DEPENDENTS

The City of Willow Park is seeking competitive sealed proposals for group health, dental, vision and life insurance coverage, for City employees and their dependents. Proposals shall be submitted in accordance with the Proposal Specifications. Proposal specifications may be picked up from Tommy Morris Agency LLC, P.O. Box 365, Abilene, TX 79604, or by contacting the Tommy Morris Agency, LLC at 325-673-4289. All sealed proposals must be marked Attn: Health Bid Proposal and addressed to The Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council, City of Willow Park, 516 Ranch House Road, Willow Park, Texas 76087 and may be delivered by hand, U.S. Mail or other courier service to that address. All proposals must be received by the City on or before 10:00 A.M. on August 15, 2022. Sealed proposals received after the due date and time shall not be considered by the City Council. Sealed proposals will then be opened by the City Secretary at 10:15 A.M. on August 15, 2022 at the Willow Park City Council Chambers, 516 Ranch House Road, Willow Park, Texas, and read aloud at the proposal opening. Proposals will then be analyzed by the Tommy Morris Agency who will make their recommendations to the City Council.

The City Council retains the right to reject any and all proposals submitted and to waive any irregularities in the proposals. The City Council may award the proposal that presents the best value for the City. In determining the best value for the City, the City Council shall consider: (1) the purchase price; (2) the reputation of the proposer and of the proposer's services; (3) the quality of the proposer's services; (4) the extent to which the services meet the City's needs; (5) the proposer's past relationship with the City; and (6) the total long-term cost to the City to acquire the proposer's services. Please note that to obtain the best final offer, the City may permit revisions to the proposals after submission and before the award of the contract pursuant to LGC Section 252.042(b). For additional information, interested providers should contact Tommy Morris Agency at 325-673-4289.

Signed  
Crystal Dozier  
City Secretary  
City of Willow Park

This notice shall be published in The Community News on July 15, 2022 and July 22, 2022.



# Classifieds

July 15, 2022  
THE COMMUNITY NEWS  
www.community-news.com

**Notice of Public Hearings**

Notice is hereby given that the Planning and Zoning Commission and the City Council of the City of Aledo, Parker County, Texas will conduct public hearings in the Aledo Community Center, 104 Robinson Court, Aledo, Texas.

**Public Hearing**  
Location:

**City Council Meeting**  
Aledo Community Center  
104 Robinson Court  
Aledo, Texas 76008  
Thursday, July 28, 2022  
6:00 P.M.

The purpose of the hearings is to receive input regarding consideration the following:

1) Public Hearing to consider a request for a Final Plat of Lot 1, Block 1, Aledo Middle School Addition - 53.594 acres, A.B. Smith Survey, Abstract No. 1223, City of Aledo, Parker County, Texas, and being a replat of a portion of Lot 20, Block 22, Original Town of Aledo, an Addition to the City of Aledo, Parker County, Texas, as filed in Volume 18, Page 398, Plat Records of Parker County; also being a replat of all of Lots 1 through 7, a portion of Lot 8 of Block 3, all of Lots 1 through 4, Block 4, and Valley View Drive, Hidden Valley Estates, Section 2, an addition to the City of Aledo, Parker County, Texas, as filed in Volume 360-A, Page 67, Plat Records of Parker County. The property is generally located at 416 S FM 1187, Aledo, Texas

For further information or questions regarding these public hearings, please contact Nathan Gonzales at (817) 717-4255

Published in *The Community News*, July 15, 2022 and posted at Aledo City Hall July 8, 2022.

Deana McMullen, City Secretary

**City of Willow Park  
Notice of Public Hearing**

The City of Willow Park City Council will hold public hearings on the matters listed below:

**PUBLIC HEARING to consider an update to the Land Use Assumptions, Capital Improvements Plan for water and wastewater impact fees, and proposed water and wastewater impact fees.**

City Council:  
Time:

Tuesday, September 13, 2022  
7:00 PM

Location:

Willow Park City Hall, 516 Ranch House Rd  
Willow Park, TX 76087


Any member of the public has the right to appear at the Public Hearing. Please contact the Planning & Development Department at 817-441-7108 or [tfisher@willowpark.org](mailto:tfisher@willowpark.org) with any questions.

I certify that the above notice was posted on the bulletin board at the Municipal Complex at the City of Willow Park City Hall, Willow Park, Texas on/before July 22, 2022 by 5:00 p.m.

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**REPORTER NEEDED:** *The Community News* is seeking a part-time reporter to cover certain city council and school board meetings.

For more information, email [rkeck@community-news.com](mailto:rkeck@community-news.com)

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TRACK AND FIELD

Morris twins reunite

Burnt orange traded for purple

By Nolan Ruth  
The Community News

When twin siblings Gracie and Graydon Morris graduated from Aledo in 2020, nobody could have predicted the road they would travel.

The twins had legendary cross country and track careers in high school. Gracie won the state title in the 800-meter run in 2017 as a freshman.

In the fall of 2017, Graydon won the first of three consecutive state titles in cross country. He followed it up in the spring of 2018 with state titles in the 1600-meter and the 3200-meter races. Graydon added another title to his resume in 2019 by getting the gold in the 800-meter.

“A lot of it was just me and my brother,” Gracie recalled. “There wasn’t so much of a running culture at Aledo when we were in high school. But I think a lot of it has changed since we graduated. We’ve been running together since Day One. We really bonded over it, and we have a really close relationship because of it.”

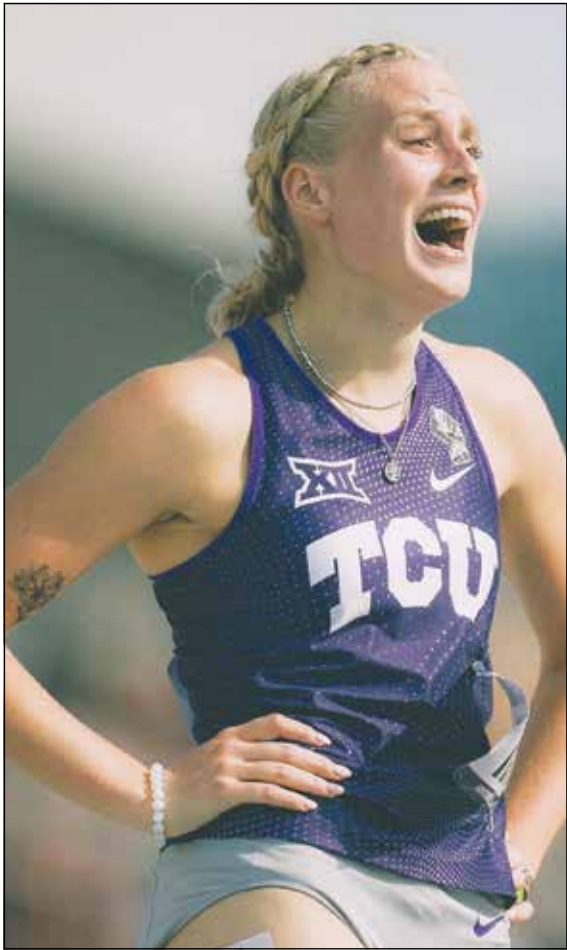
Unfortunately, the brother-sister duo lost their senior track season due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the future was bright as they both decided to sign their letters-of-intent to run at the University of Texas in Austin.

Gracie ran the full cross country season, but injured her foot during track season and her freshman year was cut short. Graydon suffered a similar fate after coaches put him in an event he had never run before.

“The coaches tried to put me in the steeplechase,” Graydon recalled. “I just had very little preparation and I landed wrong on one hurdle and hurt my heel. A couple weeks later I had an MRI and it revealed a stress fracture.”

After the injuries, it seemed like things were not working out in Austin. So Gracie made the decision to transfer to TCU and move back to Fort Worth, and for the first time in their lives, the two were separated from each other.

“I wasn’t really enjoying the coaching that I was getting,” Gracie explained. “The training just wasn’t working and they were pretty stuck in their ways. So I just decided, in order for me



to put myself in the best situation for my future, that I needed to leave.”

“I’m not going to lie,” Graydon said. “It was strange. I got two roommates that were both on the team so that made it a little easier. I don’t think living alone would have been fun.”

Gracie had a successful sophomore season at TCU, breaking three school records and qualifying for the NCAA Outdoor Championships in Eugene, Oregon.

At the national meet, Gracie ran the semi-final race in the 1500-meter but unfortunately did not qualify for the finals. However after the injury a year prior, it was just a relief for her to be there.

“It was amazing,” Gracie reminisced. “My coach and I were both just shocked because I didn’t start training until mid-December. So it was supposed to be ‘how far can I make it?’ The

biggest thing was just getting one national meet under my belt and coming back stronger next year.”

After seeing how well his sister was doing both on and off the track, Graydon decided that TCU is where he should be as well.

“I saw her go through that process,” Graydon remembered. “It didn’t seem as scary as everyone makes it out to be. I kind of had it in the back of my mind that I wanted to transfer. I gave it one more semester and nothing really changed so I knew I had to leave.”

Graydon has moved back to Fort Worth and will start running for TCU after not running for more than a year. Finally, the legendary track twins from Aledo will reunite and compete alongside each other again.

MACH I

from page 12

“We have the liberty to train a little harder with no more meets before then,” he said, adding that you never know what will happen at the national meet.

“We had a kid in 2004 at nationals in Oregon. He was ranked 24th or 25th going in and he won,” Torres said. “Nationals is full of surprises.”

Amateur Athletic Union  
Region 18 Mach I Junior  
Olympics qualifiers  
Boys

11-12-Year-Olds

1500: 4. Cameron Allen, 5:23; 6. Josh Fink, 7:34.

3000: 2. Jo. Fink, 11:31; 3. Allen, 11:38; 6. Andrew Walsh, 11:54.

1500 walk: 1. Jo. Fink, 8:35.

13-14

1500: 2. Gannon Dolan, 4:27; 4. Nicholas Walden, 4:41.

3000: 1. Dolan, 9:34; 2. Walden, 10:21.

15-16

800: 2. Samuel Hought, 2:02.

1500: 1. John Luffey, 4:16; 5. Jack Fink, 4:22; 6. Hought, 4:25.

3000: 1. Ja. Fink, 9:19; 2. Luffey, 9:21; 4. Aiden Mansell, 10:09.

17-18

800: 6. Brody May, 2:02.

1500: 5. Joshua Kocis, 4:48.

Girls

8-Under

800: 5. Carolyn Walsh, 7:14; 6. Jenna Fink, 7:34.

13-14

800: 6. Emerita Strathmeyer, 2:49.

1500: 2. Ashlynn Crossland, 5:18; 5. Strathmeyer, 5:41.

3000: 2. Crossland, 11:45; 5. Strathmeyer, 13:13.

17-18

800: 2. Makaylee Ray, 2:23.

1500: 1. Ray, 5:09.





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TRACK AND FIELD

# Mach I Track Club qualifies 16 for nationals

## Seven from Aledo

By Rick Mauch  
The Community News

In its first full season back since 2019 the Mach I Track Club returned in blazing style by qualifying 16 competitors for the upcoming Amateur Athletic Union Junior Olympics in Greensboro, North Carolina July 31-Aug. 6.

The 2020 season was wiped out by the COVID-19 pandemic. Coach Lupe Torres said when the team did return to competition in 2021 it was with a smaller roster, which has expanded greatly this season.

“It feels great to be back in full force. We’ve got a lot of new kids,” he said.

The 16 national qualifiers, in fact, ties the club record for the most in a season. Of that group, almost half (7) are from Aledo, though Torres’ team draws from all over, a reason he believes they withstood the COVID pandemic and returned so strong.

“Word of mouth has done so much. They hear about what this group has done and want to be a part,” he said. “We’re primarily a distance club. One year we had a kid coming all the way from Ranger.”

Among the returning qualifiers are Samuel Haught (Boys 15-16), John Luffey (Boys 15-16), Jack Fink (Boys 15-16) and Josh Fink (Boys 11-12), all from Aledo; Aiden Mansell (Boys 15-16), Poolville; Nicholas Walden (Boys 13-14), Azle; and Emerita Strathmeyer (Girls 13-14), White Settlement.

Newcomers to nationals are Jenna Fink (Girls 8-Under), Carolyn Walsh (Girls 8-Under) and Andrew Walsh (Boys 11-12), all from Aledo; Makaylee Ray (Girls 17-18), Poolville; Brody May (Boys 17-18) and Cameron Allen (Boys 11-12), both from Peaster; Gannon Dolan (Boys 13-14) and Joshua Kocis (Boys 17-18), both from Granbury; and Saginaw’s Ashlynn Crossland (Girls 13-14).

“I’m excited. I get to see my family. I haven’t seen them in about five years,” said Haught, who has a great aunt and uncle in the Greensboro area.

Though Haught competed at nationals last year it was bittersweet as he suffered an injury that carried over into his high school cross country season for Aledo.

“It was the last race,” he recalled, adding that the cross country season ended well, though, because the Bearcats reached state.

“I’m definitely more healthy than last season. It’ll be a lot different this season.”

Strathmeyer said though it was a rough national meet for her last year, she’s grown a lot as a runner since.

“I’m more experienced and more prepared,” she said, adding that the summer competition is great preparation for her fall schedule at Fort Worth Country Day School. “When you run in tough conditions like this you’re ready for anything.”

Jack Fink said he now knows how to handle the competition better as well.

“I know how to, for example, handle a tight situation between



RICK MAUCH/THE COMMUNITY NEWS

Mach I Track Club qualified 16 athletes for the Amateur Athletic Union Junior Olympics in Greensboro, North Carolina, from July 31 to Aug. 6. Pictured are (front row, from left) Carolyn Walsh, Jenna Fink, Josh Fink, Cameron Allen, and Andrew Walsh and (back row) Ashland Cross, Emmy Strathmeyer, Jack Fink, Aiden Mansell, Gannon Dolan, Nicole Walden and Sam Haught. Not pictured are John Luffey, Brody May, Josh Kocis, and Makaylee Ray.

runners. I’m over the first-time jitters,” he said.

This is Crossland’s first season to compete for Mach I. She admitted to being a little nervous, but called that a good thing.

“I’m more excited, though, to go with this good a team,” she said. “It’s going to be good to be noticed by some different scouts. Also, we get to travel and do something we love.”


Assistant coach Matt Mitchell said of the qualifiers, “This year,

most are at the top of their age group, and that makes a difference.”


Torres said between now and nationals the qualifiers will do one last “great push” in preparation.

Turn to MACH I, page 11

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