

THE COMMUNITY NEWS

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WILLOW PARK

Residents speak out about fire department annexation

By Rick Mauch
The Community News

If there was ever a question about how popular the fire department is in Willow Park, there should be none anymore.

With the possible annexation of their department into the Parker County Emergency Services District 1 pending with a Nov. 8 election, several citizens spoke in opposition to such a move at a public hearing on Aug. 17 at Spring Hill Suites in Willow Park. Several others from the county also spoke in defense.

Many questions were asked by the public and answered by both ESD1 Fire Chief Stephen Watson and Willow Park City Manager Bryan Grimes.

Then, the ESD1 board of directors voted 5-0 to call for the November election.

Among those from the public who spoke, eight oppose the annexation, four were in favor and a couple didn't seem to care one way or the other, but nonetheless had questions.

Among the major complaints were that the citizens have not been given enough notice or information about the subject of annexation. Some even suggested deals are being made behind closed doors, which Willow Park Mayor Doyle Moss immediately refuted.

"This was not cloak-and-dagger, these meetings we had with firemen, with ESD and now it's being brought to the people," Moss said. "We are entertaining this for the betterment of our city."

Just as he did at the Aug. 9 Willow Park City Council meeting, Watson assured citizens of many things, including that a fire station will remain in Willow Park and that all of the current employees would retain their jobs at the same pay rate with even better benefits, including the district paying 100% of the insurance costs for an employee and their family.

And that the city's prized ladder truck will stay put, as will all equipment needed to operate a fire station in Willow Park.

Citizen Dale Lewis called into question the fire station remaining, asking what happens if the quickly growing northern part of Parker County adds around 20,000 homes. Watson told him and the rest of the audience that two new stations are already in the planning for that part of the county — with a reminder that Willow Park, already the second largest city in the county, and

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Carter LeBaron named 2022 Thanksgiving Trot recipient



Carter LeBaron

SPECIAL TO THE COMMUNITY NEWS

Staff Reports
The Community News

The Marcia Walters Memorial Thanksgiving Trot has announced that the recipient of its 11th annual race on Thanksgiving Day will be Carter LeBaron, a 13-year-old Aledo ISD student that was diagnosed with Acute Lymphocytic Leukemia this past March.

It has been a tough road through a journey of chemotherapy, infusions, hospital stays, countless doctor appointments, and the list continues.

Ashley and John LeBaron, Carter's parents, have not been able to work due to the grueling demands a cancer diagnosis entails. While one gets their son to and from his treatment and related appointments, the other is tending to Carter's four siblings and the normal demands of day-to-day parenthood. Financial obligations are often difficult to meet with the added hardship of cancer.

"This family was chosen as the recipient after thorough review and consideration, and the Trot is so honored to know them and be a part of their journey," a member of the Trot board said.

Donations and funds raised through the Thanksgiving Trot will be provided to the family to help meet its expenses.

"His journey started with his loss of appetite and the inability to stay awake for longer than a few minutes," Carter's mom Ashley said. "It was out of the norm for him, so after about a week we got him seen and he got his diagnosis."

Since then, Carter's treatment has consisted of several inpatient admission stays, some of them weeks at a time. It also includes weekly chemo appointments.

Ashley said Carter sometimes has appointments five days a week, and some appointments last all day.

"It's consisted of lots of needles, bloodwork, spinal taps, and even a feeding tube a couple of times due to severe malnutrition for excessive weight loss," she said. "At one point he was under 100 pounds. For the most part he's done very well with his chemotherapy, thankfully not many side effects."

The Thanksgiving Trot began in 2011 with a simple mission — to have members of the community join

together for a common cause — to support one of its own in need.

"Being selected as this year's recipient is such a blessing for our family," Ashley said. "For so many months it has felt like we've had more low points than high and we've barely had our heads above water. His selection is just the Lord reaffirming that He's in control and showing us there are people out there who care and are willing to help."

This past spring, the Trot was honored as East Parker County Chamber of Commerce's 'Nonprofit of the Year.' It was an award that the group was so proud to have received, and they did so

on behalf of everyone who has ever sponsored, raced, shared, or supported the Trot.

For more information about the Thanksgiving Trot, visit www.aledo-thanksgivingtrot.com.

To follow Carter's story and updates, the family has a Facebook page [facebook.com/curecarter13](https://www.facebook.com/curecarter13). Mark your calendars for Thanksgiving Day at Aledo High School Stadium, and let's race for Carter LeBaron!



ROSE HOFFMAN/CITY OF WILLOW PARK

John Schneider was sworn in as Willow Park's new fire chief Tuesday. His wife, Stephanie, pins him while council member Greg Runnebaum looks on.

WILLOW PARK

Majority of drainage issues to be solved

Tax rate hearing scheduled

By Rick Mauch
The Community News

At its regular meeting on Tuesday, Aug. 23, members of the Willow Park City Council voted to approve the issuance of certificates of obligation in an amount not to exceed \$4.25 million for designing, constructing, acquiring, improving, enlarging, and equipping the city's municipal drainage utility system.

However, whereas the original proposal in June was for a 20-year plan, the city opted instead to go with a 15-year plan, which City Manager Bryan Grimes said would save the city up to a half million dollars in interest. Also, because of the city's AA bond rating, they were able to receive a fixed rate of 3.44%, resulting in a payback of around \$367,000 per year, or total payments of around \$5.5 million. In June the rate was estimated at 4.1%, which would have resulted in a 20-year payback of around \$6 million.

The first payment will be in February of 2023, with the final payment being in 2037, with the city having the option to pay it off early starting in 2032.

"This will address about 90% of our drainage needs," Grimes said.

Grimes said work will likely begin in December or January.

Certificates of obligation are similar to general obligation bonds, except that they do not require voter approval before they are issued. Certificates of obligation are also guaranteed by the city's taxation power.

In the case of Willow Park, the city has been collecting fees since October of 2021 to fund storm drainage improvements. The rates, reflected in the utility bills of

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In & Around Parker County

Fun, Food, and Adventure!

Grand Adventure is the go-to spot for fun, food, and adventure in Parker County.

Located off Tin Top Road, Grand Adventure is locally owned and locally operated by the Pennington Family, and features indoor and outdoor attractions.

Go Karts are one of Grand Adventure's top attractions, and mini-golf is also a favorite outdoor attraction.

The fun continues with a large virtual reality arena and a classic arcade.

Grand Adventure is the perfect place for birthday parties, family reunions, youth groups, corporate parties and teambuilding fun.

Having all that fun may work up an appetite, and Grand Adventure has you covered there as well. On

the menu are pizzas, chicken nuggets, loaded fries and tater tots, super stuffed bell pepper, and jalepeño bacon-wrapped peppers.

There is also plenty to satisfy your sweet tooth ice cream, gourmet cookies, cotton candy, funnel cakes, and root beer floats.

Grand Adventure is open Tuesdays thru Thursdays from 4-10 p.m., Fridays from 4 p.m. to midnight, Saturdays from 11 a.m. to midnight, and Sundays from noon to 10 p.m.

Grand Adventure is closed on Mondays, but open for Labor Day from 11 a.m. to 10 p.m.

Visit Grand Adventure at 2065 Tin Top Road. For more information, see www.grandadventuretexas.com.



One of the fun features of the mini golf course is a walk-through volcano. BELOW: Indoors, the arcade has plenty of options. Go Karts are a very popular activity.



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ALEDO ISD

District names 2021-2022 Circle of Greatness winners

Special to The Community News

Aledo ISD recently honored four well-deserving employees as Circle of Greatness winners for the 2021-2022 school year.

Receiving the honor were Vandagriff Elementary School teacher Ashley Watson in the Professional category; Stuard Elementary School special education aide Kayla Palumbo in the Paraprofessional category; transportation/bus driver Bob Brauer in the Auxiliary category; and Daniel Ninth Grade Campus substitute Amy Miller in the Campus Guest Teacher/Substitute category.

According to the school district, "Employees nominated for Circle of Greatness embody what it means to be #growinggreatness in the district, positively impacting our community, students, and school district."

The district accepts nominations for Circle of Greatness throughout the school year from parents, students, fellow employees, and community members, and there are no limitations to the number of nominations each month.

The top nominee from each category is recognized as a Circle of Greatness Special Honoree three times per year, then all of the Special Honorees are candidates for the overall Circle of Greatness winner. Winners are announced during convocation and awarded a new Apple iPad.

During the 2021-2022 school year, more than 520 nominations were made encompassing each campus and department and hundreds of employees. Here's what nominators had to say about the 2021-2022 overall winners:

Ashley Watson: "Ashley spends so many hours outside of work to make sure she does the best for her kids and her team. My son is in her class and he ADORES her. She has grown him as a reader, she loves him (and all her students like a parent hopes their child's teacher would) and has motivated him to be the best he can be. I am so grateful for her!"

Kayla Palumbo: "I feel her protection and love for our kids. My son always has to have an aide with him and it feels like Kayla spends a good part of her day with him. The job that she has is a thankless one; a highly underpaid one; a stinking hard one! And yet she shows up and she loves and she smiles and she gets it done! She really is the hands and feet of Jesus loving the ones Jesus would have had eyes to see."

Bob Brauer: "The first day of school I had the opportunity to ride the bus route that Mr. Brauer drives. As we pulled up to our first stop for students to get off the bus one student stood and walked towards the front of the bus. When the child turned to get off the bus Mr. Brauer asked how his day was and told him he would see him tomorrow. Mr. Brauer addressed every student as they got off the bus at their stop. In the conversations he had with the students it was evident that Mr. Brauer knew the students and truly enjoyed being the last person to from the school district."

Amy Miller: "Mrs. Miller is the friendly face our parents and visitors see when they visit our campus and she is consistently helpful



Daniel Ninth Grade Campus substitute Amy Miller



Stuard Elementary School special education aide Kayla Palumbo



Vandagriff Elementary School teacher Ashley Watson



Transportation/bus driver Bob Brauer

and welcoming to those who connect with our school by phone. No matter how busy the front office gets she manages it all with grace, kindness, and professionalism. The students stop by the front office in the mornings just to say hello to her and because she sets the tone for their day with her consummate

positivity and encouragement. We are thankful that Amy has chosen to grow greatness at DNG!"

Circle of Greatness nominations are open for the 2022-2023 school year. To nominate any Aledo ISD employee, visit www.aledoisd.org/circleofgreatness.



Read this story online

WP1

from page one

residents, are \$5.50 per month per 1,500 square feet of living area. For example, 2,000 square feet is \$7.32 per month, 2,500 is \$9.19 and 3,000 equals \$11.

Funds raised through these fees will go toward paying the debt service charges connected with the certificates of obligation. Also, Grimes said there is enough in the fund to cover any overages for about 10 to 12 years.

Place 1 Council Member Eric Contreras alluded to the volume of rain earlier this week, which resulted in water buildup throughout the city, saying, "This is going to take care of that. It's something great for the city."

Grimes recalled a meeting he had with a resident a few years ago that set this process in motion.

"Werner Schmidt came to me with a drainage problem. He brought attention to the issue," Grimes said. "I'm very happy for Werner and all the others. This is a city-wide project."

"I remember vividly in 2019 getting in my truck, driving around to people's homes to see if we needed sandbags."



Read this story online

Public hearing set for budget/tax rate

The council set a date of Sept. 13 for a public hearing concerning the proposed 2022-23 Fiscal

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ESD1

from page one

the rest of East Parker County is also rapidly growing.

“We put our resources into where the growth is. Look around here, there is tremendous growth,” Watson said. “Absolutely, without fail, there has to be a fire station in Willow Park.”

In fact, Watson even discussed the potential for increasing the fire department staff in Willow Park should the annexation go through.

The reason the annexation is being discussed is simple. Willow Park is busting at the seams budget-wise. All \$1.9 million expected to be brought in from property taxes in the coming year’s city budget is expected to go to fund the police department. The fire department will take up \$1.4 million of the expected \$1.7 million income from sales tax.

That doesn’t leave much wiggle room for projects such as streets, parks, etc.

“That puts a tremendous strain and pressure on our budget,” Grimes said, noting the fire department budget has grown 60% since 2017.

If the fire department is annexed into ESD1 it will no longer be funded by the city, clearing up that part of the budget for other projects. For ESD1, Watson said it is a strategic move to streamline services throughout the county with everyone working for the same agency.

ESD1 covers 311 square miles and 70,000 residents, Watson said. This includes Aledo, the Annetas, Springtown, Peaster, Poolville, Morningstar, Silver Creek, and Lajunta. They are funded by a 1.5% sales tax in unincorporated areas and an ad-valorem (property) tax of up to 10 cents per \$100 in incorporated areas such as Willow Park.

Should the WPPFD join ESD1, citizens would have to pay the ad-valorem tax. However, that would be offset by a reduction in their current taxes that would actually decrease their payments

by about \$40 per every \$100,000, Grimes said.

“If you take \$1.4 million out of our budget, there will be a tax reduction,” Grimes said.

ESD1 President Mark Jack issued a reminder that nothing is set, that the issue still has to be voted on by the residents of Willow Park and the others in ESD1. First, Willow Park residents will vote to approve or disapprove the annexation, and if they approve the other residents of ESD1 will vote whether or not to accept them, Jack said.

“The voters get to decide. It’s not up to ESD and it’s not up to the city,” Jack said. “Whatever happens now is completely up to the voters.”

Grimes told the crowd, “If the situation is status quo on Nov. 9, we’ll still make it work. The city will have a fire department.”

However, Grimes added, if the city were to fund the fire department out of property taxes — which several citizens said they prefer to the annexation — the tax would be increased to around 80 cents per \$100 for fire, police and debt.

“If you want to raise my taxes to justify it, do it,” Dale Lewis said. “Just say, ‘If you want a fire department, here is what it’s going to cost you.’”

Several of those who spoke in favor of increased taxes are senior citizens, whose property tax rate freezes at whatever the rate is when you turn 65. Grimes reminded them that no one is currently funding the fire department from property taxes as it is solely funded by sales taxes.

Michael Hogue raised the question of what happens to the public safety building, which was built with bond money, stating, “We’ve got a big liability there, and I’d like to know what we’re going to do about it?”

Watson answered that discussions are ongoing concerning the building, which also houses the police department, but assured folks that the fire station, whether still there or in another location, is not leaving town.



RICK MAUCH/THE COMMUNITY NEWS

LEFT: Willow Park Mayor Doyle Moss | RIGHT: ESD No. 1 Fire Chief Steve Watson

Grimes added that the city is currently getting appraisals on both the public safety building and city hall, a possible choice for relocation of the department. If that is the case, then city hall would have to move, perhaps to an entirely new location or simply switch places with the fire department.

K.J. Hannah asked if the fire department’s interaction with citizens - particularly young people - would continue.

“They provide outreach and training to the community. At every single event our Willow Park Fire Department is there. Even just driving through the neighborhoods, the children congregate and get them to blow their horn,” she said.

Watson responded that nothing would change.

“If you go to a Bearcat football game, you’ll probably see a fire truck there. Go to a Springtown game and you’ll see one,” he said. “We hit every single elementary school campus in ESD1.”

Former Willow Park Mayor Richard Neverdousky asked if the annexation into the ESD could improve the city’s ISO (insurance services office) rating to a 1 from the 2 it currently has. Connecting with a water supply from Fort Worth increased it from the 3 it previously was.

Neverdousky was mayor when the city switched from a volunteer

fire department to paid and when the bond was passed for the public safety building.

“I have an emotional attachment to our fire department, but I have an open mind also,” he said.

Neverdousky said if the rating cannot be improved, the annexation would otherwise be a wash.

“It may be costly, but it’s effective,” he said of the current situation.

Watson said the fire department in Aledo, also a part of ESD1, went from a rating of 7 to a 2 following their annexation.

“All over the district we’ve lowered it where we can,” he said.

Connie Vestal of Springtown, a former member of that fire department for 12 years and a resident of ESD1, is in favor of the annexation.

“There’s a lot of changes going on in Parker County right now and sometimes change is hard, but sometimes change is good,” she said. “You can still have your firefighters drive by your neighborhood. They’re not going to leave you high and dry. They take care of community.”

Scott Caron, a newcomer to the area from Kansas City, reminded citizens of what can happen when the funds needed and the services required don’t meet.

“Regionalizing your resources is the only answer. There’s a tipping point and you’re probably there with fire,” he said. “Don’t freak out and say no to this immediately.”

WP2

from page three

Year budget and the newly proposed property tax rate.

At a budget workshop in June, 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.

The \$1.9 million from property taxes is expected to go solely toward funding the police department. Of the \$1.7 million in sales revenue, \$1.4 million is expected to go to supporting the fire department, which is currently the subject of a possible annexation by Parker Emergency Services District 1. That vote is scheduled for Nov. 8.

Grimes said he has made a few tweaks to that originally proposed budget, but he still hopes to have the 2022-23 budget finalized by Labor Day (Sept. 5).

Grimes also recently presented the council with his recommendation for a lower property tax rate for citizens of 54 cents per \$100. That’s a decrease of three cents from the current rate of 57 cents per \$100.

Schneider pinned as new fire chief

John Schneider, who ascended to the role of the city’s fire chief following the retirement of Mike Lenoir on Aug. 2. Schneider has been with the city since 2008 and was promoted to assistant chief in 2016.

Among his many accomplishments, Schneider is a master structure firefighter, a master arson investigator, incident commander, emergency medical technician and more.

“I’m excited for the challenge. It’s an honor, for sure,” Schneider said.

Schneider and his wife, Stephanie, have two children and he enjoys fly fishing in his spare time.



Read this story online

NOTICE OF HEARING TO VOTE ON TAX RATE

A tax rate of \$0.538450 per \$100 valuation has been proposed by the governing body of CITY OF WILLOW PARK.

PROPOSED TAX RATE	\$0.538450 per \$100
NO-NEW-REVENUE TAX RATE	\$0.558828 per \$100
VOTER-APPROVAL TAX RATE	\$0.597921 per \$100

The no-new-revenue tax rate is the tax rate for the 2022 tax year that will raise the same amount of property tax revenue for CITY OF WILLOW PARK from the same properties in both the 2021 tax year and the 2022 tax year.

The voter-approval rate is the highest tax rate that CITY OF WILLOW PARK may adopt without holding an election to seek voter approval of the rate.

The proposed tax rate is not greater than the no-new-revenue tax rate. This means that CITY OF WILLOW PARK is not proposing to increase property taxes for the 2022 tax year.

A PUBLIC HEARING TO VOTE ON THE PROPOSED TAX RATE WILL BE HELD ON September 13, 2022 AT 07:00 pm AT 516 Ranch House Road, Willow Park, TX 76087.

The proposed tax rate is also not greater than the voter-approval tax rate. As a result, CITY OF WILLOW PARK is not required to hold an election to seek voter approval of the rate. However, you may express your support for or opposition to the proposed tax rate by contacting the members of the Willow Park City Council of CITY OF WILLOW PARK at their offices or by attending the public hearing mentioned above.

YOUR TAXES OWED UNDER ANY OF THE RATES MENTIONED ABOVE CAN BE CALCULATED AS FOLLOWS:

$$\text{Property tax amount} = (\text{tax rate}) \times (\text{taxable value of your property}) / 100$$

FOR the proposal: Lea Young Eric Contreras
Chawn Gilliland Nate Crummel

AGAINST the proposal:

PRESENT and not voting: Doyle Moss, Mayor

ABSENT: Greg Runnenbaum

Visit [Texas.gov/PropertyTaxes](https://www.texas.gov/PropertyTaxes) to find a link to your local property tax database on which you can easily access information regarding your property taxes, including information about proposed tax rates and scheduled public hearings of each entity that taxes your property.

The 86th Texas Legislature modified the manner in which the voter-approval tax rate is calculated to limit the rate of growth of property taxes in the state.

The following table compares the taxes imposed on the average residence homestead by CITY OF WILLOW PARK last year to the taxes proposed to be imposed on the average residence homestead by CITY OF WILLOW PARK this year.

	2021	2022	Change
Total tax rate (per \$100 of value)	\$0.566650	\$0.538450	decrease of -0.028200, or -4.98%
Average homestead taxable value	\$287,863	\$296,517	increase of 8,654, or 3.01%
Tax on average homestead	\$1,631.18	\$1,596.60	decrease of -34.58, or -2.12%
Total tax levy on all properties	\$3,241,709	\$3,214,123	decrease of -27,586, or -0.85%

For assistance with tax calculations, please contact the tax assessor for CITY OF WILLOW PARK at 817-596-0077 or parkercad@parkercad.org, or visit www.texas.gov/propertytaxes for more information.

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First Day of School II



Cassandra Dobles



William Wenzell



Lilly Stoker



Gunnison Dollar, Luke Mason, and Landon Watson

The Community News captured photos of several Aledo Middle School students waiting for the doors to open for the first time.
Photos by Randy Keck



Alyson Collazo, Alizzon Rodriguez, and Bella Mertz



Asher Moore and Mason Coffman



Braedyn, Toryn, and Jaxon Cox



Lillie Gideon, Kate Morris, and Reece Knight

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Capital Highlights

Farmer's Almanac predicting a white winter



Gary Borders
gborders@texaspress.com

As Texas gets at least a temporary reprieve this week from the heat, with a nice round of rain blanketing much of the state, the Old Farmer's Almanac is predicting January will bring significant snowfall to the state.

The periodical, founded in 1818, develops its extended forecast "using a 204-year-old mathematical formula focused on sunspot activity, planet positions and tidal actions of the moon." The almanac's website claims its forecasts are 80% to 85% accurate.

Since the secret formula was first developed by David Young, an astronomer and mathematician who was the almanac's first editor, only seven people have been hired to develop the weather predictions.

A meteorologist for the National Weather Service interviewed by the Austin American-Statesman casts a skeptical eye on the almanac's methods and predictions.

"There is little to no scientific evidence that sunspot activity and the position of planets have any impact on our weather and our climate," Keith White said. "A lot of the statements they use in terms of what they expect over the course of a season are very broad and can be applied kind of subjectively by people."

Neither the Almanac nor the weather service are predicting another Winter Storm Uri, which resulted in the deaths of at least 246 people in Texas in February 2021.

New CEO hired for ERCOT

The Electric Reliability Council of Texas, which drew scathing criticism for the massive power blackouts during Uri, has a new chief executive officer. The hiring of Pablo Vegas was approved by the Public Utility Commission, which oversees ERCOT.

Vegas currently serves as executive vice president of NiSource and group president, NiSource Utilities. He succeeds interim CEO Brad Jones on Oct. 1.

After Uri, most of ERCOT's board resigned and its CEO was terminated. A number of reforms and protective measures have been implemented since Uri, though critics question whether the grid can withstand another storm of Uri's magnitude.

TEA releases 2022 accountability ratings

The Texas Education Agency last week released the first A-F school accountability ratings for the first time since 2019, due to two years of the COVID-19 pandemic. The results show some improvement in grades, with 396 districts, or 33.1%, receiving an A rating. That was up from 301 getting the top grade in 2019.

Conversely, 16 districts got a failing grade, up from 14 in 2019. Among individual campuses, 2,356, or 27.9%, received the top grade, up from 1,750 in 2019. The number of campuses that received an F totaled 188, less than half the 402 schools that failed the accountability ratings in 2019. The ratings are based on three domains: student achievement, school progress, and closing the gaps.

Visit TXschools.gov to find grades for all campuses and districts. Users can search for schools using an address and compare schools as well.

Norris films PSAs for IWatchTexas program

Chuck Norris, the actor best known for "Walker, Texas Ranger," has filmed a public service announcement to publicize the IWatchTexas community reporting system. The partnership between communities and law enforcement is designed to make it easier for the public to report suspicious activity, from school safety-related threats to criminal acts or terrorism.

IWatchTexas is not designed to report emergencies, which should still be reported by calling 911. It is one of several initiatives taken after the Uvalde school shooting in May, which killed 19 students and two teachers.

In the PSA, Norris concludes by saying, "Whether it's criminal acts, terror threats, or someone wanting to harm children, if you see something, say something, and help keep communities in the great state of Texas safe."

Job surge continues in Texas

For the ninth consecutive month, Texas set new nonfarm employment records, with 13.513 million Texans at work.

The state has added 736,700 jobs since July 2021, according to the Texas Workforce Commission. The jobless rate is now at 4.0%, its lowest reading since February 2020 — just before the pandemic shuttered businesses across the state.

"The decrease in the unemployment rate and growth in jobs is a testament to our innovative and resilient Texas employers," said TWC Commissioner Aaron Demerson.

The most growth was in education and health services, which gained 14,300 jobs over the month. The lowest jobless rates in metropolitan statistical areas were recorded in Amarillo and Austin-Round Rock, both at 3.1%. The highest rate among MSAs at 8% was in McAllen-Edinburg-Mission.

Anti-drunk driving campaign underway

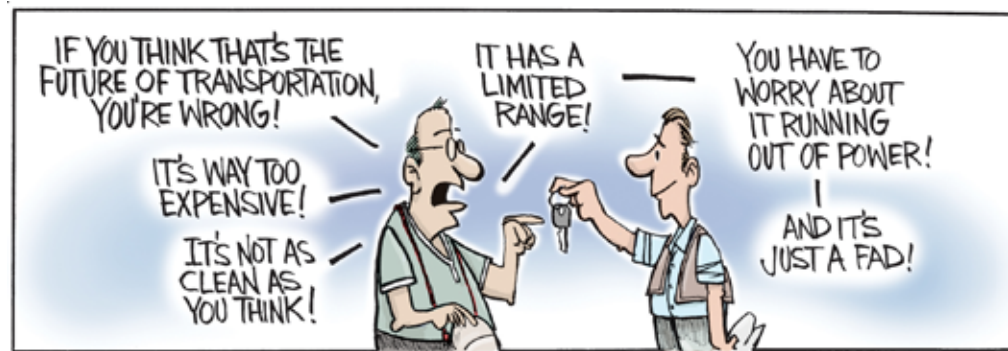
With school underway and the Labor Day holiday approaching, the Texas Department of Transportation has launched its Drive Sober No Regrets campaign, with stepped-up law enforcement efforts to arrest drunk drivers.

The state saw more than 25,000 DUI-alcohol related traffic crashes last year, resulting in 1,100 fatalities and 2,560 serious injuries, according to TxDOT.

COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations drop

The number of COVID-19 cases during the past week in Texas dropped to 59,059, according to the Coronavirus Resource Center at Johns Hopkins University, a drop of 18.7%. The number of deaths reported stood at 223, up slightly from the previous week. The Texas Department of State Health Services reported 3,018 lab-confirmed COVID-19 hospitalizations as of Sunday, nearly even with last week's count.

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.



QUOTABLE

Kindness is the language which the deaf can hear and the blind can see.

Mark Twain

Thistles & Roses

Food crisis exists for many



Richard Henderson
richard@rahenderson.com

This is the third column I have written about the food crisis that exists for many of our fellow citizens. There is an old adage that says people need to hear something three times for it to be remembered. Whether the adage is correct or not, there are many facing food shortages for a variety of reasons, which is a sad fact. Please know this, please don't forget it, and act to help if you can.

The July 2022 United States Department of Agriculture report says that a family of four consisting of two adults and two children ages 6-10 on a "moderate" budget needs to spend \$15,312 a year on food. That is \$42 per day; \$294 per week; \$1,273 per month.

Add teenagers and bigger families and \$20,000-plus per year is a reality. If the household income is \$50-60,000 a year, minimum food costs amount to more than 25% of the income. These numbers do not include the costs of eating out. Add rent, utilities, auto expenses, clothing, dentist, and doctor checkups, and many families simply do not have enough to buy the food needed. They are food insecure. You can search many websites that discuss this issue, including Feeding America at www.feedingamerica.org.

Food banks continue to be stressed as demand has grown. I saw a food distribution announced on a news broadcast, then covered the day of the distribution, and there were long lines of cars waiting to get food. Many of these folks had never had to accept food donations.

If you want to help, you can donate money by going to websites. The Center of Hope, 1318 Clear Lake Road in Weatherford (www.centerofhopetx.com) is one place you can give. You can also take groceries directly to them. I have sent money to them, but I like the cathartic experience of hand-carrying groceries I bought. As a Christian, I feel most blessed by going there myself, but any way you can donate is ok. But whatever your religious affiliation, or if you have none, you will feel good about doing it.

Center of Hope also has the Hope Chest Thrift Store. It is a very upscale resale shop. You can donate clothes and many other items that they can sell. You will need to go there to donate items which is another great experience. You can also help them by shopping at the store. There is really nice merchandise for sale there. The Hope Chest has been named the number one thrift store in Parker County.

The recently opened Tarrant Food Bank at 112 Winner's Circle in Weatherford (www.tafb.org) is another place you can help. You can go to their website and donate. They are distributing food to many Texas counties.

Both of these organizations do more than provide food. There are budgeting classes and other training to help people get out of poverty and seek a better life.

I know we are all bombarded with requests from many worthy organizations, but hopefully you can give a little to these local organizations. And maybe when you are at the grocery store, you can add a few items for one of these worthy organizations. Then look up their address and take the food there yourself. You will experience first hand how much it is needed and appreciated. You do this once and you will not forget it but going back three or more times will make double (or triple) sure you won't forget them.



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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.

Events

August 26, 2022
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More events can be found at www.community-news.com/calendar

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 2

James and the Giant Peach
Theatre Off the Square will present Roald Dahl's "James and the Giant Peach" on weekends Sept. 2-17 at 114 N. Denton in Weatherford.

Friday and Saturday performances are at 8 p.m. Sunday performances are at 2 p.m.

When James is sent by his conniving aunts to chop down their old fruit tree, he discovers a magic potion that results in a tremendous peach...and launches a journey of enormous proportions. Suddenly, James finds himself in the center of the gigantic peach, among human-sized insects with equally oversized personalities, but after it falls from the tree and rolls into the ocean, the group faces hunger, sharks, and plenty of disagreements.

Thanks to James' quick wit and creative thinking, the residents learn to live and work together as a family. The dangerous voyage is a success, but the adventure takes a whole new twist once they land on the Empire State Building. The cast and crew are from Aledo, Azle, Benbrook, Fort Worth, Granbury, Mineral Wells, and Weatherford, and includes:

- Director: Seth Hunter Williams
- Assistant Directors - Jesse James and Jenny Ingle
- Music Directors - Brad Justice and Shannon Moore
- Stage Managers - Lohi Ejere and Austin Smith
- Ladahlord - Shannon Moore
- James - Blaire Stanfield
- Spiker - Kadence Dye
- Sponge - Sally Stanfield
- Grasshopper - Brad



Justice

- Centipede - Cameron Cutshall
- Earthworm - Thomas Collins
- Spider - Jennifer Brown
- Ladybug - Jaclyn Justice
- Ensemble - Lisle Justice, Cavin Dye, Alicia Duran, Amanda Livengood, Lucas Steele, Emily Farmer.

Tickets are \$20 for all ages and all days, including matinees. To purchase tickets and choose seats, visit https://buy.tickets-tothecity.com/purchase.php?event_id=10309.

Masks are optional.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 3

Clark Gardens Model Train Show

All aboard! Clark Gardens Botanical Park's fall opening will be celebrated with its annual model train show on Saturday and Sunday, Sept. 3-4.

Saturday hours are 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Sunday hours are 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Clark Gardens, 567 Maddux Road in Weatherford.

There will be fun for the whole family. Inside the East Tent the North Texas Garden Railroad Club as well as the North Texas T-Trak Modular Railroad Club will display loads of track with different loops and auto switching dis-

plays. A crowd favorite, Choo Choo Express will be back offering trackless train rides through the gardens, and Bryton & Co. DIY Studio will be face painting on both days.

Waller Lane will serve lunch and Parker County Shaved Ice Company will have cool treats to follow.

Admission prices are \$9 for adults, \$7 for seniors (65 and older), and \$5 for kids (4-12). Children 3 and younger are admitted for free. Clark Gardens members receive free admission by showing their membership card. No free passes or reciprocal memberships will be honored at this event.

Being raised by a father that worked as a train engineer, this event holds a special place in the heart of garden founder Max Clark. Clark's passion for trains lead to Clark Gardens' very own G-Scale train station - The Clark Station. One of his favorite things about the Clark Station is the city diorama of Weatherford and Minerals Wells.

When Mr. Clark was asked what he enjoys most about the Train Show he explained it was "the delight that the public gets out of it."

He added that "seeing the happiness" is worth hosting the show each year. Clark Gardens will open up for

TEXAS CROSSWORD
by Charley & Guy Orbison
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ACROSS

- "March Madness" org.
- Twain's Huckleberry
- Alan of Texas-based "The Big Land"
- Cola
- in 2022, gas in Texas cost more than \$4 ___ gallon
- an emoji is a modern-day ___
- state where TX Buddy Holly died
- similarities between two things
- TXism: "___ of spit and vinegar" (energetic man)
- TX Rodney Crowell wrote song "Til ___ Control Again"
- TXism: "up ___ juice" (coffee)
- TXism: "___ dog won't hunt"
- Texas has ___ abortion law
- Texas Tech winning Lady Raiders coach, Sharp (1982-2006)
- TXism: "gave me a ___ dance" (runaround)
- "Traveling Wilbury" Petty, with TX Roy Orbison (init.)
- you can go salt ___ ing from South Padre Island
- underground part of a plant
- Texas actor Tommy ___ Jones

DOWN

- infantile, childish
- TXism: "between a rock ___ place"
- "One ___ one Ranger"
- TXism: "fat as a boardinghouse cat"
- Texans Houston and Donaldson
- San Antonio priv. univer.
- TX Buddy Holly's "True Love ___"
- quick light blow
- "Pepsi Challenge" ___ test"
- noted Texas pianist, Samaroff
- Mc ___, Texas
- TXism: "___ cluckin' but I can't find your nest"
- "sounds like a ___"
- messes with Texas
- shot from a concealed location
- something is wrong (2 wds.)
- before noon time
- how Texans might pronounce "no"
- dreadily dull
- TXism: "the tail ___ wagging the dog"
- bedside light
- this Lukas was in "Leap of Faith" with TX-born Martin
- TX Dan Jenkins 1982 novel: "___ Oklahoma"
- TX B.J. Thomas' "The ___ New York Woman"
- 1983 found on the Texas coast
- TX Charley Pride's "___ Rather Love You" (1971)

the fall season on Sept. 2 and is open daily, along with The Clark Station, through Nov. 27.

For more information, visit www.clarkgardens.org, call 940-682-4856, or email events@clarkgardens.com.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 7

Brain-Healthy Cooking Demonstration

The Alzheimer's Association and Texas A&M AgriLife Extension of Parker County will host a special brain-healthy cooking demonstration and presentation from 1:30 to 3 p.m. on Wednesday, Sept. 7, at the Parker County Agricultural Service Center, 604 N. Main Street in Weatherford.

Advancements in research

show that lifestyle factors including diet, exercise, cognitive activity, and social engagement affect our risk of developing Alzheimer's and dementia. It's never too late to make healthy choices for your brain and body so come learn how you can practice healthy living for your brain and body.

To RSVP, visit <https://bit.ly/3cfCf6t>

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 17

Walk to End Alzheimer's

The annual Walk to End Alzheimer's will begin at 9:30 a.m. on Saturday, Sept. 17, at the Heritage Park Amphitheater, 378 Jack Borden Way in Weatherford.

All funds raised through

Walk to End Alzheimer's further the care, support and research efforts of the Alzheimer's Association. The Alzheimer's Association is a nonprofit 501(c)3 organization. All donations are tax-deductible as allowed by law.

The walk route is 3.1 miles (5k). Walkers can participate individually or as a team to raise funds.

To register, visit https://act.alz.org/site/TR?sid=23932&type=fr_informational&pg=informational&fr_id=15910.

For more information, call Jennifer Reinhardt at 817-500-9720 or email weatherfordwalk@alz.org.

Send event information to events@community-news.com

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Sports

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FOOTBALL

Rivalry Renewed: Bearcats face Stephenville in scrimmage

Gillespie makes homecoming

By Nolan Ruth
The Community News

The last time the Aledo Bearcats football team met the Stephenville Yellow Jackets in a varsity setting, it was 2013 and Aledo defeated its long-time rival 56-14 at Bearcat Stadium on their way to a fifth state title, and a season in which they scored 1,023 points.

In the past nine years, the former arch-rivals have consistently been among the best teams in the state in their respective classifications without ever facing each other. However, on Thursday, Aug. 18 at Memorial Stadium in Stephenville, the two faced off for a preseason scrimmage that had many remembering the rivalry that once was.

"I have a lot of memories on this field right here," head coach Tim Buchanan said behind a laugh. "It was fun. Both programs have a lot of respect for each other, both coaching staffs have a lot of respect for each other, and this was probably the best scrimmage I have ever been a part of."

The scrimmage started off with practice-style possessions with coaches and substitutions standing ten yards behind the line of scrimmage during plays.

Aledo had the ball first and immediately went on a drive that ended with a Hauss Hejny touchdown pass to Zach Reynolds on



Ryan Cox runs through the Stephenville defense.

NOLAN RUTH/THE COMMUNITY NEWS

fourth and goal from the 14 yard line. On the very next play, Hejny hit Kaydon Finley for a 75 yard touchdown pass.

Despite the success of his offense, four false start penalties hindered Aledo during their drives.

"We had some mental mistakes that are uncharacteristic of us," Buchanan said. "We've got to work on our discipline. That's the bottom line tonight. We have got to be more disciplined."

The defense did its job all night, keeping Stephenville out of the end zone during the practice-style portion of the scrimmage. Junior cornerback Chris Johnson came up with an interception early in the Yellow Jacket drive, while Davhon Keys and Jake Gillespie locked down the run on the strong side.

Gillespie made a return to his former home where his father, Joseph Gillespie, current defensive coordinator at TCU, led the Jackets to a state title in 2012.

"It was nostalgic," Gillespie exclaimed. "It was fun playing against all my old buddies. It was good to see them again, but I can't hold anything back. It was weird to see all of them playing against me. I thought years ago I would be playing with them but I wouldn't want to be anywhere else than Aledo."

After the practice-style period ended, the teams played two live 12-minute halves with a running clock. For Aledo, it was the first true

Turn to **BEARCATS**, page 11



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NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING ON PROPOSED 2022-2023 FISCAL YEAR BUDGET FOR THE CITY OF WILLOW PARK

The City of Willow Park City Council will hold a public hearing on the proposed 2022-2023 fiscal year budget at a City Council meeting at 7:00 p.m. on September 13, 2022, in the Willow Park City Hall, Council Chambers, 516 Ranch House Road, Willow Park, Texas.

This budget will raise more total property taxes than last year's budget by \$50,431 or 3.24% and of that amount \$50,431 is tax revenue from new property added to the tax roll this year. The public is encouraged to review the City's proposed budget on the City of Willow Park website at www.willowpark.org or view a paper copy of the budget in the City Secretary's office.

The public may comment by providing written comments either through the mail at the following address: 516 Ranch House Road, Willow Park, Texas 76087, or by email at cdozier@willowpark.org. Any written comments received by the City on or prior to 6:00 p.m. on the day of the public hearing will be included with information provided to the City Council for their consideration.

Members of the public are encouraged to provide input through any means available and/or to participate in the public hearing in person.

Crystal Dozier
City Secretary
City of Willow Park

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VOLLEYBALL

Ladycats break even at Northwest

By Nolan Ruth
The Community News

The second of three pre-district volleyball tournaments took place from Thursday, Aug. 18 to Saturday, Aug. 20 at the three high schools in Northwest ISD. The Aledo Ladycats (13-6) went in with a three game winning streak going back to the previous tournament in Mansfield.

Aledo went 4-4 in the tournament, winning two of three on day one, dropping both games on day two, and winning two of three on the final day. The Ladycats will continue non-district play on Tuesday, Aug. 23 at home against Arlington Lamar.

Things did not start off well for Aledo in the tournament as they fell to Keller High School for the second time in the young season in straight sets, 25-20 and 25-15.

However Aledo bounced back with consecutive wins over Hebron and Denton Braswell. After falling in the first set to Hebron 23-25, the Ladycats took the next two 25-15 and 25-16 to take the match.

Against Braswell, Aledo once again dropped the first set 20-25 and yet again came back in dominating fashion, winning the second set 25-9. Braswell made the third set closer, but the Ladycats came out on top again 25-19.

"We came out a little flat," head coach Claire Gay said after the tournament. "We handled the second two matches, had to battle in three to come out and win those but we did it."



NOLAN RUTH/THE COMMUNITY NEWS

Turn to **LADYCATS**, page 12 Lauryn Mack taps the ball over the net against Rockwall.

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Town of Annetta North NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

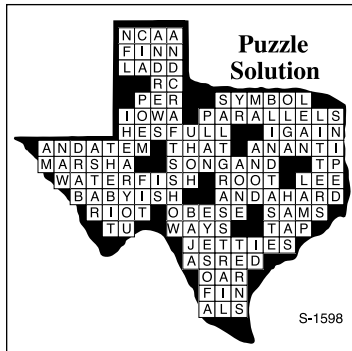
Notice is given that the Town Council of the Town of Annetta North will hold a public hearing at 7:00 pm on Monday, September 12, 2022, at the Annetta Methodist Church, 2836 FM 5, Annetta, Texas. This public hearing will be to receive comments about a variance request from Mike and Jennifer Patterson, owners of the property located at 1701 FM 5, to allow a 51-foot setback for a gate/well house, instead of 80 feet. The public is invited to attend and will be heard.

//Robert Schmidt, Mayor

Town of Annetta North Public Hearing Notice

The Town of Annetta North will hold a public hearing on Monday the 12th of September at 7:00 p.m. at Annetta Methodist Church, 2836 FM 5, Annetta, Texas, in the fellowship hall on request for a final plat being Lot 1 of Haydn's Holler a subdivision of 3.000 acres in the A.J. Hood Survey, Abstract No. 2217, Parker County, Texas

// Robert Schmidt, Mayor



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NOLAN RUTH/THE COMMUNITY NEWS

Christian Hillman avoids the block and rushes the Stephenville quarterback.



NOLAN RUTH/THE COMMUNITY NEWS

Caleb Pope evades the Stephenville defense.



NOLAN RUTH/THE COMMUNITY NEWS

Dahvon Keys sheds a tackle and scores.

BEARCATS

from page oneighte

action all season, but Stephenville was in the same position the week before against Glen Rose.

It was an inauspicious start to the live portion for Aledo as a fumble on the first drive set up Stephenville on the Aledo 36 yard line. Six plays later, the Yellow Jackets scored on a touchdown pass to take a 7-0 lead.

However Aledo's next drive embodied everything the team had been working on over the past two weeks. Running backs Ryan Cox and Caleb Pope led the charge in getting the Bearcats to the Stephenville six yard line. Facing fourth and one, Keys came into the game at running back and broke to the outside, scoring to tie it up at seven.

The defense went right back to work, forcing a Stephenville three-and-out. Aledo appeared to be on the verge of scoring again, but time expired and, despite a defensive penalty on the final play, the coaches decided to call it, ending the scrimmage in a 7-7 tie.

As it stands, the two teams plan to scrimmage again in 2023 at Bearcat Stadium, although that is subject to change over the next year.



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CROSS COUNTRY

Aledo opens season with success

By Rick Mauch
The Community News

Led by bronze medal performances from Molly Garrison and Jack Fink, the Aledo cross country teams opened the season with a first-place finish by the Ladycats varsity and a second-place finish by the Bearcats in the Cowtown Challenge Saturday.

“Good day today for Aledo cross country at the Cowtown Challenge! First 5k of the year,” exclaimed coach Mike Pinkerton.

Garrison crossed the finish line in a time of 19 minutes, 47.14 seconds for third place individually, one of four Ladycats to break the top 10. Elizabeth Griffin clocked a 20:46.99 for sixth, with Sophia Brandenburg right behind in seventh at 21:06.82 and Sidney Tillotson in ninth at 21:36.74. Aubrey Connelly was 20th with a time of 23:56.31 and Sadie Williams placed 27th in 24:37.76.

Fink paced the Bearcats, posting a third-place time of 16:41.66. Three other Bearcats broke the top 15, with Vincent Luffey 11th at 17:35.34, Henry Zedler 13th at 17:56.96 and Dominick Barrera 15th in 18:00.24. Also, Sam Haught placed 32nd with an 18:45.55, Luke Schabel was 33rd in 18:45.91 and Anderson Smith’s 18:54.20 placed him 38th.

The junior varsity boys also took second place, with Daniel Stephens winning the individual gold medal with a time of 19:11.69. James Price was fifth at 20:19.79, Bo Merrill was eighth at 20:32.32 and Chad Thomas also broke the top 10 in ninth place at 20:48.77. Rounding out the JV boys were Ian Robbins, 33rd, 22:36.73; Caden West, 37th,



The Ladycats varsity placed first at the Cowtown Challenge.

MIKE PINKERTON

22:47.21; Lincoln Tuin, 49th, 23:37.16; and Christian Flores, 50th, 23:42.37.

Three JV girls also competed, with Caroline Browning placing third in 24:27.57. Emily Lewis was

10th with a 26:14.45 and Catie Weimer’s 27:52.81 had her 15th.

The next meet is Saturday, Aug. 27 at Southlake Carroll. First race is at 7 a.m.

LADYCATS

from page nine

The second day looked very different as the team was placed into a three-team pool, meaning only two matches would be played.

The Ladycats struggled in both matches as they fell to Boswell and Prosper, both in straight sets.

“It was rough,” Gay said. “We couldn’t get any momentum going, we weren’t adjusting pretty well against two high level teams with a lot of experience. It showed our youth a little bit.”

The losses on day two placed Aledo in the bronze bracket on the final day. The bracket started early in the morning on Saturday, Aug. 20 with a match against Rockwall. Much like the previous two wins the Ladycats secured, the first set resulted in a 23-25 loss. Yet again, Aledo took the next two sets 25-19 and 25-21.

In the semifinal, Aledo faced Sachse out of Garland ISD. This time it was the Ladycats who took the first set, 25-20. However in the second set, Sachse took an early lead and never looked back, winning 21-25.

The third set went back and forth between the two. The Ladycats went on a late run to take a 24-20 lead, but Sachse responded with a four point run that tied it up. Needing two points to win, the Ladycats got a point off a Sachse serve and responded with an ace to clinch the match.

In the final against Conroe Grand Oaks, Aledo took the first set but not without a late push from their opponent. Then Grand Oaks got aggressive



NOLAN RUTH/THE COMMUNITY NEWS

Maddie Frank bumps the ball against Rockwall.

and went on a massive run to take the second set to force a final set.

The final set of the tournament was much like the one preceding it, as Grand Oaks opened the set with authority and defeated the Ladycats.

“I’m proud of the moments that they were battling,” Gay said. “That’s exactly what they did. Sadly a lot of teams would have given up but we didn’t and I’m proud of them for that.”



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