

# 30th Annual Good News Issue

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# THE COMMUNITY NEWS

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Welcome to the 30th annual Good News edition of *The Community News*.

Twenty-nine years ago, we made a decision that one issue of the paper each year ought to emphasize good news. News about pandemics, train wrecks, and political corruption can take a back seat while we celebrate the end of one year and the beginning of a new one.

We invite you to check community-news.com for breaking news during the holidays.

We hope you enjoy this issue - and we hope you and all who are dear to you have a wonderful 2025!



## Never stop learning

### Rose Hoffman lives the concept that education is a lifelong endeavor

By Randy Keck  
The Community News

Six years ago, Rose Hoffman accepted the opportunity for a midlife career change and the chance to define the position of Communications and Marketing Director for the City of Willow Park.

Although the City of Weatherford and the Aledo ISD had public information officers, it was a new concept for Willow Park, and City Manager Bryan Grimes thought Hoffman, who had been covering the city for The Community News, was a perfect fit for the job.

Hoffman said she had been thinking about making a switch out of journalism.

"I had a couple of different people tell me that this skill set

transferred really well to school communications or government communications," Hoffman said.

Among the friends she spoke to was Mercedes Mayer, the Communications Director for the Aledo ISD.

"And they all said these are really transferable skill sets. A lot of the skills that you already have in journalism are the same skills you're going to be using as a government communicator. And the things that were discussed in my interview with the city of Willow Park specifically, were things like newsletters and website, articles, and social media and those were all things I already had a background in."

Any new job, especially being the first in a position, will come with surprises, and that was the case for Hoffman.

"I didn't know what I didn't know," Hoffman said. "And once I really got in and got my feet under me, it turns out there were a whole lot of things that I didn't know."

"Anyone who stops learning is old, whether at twenty or eighty. Anyone who keeps learning stays young."

Henry Ford



PHOTO COURTESY OF ROSE HOFFMAN

Willow Park Communications and Marketing Director Rose Hoffman recently received a degree from TCU to become a Certified Public Communicator.

She undertook the process of learning what she needed to know to effectively perform her duties.

"Probably the biggest hurdle that I had, as far as training and education when I first started, was just the legal side of things," Hoffman said. "When you run a social media, particularly social media for a government, there are a lot of very, very strict rules related to the First Amendment with

government social media. And so there was quite a bit of legal training that I had to go through that now, looking back on it six years later, it shouldn't have surprised me at all, but it did surprise me a little bit, because it was a very, very different game than journalism — just the things that you are and are not allowed to say as a government communicator."

Turn to **LEARNING**, page 6

## Dickinson honored by state

### One of a very few

By John English  
The Community News

Donna Dickinson enjoys giving back.

The Aledo woman has volunteered with the Weatherford School District for the past 30 years, and her generosity of time and spirit was recently rewarded.

Dickinson received the 2024 Heroes of Children Award for District 11 on Sept. 13 in Austin, one of only 15 people in Texas to be selected for the honor by the State Board of Education.

"I was nominated by Charlotte LaGrone from Weatherford ISD," Dickinson said. "I have always loved helping in the community,

especially with children. I have served on the Weatherford ISD Education Foundation, Parker County CPS Board, Weatherford Chamber of Commerce board, Parker County Appraisal Board and the Parker County Committee on Aging. I believe Parker County is an amazing place to live and help out when there is a need."

According to the State Board of Education, the award honors volunteers who have made outstanding contributions to student learning or who have demonstrated sustained periods of involvement and support of public education.

Dickinson, 62, grew up in Weatherford and moved to Aledo in 2019.

She regularly volunteers at the annual school supply drives, helped

to revamp the Kangaroo Stadium Spirit Store into a thriving enterprise run by Career and Technical Education students and helped establish a resource room for students in need.

"I enjoy helping people and working to make Parker County an even better place to live," Dickinson said. "I have worked for Vickie and Jerry Durant since 1983 and have learned through the years it is better to give than receive and support your community."

Dickinson said she is helping with a couple of different projects this school year.

"My mom Patsy Davis was a WISD teacher and my best friend and sister, Cheryl Bullock is a crisis counselor at WISD Ninth Grade

Turn to **HONOR**, page 3



Donna Dickinson received the 2024 Heroes of Children Award for District 11 on Sept. 13 in Austin.



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GOOD NEWS - SURVIVAL

# Cancer's no match for Kade the Conqueror

By Ryan Wade  
The Community News

Best-selling author Andy Andrews is quoted as saying, "We're all either in a crisis, coming out of a crisis, or heading for a crisis. That's just part of being with us on this planet."

Except for those among us who have masochistic tendencies being the exception to the rule, Andrews' words may not be pleasant for most of us. Seasons of crisis find us all. And while none of us pursue the crises that befall us, often the perspective we gain as we endure those seasons is one of the most precious gifts we find in life.

In early spring of 2024, Kade Pruitt was your average 12-year-old boy. He went to school. He played sports. He hung out with his friends. He pestered his older sister. He did all the things parents would want for a happy, healthy young man of his age.

Like so many stories surrounding the crises that collide with us in life, that's when the story took a turn.

While bench pressing at school one day, a miscue between Pruitt and his spotter resulted in the bar dropping to his chest faster than normal. A few hours later while talking to his mom, Kristine, who has a medical background, about the incident and the continuing pain in his chest, a quick examination gave the Pruitts no reason to be concerned. However, as the night progressed, so did the pain, to the point that it woke Kade up in the middle of the night.

"I felt like I had a knife or something stabbing me in the chest," Kade explained.

Regardless of what they tried, the pain would not subside. Pain relievers, ice packs, heat therapy, and everything else they tried would not dull the pain enough to allow him to get comfortable. He spent most of the early morning hours moving from location to location in the house, trying to find any position on any surface that would allow him to find enough comfort to fall asleep.

"Finally I gave him some Benadryl at 5 in the morning, and he was able to lay down and fall asleep on the couch," Kristine recalled.

After getting a few hours of much needed sleep, Kade saw a doctor and got an x-ray. The x-ray appeared clear except for some inflammation in his chest. He was prescribed Advil and expected to be fine in a few days.

### No improvement

Unfortunately - or perhaps very fortunately depending on the perspective - he didn't get better. While playing in a baseball tournament the following weekend, it was clear to Kristine that something just wasn't right.

"He was slow, he couldn't throw, and he couldn't really bat, and he couldn't really pitch," she said. "His coaches asked what was up with Kade, and I was like, I don't really know. He's got this chest thing. It seemed to get better, but now it's worse."

Kade's dad Tye returned home from a business trip after the baseball tournament concluded. As Kade and Kristine recounted his performance during the tournament, Tye became convinced that it would be good to get Kade in to see his regular pediatrician.

Lab work requested by his regular doctor revealed Kade's white blood cell count was elevated, but he didn't have any signs of his body fighting off an infection. In order to rule out if he was dealing with some sort of infection, his pediatrician ordered more labs a few days later including what is called a blood smear test.

That test revealed not only were his white blood cells still elevated, but he had blast cells (immature white blood cells housed in the bone marrow until they mature) in his bloodstream.

Doing all their due diligence, their pediatrician referred the Pruitts to Cook Children's Hospital for more testing. While there, for the first time since the barbell incident, Kade began to run a fever. Between the stubborn chest pain that wouldn't get better, the blast cells in his blood, and the newly onset fever, a bone marrow biopsy was scheduled for the following morning.

The oncologist explained there was a 50 percent chance the bone

marrow biopsy would reveal Kade was dealing with an infection, at which point they would have to start looking for infection sites in his body. The other 50 percent chance was that he would be diagnosed with leukemia.

When the results came back, it was the dreaded c-word.

### Shock and awe

"It was obviously something that caught us off guard quite a bit," Tye said. "Just like Kenrie (Kade's older sister who is committed to play volleyball for Texas A&M Corpus Christi in the fall of 2025), Kade's also a very athletic kid. Before he was diagnosed, we literally had practice or a game all seven days of the week. There might be three or four days out of the month where we came home, and we were able to eat here. It was that busy."

One word flipped their entire world upside down: Cancer.

Once the official diagnosis was made, the Pruitts were unceremoniously ushered into a new way of life. While the success rate for Kade's treatment is high, the doctors made no qualms about letting them know up front, regardless of how responsive Kade's system was to the treatment, the next two-and-a-half years were going to be spent battling this disease.

"We had his initial bone marrow biopsy on March 5," Kristine said. "He started the initial phase of chemo right away. Then on April 21 he had his repeat bone marrow biopsy. It was negative for residual disease, which is good. That's the verbiage they use. That means there's no leukemia detectable."

A small victory, but a victory nonetheless was more than they could hope for at such an early point in what was promised to be a long two-and-a-half year treatment plan. Then, in June another round of biopsies revealed more good news.

"His oncologist said those two biopsies being negative for disease is the best prognostic indicator for Kade's leukemia," said Kristine. "He doesn't use the words cured or healed. We won't hear the word remission for a while. So, I've committed that to memory: Best prognostic indicator."

While they've gotten the best news they possibly could from the biopsies thus far in his treatment plan, battling cancer is a war of attrition. In between those silver linings have been a lot of cloudy days filled with lengthy hospital stays.

Most recently, Kade spent 16 straight days in the hospital, including Thanksgiving Day. Over the summer months, he spent 45 out of 60 days in the hospital during one stretch. Kristine and Tye switch off nights staying with Kade until the doctors are satisfied with his lab work and discharge him from the hospital where he can return home to live some semblance of a normal life.

### A clearer perspective

In 1776, American founding father Thomas Paine penned the statement, "The harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph.



COURTESY OF THE PRUITT FAMILY

Kade was recognized as part of Childhood Cancer Awareness Month in September as part of the mural in front of CrossFit Aleido on Bankhead.



RYAN WADE/THE COMMUNITY NEWS

Kenrie and Kade Pruitt pose for their "Kade Strong" themed photos during Kenrie's senior photo shoot in August.

What we obtain too cheaply, we esteem too lightly. It is dearness only that gives everything its value. Heaven knows how to set a proper price on its goods."

One of the greatest blessings that comes out of any crisis is the gift of perspective. For the Pruitt family, that has certainly been the case since that earth-shaking day back in early March. By their own admission they went from a family consumed with work, the practice schedule, where they were meeting for dinner between games and practices, and whatever else they could squeeze in from week-to-week.

Life had become a blur moving at a break-neck pace. They were so focused on the next thing that the idea of taking a moment to appreciate this stage of life or to be thankful for all the blessings they had never hit the radar.

That's all changed now. They've become so aware of the preciousness and fragility of life. They've refocused on their faith in Christ. They've met wonderful families

during Kade's extensive stays at Cook's who are fighting the same fight they are.

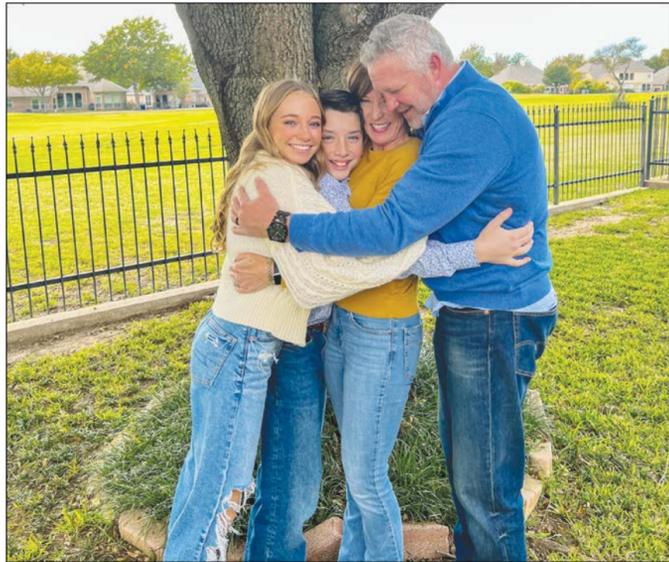
They've been blown away by the support from the community in Aleido overall, and especially from the Ladycat volleyball team. Most of all, they've become closer as a family.

"I'm thankful for everyone who is praying for me and all my supporters through this," Kade said. "Family, friends, people who are wearing my bracelets, and the Aleido community. I'm thankful for the dogs at the hospital that comfort me."

As he continues to progress through his treatment plan, life for Kade will slowly but surely begin to return to normal. With only a few months left before she graduates and moves off to Corpus Christi to begin her collegiate career, Kenrie isn't shy about admitting what she is looking forward to doing with her little brother as soon as he's able.

"I definitely think Kade and I have gotten closer through this,"

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COURTESY OF THE PRUITT FAMILY

The Pruitt family share an impromptu hug as part of a family photo.



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# HONOR

from page one

Center," Dickinson said. "This summer my sister went to a conference and came back with a great idea to help middle and high school students who need clothes and hygiene products. She calls it the Roo-Tique. I am also helping her with a garden at the courtyard at the Ninth Grade Center."

Dickinson said receiving the Heroes of Children Award was a great honor for her, and with Christmas right around the corner, the Aledo woman said it is important to give of oneself wherever and however possible.

"I love the holidays, and I know growing up in a loved family atmosphere is not always the case," Dickinson said. "So helping children and seniors makes me blessed."

# KADE

from page 2

she said. "It sounds so childish, but I'm looking forward to playing outside with him. Before he got diagnosed, we were outside playing volleyball every single day of the week, even when it was cold. I miss watching him play sports."

## My cross to bear

No one has it easy. One of the fairest things about life is that regardless of where you come from, what you look like, how many zeros are in your bank account, or anything else, life is going to be full of battles.

As a parent, so often we want to protect our kids from having to fight those battles. We would rather take them upon ourselves if only to spare our children a little pain and perhaps a few scars while we are able.

As the conversation wound down, Tye admitted he would take this battle upon himself for his son if he could. True to who he is through and through, Kade quickly chimed in.

"I don't think I would let you take it from me," he said. "I couldn't do that. I couldn't see you go through that, Dad."

## GOOD NEWS - MUSIC

# Jones takes entertaining to next level

By Christopher Amos  
The Community News

Andrew Jones has been getting around a lot lately. It is not just his construction and maintenance business that sends him around North Texas, it is his part-time job as a musician that has him putting on the extra miles.

Jones performs about three times a month in a 200-mile radius of his Aledo home, performing country music solo and sometimes with a partner. When it comes to performing close, he tends to play Jake's Burgers in Aledo, 589 BBQ on N. FM 730, Tavern on the Lake on Lake Weatherford, and Fort Brewery in Fort Worth.

He recently trekked to Dallas to play four shows at the State Fair of Texas.

His shows feature country standards and popular tunes sprinkled with a few of his self-penned songs. Over the summer, Jones spent time in a studio recording his song, "Americana," and reinforcing it with a music video filmed at locations in and around Aledo. His music video helps him fish for radio and internet radio airplay.

"It's really good to have something like that produced for you," Jones said about the song. "I'm ready to do the next one."

The performing bug bit Jones early in life. His first performances were at age five singing to a radio in front of family and friends. His first professional gig was with his country band before a Toby Keith concert at the Dallas Smirnoff Center, now Dos Equis Pavilion.

"I started really practicing to sing when Randy Travis came out with the album The Storms of Life. That was probably late 80s," Jones recalled. "I had a cassette tape of that album and I sang that thing over and over and over. That is the thing that got me thinking that I can do this."

Jones shares that as a successful performer you can't just play songs you want to play. You have to read the crowd and play popular tunes they will enjoy and when the time is right, play a couple of original songs.



CHRISTOPHER AMOS/THE COMMUNITY NEWS

**TOP:** Fort Brewery in Fort Worth is one of the area venues where Andrew Jones performs. He tries to keep his music travels less than 200 miles a show. | **RIGHT:** Andrew Jones pauses during the filming of his music video, "Americana."

Jones shares his method for balancing a popular singing act while working on honing and promoting his own music.

"I write stuff every day. It may not be a song. It may just be some stuff," he said. "I work a couple of my songs in during a show but you have to be aware of what the crowd is like. I am cautious not to play too many of my original songs. You have to be looking and scanning the crowd to determine what they may like."

His performing schedule and music video, "Americana," produced by Christopher Amos, is online at [www.AndrewJonesMusic.net](http://www.AndrewJonesMusic.net).



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### Mail:

P.O. Box 1031, Aledo, TX 76008

### Physical:

1015 Champions Drive, Aledo, TX

### Phone:

817-441-7661

### Web:

www.community-news.com

### PUBLISHER/EDITOR

#### Randy Keck

rkeck@community-news.com  
Direct Line: 817-386-1469

### DIRECTOR OF BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

#### Loydale Schmid

lschmid@community-news.com  
Direct Line: 817-386-1467

### OFFICE ASSISTANT

#### Tate Shepard

business@community-news.com

### STAFF AND CONTRIBUTORS

Chris Amos - Features/Photography

Kathy Chruscielski - Photography

John English - Features

Laura Finer - Page and Ad Design

Richard Henderson - Commentary

Rick Mauch - News and Sports

Breleigh Mayer - Photography

Kristin Morales - Photography

Ryan Wade - News and Sports

Jim Zimmermann - News and Sports

### CONTACT POINTS

#### Billing

billing@community-news.com  
Pay bills at [community-news.com/billpay/](http://community-news.com/billpay/)

#### Ad Design Materials

production@community-news.com

#### Purchase Advertising

sales@community-news.com

#### Legal Notices

legal@community-news.com

#### Subscription Questions

business@community-news.com  
[community-news.com/subscribe/](http://community-news.com/subscribe/)

#### Announcements, News, Obituaries

news@community-news.com  
[www.community-news.com/submissions/](http://www.community-news.com/submissions/)

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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 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.

Photos submitted should include names of the people in the photograph.

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.

## Capital Highlights

# Abbott unveils new border strategy



Gary Borders  
gborders@texaspress.com

Gov. Greg Abbott said last Thursday the state is initiating a billboard campaign across Central America and border cities in northern Mexico to discourage migrants from attempting to enter Texas, the *Austin American-Statesman* reported.

The billboards are in multiple languages, including Spanish, Chinese, Arabic and Russian. They tell stories of migrants being sexually assaulted while trying to enter the United States.

"This is tough medicine," Abbott said. "But we want no more rape trees in Texas. Do not make the dangerous trek to Texas." He was referring to the ashes of a tree where migrant women were sexually assaulted by human traffickers and left to die, according to the *Statesman*.

Abbott is seeking another \$3 billion in the next legislative session for Operation Lone Star. Since launching in March 2021, the state has spent \$11 billion to deter migrants and fortify the border.

### Regulators: More than 250 new cases of groundwater contamination

Nearly every county in Texas has at least one case of groundwater contamination, according to an annual report outlined in *The Texas Tribune*. The latest report compiles 2,870 open cases of groundwater contamination, some of which go back decades, according to the Texas Groundwater Protection Committee.

During 2023, 252 new cases were reported that could affect public drinking water. In addition, 289 property owners were notified that such contamination could affect their private wells.

The state relies on groundwater from aquifers for roughly 55% of its water supply. Voters in 2023 approved a \$1 billion fund to develop more water resources, including desalination of brackish groundwater.

"Any groundwater contamination is a cause for concern," said Adam Foster, director of the Texas Alliance of Groundwater Districts. "It needs to be reported properly and addressed."

Groundwater contamination falls under the purview of either the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality or the Railroad Commission, depending on its source, with the former handling 80% of the cases.

The single most common source of groundwater pollution in Texas is gas stations, which make up a third of all cases. A map of groundwater contamination cases can be found on the TCEQ site by going here: <https://tinyurl.com/375xrerk>.

### New space institute is up and running

The Texas A&M Space Institute, to be located next door to NASA's Johnson Space Center in Houston, recently broke ground on a 400,000-square-foot facility. The \$200 million facility is funded by 2023 legislation creating the Texas Space Commission with the purpose of keeping Texas at the forefront of the space program, the *Texas Standard* reported.

Institute Director Dr. Nancy Currie-Gregg, a former astronaut and an engineering professor, noted the U.S. and Texas face competition from many other nations with their own space programs. Among the projects to be tackled at the new institute will be rover and spacesuit development, and possibly developing concepts for a space hospital.

"It's really meant for collaboration between academics, industry and government to achieve government goals or to achieve, just quite frankly, commercial space goals," she told the *Standard*. "But it's all about collaboration."

Currie-Gregg added the long-term goal is traveling to Mars, but

first "we really need to return to the lunar surface."

### Investigation: Big truck oversight has waned

An investigation by the *Austin American-Statesman* indicates commercial vehicles are being stopped for safety inspections far less than they used to be, even as commercial traffic has increased. The *Statesman* found that random roadside safety inspections dropped 20% statewide over the past decade.

The reasons include staffing at state and local law enforcement agencies failing to keep pace with the state's growth and thousands of Department of Public Safety troopers being sent to the border for Operation Lone Star and other immigration-related issues.

DPS spokeswoman Sheridan Nolen acknowledged that the border assignments have hamstrung commercial vehicles oversight operations. The agency plans to ask the Legislature for more money in the next session.

The Texas Department of Motor Vehicles reported the number of commercial vehicles operating solely within state lines rose to 459,000 last year from 340,000 in 2013.

At least one Republican elected official is critical of the decrease in safety inspections.

"With the safety concerns that we have, I think that pulling officers off for Operation Lone Star or any other gimmick is just bad governance," Ector County Judge Dustin Fawcett, from Odessa, said.

### School districts asked to refund \$16 million to feds

Federal officials are asking Texas schools to return \$16 million they say was billed incorrectly to Medicaid, *The Tribune* reported.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services sent an email recently to 572 school districts in the state asking them to return anywhere from \$100 to \$800,000 for services billed in 2011. A 2017 audit found Texas

schools had improperly billed the agency 238 times.

The state has already paid the \$16 million and now is required by law to recoup its costs from the districts, many of which are struggling financially.

"Because this comes in the middle of a budget year, it makes planning for schools virtually impossible," said Brian Woods, director of advocacy at the Texas Association of School Administrators. "Had this clawback been known prior to schools approving their budgets in the summer of 2024, then at least it could have been planned for, right?"

More than 40 schools owe more than \$100,000 while more than half owe less than \$10,000.

### RRC adopts new oil and gas waste management rules

The Texas Railroad Commission has adopted a "significant overhaul" of rules and regulations for oil and gas waste management facilities in Texas. It is the first overhaul of the agency's waste management rules in four decades.

The adopted rules enhance the RRC's oversight of waste management facilities, with staff dedicated to environmental permit compliance, according to the news release.

"The oil and gas industry has evolved dramatically since the 1980s. After a years-long process, and with thoughtful and thorough deliberation from the public, agency experts, and industry stakeholders, I am proud to report the Railroad Commission has passed its first overhaul of waste management rules in 40 years," said Chairman Christi Craddick.

The new rules can be found on the RRC's website: [rrc.texas.gov](http://rrc.texas.gov).

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

## Idle American

# Life simplified



Dr. Don Newbury  
newbury@speakerdoc.com

It's seasonal for most of us, of course. Our memories kick into overdrive, dredging up details of long-ago holidays.

In my case, Christmas Days of yore were as predictable as the sunrise. After "Santa gifts" were opened, we'd scurry across the county to Granny's house (Pawpaw's, too) for lunch and more gift openings with our extended family.

There, we'd typically exchange simple items, such as socks, hankies, neckties and cheap perfume. We all thought the "tree"--fashioned from a mesquite tree limb, adorned with strings of popcorn and construction paper ornaments--was plenty good. Most memorable, though, was a menu side dish, thoughts of which today cause immediate salivation.

Grandmother Newbury had a way with fried pies--peach,

apricot, mincemeat and apple--cooked on a wood stove during my early years.

Never have I tasted their equal, and the aroma wafting from the kitchen around 11 a.m. beckoned us to move closer, if only to get "stronger sniffs."

As these words are typed, a miniature flood is forming 'tween my teeth and tonsils.

Back then, radio provided home entertainment. On cold winter evenings, we'd gather around to listen while scarfing down frozen radio dinners. Commercials were simple and easily memorized. Buster Brown Shoes, for example, opened its weekly shows with a youngster saying, "My name's Buster Brown; I live in a shoe. That's my dog, Tige. He lives in there, too." Shredded Ralston Cereal sponsored cowboy Tom Mix, urging listeners to "take a tip from Tom, go and tell your mom, Shredded Ralston can't be beat."

TV didn't show up until the mid-1950s, with most ads still simple, but often more instructive.

One keenly remembered was an instant hit, particularly during the holidays. Alka-Seltzer came up with "I can't believe I ate the whole thing." Heeding such advice was--and still is--helpful.

Many current TV ads induce groans and make my hair hurt. They insult, demean and offend, often defying the limits of innuendo.

A few are, uh, stupid, even if clever and smile-inducing.

I'll point out a couple--Charmin and General Motors. The former features happy bears who "enjoy the go," dipping their toes into questionable dialog swirling in the tricky waters of bathroom humor.

For the third straight year, we've endured the snowy scene with dialog beginning, "I have a gift for you," followed by "I have a gift for you, too." The handsome guy hands a puppy to a beautiful girl whose whistle signals the arrival of a shiny new GM pick-up truck from atop a snow-capped hill.

He is in awe, collapsing with a lingering kiss on the front fender. (In weather like this, maybe they had a tea kettle of hot water nearby to loosen his tongue frozen to the metal.) Some men might know which breed of puppy to select for their true loves, but I doubt it. Further, I can't imagine a woman with enough courage to purchase the "right" pick-up truck her guy'd give a "fender-kiss." Don't tell

me this is "real life America" for Christmas gifting.

The foregoing may add evidence to my being both old and eccentric. I admit to eccentricity decades before bales of AARP materials choked my mailbox.

Odds are, I'll remain resolute on some ads, perhaps as "dead certain" as Dr. Todd Still's late mother-in-law. Late in life, she posed a serious question to Still, who is Dean of the George W. Truett Theological Seminary. Did Jesus, in fact, drink real wine? Without hesitation, he said it was likely that he did. "He wouldn't in my house," she countered.

Closing seriously, may God's peace and grace abide with you and those you love. May you live with the undergirding assurance that the same God who has intervened in the affairs of humankind throughout history is still in charge. And may you and yours enjoy good health, good fortune and much happiness in 2025.

Dr. Newbury, longtime university president, continues to speak and write. The *Idle American*, begun in 2003, is one of the nation's longest-running syndicated humor columns. Contact: 817-447-3872. Email: [newbury@speakerdoc.com](mailto:newbury@speakerdoc.com). Website: [www.speakerdoc.com](http://www.speakerdoc.com).

May you and yours enjoy good health, good fortune and much happiness in 2025.

## GOOD NEWS - COMMENTARY



1974-75 ALEDO HIGH SCHOOL ANNUAL

The 1974 Aledo Bearcat state finalist team: (first row from left) Randy Bearden, Louis Kirk, Bruce Buncik, Jackie Ives, Pat Whiteman, Joe Glover, Leland Hughes, Dale Hughes, Joey Jackson, Jimmy Ladd, Bobby Johnston (manager); (second row) Coach Lawrence, Mike Collins, Larry Boubel, Keith Broumley, Royce Young, Kevin Wingo, Bruce Lacefield, Bob Muir, Greg Goforth, Aaron Dover, Coach Smith; (third row) Darryl Lowe, Mike Wedgeworth, Steve Lacefield, Vernie Marshall, Chuck Green, Jay Berry, Tony Aaron, Ben Hancock, and Rickey Willeford.

## Looking back on Bearcats' first taste of greatness



**Rick Mauch**  
sports@community-news.com

There is no high school football program in Texas that can match all that the Aledo Bearcats have accomplished. Most notably, they have won a dozen state championships, with the next nearest being nine.

From there, the list of records, both state and national, seems endless. From being the only team to score 1,000 points in a season (2013) to holding the longest district winning streak ever (127 and counting), if it's happened on a high school football field, it's hard to imagine Aledo not being involved.

The vast majority of these accomplishments have occurred over the past decade and a half. However, there was one team a half century ago that would fit in perfectly fine with the modern-day Bearcats.

The 1974 season marked the first time Aledo got a taste of greatness, playing for the program's first state championship before falling 19-18 to Grapevine in the Class 1A final. And while they didn't bring home the coveted trophy, they were a two-point conversion away from being remembered as the first team to

win a state championship in Aledo football history.

Instead, that distinction would go to the boys golf team in 1978.

### Still remembered

It's not always championships that create memories. The 1974 team is still talked about today.

In fact, current Bearcats head coach Robby Jones said the phone line to a fax machine in the school district was once 1974.

"It was one of the first things I was told about when I got here (in 2000 as an assistant)," Jones said. "We'd won state in 1998, but that was only the second time we'd gotten there and 1974 was the first."

"That season is still special. I suppose it's kind of gotten swallowed up in all the championships we've won now, but that was one heck of a team."

With this being the 50th anniversary of that team, it was mentioned a little more often this season, of course. But even before, when someone would ask about how long Aledo has been great, someone else would slip in a reminder not to forget the 1974 Bearcats, arguably one of the best teams ever not to win state.

### How great?

So just how good were the 1974 Bearcats? They had a defense that was nothing short of phenomenal, posting 10 shutouts and going 11 games without giving up an offensive score (Cedar Hill scored on a safety in the season opener).

In fact, it was six games into the season before an opponent scored on the Bearcats. They escaped against Lake Dallas with a 19-15 victory, their closest game of the season, except for the state championship.

As for the offense, they were pretty prolific as well, scoring 40 or more points seven times, including one five game stretch when they outscored their opponents 334-6.

In all, the Bearcats outscored their opponents by an average of 39-4 en route to a 14-1 record.

### The season

The 1974 season began with a 20-2 victory against Cedar Hill, followed by four straight shutouts of Northwest (20-0), Joshua (25-0), Glen Rose (47-0) and Sanger (12-0).

District featured something familiar to today's Bearcats fans, a perfect run. The team went 5-0, defeating Lake Dallas (19-15), Southlake Carroll (56-14), Boyd (77-0), Coppell (65-0) and Millsap (94-0).

In the postseason, the roll continued. Bi-district was a 42-6 win over China Spring, regionals was a 20-0 win against DeLeon, then came a 46-0 victory against Princeton in the state quarterfinals, followed by a 22-0 triumph of Jim Ned to reach the state final.

In the championship game, Aledo was on the verge of a title and could have settled for a tie and a co-championship. However, coach Charles Lawrence opted to go for a two-point conversion that did not succeed.

It would be Lawrence's last game at the helm of the Bearcats. In two seasons his teams were 22-4 with two district championships.

Also worth noting is this was a time when districts were winner-take-all. Only the league champion went on to the playoffs.

Case in point, the 1975 Bearcats, coached by Jim Smith, finished 9-1 but missed the postseason after placing second in district to Lake Dallas.

### The title game

A glance at the stats sheet from that 1974 final without seeing the final score and one would immediately think Aledo won handily. The Bearcats dominated the Sandies everywhere except the scoreboard.

Aledo had a 21-9 first downs advantage, a 380-241 yards gained advantage - including 257-145 rushing. Neither team threw an interception. Aledo recovered two Grapeland fumbles and only surrendered one of their own.

The Bearcats even had a penalty advantage, committing just two for 25 yards to four for 35 yards against Grapeland.

Still, after trailing by just a point (7-6) at the half, a bad third quarter left Aledo in a hole, 19-6, entering the final period. A fourth-quarter rally with a 14-yard touchdown run and a 29-yard TD pass was squelched when a run for two was stymied with 51 seconds remaining.

When the Sandies recovered an onside kick, Aledo's dream of a perfect season came to an end.

### A district of growth

The entire district was Class 1A then, the second smallest of all in the University Interscholastic League. Only Class B was smaller and the largest was Class 4A.

Now look at how those school districts have grown. Southlake Carroll and Coppell are in Class 6A, Aledo is 5A on the verge of being 6A in the near future and Lake Dallas is 4A. Also, while not having grown as much, Boyd and Millsap are now in 3A.

### Never forget

Yes, we remember the 1974 Bearcats football team as we close the door on the 50th anniversary. But they are worth remembering for much more than simply a passage of time.

Of course the question comes to mind of how would they fare against any of today's teams? I'm reminded of the time Michael Jordan was asked how his 1996 Chicago Bulls team that went 72-10 would have done against the 2016 Golden State Warriors who were 73-9.

Jordan responded that he thought it would be a close game, but the Bulls would win. He followed with saying, "Of course, we're all in our fifties now."

It was a different style of football back then, but just like today, the Bearcats played it greatly. And, just like today's teams, the 1974 squad had earned its special place in Aledo folklore.

## GOOD NEWS - BUSINESS

## Conrad credits perseverance for reaching goals

By Christopher Amos  
The Community News

It can be a long road to the top, but the view from there can be rewarding. In business it is seldom a smooth ride, but Spence Conrad shares what persistence and perseverance can do to help your career journey.

Conrad says finding a job with a positive work environment created by management is key to landing a job that may turn into a successful, rewarding career. However, it takes resolve to maneuver obstacles along the way that might otherwise steer a worker into a rut.

"Working at Texas Roadhouse helped me pay for school and get by, but it wasn't always easy," the restaurant owner said. "It's not always going to be simple, but if you stick with it you will be rewarded. I've seen so many people just give up and leave a job as soon as things get tough."

The owner of the Weatherford Texas Roadhouse on I-20 started as a part-time night-time wait staff while in college 15 years ago in Amarillo. In time, he went from a

server position to various management positions, including front and back end management, and then at other locations.

Each small step made him more relevant in the position while learning other areas of the company he might move up to, and three years ago he opened the Parker County location.

Co-worker Lauren Getts has a similar experience. She advanced in various positions with Texas Roadhouse locations until her background in merchandising and promotion led her to be marketing manager for Conrad.

"I just kept learning and looking for ways I can use my talent," Getts said.

Paul Ashton, Texas Roadhouse marketing manager at the company's Louisville headquarters, agrees with Conrad about having a patient attitude to reach long-term goals.

"Spence is the kind of person who goes above and beyond to ensure that his restaurants are more than just places to eat," Ashton said, adding Conrad has a "hands-on approach to customer service."



CHRISTOPHER AMOS/THE COMMUNITY NEWS

Texas Roadhouse owner Spence Conrad and marketing manager Lauren Getts donated food for the VIP area of a recent Parker County Sheriff's Posse event. Both have worked their way up in their company after starting in lower level positions.

## CITY OF WEATHERFORD

# Council honors outgoing chief Arnold

## One new subdivision approved, another not

By Jim Zimmermann  
The Community News

Lance Arnold, who has been the Weatherford Police Department chief of police since 2017, stepped down to accept the same position with the Broken Bow Police department in Oklahoma, effective December 20.

At the recent meeting of the Weatherford City Council on Dec. 17, Arnold was recognized for his service to the city.

"Chief Arnold has represented Weatherford with honor and brought with him a code of ethics that is non-negotiable. The Broken Bow police department is gaining an outstanding police chief and I have no doubt that his legacy will continue there," said Mayor Paul Paschal.

## Morningside planned development overlay approved

A new planned development, Morningside, was approved, but not without a long discussion in regards to the size of the lots.

A 70-lot, 25.66-acre planned community was at the forefront of the discussion among longtime Weatherford residents who are unhappy about the small home sites. No less than six citizens were able to express their concerns why they believed that the new community would not be a benefit to the area.

The 75x100 lot dimensions are considerably smaller than the four to 12-acre home sites that make up the majority of the nearby neighborhood. Mayor pro tem, Heidi Miller, brought up the issue that some of the home sites were less than the 75x100 required city dimensions.

"If we have minimum guidelines in place, we need to adhere to those

guidelines. I am all for the growth of Weatherford, but we need to follow rules and procedures," Miller said.

The discussion in regards to the home sites continued for almost 45 minutes before Paschal called for a vote for the approval on the preliminary plat, which was approved 4-1.

## Water erosion

Another issue was the action needing to take place in regards to the water erosion on Washington Bridge Drive. The U.S. Army of Engineers was charging Weatherford more than \$500,000 in "mitigation credits" to offset environmental impacts while working on the bridge.

"This important channel stabilization project, first identified in the 2014 Holland Lake Watershed Study, will implement permanent erosion control measures between the Washington Drive bridge and our trash rack system at Interstate 20," said Assistant City Manager Chad Marbut.

The design includes a concrete-lined channel with vegetated floodplain benches to manage both common and extreme storm events. Marbut said these improvements will protect Washington bridge and the trash rack system from being undermined by erosion, in addition to safeguarding Holland Lake and the downstream Holland Lake Channel improvements from any further siltation.

Marbut noted that before construction can begin, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is requiring the city to purchase mitigation credits to offset environmental impacts under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act.

## Burgess Bend development does not get approval

A new home development, Burgess Bend, a Meritage Homes



JIM ZIMMERMAN/THE COMMUNITY NEWS

Former Weatherford Police Chief Lance Arnold was recognized for his work by the city council. Arnold, who is leaving to become the police chief in Broken Bow, Oklahoma, served as Weatherford chief since 2017. Pictured are (from left) Mayor Paul Paschal, Council Member Luke Williams, City Manager James Hotopp, Arnold, Council Member Matt Ticzkus, Council Member Zack Smith and Mayor Pro Tem Heidi Miller.

company, was seeking approval on a new home community overlay for Weatherford. They did not receive the votes it needed to proceed with the community.

One of the duties for the city council members is to read, front to back, all contracts and proposals that are presented to them to protect the integrity of future developments. An issue was recognized by council member Zack Smith as he examined the pending proposal from Meritage Homes.

The wording, "eminent domain", appeared in this contract. After it

was explained, the council not to proceed with the proposal from Meritage Homes.

"As elected community leaders, we are charged with making tough decisions. Eminent domain is not a term to be used loosely in Texas, Parker County, or in our great City of Weatherford," Smith said.

"When I asked the applicant why they were so insistent on having that verbiage in the contract as 'backup vs working it out with the existing neighbors, I didn't feel like his answer was sufficient. With this being our first potential

partnership, I am not comfortable with the direction the relationship was heading."

The definition of eminent domain is, "the power of the government to take private property for public use, while providing the owner with "just compensation"

In other words, the proposal stated that they could take the property without working out the details with the homeowner. That was something that all council members agreed was not going to happen.

## LEARNING

from page one

Hoffman said she was also not prepared for the public's distrust of government agencies.

"One of the things that I lined up pretty quickly when I started working there, is that the first thing we really have to do is work to establish trust with our communications."

Her in-house education continued as she sat in on meetings with a variety of departments. In the process she learned about the processes in public works, the police department, and other city departments.

"I found generally that everybody was pretty welcoming and open and willing to talk to me and they were more than happy to give me the information that I needed to go out and do my job," Hoffman said. "I had to do a lot of education of myself for a lot of those departments to be able to understand how do I take the jargon from this department and break it down into plain language for the public? But some of that then goes back to my journalism background, particularly covering municipalities where I already sort of understood how to do that. It's far more technical when you work for the city, because you get into it a lot deeper than you do as a journalist."

"One of the things that we really preach about in my professional associations is that you really want to establish those relationships and establish that trust, long before you have a situation where you're having to communicate something urgently, because your relationships

are already there and you're ready to go as a team"

## Continuing Education

Hoffman said the city has been very supportive of her and fellow staff members in obtaining further training and education. One of the first bits of advice she received when she joined the city was to go to TAMIO (Texas Association of Municipal Information Officers), a statewide association. She pointed out that the job descriptions for her position vary wildly from city to city, and it was up to Willow Park to decide what her path would be there.

"The council and Bryan Grimes had a pretty good idea of what they wanted it to look like, but they weren't entirely sure what that path going forward needed to look like for the position," she said.

About four months into the job, she attended the TAMIO state convention.

"I was absolutely astounded at the wealth of resources and knowledge that they have there," Hoffman said. "And I got really good legal training. I got great social media training. I got great training on best practices for websites. Every time I would come up across a new challenge of, okay, this is something that I've never faced before, ... the city, every time, hands down, has been like, yes, go get the training. Go take the workshop."

As she attended conventions and workshops, Hoffman discovered that the most successful people in her field had received Certified

Public Communicator training and certification.

The CPC is a professional designation that is basically awarded at the end of the program for someone who is a specialist in strategic planning and communication systems for some sort of public entity.

"I thought, 'Okay, well, if I want to be the best of the best and really take this to the next level, that's where I need to go.'"

Hoffman said the 13-month program at the Bob Schieffer College of Communication at TCU, in addition to providing new skills, gave her a boost in professional confidence.

"When you're building a communications department from scratch, you spend a lot of time putting out fires, and just kind of going from one thing to the next," Hoffman said. "But because of the fact that I spent 13 months creating this strategic plan for the city's communications department, I now have a little bit more of a proactive approach. And when I have the things happen in the day to day, I'm able to look at that and say, 'Well, how does that response to this fit within the goals we've set forth in the strategic plan and how does this kind of go with with the big picture.'"

Most recently Hoffman received training from the Emergency Management Institute, a part of FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency).

As a result of the training she received in Emmetsburg, Maryland, Hoffman is now classified as an Advanced Public Information Officer through FEMA. She had

desired the training because, as she said, "in rural areas outside of the metropolis, there are not a lot of folks who have that level of certification for emergency management. And if we have something large scale happen in Parker County, it's very important that we have some people that have that training that are already here."

## All on Board

Hoffman was quick to point out that she is not alone.

"I'm not the only staffer at Willow park that is constantly trying to learn and train and develop and know more. Our fire marshals, Kevin and Charlie, are constantly in training. We have a number of people around City Hall who are constantly in training. We have people that go to finance training and legal training, and Toni's in school to get a certified public manager."

Last year the city secretary received her International Association of Municipal Clerks certification and the above-mentioned Toni Fisher graduated with honors from Tarleton State University.

"Part of our culture there is that we are always trying to know more and do more and be better, because we want to be prepared to meet the needs of Willow Park as we grow and as we move forward."

## Paying it Forward

In September, Hoffman was elected to the Board of Directors for the North Texas Public Information Officers group, which is for the public safety and emergency management side of public

communication for the Dallas-Fort Worth area.

"I was kind of shocked when I managed to get elected to the Board of Directors, but I'm also absolutely delighted at the opportunity to serve because one of the big things that I see, particularly in Parker County, looking at this through a longer lens, is as we grow it is going to be absolutely imperative that we train for large-scale incidents of whatever nature, and that's going to involve getting more training to some of the folks out here who may not have access to that training, and it's that way for pretty much all of the outlying counties around DFW."

"One of the things that I ran on for that board was trying to bring more of these rural and smaller agencies into this group and get them access to the resources and the knowledge and the training that that the bigger agencies have — that's kind of a personal mission of mine, is to really try to not only be a leader in Willow Park, but bring some of these other folks in that could benefit from some of the wonderful trading and connections that I've had."

Hoffman also sits on the education committee of TAMIO.

"Those are two projects I'm really passionate about that I feel like give me some amazing perspective of knowledge to bring back to the City of Willow Park. Because every time I sit in on one of those meetings, I come up with something of, 'hey, I got to take this back to Willow Park. We could implement that, and that would be really good for us.'"

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BASKETBALL

## Aledo teams win close games

**Bearcats, Ladycats win by four combined points**

By Geoff Heppes  
The Community News

Both the Aledo Ladycats and Bearcats basketball teams hosted Chisholm Trail for their respective District 5-5A games Friday night. For the Ladycats, it was their second district foe to face, while the Bearcats hosted the Rangers for their district opener.

In the end, the Ladycats emerged victorious by a final score of 37-34 while the Bearcats won by a final score of 54-53.

The Aledo girls game was played first, where sophomore guard Brooklyn Dempsey led the Ladycats (11-8, 1-1) with a team-high nine points. Meanwhile, Tiara Butler scored eight, Kinley Elms had six and Elizabeth Griffin added five. The Ladycats junior varsity (55-21) and the ninth grade squad (45-10) picked up convincing wins as Sawyer Voight led the JV with 12 points while Sonsales Rosado scored a team-high 11 points for the freshman squad.

Following the girls contest, the Aledo boys squad took the floor and won their district opener by a single point. Senior guard Joaquin Pacheco led the way with a team-high 18 points for Aledo (16-1, 1-0), while Townes Van Huysen posted eight points. Caden Cunningham and Enrique Pacheco chipped in with six points apiece.

The boys JV (64-62) and freshman teams (50-46) also won tight games over Chisholm Trail to complete the program sweep on both sides for Aledo.

The Ladycats will take the court again at 11 a.m. Tuesday, Dec. 31, at Keller Fossil Ridge. The Bearcats will resume action on the hardwood from Dec. 27-28 in the Bridgeport Tournament.



Jonathan "JD" Neff lifts and opponent during the Bearcats' recent home wrestling match.

PHOTO COURTESY OF BRENDEN LOWE

WRESTLING

## Aledo teams compete at home

Staff Reports  
The Community News

For the first time this season the Aledo Bearcats and Ladycats competed at home, hosting Benbrook and Fort Worth Paschal in a tri-match.

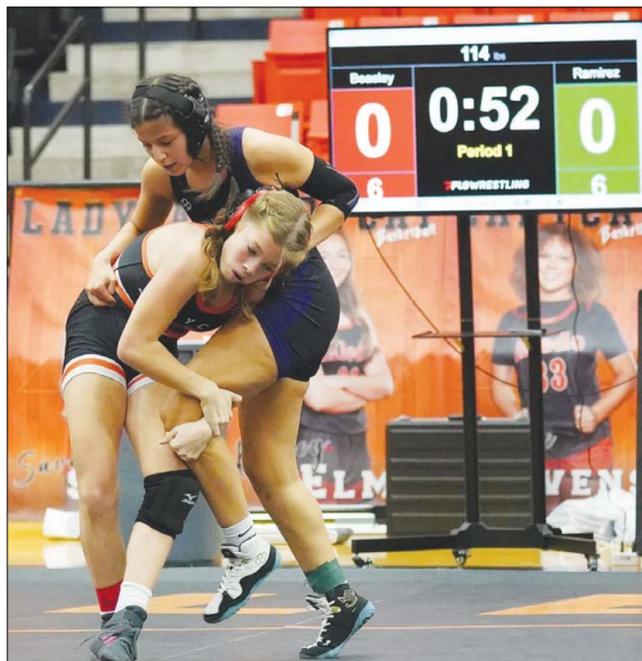
The Bearcats split their two matches, defeating Benbrook 47-35 and falling 37-30 to Paschal. The Ladycats dropped a 48-12 contest to Benbrook and were edged 22-18 by Paschal.

"The boys wrestled really well. We secured seven falls and one tech fall. We won 8 matches and Benbrook won three," Aledo coach Ben Shaw said of the Benbrook match. "The team showed great technique and continued to fight even in the matches we lost. It was a complete team win and a great way to start the night."

The Ladycats only had three wrestlers, with Grace Beasley at 114 being the lone win.

"The girls wrestled well despite losing some matches. They are progressing all the time and I was proud of the fight they showed," Shaw said.

Concerning the Paschal boys match, Shaw noted, "This was a back-and-forth dual with great matches throughout. We won two matches and Paschal won six. Even in the matches we lost we had a chance up to the final whistle. The boys wrestled hard throughout and didn't stop."



Grace Beasley (left) of the Ladycats works to take down an opponent in the Ladycats' first home wrestling meet of the season.

PHOTO COURTESY OF BRENDEN LOWE

Four girls wrestled against Paschal, with Lillian Carruthers winning in the 107 category.

"The girls were in every match, although we did not get the desired results. Overall Thoughts I think as a program as a whole we had a great night and showed some great wrestling technique," Shaw said. "We had a good number of fans in attendance, which

really helped the atmosphere. I was happy and proud to see the athletes in both teams showing off their growing technique. We are moving in the right direction and looking to peak in February."

The District 4-5A Tournament is Feb. 1 in Fort Worth. Shortly before that, Aledo will compete at home again on Jan. 22 against Brewer on Senior Night.

FOOTBALL

## Hejny entering transfer portal

**Din-Mbuh joining Frogs from WSU**

By Rick Mauch  
The Community News

Former Aledo Bearcats quarterback Hauss Hejny is leaving TCU and entering the transfer portal, numerous sources are reporting. The true freshman saw limited playing this season behind starting quarterback Josh Hoover, a redshirt freshman who plans to return to the program next season.

Hejny, who originally committed to Duke in high school, switched his choice to TCU to follow in the footsteps of his parents, who were both athletes at the school. His father played as a defensive lineman in the early 2000s and his mother played basketball.

Hejny played in four games for the Horned Frogs (8-4) this season, with TCU winning all four contests. While he did not throw a pass, he rushed for 65 yards on 15 carries.

His best outing was in a 20-13 win at Cincinnati. He carried eight times for 48 yards to help seal the victory.

At Aledo, Hejny led the Bearcats to back-to-back Class 5A Division I state championships in 2022 and 2023. Under his leadership the Bearcats were 30-2 in that span, which included a 30-game winning streak.

Hejny was considered one of the top 12 quarterbacks in the nation upon graduation from Aledo. He is not expected to play for TCU against Louisiana (10-3) Dec. 28 at 1:15 p.m.

**Din-Mbuh coming to TCU**

While Hejny is exiting, another former Bearcat is coming to the Horned Frogs. Defensive lineman Ansel Din-Mbuh is transferring from Washington State to TCU after two seasons playing for the Cougars.

Din-Mbuh was a senior on the 2022 state champion Aledo Bearcats.

Din-Mbuh recorded 26 tackles in two seasons in Pullman, Washington. As a sophomore this season he posted 24 tackles with seven for a loss and six sacks - including a three-sack outing in a 29-26 win at San Diego State.

The Cougars (8-4) are scheduled to play Syracuse (9-3) in the Holiday Bowl without Din-Mbuh on Dec. 27 at 7 p.m.

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BASKETBALL

# Eagles soaring into New Year

TCA flying high amid strong start to season

By Geoff Heppes  
The Community News

The Willow Park Trinity Christian Eagles boys basketball team went on the road Friday night to face off against Covenant Classical School of Fort Worth. The Eagles had to do so without the services of senior starters Reed Robbins and Sam Carson, who are battling respective injuries, but ultimately were able to come out on top by a final score of 54-37.

TCA improved to 16-2 and has a 15-game winning streak.

In the absence of Robbins and Carson, senior role players Scott Smith and Bo Blausler stepped in and stepped up by combining for 21 points – Smith scored 13 and Blausler had eight to go with great pressure defense on the perimeter.

Along with the two senior reserves, TCA got quality contributions from sophomores Chapel Peterson and Shane Palmer as a part of a seven-man rotation on the night. Jonathan Overholt and John Chrane also poured in 10 points apiece while Cole Massey had nine for the Eagles. Peterson and Palmer finished with two and three points, respectively.

TCA will take its winning streak into the Bill Borg Holiday Classic Tournament at Vanguard College Prep in Waco. The holiday tournament will take place Friday through Saturday, Dec. 27-28.

SWIMMING

# Aledo has strong showing at Debbie Weems Invitational

Staff Reports  
The Community News

The Aledo swim team competed at the Debbie Weems Invitational in Mansfield recently and had several top-five finishes.

Haley Roberson placed third in two events among the girls. First was the 100-yard backstroke, dropping her previous school record to 58.84 seconds. She was also third in the 100 butterfly with a time of 58.04 seconds, missing the school record by 0.17 seconds.

Roberson also joined Sydney Kellam, Victoria Crews and Mackenzie Oligschlaeger on the third-place girls 200 medley relay.

Crews also placed fifth in the 100 breaststroke, as did Ian Perez in the same event for the boys.

The girls 400 freestyle relay with Molly Garrison, Julia Gordy, Oligschlaeger and Roberson took fifth. The girls 200 free relay was sixth with Gordy, Garrison, Kellam and Crews.

Also, the Boys 200 medley relay with Jaxon Robinson, Perez, Kale Roberson, and Bradyn Baughman placed eighth.

FOOTBALL

# Bearcats galore on all-district team



KRISTIN MORALES/MEMORABLE MOMENTS

Raycine Guillory is shown in action against Lancaster earlier in the season. Guillory was named the Most Valuable Player in District 3-5A Division I.

## Guillory, Meeks garner superlative honors

By Rick Mauch  
The Community News

In his final season as a member of the Aledo Bearcats, junior running back Raycine Guillory was named the Most Valuable Player in District 3-5A Division I by the league's coaches. Also, sophomore defensive lineman Tymon Meeks was honored as the Newcomer of the Year.

Guillory opted to graduate early and forego his senior season and has signed to play for the University of Utah next season. He rushed for 1,322 yards and 25 touchdowns this season, along with catching 13 passes for 180 yards and two more scores.

In his high school career, Guillory — who began as a freshman at Mansfield Lake Ridge — accounted for more than 3,800 all-purpose yards (3,327 rushing, 509 receiving) and scored

60 touchdowns (51 rushing, 9 receiving).

Meeks registered 26 tackles, including 4.5 for a loss.

In all, 28 members of the district champion Bearcats were honored. In winning the league, Aledo (12-2, 8-0 in district) ran its national record district winning streak to 127 games.

The Bearcats went on to advance to the Class 5A Division I quarterfinals before being eliminated by district foe Denton Ryan 31-21.

## First-team offensive accolades went to:

Quarterback Gavin Beard, junior, completed 69% of his passes for 2,573 yards with 35 TD and five interceptions.

Fullback Waldron Byers, senior.

Tight end Thaddeus Keller, senior. Wide receiver Kaydon Finley, junior, 81 catches, 1,429 yards, 21 TD.

Guard Payton Williams, junior.

Guard Ryan Campbell, junior.

Tackle Cody Cartwright, senior.



BRELEIGH MAYER/THE COMMUNITY NEWS

Defensive lineman Tymon Meeks (90 at left) was honored as the Newcomer of the Year.

## Named to the first team defense were:

End Decker Sanders, junior.

Inside linebacker Owen Henderson, senior, 58.5 tackles, two interceptions.

Inside linebacker Chase Wilburn, junior, 62 tackles, 10.5 for loss, two interceptions, TD.

Outside linebacker Ben McElree, senior, 53.5 tackles, three sacks, 7.5 for loss, interception, fumble recovery returned for TD.

Cornerback Adrian Fuller, senior, four interceptions, TD.

Safety Lamel Swanson, junior, 48.5 tackles.

Defensive end Carson Dempsey, junior, 2.5 sacks, 5.5 tackles for loss.

Senior kicker Cole Crawford (59-of-60 extra points, 4-of-5 field goals, long of 46 yards) and junior deep snapper Kade Coulson were selected for first team on special teams.

Aledo second team offense picks were juniors running back Kaden Winkfield (892 yards, 13 TD) and tackle Krugger

Summers. Honorable mentions went to sophomore guard Omari Din-Mbuh, junior wide receiver Jamal Hollister and senior center Chase Anderson.

On the second team defense are juniors Cooper Cypher at defensive end and Kamron Hall at safety, along with seniors Talan Foreman at tackle and Kai Taylor at cornerback. Honorable mentions are seniors tackle Jaxson Richter and end Brody Adams, as well as junior end Jacob McIntire.

## Academic all-district

Sixteen members of the team also garnered academic all-district honors. They are:

Seniors Crawford, Tyler Huntington, Carson Bobbitt, Josh Johnson, Isaiah Anaya, Kade Callaway, Thaddeus Keller, Cory Tilly, Joseph Hancin and manager Caleb Seastrunk.

Juniors Wilburn, Jacob Patton, Ryland Haley, Caven Fagan and Lydon Olenjack.

Sophomore Cooper Hull.



Gavin Beard



Kaydon Finley



Ben McElree

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**NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARINGS ON ANNEXATION**

To be held on:  
 Public Hearing No. 1: January 14, 2025 at 6:00 p.m.  
 Public Hearing No. 2: January 14, 2025 at 6:00 p.m.  
 Willow Park City Council Chambers  
 Willow Park City Hall  
 120 El Chico Trail, Ste. A, Willow Park, Texas

**NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN TO ALL INTERESTED PERSONS, THAT:**

The City of Willow Park, Texas proposes to institute voluntary annexation proceedings pursuant to Section 43.1055, Subchapter C-1 of Chapter 43 of the Local Gov't Code, to enlarge and extend the boundary limits of said city to include an approximately 10.98 acre tract of land, having a centerline of 7,313 feet, of East Bankhead Highway Right-of-Way, a description of which is as follows:

Being 10.98 acres, more or less, having a centerline of 7,313 feet, more or less, of East Bankhead Highway (a variable width right-of-way) out of Eliza Oxer Survey, Abstract No. 1031, James R. Brown Survey, Abstract No. 69, Thomas Freeman Survey, Abstract No. 475, Francisco Sanchez Survey, Abstract No. 2346, and F. H. Hammon Survey, Abstract No. 673. The survey, field notes and map of said approximately 10.98 tract is available in the Interim City Secretary's office and on the City's website.

Two public hearings will be held by and before the City Council of the City of Willow Park, Texas, on the 14th of January, at 6:00 p.m. at the City of Willow Park City Council Chambers, Willow Park City Hall, 120 El Chico Trail, Ste. A, Willow Park, Texas for all persons interested in the above-proposed annexation. All such persons shall have the right to appear and be heard.

For questions, and a full metes and bounds legal description of the annexation area, please contact Toni Fisher, Interim City Secretary, City of Willow Park, Willow Park City Hall, 120 El Chico Trail, Ste. A, Willow Park, Texas 76087; by email [tfisher@willowpark.org](mailto:tfisher@willowpark.org) or by phone, 817-441-7108."

**"NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING ON ANNEXATION**

To be held on:  
 January 14, 2025 at 6:00 p.m.  
 Willow Park City Council Chambers  
 Willow Park City Hall  
 120 El Chico Trail, Ste. A, Willow Park, Texas

**NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN TO ALL INTERESTED PERSONS, THAT:**

The City of Willow Park, Texas proposes to institute voluntary annexation proceedings pursuant to a landowner petition submitted by Beall-Dean Ranch, Ltd, to enlarge and extend the boundary limits of said city to include an approximately 317.732 acre tract of land owned by it, a description of which is as follows:

BEING a tract of land in the F.H. HAMMON SURVEY, Abstract No. 673, the HEIRS OF FRANCISCO SANCHEZ SURVEY, Abstract No. 2346, and H.T. & B.R.R. CO. SURVEY NO. 5, Abstract No. 647 situated in Parker County, Texas, described in the deed to John Henry Dean III recorded in volume 1441, page 424 of the Official Public Records of Parker County, Texas, containing approximately 317.732 acres, more or less. The survey, field notes and map of said approximately 317.732 acre tract is available in the Interim City Secretary's office and on the City's website.

A public hearing will be held by and before the City Council of the City of Willow Park, Texas, on the 14th of January, 2025, at 6:00 p.m. at the City of Willow Park City Council Chambers, Willow Park City Hall, 120 El Chico Trail, Ste. A, Willow Park, Texas for all persons interested in the above-proposed annexation. All such persons shall have the right to appear and be heard.

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For more information contact the Aledo ISD Office of Special Programs:

Keshia Chaney  
 Coordinator of Special Programs  
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[kchaney@aledoisd.org](mailto:kchaney@aledoisd.org)



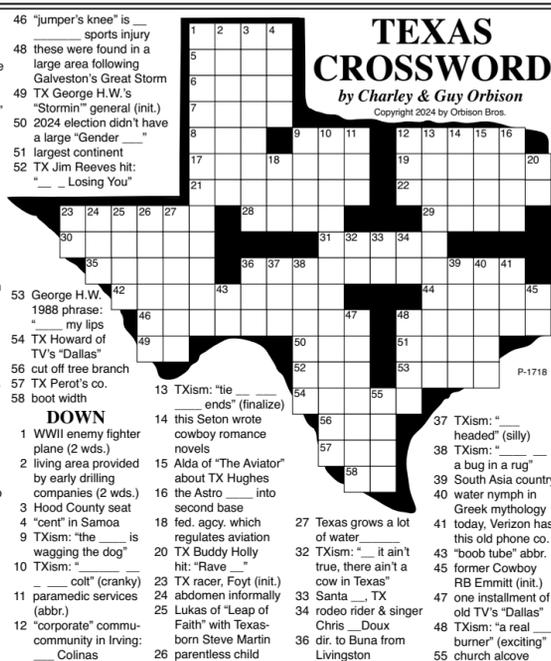
**ACROSS**

- 1 many Texans go on these for exercise
- 5 Texas-based "Space X's" Elon Musk is a billion \_\_\_\_\_
- 6 "sounds like a \_\_\_\_\_"
- 7 teenage bane
- 8 capture
- 9 TXism: "\_\_\_\_\_ the mark" (comply)
- 12 Spindletop driller, Capt. A.F. \_\_\_\_\_
- 17 where you can find Australian birds in Texas (2 wds.)
- 19 Texas astronaut Ed White died on the first \_\_\_\_\_ mission
- 21 wrenches ankle ligaments
- 22 Texas-filmed 1971 film: "The Andromeda \_\_\_\_\_"
- 23 TX Mark Chesnutt's "Too Cold \_\_\_\_\_"
- 28 an alma mater of TX George W. \_\_\_\_\_
- 29 TXism: "gotta play the \_\_\_\_\_ you're dealt" (inevitable)
- 30 Ciudad \_\_\_\_\_ is across from El Paso
- 31 "R" of NRA
- 35 Chalk \_\_\_\_\_ is a native Texas tree
- 36 hit for TX Henley's Eagles: "Peaceful \_\_\_\_\_"
- 42 TXism: "don't get your \_\_\_\_\_ (calm down)
- 44 El Paso has status of Juan de \_\_\_\_\_

**DOWN**

- 1 WWII enemy fighter plane (2 wds.)
- 2 living area provided by early drilling companies (2 wds.)
- 3 Hood County seat
- 4 "cent" in Samoa
- 9 TXism: "the \_\_\_\_\_ is wagging the dog"
- 10 TXism: "\_\_\_\_\_ colt" (cranky)
- 11 paramedic services (abbr.)
- 12 "corporate" community in Irving: \_\_\_\_\_ Colinas
- 13 TXism: "tie \_\_\_\_\_ ends" (finalize)
- 14 this Seton wrote cowboy romance novels
- 15 Alda of "The Aviator" about TX Hughes companies (2 wds.)
- 16 the Astro \_\_\_\_\_ into second base
- 18 fed. agcy. which regulates aviation
- 20 TX Buddy Holly hit: "Rave \_\_\_\_\_"
- 23 TX racer, Foyt (init.)
- 24 abdomen informally
- 25 Lukas of "Leap of Faith" with Texas-born Steve Martin
- 26 parentless child
- 27 Texas grows a lot of water \_\_\_\_\_
- 32 TXism: "\_\_\_\_\_ it ain't true, there ain't a cow in Texas"
- 33 Sanita \_\_\_\_\_ TX
- 34 rodeo rider & singer Chris \_\_\_\_\_ Doux
- 36 dir. to Buna from Livingston
- 37 TXism: "\_\_\_\_\_ headed" (silly)
- 38 TXism: "\_\_\_\_\_ a bug in a rug"
- 39 South Asia country
- 40 water nymph in Greek mythology
- 41 today, Verizon has this old phone co.
- 43 "boob tube" abbr.
- 45 former Cowboy RB Emmitt (init.)
- 47 one installment of old TV's "Dallas"
- 48 TXism: "a real \_\_\_\_\_ burner" (exciting)
- 55 church alcove

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GOOD NEWS - CHEERLEADING

# Aledo student participates in elite event

## Makes trip to Disney World

By John English  
The Community News

For Aledo High School cheerleader Abby Myser, Thanksgiving break included more than its usual holiday cheer, and it all began earlier this summer.

The AHS sophomore participated in an All-American tryout in July when Aledo Cheer attended summer UCA Cheer camp (Universal Cheerleaders Association).

At the end of the tryout, she and four of her teammates received UCA All-American honors.

All-Americans are invited to attend various parades around the country. But because Abby, who is only 15, is also a co-captain for the varsity cheer team, she received an exclusive invitation to attend the Varsity Spirit Spectacular at Disney World in Orlando, a parade reserved specifically for varsity-level All-Americans in leadership positions.

"The cheerleaders were sent videos of the parade choreography and had to learn on their own time," Abby's mother, Sarah Myser, said.

### Prominent spot

On their second day in Florida, there was a tryout for formation spots, and Abby beat out more than 800 other top cheerleaders from across the country to finish among the top six.

This allowed her the privilege of being in the front row and leading the parade.

"My husband and I are so proud of Abby for all of her accomplishments in cheerleading and in everything else she does," Sarah said. "She earned some amazing awards this year. In May we were in Orlando and her competitive cheer team won the World Championships for their level. She spends 20 hours a week in a cheer gym and then has

her sideline cheer commitments on top of that.

"Getting to watch your child walk down Main Street in the Spirit Spectacular, leading the parade, knowing the literal blood sweat and tears it has taken to achieve this level was just an incredible moment."

### More accolades

And it was not the only accolade Abby received in 2024.

In addition to All-American honors, Abby received Nfinity All-American Honorable Mention in November, which is a national award given to the best academic cheerleaders in the country.

Abby said being selected for the Varsity Spirit Spectacular was incredible.

"This event was exclusively for senior cheerleaders or captains of your squad that were awarded All-American," Abby said. "So to have been invited as an underclassman was a huge honor."

The best thing about the event for the Aledo sophomore was definitely the parade itself.

"It was so cool to have all of our hard work come together and to cheer in front of the huge crowd with all the new friends I had made," Abby said.

### More fun

The theme park was not half-bad either.

"I thought Disney World was very wholesome, especially with it being Christmas time," Abby said. "It was so special to see all the kids there with their families. I loved when little girls would come to say 'Hi' to me or ask for a picture when I was in my uniform. I love that I get to be an inspiration for them."

### Preparing for performance

Abby said she received the video of the choreography two months in



SARAH MYSER

Aledo High School cheerleader Abby Myser beat out more than 800 other cheerleaders from across America to be invited to participate in the Varsity Spirit Spectacular at Disney World.

advance and that all of the participants were expected to learn.

"Then, when we got there, we had a formation tryout, which was one of the most stressful environments I've been in," Abby said. "After the tryout, we had a six-hour practice to put everything together, practice our routine and walk the parade. Our practice was definitely worth it because the performance ended up going amazing."

But it was not without its challenges.

Abby said she had to dig deep at times to remind herself that she deserved to be there.

"At first I was a little intimidated because these were all the best girls from squads all over the country," Abby said. "Tryouts were by far the most intimidating thing because I was being compared to 800 other cheerleaders. But after making the front row, I was able to meet so many girls that loved cheer

as much as I did and I got to learn a lot about how they ran their squads back home."

### Best reward of all

Her greatest satisfaction came from learning she had been selected as an All-American.

"To me, All-American means hard work, dedication, and passion," Abby said. "It's a recognition of what you do in and outside of practice and to get that recognition means a lot to me."

Besides being a varsity cheer co-captain, Abby also serves as sophomore class president, sophomore representative of HOSA (Health Occupation Students of America), treasurer of the National Charity League and is in the top one percent of her class.

For Sarah, the benefits of cheer are evident in many aspects of her daughter's life and she could not

be more proud of what Abby has accomplished.

"Cheer is a crazy sport that requires an unwavering drive towards perfection that can never actually be achieved," Sarah said. "She has learned failure is inevitable and that one must be able to self-reflect accurately and to have an open growth mindset."

"There are no shortcuts in this sport. She is constantly striving to improve in every aspect. Details matter, and the work is never done. She has overcome serious injury and learned perseverance and mental strength."

"The grit attitude and time management this sport requires has carried over into all aspects of her life and she has taken the same work rate and drive and applied it in everything she does. We truly think she is just absolutely amazing."

## DREAM

from page 12

"It taught me that if I'm going to do something, I might as well give it my all, because I never know when I might have the opportunity to do it again."

Lilli said this newfound appreciation drives her to embrace every moment and experience it to the fullest, reminding her to cherish not only the big milestones but also the small joys along the way.

### Career goals

Lilli plans to graduate from WC with an associate of science degree, and intends to transfer to another school to pursue a degree in animal science on the pre-vet track. Her ultimate goal is to attend veterinary school and become a small animal veterinarian.

"I chose WC because it's close to home, allowing me to spend time with my family, and it offers amazing resources to support my education," she said. "I truly love

the vibrant energy of the campus and the supportive community surrounding it. I believe that my time at WC will provide a strong foundation for my future as I transition to a four-year school."

And she wants to continue playing at a higher level.

"I am currently in the process of getting recruited at a four-year school," she said, adding, "It is going to be hard finding a four-year that compares to what Weatherford College has to offer."

### Inspiration to others

Lilli admits that she sees herself as an inspiration to others.

"I believe I can resonate with pediatric cancer patients who have faced similar challenges, showing them that it's possible to emerge stronger and reach new heights — like playing college sports," she said. "I hope my journey gives them hope and motivation to keep fighting."

"I also feel that I inspire fellow softball players by competing at a

high level after overcoming cancer. My experience demonstrates that hard work and determination can take you anywhere you want to go. I've put in countless hours of effort to get to where I am today, and I want to show others that they can achieve their dreams too."

"My current favorite quote is 'The windshield is bigger than the rearview mirror for a reason. Because what's in front of you is so much more important than what's behind you,' Jason DeFord, aka (singer) Jelly Roll."

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GOOD NEWS - CROSS COUNTRY

# Elite Aledo squads now have a place for hardware

## Thanks to donation

By John English  
The Community News

With multiple trips to the state meet between the boys and girls teams, Aledo High School enjoys a proud tradition in the sport of distance running.

Consequently, the cross country program has captured a lot of hardware over the years, but until recently, had nowhere to put it.

Enter Stephanie Richardson, a cross country mom who was taken aback after a visit to the school earlier this fall.

"My daughter is a freshman at Aledo High School, and she's on the cross country and track team," Richardson said. "We went up there over the summer, and we were in Coach (Mike) Pinkerton's office. He pointed up toward the ceiling, and that's where all the trophies were. I said, 'Why are all your trophies up here in this closet?' He said because they didn't have a trophy case and I said, 'Well, why not?'"

## Getting to work

That is when Richardson went to work.

A former athlete herself, Richardson, 38, played volleyball for Aledo High School when she attended back in the early aughts.

Cross country was not quite on her radar just yet.

"I would never run," Richardson said. "A clown would have to be chasing me for me to run. It's not my sport."

But it is her daughter Hadleigh Walton's sport, so it means a lot to her.

"They had state trophies just sitting up in a closet," Richardson said. "And I'm like, 'This is not okay! I feel like if you see a need, fill a need, so that's what we did.'"

Richardson and her husband Scott, along with three other companies (Dr. Craig Lambourne with Montgomery Dental, Chad Rychlik



Standing in front of the new cross country trophy case for the Aledo teams are Hadleigh Walton (cross country runner), Brandy Belk (Aledo Athletic Director), Mike Pinkerton (head cross country coach), Hans Pettit (Texas Ag Trust donor), and Stephanie and Scott Richardson (Hadleigh's parents /donors).

PHOTO COURTESY STEPHANIE RICHARDSON

"They deserve to be proud of their accomplishments — to be able to see them and walk by them every day."

Stephanie Richardson

with Aledo Golf Carts, and Hans Pettit and Texas Ag Trust), raised a total of \$16,000 for the project.

"We each contributed \$4,000 to fund the cross country team getting four trophy cases for all their trophies," Richardson said. "They are a very successful cross country and track team, so I worked with these companies and we were able to donate four 5-foot long trophy cases that are now in the athletics hallway."

## Strong history

Cross country was sanctioned as a UIL sport for boys in 1972 and for girls in 1975 and in that

time AHS has sent 12 teams to the state meet.

Pinkerton said his athletes were thrilled to receive the cases and said their reactions were priceless.

"They love it," Pinkerton said. "It is fun to see them point out the new trophy cases to other students. They also like that they are by the gym, so anyone walking to the gym will see them. They are proud of their accomplishments and excited that they are now on display."

Pinkerton said the kindness of the gesture from the Richardson family and the three other donors

means a lot to him personally as well as to the program.

"It is a tremendous honor," Pinkerton said. "We have never had a place to showcase the achievements of our teams. With all of the success that we have throughout Aledo High School, there just hasn't been any room. This is amazing."

Richardson said it is important to give back when possible and said the team deserves to have its achievements on display where other students can see them.

"I'm an alumni of Aledo," Richardson said. "I was brought up in Aledo, and I've got a soft spot for kids in school and I see the hours they put in. They are out there practicing at 5 in the morning while everyone is still asleep, and they deserve this. They deserve to be proud of their accomplishments — to be able to see them and walk by them every day."

## VOLLEYBALL

# Lowe, Todd named All-State

Staff Reports  
The Community News

Senior Haley Lowe and junior Alyssa Todd, two members of the state semifinalist Aledo Ladycats, have been named Class 5A All-State by the Texas Girls Coaches Association.



Haley Lowe

Todd led the Ladycats in kills (557) and serves received (534). She also posted 50 blocks, served 45 aces and had 470 defensive digs.



Alyssa Todd

Lowe led the team in blocks with 130 and had 263 kills.

The duo helped lead the Ladycats to one of the best seasons in program history. They finished 35-8, which included a run to the Class 5A Division I state semifinals before falling in a thrilling 3-2 match to McKinney North, losing the fifth game 15-13.

That loss ended a 24-0 match winning streak for Aledo, including 12-0 in district where they did not drop a single set.

## Academic all-state

Lowe also earned academic all-state honors from the TGCA, along with senior teammates Kinley Elms, Ella Meador, Kenrie Pruitt and Ava Reding.

Two members of the Weatherford Lady Roos were also named to the academic all-state squad in 6A, seniors Berkley Austin-Roark and Reagan Rees.



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GOOD NEWS - STRONG SURVIVOR

# Williams overcame cancer to achieve dream

## Now playing for Weatherford College

By Rick Mauch  
The Community News

At an age when most girls are developing their first crush and looking forward to life in junior high school, Lilli Williams was simply trying to hang onto life.

The Weatherford College sophomore softball player from Granbury was diagnosed with Ewings Sarcoma in September of 2018. She was 13 years old.

Ewings is a rare form of bone cancer. She had an even rarer type that formed in her soft tissue.

"Just before my 13th birthday, which was in July, I found a lump on my side close to my ribs, and I saw many doctors to figure out what it was," she recalled. "None of the doctors really knew what it was, so after seeing a surgeon, we decided to remove the mass."

When the tumor was run through a biopsy, doctors discovered it was cancer. After being diagnosed she had surgery to put in a port, a device used in place of an IV, and started chemotherapy treatment almost immediately. Throughout a nine-month span, she received 20 rounds of chemotherapy.

"I was in and out of the hospital for constant checkups, scans, and treatment. The chemo I received was extensive, and I ended up having to get blood transfusions because of it," Lilli said. "Halfway through my treatment, me and my parents had to decide my next step of treatment, which was either proton therapy (radiation) or surgery."

They went the surgery route, which included the removal of her

last right rib and a lot of surrounding muscle.

"I finished my chemotherapy treatment in April of 2019. The battle was long, but I'm grateful for the people that surrounded me during my harsh treatment," she said. "I am officially in remission and cancer-free as of April of this year!"

### Dealing with the diagnosis

"My parents told me about the diagnosis, and we were all in shock. I was a completely healthy and active 13-year-old that played sports, the last thing on our minds was cancer," she said. "At that point in my life I didn't know that kids got cancer, I thought it was an 'old person' disease."

No one else in her family had ever faced cancer, which made her diagnosis feel all the more unusual, Lilli said.

"Ewing's sarcoma is rare, and with its cause still unknown, it was hard to grasp," she said. "Fewer than 1,000 people are diagnosed with it each year, making it even more surreal to process."

Of course, she was sidelined from playing softball. With chemotherapy weakening her immune system, she was essentially quarantined at home.

"I tried to stay as active as my body could handle, but the treatment really took a toll on my energy and strength," she said.

Occasionally, she'd watch her teammates play, but all she could do was watch from the sidelines.

"My coaches were kind enough to let me play one inning in a game I attended, and I was beyond grateful just to set foot on the field again," she said. "Not being able to play was tough, especially since I'd

always been active in every sport that came my way since I was a kid."

Going from that to almost no activity, aside from walking, was one of the hardest parts of her journey. Today, she's proud to say she's back to nearly 100% physically and emotionally.

"While the chemotherapy left its mark on my body, I feel like I'm doing pretty well and I've gained a lot of strength since my treatment," she said.

### Living a dream

Like many young athletes, Lilli dreamed of playing in college. Most, however, do not have the additional challenges she has faced and conquered.

"During treatment, I never imagined I'd be playing college softball, yet here I am, at a great school, playing for an amazing program," she said.

Coyotes coach Haylee Williams saw more in Williams than her talent - which, of course, there is plenty. She believes she has much more than a solid infielder (mostly third base), she has a walking inspiration for the rest of the team - including Williams herself.

"Lilli is such a hard worker and so diligent in her process throughout each day," the coach said. "You would never know the struggle she has been through and always has a positive, upbeat attitude."

"She is a great teammate and a pleasure to coach."

At Granbury, Lilli played on the varsity all four of her high school seasons. She helped the Lady Pirates reach the playoffs twice, earning first-team all-district and academic all-district honors all four years.



WEATHERFORD COLLEGE

Weatherford College softball player Lilli Williams overcame a rare form of cancer as a teenager to achieve her dream.

Her senior year, she was named academic all-state.

She played her freshman season at the University of Arkansas Rich Mountain community college. She helped the Lady Bucks to a second-place conference finish. They also became the first UARM softball team to earn a national ranking, reaching No. 13.

"That's a milestone I'm proud to have contributed to," said Lilli, who was also first-team NJCAA academic all-American at the school. "Now at Weatherford, I'm excited to be

part of a team with amazing talent and chemistry."

### Change of perspective

Lilli said battling cancer profoundly changed her perspective on life.

"At 13, I never imagined I could be affected by such a serious disease. I had lived a sheltered childhood," she said. "Being diagnosed opened my eyes to the harsh realities of the world and made me realize just how fragile life can be."

Turn to DREAM, page 10

**2025**

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