

THE COMMUNITY NEWS

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ALEDO ISD

Shooting STAAR

Reports show continued success aside from state-mandated test

By Ryan Wade
The Community News

While the STAAR test isn't exactly the gold standard in terms of metrics Aledo ISD uses to gauge success, the board of trustees got their mandatory annual update during their monthly meeting on Jan. 21.

Director of Assessment and Accountability for the district, Candance Summerhill, walked the board through the data from the Texas Academic Performance Report (TAPR), much to the chagrin of several board members. The report showed very little change year-over-year in math, reading, science, and social studies scores for students across the district.

While scores within the district saw little change, compared to other districts in the area and across the state Aledo ISD continues to outperform other districts by a noteworthy margin.

"This is a required report," Aledo ISD Superintendent Dr. Susan Bohn underscored. "We obviously don't, in our district, emphasize STAAR to the degree that the state may want us to on a daily basis. Our emphasis is with the PLC (Professional Learning Community) measurement by our professional teachers of their own performance, and also we have implementation goals with best teaching practices.

"Our model is to lean into best instructional practices and teaching the standards so that students are getting what they need. Then the results on the standardized tests will just come. We would not be bringing you this report if the state did not tell us we had to. We would give you the information. We just don't want people to read from this that we are emphasizing the importance of one test from one day for a kid or for a school or for a district."

Board of Trustees President Forrest Collins told an anecdotal story of a parent asking him the board's view on STAAR ratings. He told the parent that he would love to discuss the rating system. However, it wouldn't be prudent with districts across the state engaged in a lawsuit against the Texas Education Administration (TEA) regarding STAAR over the last couple of years.

He did surmise that perhaps the litigation against the process could be indicative of the program's merits.

Another metric Summerhill went over with the board was Aledo's College, Career, Military Readiness (CCMR) scores. Off the top of her discussion, Summerhill made the board aware that the data is lagging, as she only received the 2022-2023 data recently.

That said, the data clearly indicates year-over-year improvement overall in

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ALEDO ISD

District announces land acquisitions

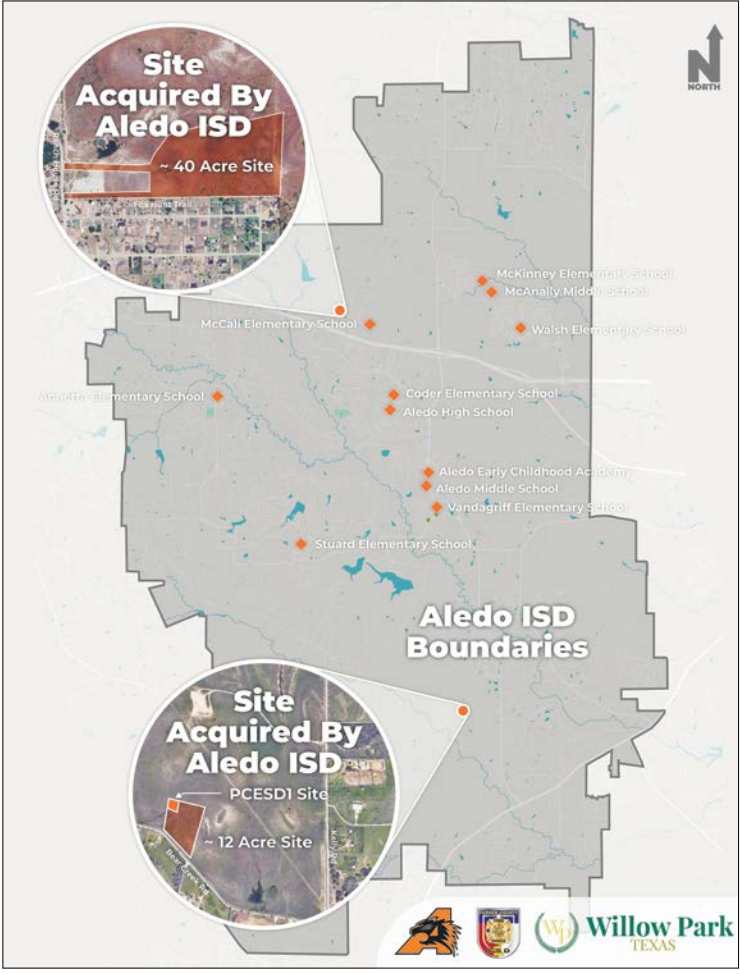
Cites partnerships, planning with local entities

By Mercedes Mayer
Aledo ISD

Through partnerships and planning together for the fast-growth within the Aledo ISD boundaries, AISD - with the help of the City of Willow Park and the Parker County Emergency Services District 1 - announced two sites that have been secured for building future schools in the district.

Aledo ISD recently closed on 40 acres from the Beggs Ranch, within the ETJ of the City of Willow Park on the north side of Interstate 20 with access from Ranch House Road; this land was acquired via a sewer easement swap. With property access points along Ranch House Road, Aledo ISD said it will work with the City of Willow Park to ensure - just as has been done with prior campuses - that pickup and drop off traffic safely queues around the campus.

"We are excited to work with Aledo ISD on a school site for Willow Park," said Willow Park Mayor Doyle Moss. "It is a testament to the leadership of our city and our community that so many people are willing to sit down together and plan for our growth."



ALEDO ISD

A map provided by the Aledo ISD shows sites of two recent land acquisitions, one in Willow Park and one near Kelly Road and Bear Creek Road.

Aledo ISD also received a donation of a 12-acre elementary school site near Kelly Road and Bear Creek Road in Kelly Ranch Estates that will be adjacent to a property that will house a new Parker County Emergency Services District fire station. There

are eight fire stations and 28 full-time firefighters on duty spread across the entire Parker County ESD, and this new site will help with future growth.

"Where the ESD builds its next fire station will be

Turn to LAND, page 3

WILLOW PARK

Franklin steps down as police chief

Quincy Hamilton steps in

By Rick Mauch
The Community News

Daniel Franklin has stepped down as the chief of police in Willow Park, effective immediately. The announcement of his resignation came during a special called city council meeting on Thursday, Jan. 23.

Franklin had served the city since 2018, first in the capacity of assistant chief. Then, following the resignation of Carrie Ellis (formerly West) in mid-2023, he was promoted to the position of chief after having served on an interim basis for a short time.

Lieutenant Quincy Hamilton was appointed interim police chief.

Willow Park officials made it clear that Franklin was not leaving because for disciplinary reasons and that there was no misconduct involved. It was simply a mutual parting of the ways, Mayor Doyle Moss said and which the city reiterated in an official statement.

"We appreciate the job Chief Franklin did in his job here. We're excited about Quincy coming in to be the interim chief," Moss said. "This was a mutual agreement and we wish him the best. He's a fine police officer."

The official statement from the City of Willow Park included, "The city thanks him for his service during his tenure and wishes him the best with all his future opportunities." It also noted that under Franklin's leadership the department received their second consecutive Accredited Status from the Texas Police Chiefs Law Enforcement Program.

Moss delivered a message to Hamilton and other officers in attendance.



ROSE HOFFMAN/CITY OF WILLOW PARK

Willow Park councilman Chawn Gilliland pins the badge on Quincy Hamilton, who became the interim police chief in Willow Park following the resignation of Daniel Franklin.

"The staff, the council and the city appreciates you. We'll move forward. Quincy, we're excited for you," Moss said.

Hamilton said of moving into his new role, "I really appreciate the council allowing me to step into this role. I love this city. I love this department."

As the search moves forward for a search for Franklin's permanent replacement, Moss said Hamilton is a candidate.

"He expressed interest and we'll be happy to visit with him," Moss said.

ALEDO

City hires first public safety director

Carol Riddle brings 24 years of law enforcement experience

Staff Reports
The Community News

Aledo City Manager Noah Simon announced he has appointed Carol Riddle as the City of Aledo's inaugural Public Safety Director, effective immediately.

"This role is vital as Aledo embarks on the establishment of its first-ever police department, a top priority set by Mayor Nick Stanley and the Aledo City Council," Simon said. "Riddle's extensive public safety expertise and leadership make her the ideal choice to spearhead this critical initiative. With her energy, enthusiasm and passion, she is well-positioned to build a dynamic and professional police department that will serve Aledo's growing community."

Bringing 24 years of law enforcement experience to the role, Riddle is a licensed Texas Master Peace Officer. Her career began in January 2000 with the Arlington Police Department, where she served for more than two decades. Following her retirement, she served as Assistant Chief of the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas and most recently as its Chief of Police.

Riddle's range of experience includes leading human trafficking investigative efforts during Super Bowl XLV, managing Youth Services and Special Operations Divisions, and overseeing the implementation of a new records management system in Arlington. At the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas, she managed district law enforcement operations, spearheaded security enhancements, and mentored women in law enforcement and other fields.

Her academic accomplishments include a Master of Arts in Criminology and Criminal Justice from the University of Texas at Arlington and a Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice from Midwestern State University. She is also a graduate of the Leadership Command College, the Senior Management Institute for Police, and the Police Executive Leadership Institute.

"I am excited to be selected for the opportunity to lead and build the city's first police department and can't wait to jump in, roll up my sleeves, and get to work," Riddle said. "I'm looking forward to connecting with the Aledo community and collaborating with our local institutions, neighbors, and law enforcement partners as we bring the city council's goal of creating the Aledo Police Department to fruition. Aledo is a wonderful community, and I'm ready to immerse myself in its rich heritage and contribute to the dynamic future of Aledo."

Turn to SAFETY, page 2



Carol Riddle

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HUDSON OAKS

Crime down
13% in 2024

Three council
positions up for
election

By Christopher Amos

The Community News

Hudson Oaks Police Chief Michael Baldwin was casual as he reported the details of last year's crime report. The board members, however, were thrilled.

"These kind of numbers for the year are what I would see on the 'west side' in a day," Baldwin said, comparing the details to his previous job years ago in Fort Worth.

Although Hudson Oaks has experienced large growth the past year, crime is down 13%. Baldwin commented that scrutiny some

residents had about newly built multi-family units and what they might do to the crime rate were unfounded concerns.

Automobile accidents from 2024, 265 in total, were almost equal to 2023. The chief noted most of the accidents in Hudson Oaks occur on Interstate 20 and Highway 180, and the traffic is so congested there that accidents are low speed and don't normally cause serious injuries.

Last year's arrest totals were 63. There have been 10 arrests made since October 2024, the beginning of the fiscal year.

Other city news

In other city business, City Secretary Shelley Scazzero announced there are three city council board positions that will be up for election. Places 2, 4 and 5, held by Jennifer Liles, Sean Cannon and Daniel Cross, will be decided in the general May election with early

voting beginning April 21. Deadline to file for candidacy is February 14. Scazzero can be contacted at City Hall for filing information.

City Administrator Sterling Naron recommended the reappointment of Baldwin as Emergency Management Coordinator/Director, with the recommendation being approved by the board. "We hope nothing happens, but in the event, we will be prepared," Naron added.

WILLOW PARK

Council approves TIRZ for new land

Expects major
growth in
commercial
valuations

By Rick Mauch

The Community News

Another step was taken in the process of the annexation of approximately 317 acres of land by Willow Park from the City of Fort Worth at the Willow Park City Council meeting on Tuesday, Jan. 28.

Following a public hearing in which only one resident spoke, the council approved a tax increment reinvestment zone (TIRZ) for the area. A TIRZ abatement buys down the property taxes as an incentive to the developer, prompting businesses to consider coming to the area.

"It provides an incentive for businesses to come in, knowing the city is willing to help," said Jennifer Sloan, manager of Municap, Inc., the third party public improvement district (PID) administrators for the area.

A PID administrator handles duties such as reporting to the state comptroller, collecting payments for the PID, preparing and submitting an annual budget for the PID, and more.

At the Jan. 14 meeting the council approved the creation of a PID for the area about to be annexed. Property assessments from a

PID are used to cover the cost of improvements in areas where a PID exists.

A TIRZ does not produce debt, but rather offsets property taxes, Willow Park City Manager Bryan Grimes explained. He added it also does not affect the city's credit rating.

"I think the key thing is it will attract businesses — high quality businesses — businesses that will produce sales tax," Grimes said. "You can look at The Shops (at Willow Park) and see what happens when you properly incentivize businesses."

Sloan said when the TIRZ reaches its termination date in 2063 the estimated value of the property could be as much as \$799 million.

The land on the verge of annexation, voluntarily offered for annexation and owned by Dean-Beall Ranch, Ltd., is located on the southwest corner of Interstate 20 and Highway 1187, running all the way to Bankhead Highway. The final step in the annexation is expected to come at the Feb. 11 meeting.

The addition of the property will include a little more than 35 acres of single family residential space, almost 92 acres of multi-family residential, more than 135 acres of commercial and more than 55 acres of light industrial.

Potential businesses for the area include sit-down restaurants, fast food restaurants, big box retail, grocers, convenience stores, office, and work space. The residential portion will include some green space with a neighborhood park and some small water areas.

The anticipated influx of new residents has the estimated future population of Willow Park increasing by up to more than double its current status of around 9,000, city officials say.

Build out will take place in three phases, with dates to be determined.

Once the development agreement is in place, the City of Willow Park has up to two years to get water and sewer in place. When that process is complete, it is anticipated that businesses and residences will begin to pop up in the next year to a year and a half.

Also at the November meeting, to help with the purchase and renovating of the land, etc., the council approved issuing certificates of obligation not to exceed \$5,135,000. This is long-term borrowing that cities can use to fund major capital projects without voter approval.

At that time, council also approved a sales tax agreement with Parker County Emergency Services District 1 that they noted could more than quadruple the current annual sales tax collection of around \$2 million in a decade or less.

Election amendment

The council amended its election ordinance to reflect that the designated polling place for the May 3 election will be the Willow Park Public Safety Building, 101 Stagecoach Trail. This includes early voting for six days prior to the election.

This year's election will be for mayor, along with council places 1 and 2.

Doyle Moss has been mayor since 2017. He is challenged by Teresa Palmer and Catherine Davis, the first time Moss has faced a challenger since 2019.

Place 2 is held by Chawn Gilliland and Place 1 is Eric Conteras. Gilliland has filed for reelection, and at press time had no challengers.

Contreras had yet to file at press time, but told The Community News that he plans to do so. Meanwhile, David Allen has filed for Place 1 and will be Conteras' first challenger since 2019.

Oncor Steering
Committee

The council approved Willow Park remaining on the 169-member city coalition known as the Steering Committee of Cities Served by Oncor. The resolution also approved the assessment of an 11 cents per

capita fee to fund the activities of the Steering Committee.

The Steering Committee undertakes activities on behalf of municipalities for which it needs funding support from its members. Municipalities have original jurisdiction over the electric distribution rates and services within the city.

"It serves to keep us in the fray on issues concerning Oncor," said Willow Park City Attorney Pat Chesser.

The Steering Committee has been in existence since the late 1980s.

The Steering Committee is actively involved in rate cases, appeals, rulemakings, and legislative efforts impacting the rates charged by Oncor Electric Delivery Company, LLC within the City.

AHS students to help
with project

Grimes announced that architecture students from Aledo High School will help with a project at King's Gate Park. He said the students are learning about such things as building codes, construction, etc., so city officials invited them to help with the design of a much-needed public restroom at the park.

"We look forward to their designs and seeing what they all come up," Grimes said.

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WEATHERFORD COLLEGE

Online scholarship applications now open

Deadline is March 31

By Crystal Woerly
Weatherford College

Weatherford College has opened its online scholarship application for the 2025-26 academic year, and all students planning to attend WC this fall are encouraged to apply now. The deadline to apply is March 31.

Funded by gifts to the WC Foundation, the college has awarded

\$1.3 million in scholarships over the past three years, \$2.2 million in the past six years and \$3.03 million over the past nine years.

The foundation and WC financial aid office use a user-friendly online application system where students apply once per year. The system then matches students with scholarships that fit them according to various criteria. Students are evaluated based on several factors,

including academic standing, extra-curricular activities/community service and work ethic.

Most students complete the application within 30 minutes.

Incoming freshmen must have applied to WC and received a college ID number and WC email address prior to applying for scholarships.

To get started, go to wc.edu and click on "Paying for WC" and then "Scholarship Opportunities."

The ag barn is essentially finished, with only some final grading and sod work remaining around the exterior of the building. Campbell mentioned if they can get the final inspection completed soon, it may open ahead of schedule.

Aledo giving

Board members Jennifer Taylor and Jeremy Pruett provided some important updates during the giving report. The AdvoCats will host their annual Run, Walk, and Crawl event on March 29 at Tim Buchanan Stadium. It will be a glow run once again this year.

The Run, Walk and Crawl event is the AdvoCats' largest fundraiser of the year.

Also, the Aledo Education Foundation is set to host their 12th Annual Bearcats and Boots event at the Stockyard Station on March 28. The event will feature live entertainment, dinner, a raffle, as well as live and silent auctions.

Tables are filling up fast for that event. To register, visit aledoef.org.

SAFETY

from page one

"Carol Riddle's appointment marks a pivotal moment in Aledo's history," said Mayor Nick Stanley. "Her wealth of experience and dedication to public safety make her the perfect choice to lead the development of our first police department. We're confident that her leadership will ensure a strong foundation for public safety in our growing community."

The selection process for the Public Safety Director began several months ago and included

multiple interviews with the City's public safety consultant, a written exercise, and an interview with a panel of current and former police chiefs, as well as the City's Public Safety Advisory Committee.

"The City of Aledo welcomes Riddle to her new role and looks forward to the successful establishment of the Aledo Police Department" Simon said.

A community meet-and-greet will be scheduled soon, allowing residents to connect with Riddle and learn more about her vision for public safety in Aledo.



CHRISTOPHER AMOS/THE COMMUNITY NEWS

Richard Minnich speaks with Hudson Oaks Police Chief Michael Baldwin during an executive session recess at the January Hudson Oaks City Council meeting. Baldwin reported a decrease in crime in the city during the meeting.

STAAR

from page one

student readiness to move into the next phase of life once they graduate from Aledo.

During his legislative report, Vice President David Lear said the district will continue to lobby our state representatives for more local control in education with the bi-annual Texas State Legislative Session officially underway.

2023 Bond Update

As the two-year anniversary of the 2023 Bond approaches and nearly all the projects are completed, Chief Facilities and Construction Officer Chris Campbell provided another project update to the board.

After several delays Campbell said they hope to close out the construction phase of Lynn McKinney Elementary School by the end of January and move into the warranty phase.

"We obviously don't, in our district, emphasize STAAR to the degree that the state may want us to on a daily basis. Our emphasis is with the PLC measurement by our professional teachers of their own performance, and also we have implementation goals with best teaching practices.

Dr. Susan Bohn

Renovations to the high school are right on queue, as are the Steve Wood Complex and ag barn construction projects. Both of the new structures have been completely closed in since the last update in December and passed their initial inspections.

LAND

from page one

dictated by growth, but we're being proactive in acquiring land so we are ready to expand our public safety services as we grow," PCESD1 Chief Stephen Watson said. "As we have seen recent rapid growth in the southeast part of the county, this site will most certainly benefit many residents as well as solidify our connection to Aledo ISD."

ESD Station 34 sits across the street from Aledo High School-Daniel Ninth Grade Campus on Bailey Ranch Road, and Station 37 is on Thunderhead Lane about ½ mile south of Stuard Elementary School.

These important relationships between Aledo ISD and local cities, developers and the local emergency

services district (ESD) have been forged through many years of working together for the benefit of Eastern Parker County, specifically its students and the Bearcat community. Because of this work, Aledo ISD has been able to complete these two transactions with no impact on the budgeted amount of money for land in the 2023 Aledo ISD Bond.

"With rising prices and rapid development within the 130 square miles of Aledo ISD as well as the desirability of moving to our area, land acquisition is a high priority as we look to our future," Aledo ISD Superintendent Dr. Susan Bohn said. "We are grateful for the Aledo Growth Committee's foresight and thoughtfulness to include funding for land in the Aledo Bond 2023 proposal, for our community's support of the bond proposal, and for

the continued dialogue with our local stakeholders and their understanding of the importance of keeping our school district thriving and growing greatness."

Although sites are being acquired by Aledo ISD, there is no determination being made about the timing or location of the next AISD campus, whether it be an elementary, middle or high school. Having these sites will allow the district flexibility to accommodate growth, and the timing, location and type of school will be recommended by a future citizen-led bond committee after they look at projections for enrollment, demographics, bonding capacity, infrastructure and more. However, the district has been more aggressive in pursuing land for future use in anticipation of future growth.

"It has taken years of relationship building and continuous communication with our local community leaders and developers to work in partnership for land donations to Aledo ISD," Aledo ISD Board of Trustees President Forrest Collins said. "Many of the families who move into these developments move here to become Aledo ISD Bearcats, and we are grateful for how these developers work with us to build up our community's education infrastructure."

Since the district's most recent land transactions have been donations or swap agreements, the district still has \$14.9 million of the original \$17.8 million in bond funds to utilize for future sites.

In 2022-2023, the citizen-led Aledo Growth Committee proposed the 2023 Bond program to Aledo

ISD Trustees and also put together a long-term growth plan that included projections for timing for additional Aledo ISD elementary and middle schools as well additional high school space, whether that be in the form of a traditional high school or a college and career academy. In the last couple of years, Aledo ISD acquired two pieces of property that could serve as sites for a traditional high school and a college career academy.

Any new school construction would begin only after a newly-formed citizen-led growth committee convenes and recommends a bond proposal to Trustees and the community, followed by a successful bond election for the district.

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Robert Casey Stroud, D.D.S., P.C.
Michael Ball, D.D.S., P.L.L.C.



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Capital Highlights

\$1 billion for vouchers, \$5 billion for teachers?



Gary Borders
gborders@texaspress.com

Legislative budget writers are proposing nearly \$5 billion to increase teacher pay and \$1 billion to implement a school voucher program in the next biennium, the *Austin American-Statesman* reported.

The voucher program, also referred to as school choice, would provide public money for private schooling, a key priority for Gov. Greg Abbott that bitterly divided Republican lawmakers two years ago and failed to pass.

In addition, the funding would increase teachers' pay by \$4,000 and give teachers in rural school districts an additional \$6,000, according to a statement by Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick. The early release of budget drafts is a signal that both chambers are getting off to a fast start in laying out their spending priorities.

Both the Senate and House are proposing an additional \$400 million for school safety.

The Senate budget measure also contains \$402 million to hire 567 new Department of Public Safety troopers and 159 related law enforcement personnel.

Patrick backs clarifying state's near-total abortion ban

Patrick said last week that the Legislature should amend the state's near-total abortion ban to address confusion over when doctors can legally terminate pregnancies, *The Texas Tribune* reported.

"I do think we need to clarify any language so that doctors are not in fear of being penalized if they think the life of the mother is at risk," Patrick said.

The state's abortion ban went into effect in 2022. It only allows abortions when the life of the pregnant mother is at risk. A number of doctors have argued the law is unclear.

A ProPublica investigation claims at least two women in the state have died after doctors delayed treating their miscarriages because of concern about possible prosecution. Medical experts consulted by ProPublica concluded the two deaths were preventable.

Sharing chairmanships with minority party to end

A decades-long tradition of giving at least some committee chairmanships to members of the minority party is about to end under proposed rules for the current legislative session, according to the *Statesman*. That means this session that Democrats, who hold 62 of the 150 seats, would be left out of those positions this session, though committee vice chairmanships would be given to them.

"The rule is amended to restrict the appointment of chairs of a standing committee to those members of the political party that constitutes a majority of the House membership and to provide that a majority party member may not be appointed as a vice chair of a standing committee," the synopsis of the proposed rules says.

The change comes after then-Speaker Dade Phelan continued the bipartisan tradition in the 2023 session and drew criticism from GOP leaders such as Patrick and Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton.

RRC seeks \$100 million to fix leaky oil and gas wells

The cost and frequency of plugging leaking oil and gas wells has prompted the Texas Railroad Commission to request an additional \$100 million in funding to address the issue, according to the *Houston Chronicle*. If granted, that would increase the RRC's state-funded budget by about 75% for the current fiscal year.

The cost to plug wells gushing with contaminated water has risen dramatically. The commission spent about \$13 million on two plugging projects last September, according to the *Chronicle*. Fees and fines paid by the oil and gas industry have in the past covered the costs of plugging wells, but the increased costs and complexity of plugging wells has largely outgrown the revenue being received.

"The 89th Legislature will thoroughly evaluate the commission's funding request and work with industry experts to better understand this compounding problem," Sen. Joan Huffman, R-Houston, and chairperson of the Senate Committee on Finance, said in a statement.

The RRC should do more to hold operators accountable for plugging their own wells, according to the director of one watchdog organization.

"We have a robust oil and gas industry, the biggest in the country," Virginia Palacios, executive director of Commission Shift, said. "There's no reason why such a profitable industry shouldn't be able to pay for its own cleanup."

Texans urged to report winter weather damages

Abbott is urging Texans affected by recent winter

weather to report any property and agricultural damages to the Texas Division of Emergency Management's portal: damage.tdem.texas.gov.

"As communities begin the recovery process, I urge Texans to report damages to their homes or businesses or any agricultural losses through the iSTAT damage survey," Abbott said. "This will help the state determine if we qualify for federal assistance."

Winter storms brought considerable snowfall recently to areas of South Texas and the Gulf Coast that rarely see the white stuff. Several storm-related deaths were reported in Austin and Houston.

2024 was hottest on record, but rainfall totals varied

It's hardly news to Texans who lived through it, but last year was the hottest on record, according to Dr. Mark Wentzel, hydrologist with the Texas Water Development Board. The previous record was set in 2023.

Precipitation proved to be a mixed bag, depending on the region, though October and August were extremely dry pretty much across the state. Twelve counties in East Texas had their wettest year in the past 130 years, while Jeff Davis and Presidio counties in West Texas, and Uvalde County in Central Texas recorded their driest year since 2011.

"Drought began the year covering 39 percent of the state and expanded to cover 44 percent by the end of the year. Statewide, storage in our water supply reservoirs saw an annual increase for the first time since 2018, up five percentage points during 2024," Wentzel wrote.

Turn to **VOUCHER**, page 7

Look at it This Way

A real life horror story

A man, a dozer and a tale of revenge



Rick Mauch
sports@community-news.com

Those who know me well know my affinity for the mountains of Colorado. With my daughter, son-in-law, and precious granddaughter living in Denver, the lovely Mrs. Junell and I are fortunate to be able to make it up to those heavenly cascades with each change of season.

Anyone who has ever visited or lived there, as we did for a couple years, knows it's a plethora of adventure with each new day.

And while you'd think that after a decade of exploring the state I might know pretty much all there is about it — it's not that big, after all. However, as I discovered, I'm still learning.

A recent visit took us to the small mountain town of Granby — not to be confused with Granbury, though both are quite charming in their own way. But something happened a couple decades ago in Granby that will hopefully never happen in our more local town with a similar name — or anywhere, for that matter.

In the summer of 2004, what began as a dispute between the city and a local business owner elevated into one of the most

unusual and terrifying responses imaginable.

How it started

With the Continental Divide in the background, Granby had always been a peaceful setting. Snowmobiles are still regularly ridden through the nearby trails in the dead of winter as a regular pastime.

But a businessman named Marvin Heemeyer brought a dark side to the community one unforgettable day. The entire story is documented in a book titled *Killdozer* by Patrick F. Brower, former editor of the *Sky-Hi News*, Granby's weekly newspaper.

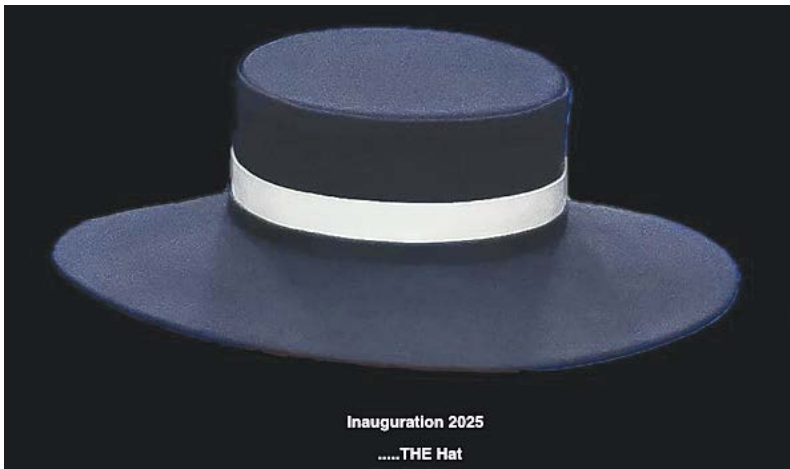
It is also told in a documentary named *Tread*, named so because the title *Killdozer* was taken in a 1970s cheesy horror flick starring Clint Walker and Robert Ulrich.

It all began when Heemeyer had a dispute with the local city leaders concerning property disputes. This led to him ultimately being forced to sell his business to his arch enemy, also setting in motion a plot of revenge unlike any other.

The dreadful day

Heemeyer spent the next year and a half in seclusion building an impenetrable wrecking machine. He fortified a bulldozer that he had secretly brought in during the middle of the night with concrete and steel, a much larger "War Wagon" for those familiar with the John Wayne/Kirk Douglas western.

Turn to **HORROR**, page 7



Idle American

A hat that stays put



Dr. Don Newbury
newbury@speakerdoc.com

My aged Uncle Mort admitted the other day that he feels like it's time for him to re-enter the stock market, and this time, "brimming with confidence."

He swore off trying to out-guess the market in the late 1990s.

Mort said he lumped all of his investments into "sweet chariot stocks." I'd never heard of such, but his next sentence clarified: "When I bought 'em, they swung low," he cackled.

He feels certain that wide-brimmed hats for ladies are going to make a comeback after several decades in storage, with owners hoping to live long enough to see them make a comeback.

Many after-the-fact comments about the recent

presidential inauguration concern Melania Trump's hat, nearly as big as a covered wagon wheel and ample space to carve a turkey.

"Lots of women are on shopping sprees right now, trying to find hats like hers," Mort said. "And they're not finding available at the Dollar Store."

It appears to me that her hat provided a personal "border wall," allowing "cheek pecks" to reach within two inches of intended targets. I'm not sure how she'd make it flying coach on today's airliners. (Duh, she wouldn't be flying coach.) I guess she could take a middle seat, then buy seats on each side so she could leave her hat on.

The subject reminds me of my ingenious uncle who, as a lad, was usher at the local movie house. This was in the 1920s, before "talkies." All they had were jumpy figures with captions.

He said the manager staged a contest among the ushers to see how the problem of women wearing huge hats could somehow be persuaded to remove

Turn to **HAT**, page 7



Shining Example

Rhonda Torres lights the way for others

By Randy Keck
The Community News

RANDY KECK/THE COMMUNITY NEWS

Rhonda Torres shared her life and her faith in a New Year's Day interview.

In the early 1990s when Aledo School Board member Rhonda Torres would meet with Superintendent Willard Stuard in a little white house that stood in front of what is now Aledo Middle School, her young daughter Niki would sit on the floor, playing with toys Stuard kept in a basket for just such occasions.

The little white house served as the Aledo ISD Administration building, and when the two met there they probably never thought that Stuard would one day have a school named after him, and Torres would set in motion an annual event that has raised hundreds of thousands of dollars to help families hit with catastrophic medical expenses.

In the years before those meetings in the little white house, and in the years since, Rhonda Torres has devoted her life to education in the classroom, on the school board, and as a life example.

"When we moved out here, it was very small, and I wanted to see if I could make a difference," Rhonda said.

In what would perhaps become a life pattern, she put together a group of women who went door-to-door to campaign for her race for school board — and she won convincingly.

During her 15 years on the school board (1984-1999), which included terms as secretary, vice president, and president, Rhonda said she learned a lot.

"I think everybody should serve in community service," she said. "It taught me that the people that sit on the other side of the table actually are making decisions that you don't have the full information on. So, it's taught me to respect people that are making decisions because I might not know everything."

Sitting on the other side of the table gives you a new perspective, she added.

The school board in those early years usually met in a school cafeteria, and were not nearly so structured as they are today.

"I look at board meetings now — how professional they run their board meeting," she said. "We were Wild, Wild West. We'd meet in the Bearcat Den. And if it was taxes or anything, they'd yell out from the audience and say things, but it was good, because everybody has a voice and you should respect their voices."

"It was a little different atmosphere then, as compared to now, but the issues are really the same. It was growth, it was pay, getting qualified teachers. But I'll tell you one thing, Aledo always did a good job of getting quality teachers. We still do."

Journey of an educator

Before a 40-year career at Weatherford College, Rhonda started her journey there as a student before moving on to Texas Women's University, where she received a B.A. of Education, Minor in English in 1976, and an M.A. in Education with a Specialization in Reading in 1979.

She began her teaching career in Bridgeport, where she took on the task of educating developmentally-challenged students.

It was a task she took on with relish, accepting a challenge few would want.

"I always thought that anybody can teach kids who know how to learn," Rhonda said. "If I have a class of people that are learners and know how to do it independently, all I have to do is guide them. The real people that need the teachers are those who don't know how to learn. And that's where I started my career, working with developmental students."

Rhonda took those skills to Weatherford College in 1983, where she was an adjunct faculty member in developmental reading/writing for about seven years. She became a full faculty member in 1990.

"I worked with developmental all my career, and always took pride in that," she said. "I've had, the best career I could ever have, and all of it is the people I work with, my colleagues, the students number one, the people you help along the way. It's very rewarding to see someone come in that maybe had an addiction, and they're wanting to turn their lives around, and somebody that has a learning disability, and you show them the light. That's what it's all about."

She described Weatherford College as a "little bitty place" when she arrived there. Most recently, under the leadership of President Tod Allen Farmer, she said Weatherford College has come into its own.

"Dr Farmer has really opened the door to progress, and we've just grown in every aspect. We have bachelor programs. We have world-class dorm facilities. We have excellent athletics. We excel in every area," she said. "When you get a bachelor's degree at Weatherford, you pay community college prices."

She also pointed out that Weatherford College now has top-tier nursing and medical programs.

Rhonda moved into the role of director of developmental reading and writing from 1997-1998, and then served as associate dean of instructional support in 1998-1999. She became dean of education and instructional support in 2001, a position she served in until her retirement last year.

Farmer said "As both a Weatherford College educator and an Aledo ISD trustee, Rhonda clearly understood the value of education in our society. She had a profoundly positive impact on the students and institutions of Parker County and the surrounding area."

Educator outside the box

In addition to her official role as educator, Rhonda has also spent her life teaching through word and deed, using her examples of service, her giving to the community, and her faith in the face of adversity.

In addition to her tenure on the school board, Rhonda's community service has included being the chairperson of the Texas Association of Developmental Educators, scholarship chairperson and scholarship committee member for the Aledo Children's AdvoCats, Center of Hope Campaign board member, executive director of the Aledo Thanksgiving Trot, and executive secretary and board member of the East Parker County Chamber of Commerce.

Early on Rhonda discovered Aledo United Methodist Church,



RANDY KECK/THE COMMUNITY NEWS

Rhonda Torres (second from left) is shown with daughter Niki, Husband Leonard, and son Josh at her Weatherford College retirement reception on Aug. 16, 2024.

where she and husband Leonard have attended and served for years.

There is a core group of women in that church, of which Rhonda is a member, affectionally known as the "Aledo Mafia." When there is service to be done, Rhonda and women like Sharlyn Poe, Rhonda Ray, Sally Bond, Marsha Ancona, and a host of others jump in whenever there is a need.

They sold cookbooks for the church, they helped prepare food, and did the things that groups of women all over the world do for their churches.

Rhonda was quick to point out that she and her peers at the church were not the first.

"We rode on the backs of a lot of people like Nelda McGlinchy," Rhonda said. "It's been a blessing to be a member of that church."

About 13 years ago, Rhonda and her son, Josh, hatched an idea to hold a 5k race on Thanksgiving morning to assist a family that was hit with catastrophic medical costs. Families who experience such situations not only deal with massive medical bills, but at the same time experience loss of income from work for one or perhaps two wage earners in a family.

The Aledo Mafia was quick to jump on board, and in 2011 the inaugural Aledo Thanksgiving Trot was held at Rhonda and Leonard's house. Proceeds from the race benefited Marcia Walters, who had recently had a lung transplant.

In the annual running of this event, the recipient family one year tends to jump in and help the following year, and Walters did just that, helping shape future races. Recently the race was renamed the Marcia Walters Memorial Thanksgiving Trot in her memory.

The race, which outgrew Rhonda's house, now launches from Tim Buchanan Stadium each year, and typically hosts 3,000 runners or more — people who are willing to get up early on a holiday morning and go run a 5k to benefit someone they might not even know.

And while the recipients are always thankful, Rhonda said "The blessing is ours - we're blessed to live in a great community that supports good causes!"

The power of faith

In recent years Rhonda has faced a Parkinson's Disease, a chronic and progressive neurological disorder.

"It's a very humbling disease, because you have to depend on other people," Rhonda said. "It affects my speech, my walking, my talking. You know, it just kind of slows you down. They say Parkinson's doesn't kill you. It's like if you get pneumonia or something like that. But I'm not gonna die anytime soon."

Despite the disease, Rhonda wakes up each day finding something to be grateful for.

"Before, I thought all I did, that I did it," Rhonda said. "I didn't do it. God did all of it. He really did it. It made me more aware of that, and God is the person, and I don't fear it, because I know that God is going to be with me throughout it. So why do you fear it? He's not going to let you go."

Rhonda does not subscribe to the "Why me?" syndrome.

"Why not me?" Rhonda said. "Marcia Walters used to say, 'Why not me?' You know, do I want Niki to have it? No."

"It's very humbling, and it's taught me — I'm more compassionate, I'm more grateful. So, I have to say that it's not all bad. I just trust God. I trust him. He's gonna see me through it. And if you can have that trust and develop that trust, then you don't have to worry about it. There you go. I don't have any fear, and that's a peaceful place to be."

In the midst of the Parkinson's battle, a few years ago Rhonda developed breast cancer.

"The whole time I was upset about it. I was crying about it," Niki said. "Not one time did she (Rhonda) say anything about it. She did, but she just said He (God) had it all."

"The minute I was diagnosed, I thought, 'I can't carry this burden by myself along with Parkinson's'" Rhonda said. "I said, 'God, take it from me.' And I never worried about it. I never was concerned about it from that point on. So, I think it deepened my faith. I've always had a strong faith, but it really became real. It made my faith real to me."

Faith doesn't always make the mechanics of day-to-day life easier for you - that is what Leonard is for.

"It's hard to have your independence taken away from you. But I'm so lucky — Leonard — we say we're living our marriage vows," Rhonda said. "He's wonderful. He takes great care of me. Now we still disagree and argue about some things like the black-eyed peas he's cooking. I'm still gonna try to tell him about it."

It was pointed out that you wouldn't be married if you didn't argue, to which Niki added, "and you wouldn't be Rhonda if you didn't try to tell him."

The faith Rhonda leans on is the faith she has lived out in her life. She has, in a very real way, spent her life casting her bread upon the water.

"Mom used to get the bulletins from church, and on the back, there would be a list of concerns, prayers," Niki said. "And she would circle people. And then that week, you would find cards that she had written. She might not know these people, but she had gotten an address, and she would send them cards."

She now has stacks of cards she has received, mainly from members of her church family.

While she doesn't see an imminent end of things, there does come a time when you realize you are probably in the fourth quarter.

It's caused us (the family) to talk about all things we would never talk about," Rhonda said. "The kids have had a chance to ask me questions. I've had a chance to tell them things. And one thing I told him, I said, 'Don't cry at my funeral. Go play pickleball. Because I'm gonna be playing pickleball in heaven, and that's how I feel about it. Life is just to prepare us for the bigger life, the everlasting life'"

What we take with us

Niki reflected on her mother's illness this way: "Hard things like this in life will refine you if you will let it, but you have to let it. And if you sit around and you're sad about it all the time, it doesn't help. I think about my kids, and I think about mom, and I think about how the only thing we can control is what you give to other people and what you leave them with. Mom has a sign in her laundry room, and it says, 'What you do for yourself dies with you, what you do for others lives for eternity.'"

More events can be found at www.community-news.com/calendar



FEBRUARY 1

Howard Way Park Ribbon Cutting

The City of Aledo invites everyone to the ribbon cutting for Howard Way Park Ribbon Cutting at 10 a.m. on February 1 at 344 Howard Way Drive, Aledo, Texas 76008. Join in celebrating the grand re-opening of the park featuring its exciting new playground!



FEBRUARY 8

"Share the Love Day"

Weatherford Wags is having Share the Love Day from 11 a.m.- 2 p.m. on February 8, at 209 N. Front Street in Aledo. The "LOVE" puppies will be making their appearance at Two Sisters Teahouse and Boutique! Stop by for Lattes, create your own flower bouquets, unique vendors and each purchase of \$25.00 is entered into a raffle for a basket with gift cards & fun items from our stores! Plus, 10% of sales will be donated to Weatherford Wags Rescue! All puppies are available for adoption through Weatherford Wags!

To be pre-approved find adoption questionnaire here: <https://www.weatherfordwags.org/adopt/adoption-questionnaire>



FEBRUARY 10

Red Cross Blood Drive

The Red Cross is holding a blood drive from 12 - 5p.m. on Mon, Feb 10, at the Weatherford Public Library 1014 Charles St Weatherford, TX Visit RedCrossBlood.org to register for the Red Cross Drive at the Weatherford Public Library. You can also call 1-800-REDCROSS to make an appointment. <https://www.weatherfordtx.gov/calendar.aspx?EID=6469>

FEBRUARY 11

Dementia Support Group

Join the Dementia Support Group from 4-5 p.m. at Harvest of Aledo 1043 Bailey Ranch Rd. Even more so, we value the efforts of the caregivers, especially the families of our residents. This meeting will take place on the second Tuesday of every month. For more information call 682-209-0643

FEBRUARY 13

Alzheimer's Group

The East Parker County Alzheimer's Group meets from 1-3 p.m. on the second Thursday of each month at Aledo United Methodist Church, 100 Pecan. Drive.

For more information, call 817-441-8329.



FEBRUARY 28

Young Life Mahjong Brunch

Mahjong Fundraiser benefiting Aledo Young Life in their mission to introduce ALL teenagers in Aledo, Texas to Christ and help them grow in their faith! Join us at Stillwater Meadow from 9a.m. - 12p.m. on Friday, February 28 . Create a team if you are the Table Captain or join a team if you have been invited to play! Get creative with those team names ladies, let's have some fun! Register: <https://tx485.younglife.team/mahjong>

MARCH 4

Mardi Gras Festival

Join us for our 3rd Annual Mardi Gras Festival from 6-9p.m. on March 4, at the Weatherford College - Alkek Fine Arts Center. We'll have mouthwatering food, a gumbo cook-off that'll spice things up, live music to get you moving, and plenty of activities to keep the kids entertained. Let the good times roll!



ACROSS

1 home of Marching Green Pride band

5 state ____ has "a star of five points"

6 a SE Asian deer found in Texas

7 TXism: "up and ____ juice" (coffee)

8 ____ Ross State University in Alpine

9 TX Jerry Fuller wrote "Travelin'" for Ricky Nelson

12 TXism: "he's fast enough to yesterday"

17 grunting while sleeping

19 TXism: "hot ____ tar in July"

21 ____ Zaragoza Seguin was born in today's Goliad, TX

22 this Stephenson was in soap opera "Texas"

23 TX Pride's " ____ Angel Good Mornin'"

28 TXism: "could shoot the eye out of a ____ (good shot)"

29 " ____ up for"

30 TXism: "he couldn't ____ plastic worm" (bad fisher)

31 organized church singers

35 to fish on a Texas lake, get ____

36 TXism: "gentle ____ merry-go-round"

42 study of society

44 short letter (2 wds.)

46 obscene language

48 to falsely incriminate someone (3 wds.)

49 "we ____ out for pizza"

50 Texas high school football night (abbr.)

51 "not one red ____" (none)

52 TXism: " ____ up the loose ends" (finalize)

53 TX Meat Loaf's " ____ Anything for Love" (1993)

54 pleased

56 measure of a country's economy (abbr.)

57 arrival guess abbr.

58 Texas television "Tarzan," Ely

DOWN

1 JFK ____ was 11/22/1963

2 New Braunfels Herald- ____

3 popular Austin body of water (2 wds.)

4 Jack of "4 for Texas"

9 mineral in Texas, used in makeup

10 TXism: "got ____ finger" (nervous)

11 "Stop- ____" convenience store

12 this Smith was a "Texas Troubadour" before solo career

13 TXism: "slippery ____ pig"

14 Matt Damon was a Texas Ranger in 2010 " ____ Grit"

15 in Comanche: "Old ____ Courthouse"

16 TXism: "he's got a ____-trigger temper"

18 TXism: "burned some boot leather"

20 fleur- ____-lis once flew over Texas

23 Phoenix Suns, Durant, who played for UT (init.)

24 acct. that could be a "Roth"

25 cries loudly

13 TXism: "slippery ____ pig"

14 Matt Damon was a Texas Ranger in 2010 " ____ Grit"

15 in Comanche: "Old ____ Courthouse"

16 TXism: "he's got a ____-trigger temper"

18 TXism: "burned some boot leather"

20 fleur- ____-lis once flew over Texas

23 Phoenix Suns, Durant, who played for UT (init.)

24 acct. that could be a "Roth"

25 cries loudly

37 ____ of a gun

38 Christmas offering (2 wds.)

39 TXism: "it'll make your hair stand ____" (scary)

40 ____ worry (no cause for concern)

41 Univ. of Central Texas before 1989 poetic "often"

45 "The King" (init.)

47 triangle sign says ____ traffic

48 corrosive liquid

55 what you fry bacon in (2 wds.)

TEXAS CROSSWORD

by Charley & Guy Orbison

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P-1724

Event Submissions: Send event submissions to events@community-news.com. Please include time, date, and place of the event, a short description, and phone/email for obtaining further information, along with photos, graphics, or flyers.

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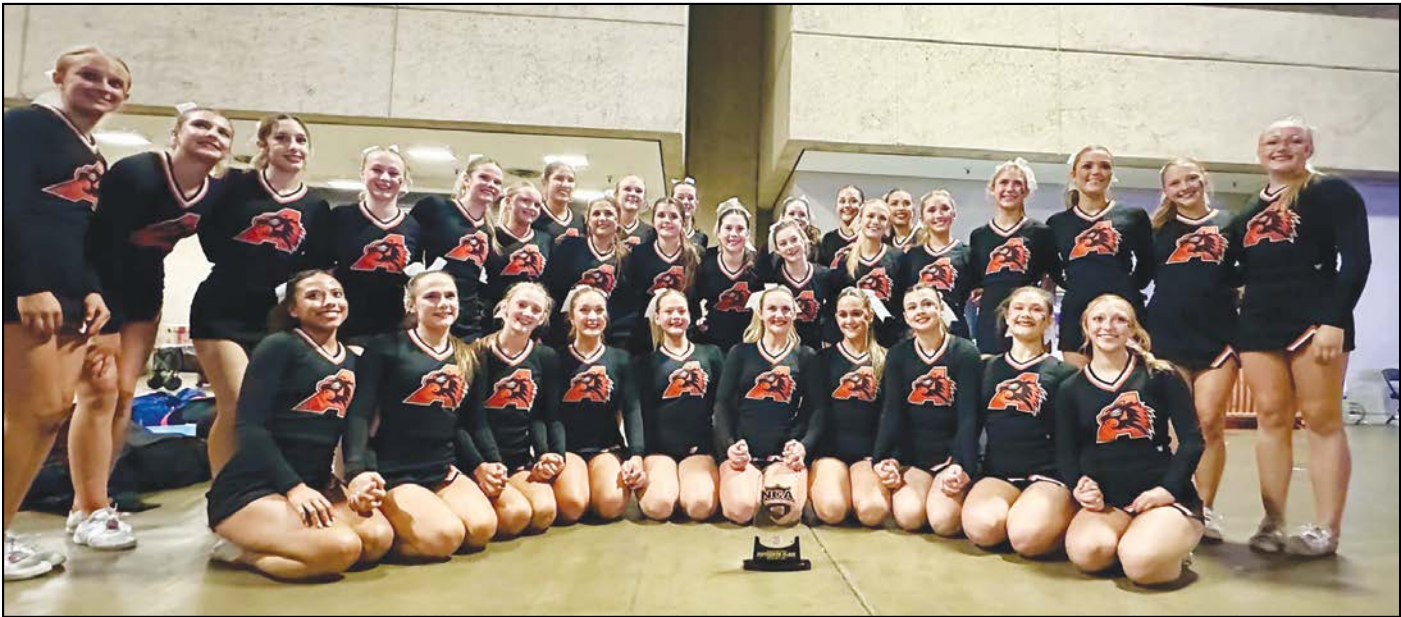
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CHEERLEADING

AHS cheerleaders compete at nationals



The Aledo varsity cheerleaders are shown at the national championships on Jan. 25.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF MICHELLE LANSFORD

JV finishes in second, varsity 15th

Special to The Community News

Aledo High School cheerleaders competed in the National Cheerleading Association (NCA) National Championship in Fort Worth on Jan. 26 against top cheer teams from all around the United States.

Aledo JV cheer 30 girl team consisting of freshman, sophomore, and junior students competed in Game Day JV Large division and finished in second place.

AHS Varsity 30 girl team of sophomores, juniors, and seniors competed in Game Day Varsity Large Team Division, and finished 15th out of more than 50 teams.

HAT

from page 4

them so folks behind them could see the screen. Mort was creative even then. He made a printed sign and placed it at the entrance. It read: "Ladies over age 40 need not remove their hats." Problem solved; Mort won the contest. Meanwhile, President 47 took time from signing executive orders to decree that the Gulf of Mexico will henceforth be named "Gulf of America." Such may have occurred to other folks, but I've never heard it mentioned. The decree begs numerous questions. First of all, who named it, and when? How much of the gulf is owned by the USofA? Finally, is it really a gulf? Cursory research reveals that the gulf had no name until the 1540s, when most maps and documents referred to it as the "Golfo de Nueva Espanol," from Greek mythology and its Sea of Atlas. People who know far more than I about such say that it is not really a gulf, but more nearly a sea, in many cases larger than bodies of water that are called oceans and seas. I dunno, but Mort might want to consider investing in map-making and/or t-shirt lettering. Presses already are rolling. "Loyalty" was a word frequently heard during the recent inauguration, and likely in all the ones before it. It's a trait to be valued, but few have seen evidence "up close" to match Dr. Charles Wade's recollection. He was pastor of Arlington First Baptist Church for 23 years until 1999, when he became Executive Director of the Baptist General Convention. In Arlington, he succeeded Dr. Henard E. East, on staff there for 53 years. Someone asked him about loyalty to Dr. Wade. "Let me put it this way," he said. "If Dr. Wade decides to paint the steeple pink, I'll climb up there with him and hold the bucket."

Dr. Newbury, longtime university president, continues to speak and write. The Idle American, begun in 2003, is one of the longest-running syndicated columns. Contact: 817-447-3872. Email: newbury@speakerdoc.com. Website: www.speakerdoc.com.

VOUCHER

from page 4

State records most tornadoes in 2024

Preliminary data from the National Weather Service's Storm Prediction Center indicates the United States experienced a record 1,855 tornadoes in 2024, breaking a 20-year-old record. Texas led the nation with 169 tornadoes last year, more than doubling the 2023 total of 78. Dozens of tornadoes were spawned by several tropical storms and hurricanes. For example, Hurricane Beryl, which landed at Matagorda in early July, spawned at least 65 confirmed tornadoes. A total of 53 fatalities were caused by tornadoes across the U.S., including nine in Texas from three twisters. 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, Lufkin and Cedar Park. Email: gborders@texaspress.com.

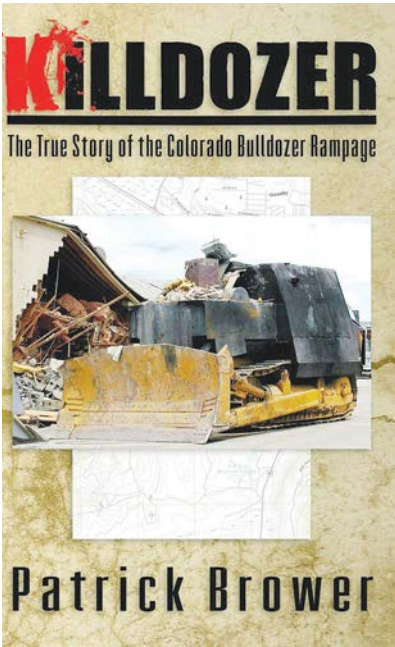
HORROR

from page 4

Then, one day that began as peaceful as they regularly do in mountain towns, the sky erupted with a thunderous noise. The Killdozer escaped its containment by bursting through one of the walls. Heemeyer then proceeded to drive through downtown Granby, destroying everything within its path. "We live up by the propane tanks. We watched a lot of it," said long-time resident Angie Kuczkowski. "It was scary. It was unreal." Try as they might, law enforcement officers could not get to Heemeyer, who was driving. Bullets deflected off the Killdozer like Superman. Heemeyer had created a device of destruction that would rival any tank on the planet. Buildings that had stood for decades were suddenly nothing more than rubble. Bits of history were instantly reduced to shreds, all while people were running in terror for a place to hide — those who weren't petrified in place by the sheer unbelievable and horrifying occurrence unfolding before them.

Meanwhile, he continued on his destructive path, with one particular destination. He was headed for the "Sky-Hi News" offices and Brower, who he believed had wronged him with his reporting of the strife between Heemeyer and the council. And yes, he did reach the news building, destroying it. Brower managed to escape, and the Killdozer became stuck. Realizing he was trapped, Heemeyer ended his rampage by taking his own life with a gun. It was most likely his planned ending from the outset. "Bullets were just bouncing off this thing," recalled James Henley as if the incident were the day before. "I will never forget that day if I live to be a hundred and fifty." Ironically, Heemeyer is the only person who died in the infamous incident. The aftermath Today, Granby is completely rebuilt, though images of it in shambles following the attack will blow your mind. "It took years to rebuild the town," Henley said. "It kind of put us on the map, though that's definitely not how you want to become famous."

"If you watch that documentary Tread it comes across as a descent into madness, and I suppose that's about the best way to describe what he was going through." Like many towns, Granby has seen a change in population. Some folks moved away, some passed away and a whole new set of residents have since made Granby their home. "I watched the documentary and then we ended up moving here. It's funny how fate works sometimes," said Rebecca Hightower. "I don't think Granby is ever going to escape what happened, but it really is a nice place to live." There has been talk of commemorating the event, but why? Fortunately, city leaders have taken the high road and turned away such requests. The story made world news, of course. However, it was quickly removed from the headlines as former President Ronald Reagan passed away the next day. Plaque or no plaque, Granby is nonetheless famous, its place in history secured by one of the strangest and most frightening days ever recorded.



The book "Killdozer" tells the true story of how a man in Granby, Colorado built a machine of destruction out of a bulldozer and then rampaged the city.

LETTERS POLICY

The Community News welcomes letters from readers on topics of local interest. Please include a telephone number or other contact information so the identity of the letter writer can be verified. Send letters to The Community News, P.O. Box 1031, Aledo, TX 76008 or e-mail to news@community-news.com.

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SWIMMING

Ladycats, Bearcats second in district



AVERY FAULKNER

LEFT: Sophomore Brayden DeBoer won all four of the events in which he competed, the only Aledo swimmer to do so at the District 5-5A Meet. | RIGHT Sydney Kellam was the lone freshman to win a gold medal for the Ladycats at the District 5-5A Swim Meet.

Qualify 17 for regionals

By Rick Mauch
The Community News

For University Interscholastic League Class 5A swimming, the road to Austin runs through Mansfield, and 17 Aledo swimmers will be making the first journey in that trek thank to their performances in the District 5-5A Meet Jan. 24-25.

The Ladycats and Bearcats each finished second as a team behind Granbury in the league meet at the Justin Northwest ISD Natatorium. In doing so, nine girls and eight boys qualified to compete at the 5A Region II Meet at the Mansfield ISD Natatorium on Feb. 7-8.

From there, the top two swimmers in each event qualify for state, along with the next eight fastest in each event from across all eight regions.

Three Aledo swimmers, all Ladycats, will seek a return to state. Seniors Haley Roberson and Victoria Crews, in fact, are vying for a fourth straight appearance, while junior Julia Gordy is looking for a second consecutive trip.

Roberson was named the Female Swimmer of the Meet at district this season after winning a pair of gold medals individually, along with swimming on a gold medal

and silver medal relay. She won one of her races by a whopping 49 seconds.

“Haley is an incredibly hard working athlete - this award was earned with sometimes up to 20 hours a week in the pool,” Aledo coach Meghan Roberson said. “She loves this sport and this team. She’s an excellent leader and role model for our underclassmen.”

One of those underclassmen, freshman Sydney Kellam, won the

other individual gold medal for the Ladycats.

Brayden DeBoer also won two gold medals individually for the Bearcats, as well as swimming on two gold medal relays.

“He was our high point contributor - the only one to win all of his events,” coach Roberson said.

Ian Perez and Kale Roberson won the other individual gold

Turn to **SWIMMING**, page 9

BASKETBALL

Aledo earns home sweep over Fossil Ridge

Ladycats and Bearcats both win close contests

By Geoff Heppes
The Community News

The Aledo Ladycats and Bearcats basketball teams hosted an intense doubleheader Friday night, Jan. 24 against visiting Fossil Ridge as both Aledo squads continue to fight for playoff positioning.

In the end, the Aledo varsity teams got the edge on the hardwood while the subsvarsity squads were also victorious. The Ladycats varsity edged Fossil Ridge 55-52 while the Bearcats earned a 53-47 victory.

Ladycats

“I am so beyond proud of these kids. They had so many opportunities to give up, they got down, went on an 8-0 run late ... but we stayed connected and stayed focused,” Ladycats head coach Donnie Ott said. “They stayed committed to each other throughout the game and did it in front of middle school kids that look up to these girls.”

The game was nip-and-tuck late, but big plays and big shots by the Ladycats (18-11, 7-2 in District 5-5A) - including a tie-breaking 3-pointer - helped Aledo secure a critical victory with just three league contests remaining.

“Brenna (Clock) stayed with her composure and she’s not afraid to

shoot those big shots,” Ott said. “Her late three was the dealbreaker right there. When she hit that shot right there, it really just put a nail in it and we had the momentum to close it out.”

Tiara Butler led the way with 16 points while Elizabeth Griffin scored nine points. Ella Isbell had eight points while Brooklyn Dempsey and Kinley Elms each recorded seven points. Clock added her clutch long ball as well.

“We have Saginaw, Granbury and Azle left down the stretch. If we take care of business the rest of the way, then we should have the top big-school seed in the playoff bracket, which would likely match us up against Birdville,” Ott said. “Right now, we just have to stay committed to getting better. I think we are hitting that peak, that stride, so we just want to keep growing in that direction.”

Bearcats

Meanwhile, the boys team overcame a tough shooting night to secure another key district win to keep the Bearcats (24-4, 8-0 in District 5-5A) alone atop the district standings as they seek the first district championship in program history.

“I thought our guys played really hard even though we shot the ball poorly,” Bearcats head coach Brian Blackburn said. “I take ownership of the poor shooting performance,

but the game didn’t have much of a flow outside of the first quarter. It’s tough to keep your rhythm through a choppy game, which I think affected the guys. At the same time, it’s a testament to our guys to be able to pull out a win in a game like this.”

The Bearcats outscored the Panthers 19-8 in the first quarter but the Bearcats needed a late push to pull away from Fossil Ridge. Aledo reached double-figure scoring in each quarter as well.

Joaquin Pacheco led the boys’ efforts with 19 points while Townes Van Huysen added nine points. Enrique Pacheco finished with eight points while Kaiden Clayborn scored five. “We have eight district wins now and every district win is important,” Blackburn said. “Going forward, our guys know we are going to have to play better than that to get to where we want to go, and that will start with a tough road game Tuesday at Saginaw.”

The Ladycats and Bearcats were playing at Saginaw at press time. They host Granbury for Senior Night on Friday, Jan. 31, girls at 6:15 p.m. and boys to follow.

Turn to **HOOPS**, page 11

WON’T BE SILENCED: Joaquin Pacheco splits two defenders in the lane on his way to the basket during the Bearcats’ 53-47 win over Fossil Ridge on Friday, Jan. 24.

RYAN WADE/THE COMMUNITY NEWS



LADYCAT OF THE WEEK



Avery Sands Soccer

The freshman was a key player in wins over Brewer (4-1) and Fort Worth Trimble Tech (6-0). She scored three goals and assisted on three others.

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BEARCAT OF THE WEEK



Brayden DeBoer Swimming

The sophomore won all four events in which he competed at the District 5-5A Meet this past weekend. He took first individually in the 200-yard individual medley and the 500 freestyle, along with swimming on the winning 200 medley relay and the 400 freestyle relay.

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SWIMMING

from page 8

medals for Aledo and each also swam on both relays.

“We had a remarkable swim today from sophomore Ian Perez in the 100 butterfly, he’s one to watch the rest of this season. He was seeded third going into the race,” coach Roberson said. “Freshman Sydni Kellam also put together a great come-from-behind win in the 100 breaststroke. She was the only freshman to top the podium in an individual event.

“Sophomore Kale Roberson’s 100 freestyle is a tough race to come out on top, and he took a commanding win there.

“While we look to graduate out seven seniors this season, our underclassmen are proving they can contribute too.”

The coach also praised the marked improvement from last season to this one.

“I’m incredibly proud of this team and how they’re doing. Last year both boys and girls took third so we’re happy to move to runners up,” she said. “They’re working hard to improve with their eye on region-als. I’m excited to see how we do.”

District 5-5A Swim Meet at Northwest ISD Natatorium

Girls Team - Second in district behind Granbury

Haley Roberson was named Female Swimmer of the Meet

200 Yard Freestyle: 3.Julia Gordy, 2:14.56; 8. Natalie North, 3:14.75 (1.51 second drop in time).

200 Yard Individual Medley: 1. Haley Roberson, 2:08.56 (won by 13 seconds).

50 Yard Freestyle: 7. Brooklynn Wilson, 30.71 (0.92 second drop); 8. Hannah Peckham, 30.75 (0.61 second drop).

100 Yard Butterfly: 3. Victoria Crews, 1:03.52; 6. Aurora Dingman, 1:26.28.

100 Yard Freestyle: 2. Mackenzie Oligschlaeger, 59.55; 3. Julia Gordy, 1:00.90.

500 Yard Freestyle: 1. Haley Roberson, 5:09.36 (won by 49 seconds); 4. Molly Garrison, 5:59.47 (2.63 second drop); 7. Hannah Peckham, 7:04.15.

200 Yard Freestyle Relay: 2. Crews, Gordy, Oligschlaeger, Roberson, 1:46.45.

100 Yard Backstroke: 2. Oligschlaeger, 1:10.16; 4. Ava Curnutt, 1:14.53 (3.59 second drop); 5. Brooklynn Wilson, 1:23.06 (3.36 second drop); 7. North, 1:29.85 (5.47 second drop)

100 Yard Breaststroke: 1. Sydni Kellam, 1:14.99 (0.22 second drop); 2. Crews, 1:16.03; 4. Molly Garrison, 1:21.56 (2.13 second drop); 7. Aurora Dingman, 1:29.78.

400 Yard Freestyle Relay: 1. Crews, Gordy, Oligschlaeger, Roberson, 3:56.34 (won by 13 seconds).

Boys Team - Second in district behind Granbury

200 Yard Medley Relay: 1. Jaxon Robinson (backstroke), Ian Perez (breaststroke), Brayden DeBoer (butterfly), Kale Roberson (freestyle), 1:47.21 (3.86 second drop).

200 Yard Freestyle: 4. Robinson, 2:01.85; 5. Evan Bradley, 2:04.62.

200 Yard Individual Medley: 1. DeBoer, 2:11.17 (1.49 second drop, won by 17 seconds).

50 Yard Freestyle: 3. Roberson, 23.36 (0.24 second drop); 11. Lucas Todd, 28.32 (1.02 second drop)

100 Yard Butterfly: 1. Perez, 55.74 (0.38 second drop); 5. Bradley, 1:01.19; 6. Bradyn Baughman, 1:04.26 (2.49 second drop).

100 Yard Freestyle: 1. Roberson, 50.42 (1.53 second drop); 8. Michael Spillers, 1:00.47; 11. Todd, 1:05.69.

500 Yard Freestyle: 1. DeBoer, 5:24.76 (8.10 second drop, won by 11 seconds).

200 Yard Freestyle Relay: 5. Bradley, Todd (12), Spillers, Bradyn Baughman, 1:49.59.

100 Yard Backstroke: 3. Robinson, 1:03.53; 4. Spillers, 1:08.52.

100 Yard Breaststroke: 2. Perez, 1:05.97; 4. Baughman, 1:16.17 (3.45 second drop).

400 Yard Freestyle Relay: 1. Roberson, DeBoer, Robinson, Perez, 3:28.11 (4.49 second drop, won by four seconds).

Freshman James Beyer (190) went up by a 7-0 score in the first period before earning the pin mid-way through the second stanza.

In the heavyweight division (285) freshman Cade Rangel held his own. The pair held each other scoreless in the first period. At the end of two rounds, Rangel trailed ever so slightly, 2-1. The third period, though, ended up with Rangel’s shoulders being pinned to the mat with time winding down as Aledo trailed 39-36 heading into Barbarena’s match.

Both Aledo teams are wrestling in the District 4-5A Tournament in Fort Worth this weekend.



KRISTIN MORALES/THE COMMUNITY NEWS

Soccer seniors (from left) Regan Tomlin, Emery Thompson, Katie Cox, Ava Fennell, Conley Hamilton, and Emma Grace Bolz



KRISTIN MORALES/THE COMMUNITY NEWS

Soccer seniors Roman Valdez, Noah Pepper, Elliot Smith, Ryan Spriggs, Cole Crawford, Austin Randriamahefa, Kaden Callaway, Eric Canales, and Sean Michel.

POWERLIFTING

Bearcats win at Chisholm Trail

Capture four weight classes

By Rick Mauch
The Community News

The Aledo Bearcats lifted their way to victory in a tri-powerlifting meet at Saginaw Chisholm Trail recently. Aledo finished with 48 points, with Brewer garnering 42, and Chisholm Trail scoring 28.

Leading the way to Aledo’s victory were first-place finishes in four weight classes. Matthew Long won in the 148-pound division, lifting 930 pounds, while Chase Wilburne lifted 1,190 to capture the 220 division, Anthony Flowers’ 1,315 pounds topped the 242 class, and Omari Din-Mbuh claimed the 308 division with 1,335 pounds.

Taking second in their divisions were Ethan Pickett, 181 class, 935

pounds lifted; Blake Long, 198 class, 890 pounds; John-Patrick Harrell, 220 class, 1,055 pounds; and Kruger Summer, 275 class, 1,290.

In all, the Bearcats had 17 lift-ers finish in the top five of their respective weight classes, along with another who narrowly missed in sixth place. Other top finishers and the total pounds lifted include:

- 148: 4. Zach Grimes, 710.
- 181: 3. Ashton Hebel, 850; 5. Gunter Swain, 820.
- 220: 3. Noah Leake, 935; 4. Jace Kelso, 695.
- 242: 3. Casen Miller, 1,060; 5. David Reyes, 845.
- 275: 4. Carter Campbell, 1,180; 6. Roland Krieger, 1,080.
- 308: 4. Bill White, 915.

Ladycats compete at Azle

The Ladycats placed fourth at the Hornet Girls Invitational recently,

scoring 21 points. Host Azle won with 72.

The Ladycats were led by the runner-up finishes of Charlee Soward in the 123-pound division and Bryanna Orr in the 132 weight class. Soward lifted a total of 600 pounds and Orr lifted 725.

Finishing fourth in their respective divisions were Kylie Dernovich, 105 pounds, 350 lifted; Hadley Baird, 165, 520 lifted; Jayden Staggs, 181, 680 lifted; and Adrianna Lambert, 220, 720 lifted.

Allie Faulkner (148), Kendra Potts (165), Claire Mosley (181) and Kayliin Miller (242-plus) each took fifth in their weight class. Faulkner lifted 570, Potts 460, Mosley 570 and Miller 570.

Kennedy Ross was sixth in the 165 division with 430 pounds and Liberty Pelfrey was sixth at 181 with 480.

WRESTLING

from page 12

At 120 pounds, sophomore Dylan Chandler dominated his opponent before picking up a pin-fall win in the second period to increase the Aledo lead.

Then the Bears came out of hibernation.

Brewer ripped off four wins in a row to regain the overall lead before sophomore William Reese (165 pounds) put an end to the Bears’ streak. His pinfall with 29 seconds left in the first period gave Aledo the momentum back heading into the final three matches of the night.



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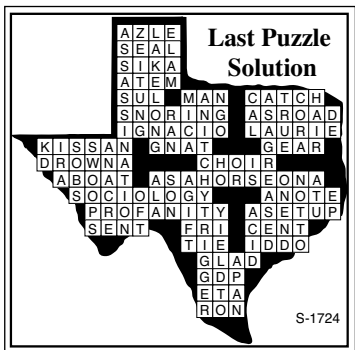
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City of Willow Park, Doyle Moss, Mayor January 24th and 31st, 2025

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RYAN WADE/THE COMMUNITY NEWS

Liz Griffin steals the ball away from the Fossil Ridge point guard as the Ladycats prevailed, 55-52, in a tough district matchup.

HOOPS

from page eight

Subvarsity

The Ladycats junior varsity team won 52-19 behind 14 points from Sawyer Voight and 11 from Sarah Edwards. Additionally, the freshman squad earned a 43-22 victory, led by 10 points from Bailey Martin and nine from Sonsoles Rosado.

Furthermore, the Bearcats JV team won 67-56 while the freshman squad recorded a 60-47 triumph.

Double-digit victories last week

The Bearcats and Ladycats both hit the bus for a short road trip to Chisholm Trail for a pair of

District 5-5A contests on Tuesday night, Jan. 21.

After the thrilling double-header at home against Brewer in the teams' previous outing, both squads emerged victorious by a double-digit margin. The Ladycats tipped off the varsity action with a 56-34 victory while the Bearcats followed that up with a 47-33 win.

The Ladycats were dominant in the victory after suffering a four-point loss to first-place Brewer. Standout move-in junior Tiara Butler led the charge with 14 points while Elizabeth Griffin and Ella Isbell also reached double figures with 10 points apiece. Sophomore Brooklyn Dempsey also contributed with nine points.

On the boys side, a program sweep was also accomplished, highlighted by the varsity's 14-point

win. The varsity boys (23-4, 7-0) were led by Joaquin Pacheco's 19 points while Towns Van Huysen added nine in the win.

Caden Cunningham also chipped in with eight points.

The Ladycats' subvarsity programs were winners as well. The junior varsity team recorded a 50-27 triumph while the freshmen team earned a 54-15 victory for the program sweep.

Kennedy Cardenas (16) and Sawyer Voight (15) led the JV team in scoring while Bailey Martin (15) and Sonsoles Rosado (11) led the freshman team's efforts.

In addition to that, the boys JV squad recorded a 65-60 victory while the freshmen team emerged with a 41-33 win.



KRISTIN MORALES/THE COMMUNITY NEWS

Kylee Vandiver heads the ball during action against Trimble Tech on Jan. 24.

SOCCER

Ladycats win, Bearcats tie on Senior Night

Return to league play this week

By Rick Mauch
The Community News

The Aledo Ladycats made short work of visiting Fort Worth Trimble Tech, winning 6-0, while the Bearcats battled to a 2-2 tie. It was senior night for both Aledo teams on Friday, Jan. 24 at Tim Buchanan Stadium.

and Jules Avery each registering one. Sands had a pair of assists, with Weimer, Abigail Cates and Emma Grace Bolz each posting one. Again, Fennell and Obana were in goal.

The Ladycats were hosting Saginaw Chisholm Trail at press time and travel to Keller Fossil Ridge on Friday, Jan. 31 for a 7:45 p.m. contest.

"Big week. Two new teams in district, both dropping from 6A and both have shown to be very competitive," Ladycats coach Bryan Johnson said. "We need to get two this week to get a good lead going into the third week of district. They both will be difficult to break down and make for a tight game."

Bearcats

The Bearcats (4-3-1, 0-1 in District 5-5A) played to a draw against Tech (3-5-3) as Harrison Kear and Eliot Smith each scored a goal with assists from Austin Randriamahefa and Robby Sloan.

The Bearcats began the week with a 1-0 loss at home to Brewer (3-5, 1-1 in district) on Jan. 21. It was the sixth game this season in which the Bearcats have surrendered one goal or less, including three shutouts.

Aledo was playing at Chisholm Trail at press time and is home to Fossil Ridge on Jan. 31 at 7:45 p.m.

SPORTS BRIEFS

BASEBALL

Coyotes No. 11 in preseason

The National Junior College Athletic Association's Division I preseason rankings were released recently, with the Weatherford College Coyotes ranked No. 11 in the nation.

With back-to-back North Texas Junior College Athletic Conference championships, new arms in the bullpen and an overall win record of 45-15 and 25-7 in conference last year, the Coyotes are optimistic about continued success in 2025.

Games start Friday, Jan. 31, at Navarro College. The Coyotes' first home game is Thursday, Feb. 6, against Salt Lake Community College, and conference plays begins March 5. Check out wcathletics.com for their full schedule.

Bearcat alums named pre-season All-Americans

Former Aledo Bearcats Max Belyeu and Jalin Flores have been named to the D1 Baseball Preseason All-America list. Both play for the University of Texas Longhorns and were named third team.

BOYS BASKETBALL

Tison wins tourney

The Weatherford Tison seventh grade A team went 3 - 0 and won the Bridgeport A Team Tournament. They defeated Mineral Wells 57-20, Bridgeport 38-32 and Ponder 45-36.

Tison takes third

The Tison eighth grade A team went 2-1 in the Boyd A Team Tournament and won the consolation bracket. After losing to Burkburnett 48-38, they defeated

Bridgeport 40-26 and Valley View 36-28.

Tison vs. Acton

Eighth grade: A team lost 52-27, B team lost 41-37.

Seventh grade: A team won 52-26, Player of the Game Dillon Stone; B team lost 23-17.

BOYS POWERLIFTING
Roos set school record

Ryland Todd, Ryan Ekberg and Brenton Linehan set school records in the Lake Worth Meet. Linehan lifted 1,555 total pounds to win the super heavyweight weight class, Ekberg won the 148-pound class, lifting 1,200 total pounds, while Todd lifted 695 for second in the 114 division.

Also, Preston Clark placed third in the 220 class with 1,240 lifted.



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THE COMMUNITY NEWS



WRESTLING

Seniors lead Aledo grapplers to victory

By Ryan Wade
The Community News

Perhaps it was a little kismet that the three seniors on Aledo’s wrestling team pinned their opponents, lifting the team to a 42-39 win over Brewer during Senior Night on Wednesday, Jan. 22.

Avery Kernan, Arianne Mathias, and Sebastian Barbarena all managed to glue their opponents to the mat in the first period.

With Aledo trailing 39-36 heading into the final match of the evening, Barbarena made short work of his 190-pound match, earning the pin in just 47 seconds, to give Aledo six points and elevate the team to victory.

“Man, on the girls’ side, they’re solid,” Aledo head coach Benjamin Shaw said of his seniors after the match. “They’re going to be big leadership shoes to fill. We’ve got good girls coming up, but those two are leaving big shoes to fill. Sebastian’s been with us a short time on the boys’ side, but he brings energy and wrestles hard. He brings his A-game every time. We’re gonna miss him. We thank them for everything they’ve done [for the program] in our short three years of existence. They’ve been great for us.”

Ladycats split

The varsity Ladycat grapplers started off the night with a good showing on the mat despite the mixed results on the scoreboard. Lillian Carruthers led off the festivities in the 100-pound division for Aledo. After a brief feeling out period, Carruthers was taken down and pinned in short order to give Brewer a 6-0 lead.

Kernan took to the mat at 107 pounds for the second match.



Senior Sebastian Barbarena (190 lbs) reacts after winning his match by pinfall, cementing the Aledo win for the dual over Brewer on Wednesday, Jan. 22.

She turned in a dominant performance, making quick work of her opponent as she tied the score up at 6-6 with a pin of her own.

A pair of freshmen Ladycat grapplers took to the mat next. Grace Beasley at 114 pounds went all three rounds in a highly competitive match before ultimately falling 8-3. The decision victory pushed Brewer ahead, 9-6.

Joy Stephens answered right back for the Ladycats in her 120-pound match. Stephens locked down her opponent, maneuvered her into position, and picked up a win by pinfall with less than a minute to go in the first period. Aledo regained the lead at 12-9 following the pin.

Sophomore Braylin Wiggins trailed her opponent at 126 pounds for the first two periods before dropping the match via pinfall with 17 seconds left on the clock in period

three. The Lady Bears regained the lead, 15-12 with the final ladies match heading to the mat.

At 138 pounds, Mathias dominated on the mat to a far greater degree than the scoreboard showed. Taking her opponent down early, Mathias grounded the Lady Bears grappler for the better part of two minutes until the first period ended with her leading 3-1. With her opponent struggling to deal with her constant pressure, Mathias earned the pinfall midway through the second period, handing the boys an 18-15 lead.

Bearcats hold on

With no opponent at 106 pounds, Cameron Robbins didn’t get all dressed up for nothing. Instead, the freshman grappler went up to 113 pounds to pick up a pinfall win in the second period.

Turn to **WRESTLING**, page 11

BASKETBALL

No. 8 TCA edges rival LCCS in two OT

Eagles soar in final minute to force overtime

By Geoff Heppes
The Community News

The Trinity Christian Eagles, ranked No. 8 in the state in TAPPS Class 4A by the Texas Association of Basketball Coaches, faced a tough TAPPS District 1-4A foe in the form of their rivals Tuesday night.

The Eagles faced off against the No. 4 Lake Country Christian School Eagles in a high-level clash. Trinity eliminated a six-point deficit with a late flurry in the final minute of regulation – capped off by a tying bucket with 40 seconds left by Cole Massey, a big defensive stop, and two clutch free throws from senior Sam Carson. In the end, TCA emerged

victorious in the second overtime period by a final score of 77-66.

TCA (23-5, 4-0 in district) entered halftime with a narrow 33-31 advantage but lost the lead entering the fourth quarter after getting outscored by four. LCCS had steadily increased its narrow margin throughout the fourth until TCA’s late surge ended regulation with the teams deadlocked at 54-all.

Carson led the way with 17 points, six assists, five rebounds and three steals while Reed Robbins added 16 points, eight rebounds and two assists. John Chrane and Massey combined for 31 points while Chrane also had six assists.

The high-flying Eagles won the crucial league clash to remain atop the district standings with an unblemished record.

SPORTS BRIEFS
GIRLS BASKETBALL

Aledo Middle School vs. Mansfield Jones

Seventh grade: A Team won 46-24, B Team won 26-18, C Team lost 23-15.

Eighth grade: A Team won 26-22, B Team won 32-6.

Tison Lady Roos split with Acton

Eighth grade: A team lost 32-24, Player of the Game Chrislyn Lancaster; B team won 20-11, Player of the Game Allie Johnson.

Seventh grade: A team lost 27-26, Players of the Game Helena Michno and Bella Simmons; B team won 18-11, Players of the Game Chloe Hernandez and Isabel Peddle.

Weatherford Hall 3-1 vs. Cleburne Wheat

Eighth grade: A team won 28-22, Players of the Game whole team; B team won 14-10, Players of the Game whole team.

Seventh grade: A team won 30-27, Players of the Game Daylyn Drake, Vanessa Delgado; B team lost 25-16, Player of the Game Kinsley Lowrimore.

GIRLS SOCCER

The Weatherford Lady Roos are the No. 1 team in the state in this week’s Class 6A rankings from the Texas Girls Coaches Association. The Lady Roos are 8-0 overall, 1-0 in District 3-6A, and have outscored their opponents 29-0.

Congratulations



The Aledo varsity cheerleaders are shown at the national championships on Jan. 25.



Aledo JV cheerleaders placed second in their division at the national championships on Jan. 25.

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