

THE COMMUNITY NEWS

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WILLOW PARK

Contreras, Allen to vie for Place 1 on council

Join mayor's race in being contested

By Rick Mauch
The Community News

Eric Contreras has filed for re-election for his seat on the Willow Park City Council. For the first time since 2019 he will have an opponent in David Allen.

Contreras has held Place 1 since 2018 when he was first appointed. After winning re-election in a contested election in 2019, he ran unopposed in 2021 and 2023.

Contreras joins Mayor Doyle Moss and Place 2 Council Member Chawn Gilliland in also running for re-election.

Moss has held his office since 2017 and last faced a challenger in 2019, winning that year and repeating in unopposed elections in 2021 and 2023. He is challenged this year by Teresa Palmer and Catherine Davis.

Gilliland was appointed to office in 2022 and won his own election in 2023. As of press time no one had filed to run against him this year.

The deadline to file for election is Feb. 14.

For the May 3 election (early voting April 22-25 and April 28-29), Parker County has added a polling location at the Willow Park Public Safety Building, 101 W. Stagecoach Trail.



Eric Contreras



David Allen



RICK MAUCH/THE COMMUNITY NEWS

Aledo Bearcat teammates and good friends Owen Henderson (left) and Kai Taylor will continue playing football together at Angelo State University. For more athletic signing day turn to page 7.

WILLOW PARK

Council approves final annexation of Beall-Dean property

Multi-faceted development planned

By Christopher Amos
The Community News

Months of analysis, research, and meetings came to a conclusion Feb. 11 with the unanimous approval from the Willow Park City Council to annex 317 acres of Dean Ranch at the southwest corner of Interstate 20 and Highway 1187. The land along the main road into Aledo will be a multi-function commercial and residential development.

After the vote, city manager Bryan Grimes leaned into his microphone and gave a hardy, "Welcome to Willow Park, Mr



CHRISTOPHER AMOS/THE COMMUNITY NEWS

With results from an extensive park improvement survey in, Willow Park's marketing director Rose Hoffman describes to the council suggestions from the public and how the information may be understood for the future for the city's parks.

Beall." To which developer Robert Beall grinned and gave a happy "thumbs-up" from his seat in the audience.

Plans for the development include 35.3 acres of single family residential space, 91.7

Turn to **COUNCIL**, page 3

FOOTBALL

Beard leaving Bearcats

QB transferring to All Saints

By Rick Mauch
The Community News

One season after being the starting quarterback for the Aledo Bearcats, Gavin Beard is leaving the program to transfer to Fort Worth All Saints, Bearcats head coach Robby Jones announced.

Beard, a junior, previously attended All Saints for one year in the eighth grade, but returned to Aledo his freshman year. He could not be reached for a comment about his decision to leave the Aledo program.

All Saints won the Texas Association of Private and Parochial Schools Division II state championship last season, finishing 14-0.

Beard quarterbacked the Bearcats into the Class 5A Division I state quarterfinals this season. Despite missing two games early in the season with a back injury, he completed 69% of his passes for 2,573 yards with 35 touchdowns and five interceptions.

He was named first team Class 5A Division I All-State by the Padilla Poll.

Beard was key in Aledo finishing 12-2 and winning the District 3-5A Division I championship. It was their 17th consecutive league title dating to 2008 as they extended their national-record district winning streak to 127 games.

With Beard leaving, the starting quarterback position is going to feature several players battling for the position come spring ball. Jones noted two strong quarterbacks who will be vying for the starting job.

Lincoln Tubbs, who will be a senior next season, came into games throughout the season as a wildcat quarterback to give the team an additional running threat.

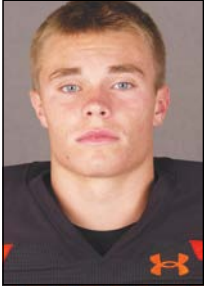
"Lincoln just ran a 4.53 40 (yard dash) time in our first offseason test, so he would bring quite a bit of speed back to the quarterback position," Jones said. "Lincoln has provided some early leadership this offseason with his tremendous work ethic."

In limited play at the position in 2024, Tubbs rushed for 48 yards and a pair of touchdowns on 10 carries.

Nash McElree, who will be a junior next season, started the two games Beard missed and led the Bearcats to two victories. For the season he was 37-of-49 (76%) passing for 500 yards with seven touchdowns and a pair of interceptions, along with rushing 22 times for 75 yards.

"Nash McElree has a very strong arm and proved last year that he can win games with starts against Lancaster and Brewer," Jones said. "Nash has been in basketball for the first part of the offseason and we look forward to getting him back with us as subvarsity basketball season comes to a close.

"Spring ball is going to be extremely important for us this year to see which quarterback establishes himself as the frontrunner. It could even be something that will continue into the start of the season because both players are very talented."



Gavin Beard

WEATHERFORD ISD

Board meeting features evening of achievement

DECA students, cheerleaders honored

By Candy McMichen
The Community News

It was standing room only Monday evening when Weatherford ISD school board president Mike Guest gavelled the meeting to order at 7 p.m. after an executive session.

Five Ikard Elementary School students led the crowd in the Pledge of Allegiance before the board honored 15 WHS Distributive Education Clubs of America (DECA) students who have advanced to the state competition.

Turn to **BOARD**, page 3



CANDY MCMICHEN/THE COMMUNITY NEWS

After winning the state UIL championship, WHS cheerleaders were named as Student Athletes of the Month.



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WEATHERFORD ISD

Education key to Soontornvat’s literary recognition

New York Times best-selling author cites WISD education

By Christopher Amos
The Community News

Christina Soontornvat is quick to credit her Parker County experiences for her love and talent of writing. The 1998 Weatherford High School graduate’s energetic, positive personality is reflected in many characters of her children’s novels and her perspective of historical events has earned her awards in non-fiction as well.

Targeting primarily children and middle-grade students, her more than two dozen volumes educate, entertain, and charm students of all ages.

The star characters in her books are often autobiographical, including two novels, *The Tryout* and *The Squad*.

“Oh, yes. It’s a memoir,” the author said. “It’s about growing up in Weatherford, middle school, and trying out for cheerleader. All of it is true.”

Soontornvat mentions teachers Janis Smith and Charles Carroll among the educators that touched her life. Carroll teaches Weatherford High School AP English and Composition, and literature instructor Smith is retired from WISD

and is the director of communications for Manna Storehouse in Weatherford.

“Christina was a phenomenal reader and writer, although I think she was strong in all academic areas. Her university major would certainly indicate that,” Carroll said of his former student. “I am flattered Christina considers me a positive influence on her development as a writer. She is a funny, insightful, intuitive person who shared her ideas and perspectives in extraordinarily effective prose.”

Soontornvat received what she calls a world-class education in Weatherford where the teachers encourage and push students to be their best.

The author is not limited to encouraging and motivating students through storytelling. In 2018, a monsoon trapped a teen-aged soccer team and their coach deep in the Tham Lang cave system of Soontornvat’s ancestral Thailand for 18 days, and the writer’s research and report of the incident in her book, *All Thirteen*, earned a 2021 Kirkus Prize plus nine other literary honors.

Along with the New York Times bestselling novel *The Tryout*, other Soontornvat titles include *The Ramble Shamble Children*, *To Change a Planet*, and *Diary of an Ice Princess*. It was announced at the



WEATHERFORD ISD

Austin Elementary School students Alexis Kitchen, Lydia Grzemski and Skylar Miller share a copy of *The Squad* by former WHS student Christina Soontornvat. The novel is now in all Weatherford elementary schools.



Christina Soontornvat



2024 YEAR IN REVIEW



KRISTIN MORALES

The cheerleaders as well as the crowd couldn’t take their eyes off the Bearcat football game between Aledo and Richland. The Bearcats won 49-42 in overtime on Friday, Oct. 25.

NOVEMBER 1, 2024

After months of working with a graphic designer, Communications and Engagement Manager for the City of Aledo Whitney Walters had her first opportunity to present Aledo’s

potential next logo to the city council on Thursday, Oct. 24.

After serving the City of Willow Park for three years, Crystal Dozier announced her resignation as city secretary.

Residents of Willow Park who wanted to vote early had to leave the city because there were no early voting sites in the city.

A standing ovation from the Weatherford City Council and all present at a public meeting was well-deserved to honor the Parker County Peach Festival organization. The group received a national award recognizing their efforts producing the largest event in Parker County.

With focus on doing everything possible in keeping the campus a productive learning environment, Trinity Christian Academy Head of School Craig Smith announced the school’s new no phone in classroom policy was having positive results.

Aledo High School hosted a 13-school robotics meet on Oct. 26 as area competition passes into the second half of the season.

Parker County judge has been training for and participating in triathlons and Iron Man competitions.

Willow Park resident Bruce

Campbell has been seeking, exploring, and educating others about the cosmos since childhood and is now the president of the Fort Worth Astronomy Association.

Carey Durham’s “Carey’s Clan” has been among the top individual efforts raising money for Parkinson’s research.

The Aledo Bearcats and Ladycats got an early look at their fellow teams in District 5-5A when they competed in the Buzzy Open, hosted by the Azle Hornets and Lady Hornets at Cross Timbers Golf Course in Azle on Oct. 22. Both the Bearcats and Ladycats Black teams placed second, while the Orange teams were third.

Racine Guillory scored an eight-yard touchdown run in overtime to give the Bearcats a win over Richland.

NOVEMBER 8, 2024

The Bearcat Regiment marched into the Alamodome in San Antonio for the State 5A Marching Contest on Nov. 5. They finished fifth in prelims, the highest placement ever in pro-



CHRISTOPHER AMOS/THE COMMUNITY NEWS

Mural artist Ric Montgomery finishes a National Cutting Horse Association logo on what will become a giant art installment northeast of the Parker County Courthouse on the east side of City Pharmacy. The finished mural will have five mounted cutting horse legends, four men and a woman, thundering towards the viewer.

gram history. At finals the regiment finished fifth overall.

As Republican Donald Trump coasted to a major electoral count

Turn to page 3

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acres of multi-family residential, 135.2 acres of commercial and 55.5 acres of light industrial. Eateries, both take-out and sit-down dining, are among the plans, as is a public park and walking/biking trails.

The City of Fort Worth relinquished the property from its extraterritorial jurisdiction because they could not provide utilities to the area, whereas Willow Park could. Businesses are anticipated to open 12-18 months after the utilities are finished, and the city reported the estimated value of the development at full buildout to be \$500 million. The development is expected to roughly double the city's current sales tax collection.

Park survey completed

City marketing director Rose Hoffman reported an extensive survey seeking input from the public about city parks has been completed. Her department will begin assimilating the information for future presentation to the council. Hoffman said highlights of public wants and concerns include playground equipment, walking

path improvements, lighting, and restrooms.

Hoffman detailed how every means possible was taken to give residents a voice in the matter, including multiple social media outlets, the city's website, an announcement in The Community News, and flyers distributed to residents and posted in public.

"Did we do everything we could to get a scientific analysis and response from the public? Yes, we did," Hoffman concluded.

Mayor pro-tem Lea Young said the next steps to park improvements and expansions will include designing conceptual plans, obtaining quotes and estimates, and bringing the results to the board for financial approval.

Police chief hunt

The board approved the forming of a committee to find and hire a new police chief. Daniel Franklin resigned from the post in January and Quincy Hamilton, who has been with the department since 2021, is serving as interim police chief.

Council members Eric Contreras and Chawn Gilliland, along with Mayor Doyle Moss, were chosen to be on the search committee. Council member Nate

Crummel volunteered as an alternate. Gilliland has an extensive background in Parker County law enforcement, including 10 years chief criminal investigator for the Parker County District Attorney's office and 12 years Aledo ISD police chief.

City Secretary hired

Following an executive session, the council voted to hire former Aledo City Secretary Deana McMullen as the new Willow Park city secretary.



RYAN WADE/THECOMMUNITY NEWS

Deana McMullen proudly displays the placard bearing her name that will hang in the new Aledo City Hall upon completion. She was hired as Willow Park's new city secretary at their Feb. 11 meeting.



CANDY MCMICHEN/THE COMMUNITY NEWS

WHS DECA students are recognized for advancing to the state UIL competition.

BOARD

from page one

The WHS Cheer team was given a standing ovation for their recent UIL state championship and named February's Athletes of the Month.

Dr. Jason Dunkelberger, Director of theTransportation, explained his department's program evaluation reporting that upon his arrival to the district three years ago, there were 23 openings for licensed bus drivers. Today there is one.

This past year, the department retained 68 of 70 drivers, as the two who left moved out of district.

"Everything rises and falls with leadership," board secretary Adam Feriend noted.

In other business, the board voted to purchase approximately 62.499 acres of real property located at 1501 Upper Denton Road for purchase price of \$2,968,702.50, subject to the conditions outlined in the contract, including a 90-day due diligence period.

NOVEMBER 8, 2024 (CONTINUED)

victory with eked out victories in "swing states" on Tuesday, Nov. 5, Parker County left no doubt at the local level. With all precincts counted, the unofficial total of votes in the county gave Trump 75, 091 (82.76%) votes to Kamala Harris' 14,840 (16.36%).

On Oct. 31, the Willow Park Police Department successfully apprehended the suspect involved in a gunshot incident reported four days earlier. The suspect, 34-year-old Ryan Leconte, faced charges that include deadly conduct, a third-degree felony.

A Willow Park Parks and Recreation meeting Oct. 29 drew 30 participants adding suggestions to upcoming public park improvements and expansions.

The Independent Bankers Association of Texas honored First Bank Texas in Willow Park with two Best of Community Banking Awards: the Gold Eagle Award for its "That's My Bank!" marketing entry and a Silver Eagle Award for its "Serving Through PPP" community service entry.

The Aledo Ladycats placed third as a team at the state cross country meet.

Dual-threat quarterback Canaan Kaznowski made a tremendous impact for the Eagles after transferring to Trinity Christian Academy for his senior year.

The Lady Eagles placed fifth and



JIM ZIMMERMANN/THE COMMUNITY NEWS

Annetta Mayor Sandy Roberts with Gomez, the turkey she officially pardoned at the Nov. 21 town council meeting.

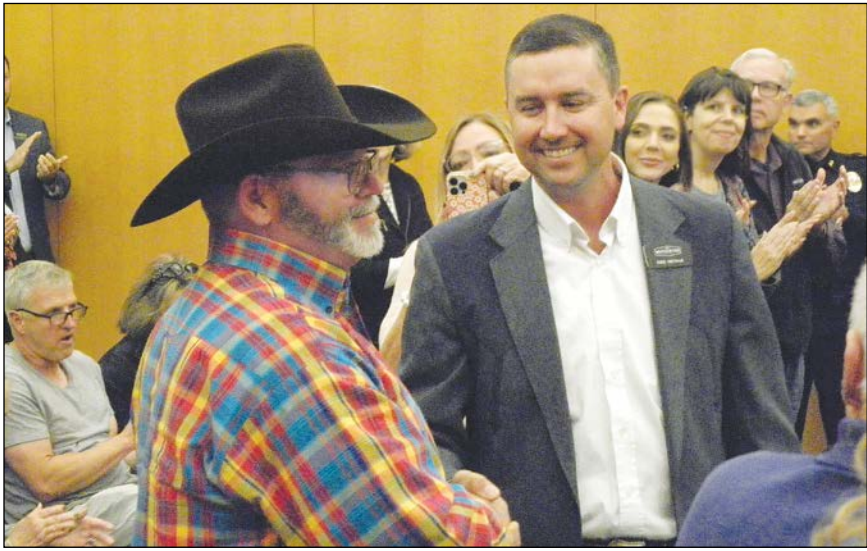
the Eagles were sixth at the Texas Association of Private and Parochial Schools Class 4A cross country state meet.

The Ladycats defeated Birdville to take the bi-district championship in volleyball.

NOVEMBER 15, 2024

The Willow Park City Council approved the annexation of 317 acres of land owned by Dean-Beall Ranch, Ltd. The land is located on the southwest corner of Interstate 20 and Highway 1187, running all the way to Bankhead Highway.

On Thursday, Nov. 7, the Aledo City Council approved the purchase of two new cruisers for its future police department.



CHRISTOPHER AMOS/THE COMMUNITY NEWS

Troy Dickey, Weatherford Solid Waste & Recycling manager, is congratulated for 35 years of service to the city by Eric Shumar, Asst. Director of Solid Waste and Recycling.

Weatherford College and Sam Houston State University entered a new partnership this week designed to create seamless transfer pathways for WC students.

Artist Richard Sukup explained the background behind his work "The Forgotten Unknowns" depicting a homeless man comforting his dog and other works.

Thirteen-year-old Grant Burnette led his team of Troop 75 Scouts to straighten the wrought iron fence at the Bedford-BlackwellPickard-Shaw Cemetery.

Weatherford mayor Paul Paschall was honored with the 2024 James



CHRISTOPHER AMOS/THE COMMUNITY NEWS

Cameron Ross plays jazzy Christmas tunes beneath the 55-foot Weatherford Christmas Tree.

vated its bond credit rating from AA to AA+, with a stable outlook. This upgrade represents a substantial achievement for the city, enabling reduced interest costs on future debt obligations.

The Weatherford College Board of Trustees approved the sale of 5.063 acres on the northwest corner of BB Fielder Road and South Main Street for \$2.25 million at their November meeting.

When the movie "God's Here" began filming in Granbury last year, it spawned the potential beginning of a new acting career for Aledo resident Lola Gianna.

The Weatherford School Board recognized the veterans who are part of the Weatherford ISD family its meeting on Veterans Day.

Following their win over No. 1 Amarillo, the Aledo Ladycat volleyball squad knocked off No. 2 Colleyville Heritage to reach the state semifinal.

The Ladycats lost that state semifinal match to McKinney North in a heartbreaking fashion, 21-25, 25-19, 13-25, 26-24 and 15-13.



BREILEIGH MAYER/THE COMMUNITY NEWS

The Aledo Bearcats celebrated landing at the top of district after defeating Chisholm Trail on Nov. 15.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF ALEDO ISD ATHLETICS

AHS swimmers set a new school records at the North Zone TISCA meet in Lewisville on Nov. 23. Victoria Crews, Julia Gordy, Mackenzie Oligschlaeger and Haley Roberson swam in the 400 freestyle relay with a time of 3.45.06.

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

The Community News does not charge for time-ly 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

Voucher bill passes Senate, arrives in House



Gary Borders
gborders@texaspress.com

A bill to implement school vouchers in Texas sailed through the Senate largely on party lines last week and now awaits consideration in the House, the *Austin American-Statesman* reported. House Speaker Dustin Burrows, R-Lubbock, said he believes there are enough votes in that chamber to pass the legislation, which was defeated a half-dozen times in 2023 by a coalition of Democratic and rural Republican members.

"As Speaker, I'm committed to ensuring the agenda of the Texas House remains truly member-driven this session," Burrows said in a statement. "I support empowering parents to decide the best educational option for their children."

The bill's supporters, which include Gov. Greg Abbott, Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick and other top elected officials, say it would give students access to more school choices. Opponents fear the \$1 billion program will siphon funding and students away from public schools already facing budget deficits.

The political director of the Texas Freedom Network said legislators should focus on funding public schools instead.

"Voucher schemes steal vital funds from kids in our neighborhood schools, all so megadonors and the politicians in their pockets can subsidize private and religious schools for the wealthy at our expense," Rocio Fierro-Pérez said.

Abbott outlines his legislative priorities

Abbott outlined his legislative priorities in a speech last Sunday. Besides school vouchers, he wants state lawmakers to cut property taxes by \$10 billion, launch a massive water project to ensure adequate supplies, and restrict bail for a number of crimes, the *Houston Chronicle* reported.

Other priorities include pay raises for teachers and investment in nuclear energy as a way to "fortify" the state's electric grid.

Abbott is backing a plan by state Sen. Charles Perry, R-Amarillo, which would invest in several large projects to increase the state's water supply. Among the projects are desalination plants and a network of pipelines to distribute water.

"We will make the largest investment in water in the history of Texas," Abbott said. "We will tap into new water supplies and repair pipes to save billions of gallons of water each year."

The Democratic response to Abbott's State of the State address blasted the governor for being too friendly with President Trump and billionaire Elon Musk, who is leading an effort to eliminate federal government waste and inefficiency.

"The fact is people are struggling after 30 years of Republican rule," Gilberto Hinojosa, the former Democratic Party chair, said in the response.

Dairy, poultry producers grapple with bird flu

By now, most everyone has noticed the steep rise in the price of eggs, which is being blamed on the spread of avian flu, first detected in a flock of pheasants in Erath County nearly three years ago, the *Texas Standard* reported.

"It's a supply-and-demand issue," said J.C. Essler, executive vice president of the Texas Poultry Federation. "When we're putting multiple flocks down, and our layer operations can be up to a million birds, you're taking a substantial supply out of the market."

Thus far in Texas, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have confirmed 14 cases of bird flu at poultry farms, only one of which was at a large-scale farm with 2 million chickens. There have been 27 confirmed cases at Texas dairy farms.

The potential economic impact could be huge if bird flu continues to spread in the state. The poultry industry contributes more than \$5 billion to the state economy annually, while dairy operations add \$53.8 billion.

One longtime researcher of bird flu at Texas A&M University



LILLIANA GRACE / PEXELS

Dairy, poultry producers grapple with bird flu causing a steep rise in the price of eggs.

said he didn't expect the virus to spread from human to human; 67 cases of it being transmitted to humans from poultry or cattle have been recorded, including one in Texas. One death has been reported.

"If we ever start seeing human-to-human transmission, that tells us the virus is adapting to humans," said Gerald Parker, associate dean for Global One Health at A&M. "That would not be a good sign."

State struggling to fix leaky abandoned oil wells

Abandoned oil wells turned into water sources are threatening aquifers that supply water to cities, farms and ranches, the *Statesman* reported, particularly in rural West Texas where oil exploration began nearly a century ago. The leaky wells are called P-13 wells after a Texas Railroad Commission form that allowed them to be repurposed to provide water.

The state has recorded 1,915 P-13 wells, though many more likely exist undetected and undocumented. They have the potential to become environmental disasters. One example is the 60-acre Lake Boehmer in Pecos County, formed by a leaky well. It emits high concentrations of hydrogen sulfide, a potentially fatal gas.

The state committed \$10 million to plugging the leaky wells in 2023, but two years later none of that money has been distributed. Even that amount, whenever it is actually spent, is likely inadequate to solve the problem, since plugging a single well can cost hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Idle American

A quarter for your thoughts?



Dr. Don Newbury
newbury@speakerdoc.com

Economists have suggested for years that we'd be better served if the U.S. Mint ceased turning out pennies--the nation's lowest denominational coin. Though some 140 billion pennies remain in circulation--many in jars, under sofa cushions, on sidewalks or playgrounds--their demise will be gradual.

With cost-cutting the order of the day, why should we mint coins that cost three cents each to make?

Hoarders--I am told--are combing through garage sales, seeking piggy banks--long considered depositories for pennies--anticipating their becoming collectors' items. A clue is that at such sales, prices for piggy banks now are negotiated upwards.

The penny--introduced in 1793--became "Lincolnesque" when "Honest Abe's" likeness was struck thereon in 1909, the 100th anniversary of his birth.

It's a sad prospect, really, but pennies don't buy much anymore. You'll need a pocketful to buy McDonald's coffee, and at Starbucks, take a wheelbarrow.

"Penny" will remain a cute girls' name, but it won't buy anyone else's thoughts that are now going for a quarter or more, and sometimes even priceless.

I--and likely a few million others--have stopped in our tracks for decades to claim grounded pennies. General disregard for their meager value--coupled with the exertion of bending over--have lessened the practice.

It's been several years since I've picked one up. Should I be tempted by a quarter, however, I may stick a wad of chewing gum on my cane for, uh "bendless retrieval."

If anyone is watching, I may use store-bought "stick-um."

Pennies, long romanticized, have mobilized folks to embark on noble causes, promoting "one for all and all for one" projects.

Glenn Dromgoole, who spent more than 30 years in newspapering--mostly as editor of the Abilene Reporter News--is a recognized author, now having penned 35 books. This friend of almost 60 years wrote *The Power of a Penny* back in 1999.

His 35 books--several on best-seller lists--can't be put

down once picked up, unlike mine, which can't be picked up when put down.

Years ago at an overnight East Texas speaking engagement, someone broke my car window, I assumed to access the case of books on the back seat.

He or she opened the case, took one copy and tossed it on the sidewalk near my motel room door.

Now that's a discerning reader right there.

One great "penny story" has been shared for decades in Snyder, TX, where a fidgety youngster attended church regularly.

Every Sunday, his mom refused to let him join the "march to the penny jar" at the altar.

That's where children--largely pre-schoolers--dropped pennies for missionaries on Sundays nearest their birthdays.

The youngster was barely three years old when he first noticed the practice. Several months away from his fourth birthday, he squirmed each Sunday to participate, his eligibility be hanged.

Finally, his fourth birthday Sunday arrived, and his mother

set him free to take his four pennies to the altar.

Racing forward, he rang the rafters with an unlikely and "unchurchy" expression: "Hi yo, Silver, here I come!"

Had Dromgoole come across the Snyder story when he wrote about pennies, I'm sure he would have "scooped" me. But this one time, I am first, as far as I know.

The Power of a Penny, by the way, is still available, prominently displayed at the Texas Star Trading Company in Abilene. Multiple copies sold last year, and it'll likely continue to be offered for years to come.

After all, Dromgoole and his wife, Carol, have run the business for 20 years and still accept coins--even buckets of pennies--as legal tender. If Glenn is minding the store, he'll offer a plethora of thoughts at no charge. Come to think of it, he may offer you a penny or two for yours.

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.

THE ROAD TO 50 Years



Steve and Barbara Russell explain secret to a long and happy marriage

By John English
The Community News

In November of 2023, Steve and Barbara Russell celebrated 50 years of marriage.

The couple marked the occasion by taking the trip of a lifetime.

Traveling to France, Spain, and Italy, the Russells saw such vestiges of historical significance as the Colosseum, the Pantheon, the Statue of David, and much, much more, and the Parker County couple said it was all that they could have hoped for and more.

“For our 50th anniversary, I talked to Steve and said we need to take a big trip,” Barbara said. “He said, ‘Okay, what do you want to do?’ I said, ‘I want to go to Italy.’ My grandfather died in Florence and my father would go to Florence on business, so I really wanted to go to Florence. I really wanted to close the generation gap. We decided to take a cruise, and we saw the most beautiful things ever.”

The Russells made the trip to Western Europe via the Queen Victoria and for Barbara, who taught in the Aledo ISD for 28 years, the experience brought much of what she taught to life.

“I was a history major and I also minored in Spanish,” Barbara said. “To go to these places in Rome and Florence and Spain, oh my gosh it made me so very happy because that was what I studied for many years. So that was exciting. We don’t take big trips like that at all, and we just decided for

our 50th anniversary that we were going to see something that we’d never seen before. That’s what made it special.”

As Valentine’s Day approaches and their 51st anniversary has now passed, the couple reflected on what it takes to make a marriage work for more than five decades.

Originally from Shreveport, Louisiana, Barbara, 78, said the recipe for a successful marriage is really not all that complicated.

“We’re pretty happy,” Barbara said. “We like to laugh. We are very supportive of each other, and he gives great hugs.”

The Russells have lived in Willow Park since 1985 and still remember how they first met.

“It was a blind date,” Barbara said. “It was in Shreveport, Louisiana. He was 28 years old and I was 28 years old. I opened the door and I saw this beautiful man in front of me, and I still remember the exact words that he said to me. I said to him, ‘I’ve seen you around before, you’re tall.’ And he said to me, ‘I’ve seen you around before, too, and you’re always smiling.’ Oh yeah— he got me on the first sentence.”

The couple went out for a baseball game and dinner on their first date, but the second date was the turning point in what would eventually become a shared journey of 51 years.

“He came to my parent’s

house and he said, ‘What do you want to do tonight?’” Barbara said. “I was all ready to go out for dinner, and I said, ‘How about a game of tennis?’ His face lit up and he said, ‘You just stay right there. I’m going to go home and get changed.’

“We went to the tennis courts and the rest is history. We both love sports. He is very lucky in that because I like many sports. So basically, that’s how it all started, and it’s been like that ever since.”

For Steve, who grew up in Midland and earned a golf scholarship to TCU, the most rewarding aspect of marriage, without question, is the companionship.

“I think it’s the comfort of having a friend in your wife and someone that supports you,” Steve said. “We raised two kids and we’ve done pretty well. We’ve gotten to go to a lot of places, and it is nice to share those things. The older you get, the more you realize how rare it is that people stay together for that long. Knowing that you have that going for you is a comforting thing in a stressful world.”

Steve, 78, who worked the last 30 years of his career as a golf professional at Leonard Golf Links, said that marriage is not always

easy, but if he could give any advice to young couples just starting out this Valentine’s Day, it would be to remember that one does not always have to be right, to keep egos in check, and practice a few important habits.

“When we have issues or things going on, we talk about them,” Steve said. “We work our way through them. You have to realize that it’s not about you. In other words, it’s not about Steve Russell. It’s about Steve and Barbara and family and that’s what’s really important. If you let your ego get a little too elevated, you’re going to create tension and it’s going to come back to bite you.”

“The world we live in today seems to be so ‘me, me, me,’ I think that not letting that eat you up is the key to any relationship.”

Barbara agreed and said she would add one other thing.

“That’s why I love him,” Barbara said. “He is kind, and believe me there were times where sometimes I call us ‘Mr. and Mrs. Grumpy Cat,’ because we do get grumpy. But every day he comes home he’s kind and we get a giggle in, so I would say it is being kind to each other, pure and simple, and do it in the right way.”

“...being kind to each other,
pure and simple, and do it in the right way.”

- Barbara Russell



SPECIAL TO THE COMMUNITY NEWS

TOP: Steve and Barbara Russell celebrated their 50 years of marriage with a trip of a lifetime to France, Spain, and Italy. | **BOTTOM:** Steve and Barbara Russell exit the church after their wedding in 1973.



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FOOD PANTRY
requests for the week

- MILK
- CEREAL
- BUTTER
- DELI MEAT
- FRESH FRUIT
- BREAKFAST BARS

Food pantry requests for the week!
This week requests are milk, cereal, butter, deli meat, fresh fruit and breakfast bars. If you're able to donate toward the food pantry requests, donations may be dropped off at 1225 Holland Lake Dr. Weatherford, TX 76086 Monday-Thursday from 8 a.m. - 4 p.m. We appreciate your continued support to help feed our Senior community

Exploring kindergarten options for the 2025-26 school year?

TCA

Register now for Kindergarten Roundup!

February 18 8:30-9:30 AM

FEBRUARY 18
TCA's Kindergarten Round-Up
Join Us for TCA's Kindergarten Round-Up from 8:30-9:30a.m. on February 18th. This is a wonderful opportunity to get a firsthand look at our kindergarten experience, ask questions, and connect with other families. Highlights include:
• You get the opportunity to attend Pre-K chapel.
• Meet with our kindergarten teachers and administration for a brief presentation on our program, curriculum, and what makes our school an excellent place for your child to learn and grow!

FEBRUARY 22
Hats, Horses & Hoopla
Aledo Project Celebraion 2026 is holding an event from 6-9 p.m. on February 22, at The Social Space, 205 S. Calhoun St. Fort Worth. Visit aledopc2026.com for tickets and more information. Ticket purchase deadline: Sunday, February 9, 2025



FEBRUARY 25
67th Annual Rotary Pancake Supper
Weatherford Rotary is having their annual Pancake Supper from 6-8p.m. on February 25, at the Weatherford High School Cafeteria, 212 Bethel Rd. Funds raised for towards scholarships for Weatherford high school seniors. For more information visit weatherfordrotary.org or call 817-360-8173.

LET'S MAHJ!
for YoungLife

Join us at Stillwater Meadow on Friday, February 28 from 9am-12:30pm

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>

Weatherford First Monday Trade Days
Discover the charm of one of Texas' oldest open-air markets, happening the weekend before the first Monday of every month. From 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., Friday to Sunday, at Heritage Park (317 Santa Fe Dr) transforms into a vibrant marketplace filled with treasures! Shop an incredible variety of antiques, furniture, jewelry, plants, artwork, collectibles, and so much more. Feeling hungry? Swing by the food park to grab some delicious eats while you browse. With free entry and parking, there's no reason to miss out! Bring your friends, family, or just yourself for a unique shopping experience.

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!

TEXAS CROSSWORD
by Charley & Guy Orbison
Copyright 2025 by Orbison Bros.

ACROSS

1 Oldham County seat
5 TXism: "got ____ of arrows in his quiver" (capable)
6 African river
7 TXism: "big biscuit ____ the pan" (boss)
8 TXism: "limp as a dish ____"
9 wanderers
15 very small amount
16 popular Texas beer bottles
19 carries something heavy or awkward
21 it's created by the Texas sun
22 ____ Bend, TX in Kaufman County
27 ____ song by TX Henley's Eagles: "Life in the Fast ____"
28 British dish: "____ the hole"
29 TX Meat Loaf album: "Bat Out ____"
30 alternative energies: wind ____
32 Astro's Jeremy Pena pos.
33 what a tornado siren does
36 TXism: "____ lick of" (none)
37 "give ____ rest" (stop talking)
38 to corrupt morals
39 TX Orbison posthumous hit (3 wds.)
41 ____ beans are a major Texas crop
42 TXism: "likely ____" (probable)

DOWN

1 ____ Alstyne, TX
2 actor and UT alumnus, Wallach
3 Philistine giant downed by David
4 Texas cowboy head covering (4 wds.)
8 "Enchanted ____ State Natural Area"
9 TXism: "plain as the ____"
10 TX Willie's "____ the Road Again"
11 he owned Gilley's Club in Texas (init.)

45 TXism: "six ____ half a dozen of the other"
46 Texas tribe "Eyeish" was also known as this biblical "you"
47 former governor, Richards
49 Christmas venture: "____ grandma's house"
52 Texas river transports
53 kids' game

12 Texas has most of this mohair-producer in the U.S. (2 wds.)
13 French explorer Sieur ____ Salle died in Texas
14 as a plural, a great number or quantity
15 TXism: "his porch light ____ burning" (friendly)
16 licensed practical nurses (abbr.)
17 soap opera "Dallas" character, Shepard
18 perceived by the senses
20 TXism: "still wet behind the ____"

28 Texas Outlaws coach (soccer)
31 pirates' booty
34 gold chem. symbol
35 former Aggie coach ____ Slocum
37 TXism: "put ____ the back burner"
40 "what part ____ don't you get?"
43 ____-Pei dog breed
44 writes music using accepted symbols
50 "____ me thinking"
51 40th Texas governor, Preston (init.)

MARDI GRAS FESTIVAL
A FAMILY FRIENDLY EVENT
MARCH 4, 6:00 P.M. - 9:00 P.M.
AT ALKEK FINE ARTS BUILDING

MARCH 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.



MARCH 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.

Aledo High School
Spring Fling
Craft Fair & Market Expo
March 29, 2025 10am-4pm

MARCH 29
Aledo Spring Fling Craft Fair and Market Expo
The Aledo Spring Fling will be from 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. on March 29 at the Aledo High School. Come and shop creative quality craft vendors and market vendors who have everything to share with you from wood crafts and paper goods to beauty, floral, and boutique products! Proceeds benefit the Junior Class at Aledo High School every year.

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THE COMMUNITY NEWS

ACHIEVEMENTS

Football friends to stay teammates in college

Aledo has 11 commit to extend careers

By Rick Mauch
The Community News

National Signing Day is a day of joy for high school athletes committing to keep playing their respective sport at the college level.

It's also a day when reality sets in that the time is soon coming to say goodbye to your high school friends and teammates as you prepare to make new ones — all the while maintaining the special bond you created by competing together at the prep level.

However, that is not always the case, as proven by former Aledo football players Owen Henderson and Kai Taylor. On Wednesday, Feb. 5, the two signed their college letters of intent to play for the Angelo State University Rams.

They are part of 11 Aledo athletes who signed to play college sports. They were joined by:

Football

- Brody Adams, Kilgore College.

- Blake Burdine, Trinity University (San Antonio).
- Cody Cartwright, West Texas A&M University (Canyon).
- Adrian Fuller, Henderson State University (Arkadelphia, Arkansas).
- Roman Jeffries, Independence College (Montgomery, Kansas).

Baseball

- Brooks Burdine, Air Force Academy (Colorado Springs, Colorado).
- Braden Montgomery, Dallas Christian College.

Track

- Maggie Kilburn, Louisiana Monroe.
- Luke Schabel, Dallas Baptist University.

Of the track signees, Aledo girls coach Mike Pinkerton said, "They're going to go far. They have tremendous work ethic. Every time we graduate seniors of their caliber, we're scrambling to find points."

Bearcats baseball coach Chad Barry echoed those sentiments toward his baseball players.

"Their work ethic, their attention to detail, the

leadership they provide speaks volumes," Barry said. "They're typical Aledo kids. They work hard and overachieve."

Remaining teammates

Henderson said he and Taylor discussed the possibility of attending the same college. They've been great friends and teammates since the eighth grade.

"When we went and toured — he went the day after me — we said 'I think we can do this,'" Henderson said.

"It's so cool that it's really happening. We don't have to stop being teammates because we're going to college."

Taylor said after Henderson visited he noticed his friend posting about his time on campus and it got him excited about his trip to San Angelo. Next thing you know, they agreed to become Rams.

"I couldn't wait to go, and after I visited I knew I wanted to play there also," Taylor said. "We both said yes on the day we visited."

"I'm extremely happy for those guys. That's

really special," Bearcats football coach Robby Jones said, noting of all the signees, "That's a great thing when you have that many kids continue their education. It speaks to the success of the program. We had 70 schools come through during this last recruiting cycle."

What's more, not only are Henderson and Taylor still going to be teammates, they will still have the opportunity to be on the field at the same time, just as in high school. Henderson is a linebacker and Taylor is a cornerback.

"Yeah, that's going to be great," Henderson said.

They each said they like having their good friend on campus as they will help each other get acclimated to college life.

"Anytime I need someone to talk to, he'll be right there," Henderson said.

What could make it even better? Being roommates, of course.

"We're thinking about that. I hope we can make it happen," Taylor said.

PHOTOS BY MERCEDES MEYERS/ALEDO ISD



Brody Adams will play football at Kilgore College. He is shown with Rob and Amanda.



Blake Burdine will play football and baseball at West Texas A&M University. He is shown with Landry, Elizabeth, Belle, and Brooks.



Brooks Burdine will play baseball at the Air Force Academy. He is shown with Landry, Elizabeth, Belle, and Blake.



Cody Cartwright will play football at West Texas A&M University. He is shown with Royce, Jill, Catie, and Cason.



Adrian Fuller will play football at Henderson State University. He is shown with Martin, Allison, and Aspen.



Owen Henderson will play football at Angelo State University. He is shown with Jason, Elizabeth, Luke, and Wyatt.



Roman Jeffries will play football at Independence College. He is shown with Stephen and Andrea.



Maggie Kilburn will pole vault at the University of Louisiana Monroe. She is shown with Robin Kilburn.



Braden Montgomery will play baseball at Dallas Christian College. He is shown with Kelley, Lori, and Brycen.



Luke Schabel will run cross country and track at Dallas Baptist University. He is shown with Tim, Carmen, Maggie and Dianne.



Kai Taylor will play football at Angelo State University. He is shown with Jeff, Erica, and Bleu.



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BASKETBALL

Ladycats claim bi-district title over Birdville

Move on to face
Timberview

By Ryan Wade
The Community News

HALTOM CITY - With the regular season in the rear view window, Aledo's varsity Ladycats kicked off their 2025 playoff run with a dominant performance against Birdville to claim their Class 5A Division II bi-district contest on Monday, Feb. 10.

A second-half flurry by Aledo (22-11 overall, 10-2 in District 5-5A, second place) allowed them to put some distance between themselves and the Lady Hawks (12-18, 6-6 in District 6-5A, third) as they cruised to a 16-point victory, 53-37.

"I feel really, really good," first-year Ladycat coach Donnie Ott said after the game. "We've got to clean some things up defensively that I would've liked to have done better that exposed us a little bit. It's good. You want those things, as coaches, to continue to work and improve your team. But I was just so proud of their effort."

The start of the game resembled more of a three-point contest during an all-star weekend with the two teams trading volleys from beyond the three-point line. Birdville opened the scoring with a three-pointer. Aledo's junior point guard Liz Griffin answered right back with a long ball of her own to make it a 3-3 affair early.

The Lady Hawks knocked down another three-pointer on the ensuing possession to make it 6-3

with neither team having attempted a shot from inside the arc.

Then the Ladycats began to find their rhythm.

Since transferring to Aledo from Virginia last summer, Tiara Butler has become a cornerstone of the Ladycat basketball team at both ends of the floor. Monday night was no exception. Butler claimed her first basket of the night with 5:13 left in the first quarter, thrashing around in the paint to score a tough bucket to bring Aledo within one of Birdville.

After the Aledo defense forced a turnover, Griffin earned three the hard way, taking a hard shot as she drove the lane for a layup. The shot scored, putting Griffin at the charity stripe where she converted the free throw to give the Ladycats their first lead of the game.

Birdville answered back to tie the game at 8-8 with 3:51 left in the first quarter. However, that was as close as the Lady Hawks would get to the lead the rest of the way. In the remaining three and a half minutes in the first quarter, Aledo outpaced Birdville 11-5.

Griffin remained hot as she knocked down a pair of threes to put the Ladycats up by a half dozen forcing the Lady Hawks to take their first timeout of the game with 3:20 left in the first and the score 14-8 in favor of the Ladycats.

As play resumed Butler drew a hard foul in the paint before knocking down both free throws. A minute later August Carlone came off the bench, got a good

Turn to LADYCATS, page 12



RYAN WADE/THE COMMUNITY NEWS

Tiara Butler eyes the basket as she drives by a Birdville defender during the Ladycats' bi-district win.

SPORTS BRIEFS

BOYS BASKETBALL
Ballard scores 1,000th point

The Weatherford Kangaroos varsity defeated Boswell 68-49 on Feb. 7. In the victory, Kangaroo Brandon Ballard scored the 1,000th point of his high school career.

BOYS POWERLIFTING
Roos set records

Enrique Vega set a school record in the 123-pound division recently, lifting 185 pounds in the bench press. Also, Jonathan Griggs set a deadlift record in the same division with 310 pounds.

BOYS TENNIS
Silver medal for Kangaroo

Owen Hendricks of the Weatherford Kangaroos garnered second place boys singles at the Boswell Invitational recently.

BOYS WRESTLING
Spotanski qualifies for state

Gunner Spotanski of Weatherford finished third at the Class 6A Region I Tournament in Coppell this past weekend. That qualified the senior for this weekend's state tournament in Katy.

GIRLS SOCCER
No. 1 Lady Roos extend shutout streak

The Weatherford Lady Kangaroos posted victories of 5-0 over North Crowley and 1-0 against Mansfield Lake Ridge. The Lady Roos improved to 11-0 overall and to 4-0 in District 3-6A.

Ava Garrett scored the lone goal against Lake Ridge off of an assist by Kylie Daniel.

In the win over North Crowley, Garrett scored two goals, while Landree Cooper, Addy McElhaney, and Nancy Taylor each had one. Assists came from Cooper, McElhaney, Taylor, Landree, Cooper, and Dayla Dromgoole.

Shutout defense came from Taylor, Bri Lilly, Dromgoole, Emma Johnson, Raleigh Boone, Nataly Ponce, Alexzenna Stay, Jayden Wright, and Hanna Redington.

Weatherford, ranked No. 1 in Class 6A by the Texas Girls Coaches Association, have outscored their opponents 38-0.

Weatherford JVA 5,
North Crowley 0

Haley Wolfsen scored 4 goals and Accailia Rogers scored 1. Quinn Kahlden recorded another shutout.

Weatherford JVB 4,
Lake Worth 1

Goals were by Sydney Vandecarr (2), Josie Hunt and Temperance Medlicott. Assists were by Vandecarr, Hunt and Piper Mercier.

Weatherford JVB 8,
North Crowley 0

Goals were by Morgan Banfield (3), Adilyn Melven (2), Mercier, Bella Chuhaloff, and Temperance Medlicott. Multiple assists were by Hunt.

BASKETBALL

Bearcats roll to first-ever
district championship



RANDY KECK/THE COMMUNITY NEWS

Ryan Gonzales heads to the basket on a fast break in Aledo's game against NTCA on Monday, Feb. 10.

Ladycats wrap up
district en route
to playoffs

By Geoff Heppes
The Community News

AZLE - The Aledo High School boys and girls basketball teams have earned high marks on their respective seasons thus far and both achieved major accomplishments in their most recent district-doubleheader Tuesday night, Feb. 4, at Azle.

The Ladycats locked up the second seed in District 5-5A with a 45-23 demolition and finished the year 10 games above .500 while the boys squad impressively won 79-54 to secure the program's first-ever district title.

Bearcats

The Bearcats (26-5, 10-1 in district) raced out to a fast start behind a balanced scoring effort to achieve the seemingly elusive feat of history. The Bearcats blazed past the Hornets by outscoring the opposition 51-23 in the first half.

Turn to HOOPS, page 11

WRESTLING

Aledo's
Powell to be
alternate
at state

Dozen Bearcats
qualified for regional

By Rick Mauch
The Community News

One of the best seasons in Aledo's young wrestling history continued

at the Class 5A Region I Tournament in Lubbock this past weekend. The highlight of the tournament was Brady Powell finishing fifth in his weight class and being an alternate for the state wrestling tournament Feb. 14-15 at the Berry Center in Houston.

Powell, competing in the 175-pound division, split his six matches.

For the Ladycats, Ari Mathias also reached the second day of competition. She was 2-2 in the 138 division.

Turn to POWELL, page 9



Brady Powell

LADYCAT
OF THE WEEK

Haley Roberson
Swimming



The senior is making a fourth consecutive trip to state and will compete in four events after her dominating performance at regionals. Individually, she won the 200 individual medley and 500 freestyle, while swimming the anchor leg of both winning relays, the 200 free and 400 free. The 200 free relay set a school record with a time of 1:41.57.

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BEARCAT
OF THE WEEK

Ian Perez
Swimming



The sophomore finished in the top five in four events at the Class 5A Region II Meet in Mansfield on the Feb. 7-8 weekend. He was part of the second-place and state qualifying 400-yard freestyle relay and fourth-place 200 free relay, while individually finishing third in the 100 butterfly and fourth in the 100 breaststroke. The 400 free relay set a school-record time of 3:21.60.

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SPORTS BRIEFS

RODEO

Area athletes among NTHSRA leaders

Several area competitors are among the top 10 in their respective events as the North Texas High School Rodeo Association prepares to begin the second half of the season. The top 15 in the final regular season standings in each event advance to the NTHSRA Finals in May.

Barrel racing: 10. Annabella McNeely, Aledo

Calf roping: 9. Cole Lewis, Weatherford

Ribbon roping: 6. Lewis

Team roping-header: Shane McCulloch, Weatherford

Team roping-heeler: McCulloch

Boys all-around: 8. McCulloch

SOFTBALL

WC's Hanf Pitcher of the Week

Weatherford College's Sarah Hanf has been named both the national and regional Pitcher of the Week by the National Junior College Athletic Association and the Northern Texas Junior College Athletic Conference.

As a freshman right-handed pitcher hailing from Elk Grove, California, Hanf is making her college softball debut in a big way. Hanf won three games in one week for the WC softball team, including one against 13th-ranked Paris. In total, Hanf allowed three runs and only nine hits in 13 innings. She wrapped up the week with 21 strikeouts and three walks.

Hanf is only the second player in the 14 season history of the program to receive this national honor. Taylor Maliska won the National Pitcher of the Week Award in April of 2016.

POWELL

from page 8

"We are a young team, so the experience of making it to regionals and winning a match at that tournament will be valuable next season," said coach Ben Shaw, who is wrapping up his first season at the helm of the Aledo program. "We competed hard and wrestled lots of close matches. I'm proud of the way our athletes continued to compete until the very end."

Also winning matches and their respective weight classes for the Bearcats were Cameron Robbins, 106; Dylan Chandler, 120; and Cade Rangel, 215. Brice Bohn, 126; Oliver Tatro, 132; and Benjamin Hungerford, 144, also qualified for regionals.

Joy Stephens, competing in the 120 division, also posted a victory for the Ladycats. Other girls who qualified for regionals are Lillian Carruthers, 100; Avery Kernan, 107; and Grace Beasley, 114.

"This was a great year for all of our regional qualifiers and it gives us the motivation to keep working to achieve our goals for next season," Shaw said.

SWIMMING

Roberson, Crews competing for fourth straight year

By Rick Mauch
The Community News

The city of Austin has gotten quite familiar with a contingent from Aledo making its way down south about this time of year for the annual University Interscholastic League Swim Meet.

This year the Aledo High School squad will be sending eight competitors (4 girls, 4 boys) to the Lee & Joe Jamail Texas Swimming Center at the University of Texas at Austin. They will compete in the Class 5A Meet Feb. 21-22.

For two members of the group, it will be their fourth consecutive season in which to compete at state, Ladycats Haley Roberson and Victoria Crews. Roberson qualified in four events, two individual and two relays, while Crews is part of both relays following their performance in the Deb. 7-8 Region II Meet in Mansfield.

Roberson will once again compete at state in the 200 individual medley and the 500 freestyle. She posted a time of 2:07.21 in the former to win by seven seconds by dropping her time by 1.35 seconds

since district, along with taking first in the latter by 19 seconds by posting a time of 5:11.18.

Also competing on the 200-yard freestyle and 400 freestyle relays will be junior Julia Gordy, who is making a second straight state appearance, and freshman Mackenzie Oligschlaeger. The quartet won both relays, including the 400 by 11 seconds with a time of 3:45.13, a drop of 11.21 seconds from district.

In the 200 free relay, they set a school record with a clocking of 1:41.57, dropping 4.88 seconds off their district time.

The four boys advancing comprise the 400 free relay that finished second. Senior Tyler Jackson joined sophomores Kale Roberson, Brayden Deboer, and Ian Perez to swim a time of 3:21.60 for a 6.51 improvement from district and another school record.

Also, while not qualifying for state the boys 200 free relay of Kale Roberson, Jackson, Perez and senior Evan Bradley also set a school record of 1:32.22 to place fourth.

"The (boys) 400 free was a race to watch. Splits were almost all best times and they set the school

Turn to **SWIM**, page 11



AVERY FAULKNER

The girls 200-yard Free Relay of (front) Mackenzie Oligschlaeger and Haley Roberson and (back) Victoria Crews and Julia Gordy set a school record in qualifying for state. The quartet also qualified in the 400 free relay.

BASEBALL

Bearcats ready to build off impressive 2024

Experienced team has big aspirations

By Geoff Heppes
The Community News

With a new season on the diamond upon the community of fans touting orange and black, the Aledo Bearcats baseball team is eager to build off the successful campaign they had in 2024. Last season, the Bearcats (25-14-1, 10-2) earned a first-place finish in the district and advanced three rounds through

the postseason bracket, where they bowed out to Argyle.

"Last year's team overachieved. They had great leadership from the seniors and a great work ethic," Bearcats' head coach Chad Barry said. "They grew tremendously throughout the year. They won a lot of close games last season, and I think those games that a lot of these seniors played in has helped mature their approach on the field. We definitely have more veterans going into this season."

Experience on the roster was a key component of Aledo's success last year as it will be this season. Barry's Bearcats will feature more than 10 upperclassmen on the squad, and the long-time Aledo coach expects them to fulfill big roles for the 2025 squad.

"Key players will start with the returning starters, Brooks Burdine, Blake Burdine, Devin Miller, Brennon Evans, and Luke Trager," Barry said. "Several other seniors who saw significant playing time last season like Noah Graham, Luke Sandefur and Rhett Spiers will be big for us as well. We also have quite a few new faces to the varsity and our program that look to make an impact: Dylan Duran, Luke Gladchuk, Grayson McKelvey, Nick Foster and Landon Barnes."

The masterful blend of youth, experience, athleticism, and poise equated to a 25-win season for a squad Barry called "overachievers." This year's Bearcats team should boast a strong pitching staff with a bevy of quality arms, according to Barry. And, with that, the expectations will remain high in Aledo.

"The standard does not change year to year," Barry said. "The goal every season is to get to the state tournament. This group seems to be taking that goal and running with it."



RYAN WADE/THE COMMUNITY NEWS

Devin Miller winds and fires during a home game for the Bearcats during the 2024 season.

With big aspirations in the crosshairs, Aledo will aim to either replicate or surpass its success in the district slate as well. The Bearcats will vie for the District 5-5A Division I title against the likes of Azle, Brewer, Granbury, Rider, and Saginaw after edging Rider for the league title last year.

"All the district games are key," Barry said. "Last season every district game was highly competitive, and if you didn't go out and play well, you lost. I think it will be much the same this season as well, so those 12 games are huge for us."

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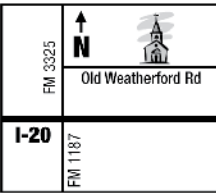
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Notice is hereby given that the following RFP will be accepted by Aledo Independent School District (140837) on or before Monday, **March 17, 2025, no later than 2:00 PM CST.** Late proposals will be rejected as non-responsive. Forms and specifications may be obtained, and submissions received at the website referenced below until the designated time.

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Link for all interested vendors: <https://kelloggllc.bonfirehub.com/portal>

All Questions and Proposals must be submitted online.
Questions must be submitted no later than 2:00 PM CST on **Tuesday, February 18, 2025.**
Proposals must be submitted no later than 2:00 PM CST on **Monday, March 17, 2025.**

The Aledo Independent School District reserves the right to reject any and/or all proposals and to make awards as they may appear to be advantageous to the District and to waive all formalities with respect thereto. Bidders are encouraged to submit proposals well in advance of the deadline. The District is not responsible for the bidder's technical difficulties that may be experienced at the time of the bid closing.

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FOOTBALL

Finley honored by THSCA

Second accolade in a week

By Rick Mauch
The Community News

The postseason accolades keep coming in for Aledo junior wide receiver Kaydon Finley. For a second straight week he was honored by one of the state's elite organizations.

Finley was named to the Texas High School Coaches Association Class 5A Super Elite Team. It comes on the heels of him being named all-state by the Padilla Poll.

The Super Elite Team is exactly what the name says. A player must have excelled as an elite member in their respective sport.

They must also be of good moral character and have been a member of the team in good standing at the time of the nomination. The award is for varsity sports only.

“That is a great honor to be selected for the THSCA for their Super Elite Team. An individual has to meet certain criteria and then a committee chooses who will be on the team,” Bearcats head



BRELEIGH MAYER/THE COMMUNITY NEWS

Kaydon Finley

coach Robby Jones said. “One of the big differences between this team and other all-state teams is the committee reviews each nominees highlight videos.

“Kaydon excelled at a truly elite level last fall and we expect him to help lead next year’s team back to another state championship.”

Finley caught 81 passes for 1,429 yards, an average of 17.6 yards per catch. His long catch was for 92 yards.

He was targeted 125 times in 14 games and only had four drops.

Overall, Finley enjoyed his best season to date.

Finley helped the Bearcats to a 12-2 record and a berth in the Class 5A Division I state quarterfinals. He helped them to back-to-back state championships in his freshman and sophomore seasons and has been a starter all three of his high school campaigns.

In his time on the varsity the Bearcats have posted a record of 42-4, including 16-0 in 2023. They won 30 straight games in that span.

POWERLIFTING

Aledo girls win own meet

Bearcats, Ladycats compete in Glen Rose

Staff Reports
The Community News

The Aledo Ladycats topped the field in their Aledo Invitational powerlifting meeting on Jan. 30. They scored 60 points to easily outdistance runner-up Trinity Christian Academy with 22.

The Ladycats and Bearcats then competed in Glen Rose on Feb. 5 and 6, respectively. The Aledo girls placed second with 41 points, behind Glen Rose with 47, and the boys were third with 40 points, behind Glen Rose with 67 and Granbury with 49.

Aledo Meet Aledo Girls

105-pound division: 1. Lily Caruthers, 455 total pounds lifted.
123: 1. Ashlynn Durnill, 415.
132: 1. Avery Jeter, 525; 2. Olivia Evans, 435.
148: 1. Breleigh Mayer, 655; 3. Allie Faulkner, 580; 4. Gracie Smith, 575; 5. Ella Childress, 570.
165: 2. Kendra Potts, 550; 3. Charlotte Gardner, 505; 4. Kennedy Ross, 490.
181: 2. Lily Morris, 555.
220: 1. Mallory Morgan, 600.

Trinity Christian Girls

148: 2. Rylie Reeder, 620.
165: 1. Addison Shoppach, 705.
181: 1. Anna Nelson, 605; 3. Molly Speaks, 530.

Glen Rose Meet Aledo Girls

105: 3. Caruthers, 480; 4. Kylie Dernovich, 385.
123: 3. Charlie Soward, 585.
132: 1. Bryanna Orr, 765; 4. Kyla Pierce, 595.
148: 1. Ari Mathias, 805; 2. Smith, 605; 3. Faulkner, 600; 4. Childress, 590.
165: 4. Claire Moseley, 610; 5. Potts, 605.
181: 2. Jayden Staggs, 615; 4. Morris, 590.

Aledo Boys

148: 2. Matthew Long, 955; 5. Kason Vititow, 780.
165: 4. Carson Bobbitt, 1,095.
181: 3. Ethan Pickett, 1,120; 4. Rylan Haley, 1,060.
220: 1. Chase Wilburn, 1,360; 5. Seth Knott, 1,115.
242: 2. Anthony Flowers, 1,460; 4. Cason Miller, 1,160.
275: 2. Krueger Summers, 1,480; 3. Roland Krieger, 1,285.
308: 1. Omari Din-Mbuh, 1,400; 4. Bill White, 900.

The Ladycats and Bearcats will each host their respective meets. The girls are competing on Feb. 14 and the boys on Feb. 18.



AVERY FAULKNER

The boys 400 Free Relay of (front) Brayden DeBoer and Tyler Jackson and (back) Ian Perez and Kale Roberson qualified for state and set a school record at regionals.

SWIM

from page 9

record previously broken in 2009. One of the relay members, Brayden DeBoer, wasn’t born when it was set,” Aledo coach Meghan Roberson said. “They broke it by 5.04 seconds. They led until the final leg when Colleyville Heritage’s anchor swam an incredible last leg to just beat them out.

“I’m incredibly proud of the team and the work they’ve put in this season to get to this point. They’re working hard during practice to be their best for each other in these relays. As a coach and mom with a senior (Haley Roberson) on the team, I’m so glad we’re not done with this season yet!”

Class 5A Region II Swim Meet Aledo Girls

200 Freestyle: 4. Julia Gordy, 2:08.97, a 5.73 second drop from district.
200 Individual Medley: 1. Haley Roberson, 2:07.21, 1.35 drop, state qualifier.

100 Butterfly: 3. Victoria Crews, 1:00.25, 3.27 drop from district; 18. Aurora Dingman, 1:21.03, 5.25 drop.

100 Freestyle: 5. Gordy, 57.74, 3.16 drop; 7. Mackenzie Oligschlaeger, 58.59, 0.96 drop.

500 Freestyle: 1. Roberson, 5:11.18, state qualifier; 4. Molly Garrison, 5:47.75, 12.79 drop.

200 Freestyle Relay: 1. Crews, Gordy, Oligschlaeger, Roberson, 1:41.57, 4.88 drop, school record, state qualifier.

100 Backstroke: 6. Oligschlaeger, 1:07.09, 3.07 drop; 12. Ava Curnutt, 1:12.00, 2.53 drop; 19. Brooklynn Wilson, 1:24.44.

100 Breaststroke: 7. Garrison, 1:19.14.

400 Freestyle Relay: 1. Crews, Gordy, Oligschlaeger, Roberson, 3:45.13, 11.21 drop, state qualifier.

Aledo Boys

200 Medley Relay: 8. Jaxon Robinson (backstroke), Michael Spillers (breaststroke), Brayden DeBoer (butterfly), Tyler Jackson

(freestyle), 1:52.31.
200 Freestyle: 10. Evan Bradley, 1:58.82, 5.80 drop; 11. Robinson, 2:00.10, 1.83 drop.

200 Individual Medley: 7. DeBoer, 2:09.72, 2.55 drop.

50 Freestyle: 9. Kale Roberson, 22.88, 0.48 drop.

100 Butterfly: 3. Ian Perez, 54.40, 1.34 drop; 9. Bradley, 59.22, 1.97 drop; 15. Bradyn Baughman, 1:04.49.

100 Freestyle: 3. Roberson, 49.05, 1.53 drop.

500 Freestyle: 5. DeBoer, 5:20.04, 4.72 drop.

200 Freestyle Relay: 4. Roberson, Bradley, Jackson, Perez, 1:32.22, drop of 17.37, school record.

100 Backstroke: 13. Robinson, 1:04.92; 17. Michael Spillers, 1:06.96, 1.56 drop.

100 Breaststroke: 4. Perez, 1:03.17, 3.89 drop; 13. Baughman, 1:13.45, 2.72 drop.

400 Freestyle Relay: 2. Roberson, DeBoer, Jackson, Perez, 3:21.60, 6.51 drop, school record, state qualifier.

HOOPS

from page 8

During the first half scoring spree, Aledo’s leading scorer, Joaquin Pacheco, netted 15 of his game-high 20 points in the first two quarters of play. Azle outscored Aledo 24-9 in the fourth quarter but the outcome was no longer a mystery at this point in the game as Aledo emptied its bench with a 68-30 lead entering the game’s final eight minutes.

Talented post Townes Van Huysen also made a major contribution with 13 points while sophomore Caden Cunningham and Kaiden Clayborn scored nine.

Non-District Matchup

The Aledo Bearcats (27-6) hosted the North Central Texas Academy Pioneers (33-7) for a non-district contest on Senior Night, Feb. 10. Although leading 27-18 at the half, the Bearcats were outscored 25-10

in the third quarter, and the took the game 57-52.

The JV defeated the Pioneers 57-54. Th 9A team defeated Colleyville Heritage 58-43, while the 9B team lost to Heritage 54-45.

Joaquin Pacheco led scorers with 13 points. Enrique Pacheco was also in double digits with 12.

Aledo at Brewer

The Bearcats made a clean sweep of Brewer this season by defeating the Bears in their own den on Friday, Feb. 7, by a score of 50-47.

Ladycats

Meanwhile, the Ladycats (21-11, 10-2 in district) posted their own dominant win in Azle and victoriously emerged from their regular season finale by a final score of 45-23. Standout junior guard Elizabeth Griffin paced the Ladycat offense with a team-high 15 points while senior post Ella Isbell provided quality post defense to go with her eight points. Sarah Edwards and Tiara Butler also



RANDY KECK/THE COMMUNITY NEWS

Six Bearcats honored on Senior Night with decorated tables in the foyer of Aledo High School's gymnasium and recognition before a home crowd on Monday night, Feb. 10. The seniors introduced and honored were: Cannon Sharp, Pete Previte, Joaquin Pacheco, Anthony Calderone, Ryan Gonzales, and Brett Barclay.

provided a lift by combining for 10 points.

Subvarsity

Both programs’ sub varsity teams completed impressive campaigns, sweeping district titles across the

board. In their season finales, the JV boys won 57-50 while the freshman boys earned a 66-23 victory.

On the girls side, Sawyer Voight scored 14 points to lead her JV squad to a 55-25 win. Sarah Edwards (10) and Harper Fink (7) also provided

quality contributions to the win. The freshman team completed a perfect 24-0 season with a 51-32 triumph. Sonsales Rosado starred for Aledo with a game-high 15 points while Charlotte Gartner and Carlee Sanders chipped in with eight points apiece.

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SOCCER

Bearcats soccer rolls past Granbury

Ladycats suffer first loss

By Geoff Heppes
The Community News

The Aledo Bearcats put their winning ways on display on the soccer field once more Friday night, Feb. 7, during the midst of their district schedule. Aledo was firing on all cylinders offensively and defensively and, ultimately, walked away with a 6-0 triumph over Granbury.

Bearcats striker Trapper Davis found the back of the net twice while Austin Randriamahefa assisted on one of Davis' goals while netting one of his own. Davis and Randriamahefa lead the team with 10 goals apiece on the season.

Harrison Kear helped move the ball well with his accurate passing, highlighted by two assists. Cole Crawford, Brody Gill, and Adrian Solis also connected on goals with Roby Sloan, Gill, and Pierce Ling accounting for the remaining assists.

For his part, Ling was strong inside the net as a goalie. Ling and Mark Graham combined for a shutout inside the net. The win kept Aledo (8-3-1, 4-1) in the top section of the district standings with their fourth consecutive district win.

Meanwhile, the Aledo Ladycats soccer team also took the field Friday night and lost for the first time in district play against Granbury by a final score of 2-1. In that contest, Ainsley Elmore scored Aledo's lone goal off the feed from Reese Harz. The Ladycats (9-3, 4-1) still remain in first place atop the league standings.

Taking down Saginaw

The teams earned a pair of wins Tuesday night, Feb. 4, to provide a 4-0 district start for the girls and a 3-1 opening for the boys against district opposition.

The Ladycats defeated Saginaw in a tightly-contested game but emerged by a final score of 3-2. Ainsley Elmore led the charge offensively with a pair of goals while Avery Sands found the back of the net on a strike of her own. Sands also assisted one of Elmore's goals while Reagan Tomlin had another assist.

Goalkeeping duties were split between Audrey Obana and Ava Fennell. Obana was able to shut out the Saginaw offense in the first half while Fennell allowed two goals but was able to close out her duties strong with her team to secure the win.

Before they faced Saginaw, the Ladycats recorded their first shutout of the season that came in the form of a 4-0 victory over Fossil Ridge. Elmore led with two goals while Cox had a team-high two assists. Weimer also contributed with a goal and an assist while Emery Thompson also netted a goal and Bolz added an assist. Furthermore, Obana and Fennell teamed up to keep the net clean for the team's first district shutout of the season.

A week prior, the Ladycats posted an impressive 5-1 triumph over Chisholm Trail, highlighted by a hat trick from Ally Weimer. Abigail Cates and Katie Cox scored one goal apiece as well while Cox, Sands, Emma Grace Boz, and Elmore were responsible for the team's four assists. Obana and



RYAN WADE/THE COMMUNITY NEWS

Brody Gill and Ryan Spriggs celebrate following a goal by Gill during the Bearcats' 6-0 shutout of Granbury on Friday, Feb. 7.

Fennell anchored the defensive effort allowing just one goal.

Bearcats finding their stride

Meanwhile, the Bearcats' most recent two outings were also victorious against district foes. Like the girls did, Aledo posted a shut-out in their match against Fossil Ridge. The Bearcats clawed their way past the Panthers and were strong defensively to secure a 2-0 win. In that contest, Trapper Davis and Erik Soltow found the back of the net for Davis' sixth and Soltow's first respective goals of the year. Harrison Kear distributed the ball offensively as he provided both of the assists. Aledo's goalkeeper, Pierce Ling, was stellar during his

duties in the net as he recorded six saves to move his season total to 31 while also being responsible for 3.5 shutouts thus far in 2025.

On Feb. 4, Aledo took the field again and took down Saginaw 3-1. Davis' foot provided two more goals for Aledo to give him eight on the year while Elliot Smith also got in on the action with a goal of his own. Adrian Solis, Austin Radriamahefa and Cole Crawford were responsible for one assist apiece while Ling had two big saves to offset one goal allowed.

Coming up

6 p.m. Friday, Feb. 14 — Ladycats JV at home vs. Brewer
7:45 p.m. Friday, Feb. 14 — Ladycats at home vs. Brewer

LADYCATS

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look at the bucket from behind the arc, and knocked down her lone basket of the game right in front of the Birdville bench as Aledo took a 19-13 lead into the second quarter.

Scoring for both teams slowed in the second quarter as the Ladycats still managed to outpace Birdville, 8-5, to take a 27-18 lead into the half.

Coming out of the break Aledo made a strategic change to their offense that ended up paying dividends.

"We executed our offense well," Ott said. "We stayed patient. We forced them to get out of their zone by holding the ball out there and making them come out to play us a little bit. We forced their hand a little bit. We knew they didn't want to play us in man. I think that was huge for us being able to execute and do those things."

The Ladycats put up a dozen points in the third quarter, thanks to their ability to stay disciplined as they drew the Lady Hawks out of their zone. Brooklyn Dempsey led the charge for Aledo with five points in the quarter as she went 3-for-3 from the stripe and drove the lane to score a contested bucket.

Heading into the final frame the Ladycats held a 39-27 lead. Aledo stuck to their gameplan like duct tape. Holding the ball near half court flushed the Lady Hawks out of their zone opening up the post for Kinley Elms and Butler to do their work on the scoreboard. Down the stretch the duo combined for 11 of Aledo's 14 fourth-quarter points en route to a commanding 16-point victory.

Ladycats vs. Birdville – Feb. 10

Aledo	19	8	12	14	- 53
Birdville	13	5	9	10	- 37

Aledo scoring: Liz Griffin 18, Tiara Butler 14, Kinley Elms 13, Brooklyn Dempsey 5, August Carlone 3.

Congrats Seniors

Cannon Sharp, Pete Previte, Joaquin Pacheco, Anthony Calderone, Ryan Gonzales, Brett Barclay

Savannah Salas, August Carlone, Kinley Elms, Rebekah Jarrell, and Ella Isbell pose with the Ladycat senior team managers.

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