

Library staff ready for 2024

The holidays have come and gone for another year but the staff at Lillie Russell Memorial Library is anxious for the new year with some familiar activities.

Regular activities include Adult Game Day each Tuesday when patrons 18 and older can enjoy board games, card games, dominoes and other entertaining ways to spend a morning.

The Game Days begin at 10:30

On Thursdays at 4 p.m., the Yarn Club will continue once again.

At 3:30 on the first Tuesday of each month, the Diabetes Support Group meets for those newly diagnosed or others who have been battling diabetes long term.

Every third Tuesday at 2 p.m. of each month, its Coffee and Crafts because crafts aren't just for youngsters.

Guest lecturer Dr. Jeffrey Owens from Tyler Junior College will present a special feature on the life of Stephen F. Austin at noon on Friday, Jan. 19.

A great way for parents to enhance their kids' reading skills is to sign them up for a visit to Therapet on Saturday, Jan. 13. Reservations are needed and can be made by calling 903-882-1900.

And of course the ever-popular Storytime will take place on Fridays with two sessions, one at 9 a.m. and the second at 10:30 a.m.

Themes for January include Light and Shadow on Jan. 5; Space on Jan. 12; Pizza on Jan. 19 and Snow on Jan. 26, when youngsters are encouraged to wear their favorite white outfit.

Hours for the Lillie Russell Memorial Library are 10 a.m-6 p.m. Tuesday-Thursday and 10 a.m.-4 p.m. on Friday-Saturday. The Library is closed on Sundays and Mondays.

For more information, call 903-882-1900.

Smith County Jail inmate dies

Officials with the Smith County Sheriff's Office reported that jail inmate Susan Taylor, 58, had died after being taken to a UT Health emergency room after being found unconscious in the day room of the jail just after 12 noon on Wednesday, Dec. 27.

Emergency personnel began implementing life-saving measures but Taylor remained unresponsive. She was taken to UT Health were she died.

Precinct 1 Justice of the Peace Derrick Choice arrived at the hospital and performed the inquest on Taylor.

Choice ordered an autopsy and Taylor was transported to Forensic Medical in Tyler, officials said.

The Texas Rangers will investigate the in-custody death per Smith County SO protocol, officials said.



Texas Department of Transportation crews continue working on FM 16 west of Lindale, an area that covers approximately four miles from FM 849 to Highway 69 near downtown. The project is expected to be completed by 2025, TXDOT officials said.

Photo by Terry Cannon

Work continues on FM 16 near Lindale

Widening and realignment of FM 16 west of downtown Lindale will continue this week with lane closures and traffic shift detours in place, said Texas Department of Transportation spokesman Jeff Williford.

The project is four miles west of FM 849 and will continue to U.S. 69 in downtown Lindale, Williford said. Highway 19 Construction, LLC is in charge of the project at a cost of \$44.4 million. It is expected to be completed in the summer of 2025.

The project consists of grading, asphalt base, asphalt surface overlay paving, storm drain, bridge, and culvert structures, signing, pavement markings, and signals. Crews will be preparing the right-of-way by removing trees and grading the embankment.

TXDOT crews will be patching potholes, removing encroachments, and repairing signs throughout the county. Crews continue fog seal operations on FM 850 from SH 31 to Overton. A second crew will be doing bridge work on various roadways throughout the county.

Smith County construction projects updates:

Tyler State Park Bridge and Resurfacing Project

Limits: Park Maintenance Road in Tyler State Park SW to Cedar Point Camping Area Exit

Contractor: Encino Landscape

Cost: \$2.4 Million

Anticipated Completion Date: Winter 2023

The contractor is scheduled to erect forms, tie steel, and pour the concrete approach slab. Also, crews will continue the placement of the stone veneer facing to the retaining walls. The project consists of bridge and pavement resurfacing.

US 69 Rehab Existing Road and Restricted Crossing U-Turn (R-Cut)

Limits: Cumberland Road to .45 miles north of FM 346 Contractor: Drewery Construction Company, INC Cost: \$5.8 million

Anticipated Completion Date: Winter 2023

The contractor has no work scheduled this week. This project consists of rehabilitating existing roadway and installing a restricted crossing U-turn (R-Cut) at FM 2813 intersection.

Legacy Trails Extension

Limits: Stewart Park to Peete Elementary

Contractor: THK Construction LLC. Cost: \$3.5 million

Anticipated Completion Date: Fall 2024

The contractor has no work scheduled. Expect no lane closures during the duration of this project. Project consists of a hike and bike trail development that includes construction of a 12-foot wide shared-use path.

FM 2493 Widen Non-Freeway

Limits: FM 346 in Flint, south to 0.3 miles south of FM 344

Contractor: Longview Bridge and Road LTD Cost: \$52 million

Anticipated Completion Date: Spring 2027

The contractor has no work scheduled this week. No lane closures are in place. The project consists of widening the existing roadway.

County Bridge Replacements

Limits: CR 35 bridge at Hitts Creek Trib., CR 336 at Wiggins Creek, CR 411 at Prairie Creek Trib., CR 471 at Prairie Creek, CR 452 at Mill Creek, CR 411 at Caney Creek.

Contractor: Baker & Company Construction, LLC

Cost: \$6.2 million

Anticipated Completion Date: Spring 2026

The contractor working at CR 411 at the Caney Creek Tributary, pouring contrate for the bridge abutments. On CR 411 at the Prairie Creek Tributary, forms are being made for the concrete structure. CR 35 at the Hitts Creek Tributary is now open. The project consists of replacing the existing bridges and approaches.

CR 422 Bridge Replacement

Limits: CR 422 at Rattlesnake Creek Contractor: Hwy 19 Construction Inc Cost: \$555,187

Anticipated Completion Date: Winter 2024

The contractor has no work scheduled this week. The bridge will be completely closed throughout construction of the new bridge. The project consists of replacing the existing bridge facilities and approaches.

Lindale's Kayli Vickery earns **All-State honors** in volleyball

Lindale High School volleyball standout Kayli Vickery, who helped lead the Lady Eagles to the Regional Semifinals of the 2023



playoffs, was recently selected to the Blue Bell/ Texas Sports Writers' All State Volleyball team, officials announced.

Vickery, a middle

blocker, was selected to the Class 4A third team

She also earned Blocker of the Year honors for District 16-4A as chosen by the league's coaches. Lindale won the District 16-4A

The Lady Eagles finished the season with a 36-9 mark and advanced to the state semifinals by defeating Paris at bi-district, Caddo Mills in the area round and Farmersville in the regional semifinals.

CLASS 4A ALL STATE TEAMS

COACH OF THE YEAR: Taylour Toso, Davenport

PLAYER OF THE YEAR: Talan Dodson, Davenport

FIRST TEAM

Outside hitters: Talan Dodson, Davenport; Jordyn Gove, Canyon Randall; Sydney McKay, Bellville

Middle blockers: Keirstyn Carlton, Stephenville; Demi Carter, Bridge City; Lacey Wilson, Gilmer Setter: Sidney Soria, Canyon Randall

Libero: Logan Strong, Davenport

SECOND TEAM

Outside hitters: Brooklyn Miller, Devine; Ashtan Dodson, Davenport; Annaleise Sevier, Aubrey

Middle blockers: Macy Morris, Salado; Elsie Law, Salado; Kynadi Hall, Aubrey

Setter: Sarah Lischka, Bellville Libero: Morgan Kelly, Celina

THIRD TEAM

Outside hitters: Kate Walraven, Alvarado; Lesley Sanchez, Spring Hill; Arissa Carbonara, Cuero

Middle Blockers: Carli Manasse, Spring Hill; Bryalee Mays, Gra-

ham; Kayli Vickery, Lindale Setter: Tyhia Mack, Spring Hill Libero: Kendal Bargas, Port

Lavaca Calhoun **HONORABLE MENTION**

Outside hitters: Nevaeh Rangel, Calhoun; Ryan McCoy, Celina; Kael Wilcox, Salado; Baylee Mobley, Godley; Bella Garcia, Tuloso-Midway; Kennedy Hangartner, Celina; Linsy London, China Spring; Rylee Esquibel, Devine

Middle blockers: Katrina Greer, Waco Connally; Ashley Woodrum, Celina; Allison Rickman, Canton; Jordan Johnson, Cumberland; Adilene Gonzalez, Monahans; Kenzie Norton, Rusk

Setters: Livia Niu, Salado; Lexi Dahl, Davenport; Alex Werbeck,

Liberos: Sterlyn Smith, Springtown; Reese Rich, Salado; Ray Guinn, Stephenville; Lexi Nugier, Bridge City; Abby Fisher, Spring Hill.

East Texas unemployment figures drop

East Texas' unemployment rate improved from October, 2023 to November 2023, which mirrored the rest of the state, according to figures released by the Texas Workforce Commission this past week.

Employment estimates released by TWC are produced in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics and according to the TWC, East Texas' unemployment rate was 3.3 percent in November, compared to 3.6 percent for October.

There were 110,600 employed out of a combined labor force of 114,400, with 3,800 unemployed.

Texas' labor market achieved a new record high as the state's seasonally adjusted job count reached 14,094,900, an increase of 26,800 positions over the month of November.

Lone Star State employment set new record high levels

in each of the last 26 months and added 407,100 positions since November 2022, ranking No. 1 in the nation in over the year increase of seasonally adjusted nonfarm jobs. Texas' employment growth rate continued to outperform with 3.0 percent annual growth from November 2022 to November 2023 - outpacing the nation's more modest 1.8

The Texas seasonally adjusted civilian labor force grew over the month by 30,800 people to reach 15,192,900 in November. This marked the 11th consecutive monthly increase and included the addition of 39,700 Texans employed. The seasonally adjusted unemployment rate held at 4.1 percent.

Continued on Page 8

Mike Smith Agency, Lindale 903-707-8566





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THE FIRST AMENDMENT: Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of all the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.

Small moments ...

From 2020

The "It's a Wonderful Life" Christmas village is boxed up. Santa Mickey is back in the closet. Forgotten gifts for family members that were tucked away have been belatedly discovered only to be packed away...again, for next year. It is time for a new year and a new attitude.

I must admit that this year I have been celebrating a "Blue Christmas". Ghosts of Christmases past have filled my thoughts. The loss of Jack the Wonder Sheltie has also been weighing heavily on me. We adopted him on Christmas Eve a few years ago. If only I knew then what I know now.

In our search for a new pet we have discovered that many Collies and Shelties have a problem with the heart worm preventative/treatment Heartguard. The use of that drug may well have shortened our much loved Jack's life. And that has led to my very bruised heart since I was the one taking care of his vet visits.

My dog loving hubby and I think we may be ready to bring a new wet-nosed, 4-legged family member home. We are in line to get a rescue Collie named King in a few weeks. King's owner is dying and King has the blues too...bad.

I think this may be a situation where we can rescue each other and love each other out of those blues. We have worked on the fence, cleared the adoption process, paid our adoption fee and have bought the treats and stuffed animal that will hopefully help to begin winning the heart of this beautiful boy and healing all our hearts in the process.

Spate of new laws effective Jan. 1

After the Texas Legislature spent much of 2023 in session, a bevy of new laws go into effect on New Year's Day, though some have been delayed by lawsuits challenging their constitutionality

The Austin American-Statesman reported on SB 17, a new law that institutes a ban on programs and policies "designed or implemented in reference to race, color, or ethnicity" at Texas public universities or colleges — commonly known as diversity, equity and inclusion, or DEI.

GOP lawmakers who pushed the ban through argued that DEI programs are divisive. Those opposing the ban said it would eliminate initiatives designed to help people of color feel more included on campus. Universities have already begun the process of renaming and eliminating the types of programs that will be outlawed under SB 17.

Another law taking effect in 2024 doubles the state franchise tax exemption, with up to \$2.47 million of a company's annual taxable revenue being exempt.

Another measure that passed with bipartisan support creates a diversion program for juveniles accused of low-level offenses. Local governments now will be able to turn to rehabilitation services, job training, and alcohol and drug awareness programs as alternatives to more punitive measures.

HB 4758 makes it a crime for companies to target minors with advertising for e-cigarettes, the use of which by teens has increased markedly in the past decade.

Not all laws passed by lawmakers will take effect on Jan. 1 because of lawsuits filed after their passage. As The Dallas Morning News noted, a bill that prohibits sexually explicit performances in front of minors — and was targeted toward drag shows in particular — was declared unconstitutional by a federal judge.

U.S. District Judge David Hittner ruled the ban violated performers' free speech rights under the First Amendment. That decision is being appealed.

Another law that would regulate what books children can read in schools is still in effect. An initial ruling that it was unconstitutional was appealed to the 5th Circuit, which has yet to issue a ruling.

Medical board silent on abortion laws

The Texas Medical Board remains silent on how to interpret the state's abortion laws, The Texas Tribune reported, despite a call from the Texas Supreme Court to offer more guidance to doctors on how to interpret the laws.

This came after the high court rejected a Texas woman's bid to terminate a nonviable pregnancy that she maintained threatened both her health and ability to have future children. Kate Cox later obtained medical care out of state.

"While the judiciary cannot compel executive branch entities to do their part, it is obvious that the legal process works more smoothly when they do," the justices wrote. In response, Dr. Sherif Zaafran, board chair, said the Texas Medical Board is not likely to do so while other court cases were proceeding.

"It wouldn't be appropriate for us to start making any kind of movement or decisions while all that is out there still being adjudicated," Zaafran told the Tribune.

The Best of Suzanne Bardwel



A radio preacher I was recently scanning past reminded listeners to enjoy life, just as it is, and to remember the joys of the past with gratitude. And I always have...been grateful.

It is poorly always the small moments that our lives are

It is nearly always the small moments that our lives are built from that often go unrecognized that deserve more of our gratitude.

Small moments like those that include the soulful eyes of a rescue dog. Or the first bloom of paper whites and daffodils. Daily laughter over the inconsequential. Holding my sweetheart's hand at night. Good music, good food and good friends. Small moments.

Today I give thanks for the small moments that are like the tiny pieces in the puzzle box. Sometimes those small moments are hard to recognize until you connect the pieces. And when they are connected a beautiful life emerges. It is after all, perspective.

Small moments create 'big' memories, loves and lives that deserve our gratitude.

May our small moments in this new year not go unrecognized or unremarked. May our small moments be full of meaningful moments that matter.

Gary Borders Capital Highlights



Paxton must testify in whistleblower trial

A state district judge ruled last week that Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton must testify in a whistleblower case that led to his impeachment and subsequent acquittal. That case revolves around Paxton's dealings with developer Nate Paul, who is under federal indictment for wire fraud, The News reported.

Four top deputies were fired after reporting Paxton's dealings with Paul to the FBI. A \$3.3 million settlement with the whistle-blowers fell apart when the Legislature refused to fund it. The former deputies claimed, among other allegations, that Paxton "created a legal opinion to prevent the foreclosure sales of several of Paul's properties."

Paxton's attorneys are appealing the judge's ruling. The whistleblower case is more than three years old. Paxton remains under federal investigation and faces trial in early 2024 for a nearly nine-year-old state securities fraud indictment.

Inspectors out checking natural gas facilities

Inspectors for the Texas Railroad Commission were out in force in December, conducting weatherization inspections at hundreds of critical natural gas facilities across the state to ensure adequate gas supply this winter.

The RRC said inspectors have checked 99% of the facilities that directly connect to electric generating plants — including gas processing plants, underground storage facilities and pipelines.

"The commission will continue to inspect these facilities multiple times during the winter season," Wei Wang, executive director, said. "In total, we expect to conduct more than 5,600 inspections of critical gas facilities on the electric supply chain map."

Another important factor is the amount of natural gas stored in underground facilities that would be available if the state is hit with another severe winter storm, such as Winter Storm Uri in 2021, or the ice storm last February. The amount stored is up 6% from the same time last year and is the highest winter level seen in the past six years.

Unclaimed pot of money grows to \$9 billion

Texas has almost \$9 billion in "unclaimed property," according to kut.org. This includes funds from paychecks, refunds, deposits and dormant bank accounts. If the money hasn't been claimed after a few years, the asset holder, such as a bank, must send the funds to the Texas Comptroller.

The amount that gets returned to the rightful owner is only a fraction of the amount sent to the office. For example, in fiscal year 2023, the state collected \$1.1 billion but only returned about a third of that amount, or \$340 million.

Folks can find out whether the state is holding money that belongs to them by going to ClaimItTexas.gov.

THE ECONOMIST

By Dr. M. Ray Perryma

Around and About ...

The seven largest metropolitan areas in Texas drive the overall pace of growth, accounting for nearly eight of every 10 net new jobs. Looking ahead over a long-term forecast horizon (through 2050), this pattern appears likely to persist. Let's take a brief tour of the highlights of our latest projections.

Through 2050, our analysis indicates that the fastest grow-



ing population centers as measured by job gains will be the Austin-Round Rock-Georgetown Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) and the Dallas-Plano-Irving Metropolitan Division (MD). In each of these regions, diverse and dynamic economies are expected to expand in both traditional and emerging sectors, and we are projecting that wage and salary employment will increase at a 1.57% annual rate, significantly faster

than the overall state pace of 1.41%.

For the Fort Worth-Arlington-Grapevine MD, broad-based expansion is expected to generate jobs at an annual rate of 1.45%. The McAllen-Edinburg-Mission MSA economy is also progressing impressively, with employment expansion projected to be 1.45% per year. The Houston-The Woodlands-Sugar Land MSA is the largest Texas metro area, comprising 24.33% of the state's total population; we are anticipating a 1.41% annual employment increase for that area.

The San Antonio-New Braunfels MSA is expanding at a notable pace, but is slightly below the statewide rate of job growth; the forecast annual rate of escalation in employment is 1.35%. Modest economic expansion is projected for the El Paso area through 2050, with job gains at a yearly rate of 1.17%.

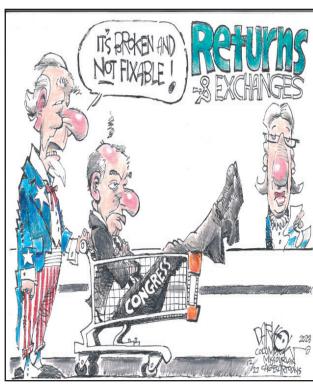
In addition to the large urban centers, the state's smaller metropolitan areas are sources of notable business activity, both now and for the foreseeable future. Wage and salary employment expansion in several of these MSAs is forecast to match or exceed the state's annual growth pace of 1.41% through 2050, including Tyler (1.54%), Brownsville-Harlingen (1.50%), Sherman-Denison (1.44%), and Midland (1.41%).

Our job growth rate projections through 2050 for the remaining MSAs include Odessa (1.39%), Waco (1.36%), College Station-Bryan (1.33%), Lubbock (1.32%), Laredo (1.30%), Longview (1.30%), Texarkana (1.29%), Corpus Christi (1.25%), Abilene (1.23%), Amarillo (1.21%), Killeen-Temple (1.21%), Wichita Falls (1.21%), San Angelo (1.15%), Beaumont-Port Arthur (1.13%), and Victoria (1.05%).

Business disruptions and unforeseen challenges are inevitable in our complex and dynamic economy, but our long-term outlook calls for economic expansion in each of the state's metropolitan statistical areas. The largest population centers will lead the way, but smaller cities and rural areas will also contribute significantly to the state's overall performance. This outlook is a testament to the diversity of this massive state that seems to have a little bit (in many cases, a lot) of everything.

All of us at The Perryman Group wish you a joyous holiday season and all the best in the coming year.

Stay safe!





The Lindale News & Times

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New Year's bargain: Two for one

Telephone scams and illegal aliens

One of the unfortunate facts of life is that there are too many lowlifes in our midst ready to take advantage of the weak and vulnerable.

The Smith County Sheriff's Office is all too familiar with these scam artists who love to prey on gullible people seeking to make a dishonest dollar.

Recently, Sheriff's Office spokesman Sgt. Larry Christian sent out another warning involving a telephone scam where victims are receiving calls from someone identifying themself as Smith County Sheriff's Deputy Smith.

The suspect tells the victim that they have an outstanding warrant and to immediately pay a fine.

The victims have been instructed to go to local vape shots throughout the



area and deposit money into bitcoin machines.

"We have also received similar reports of an individual identifying himself by the name of Captain Craig Halbrooks, who is the Patrol Commander for the SCSO," Christian said.

So far, approximately \$50,000 has been fraudulently obtained by this suspect(s) from Smith County citizens. This suspect is requesting \$10,000 to \$20,000 at a time.

"Please don't fall victim to these telephone scams," Christian said. "At NO time will the Smith County Sheriff's Office, or any law en-

forcement agency, call you on the telephone asking for money. Law Enforcement agencies do not handle payments for fines or warrants."

Christian said if you feel that you may actually have a warrant out for your arrest, no law enforcement agency will call you requesting money. If you receive a call like this, simply hang up, call the agency in question, and tell the dispatcher what is happening.

They will have a law enforcement officer call you to verify the scam.

A common refrain among us history nerds states that in order to know where you're going you have to know where you've been.

Which is illustrated by the recent hullabaloo surrounding Gov. Greg Abbott's decision to arrest illegal aliens at the border. Illegal immigration is indeed a thorny problem and it's the view from this soapbox that you can build all the walls you want but that's not going to solve the problem (See Berlin, 1961-89) neither is making laws to stem the tide.

I'm not smart enough to know the answer, but I do know that history repeats itself and sometimes it can be rather ironic.

It seems that Texas, or at least the area once known as Tejas, has been a popular destination for "outsiders" for many years.

Let's step back in time to the 19th century, at a time before Tejas became Texas and, obviously, before Texas

our Texas became part of the United States.

In 1822, under an "empresarial" grant under Spanish control, Stephen F. Austin brought in a group of settlers - known as the Old Three Hundred – to a region along the Brazos River. Mexico later approved Austin's grant, and later 23 additional empresarios brought settlers into the region.

The majority of these came from the United States, with just one colony settled by Mexican nationals and two by European immigrants.

By 1830, Mexican officials were alarmed with the number of "illegals", i.e., immigrants from the U.S. entering the country which then led to the Law of April 6, 1830, which banned further immigration into Mexico from the United States. By 1832, these American-born colonists demanded more U.S.

born citizens be allowed to immigrate to Texas. Which would one of the sparks to light the Texas revolution against Mexico in 1836.

Yet all of this didn't slow the migration of U.S. citizens to Mexico and by 1834, there were an estimated 30,000 Anglos living in Texas, compared to just under 8,000 Mexicans.

By 1837, Mexico had banned slavery, but Austin argued that in order to lure more Anglos slavery was necessary to ensure economic success of the region. He successfully lobbied the Mexican government to allow slavery to exist in the region, remaining until the end of the Civil War.

So, as you can see, illegal immigration isn't just a modern day conundrum and it's kind of ironic that nearly 200 years ago, these "illegals" were coming in from the north instead of the south.

Having a "real" blast for New Year's

Another New Year's Day has come and went, and it reminded me of when I was

You see, back then, we used to do some really stupid stuff with fireworks. I know, that's hard to believe, me bein' the upstandin' citizen I am and all, but it's true.

Now, every kid looks forward to Christmas, but for me New Years and the Fourth of July were just as excitin' because of the

fireworks. Most every kid back then was the same way. Well, at least the boys were. Girls couldn't care less. Maybe not every girl, but I know my wife Janet would fall into that category.

Oh, she likes to watch them, but I'm talkin' about settin' off fireworks. Why, if we had kept separate diaries about New Years back when we were kids, it probably would have been somethin' like this.

Dear Diary, I'm so excited because today is New Years Day and I get to stay up until midnight. Janet

Dear Diary, WHOOPEE! New Years Eve! Man, I can't wait 'til tonight. I'm gonna blow somethin' away.

Dear Diary, All of my friends are coming over and I'm going to wear my new furry earmuffs and furry hand muffler when we go out to watch the fireworks. Janet

Dear Diary, Let's see, there'll be me, my cousin Coy, my cousin Rex, my cousin Ted, Greg Hunt, Little Rusty, Wee Whoa, and his dog Bones. Let the games begin. Rusty

Dear Diary, Daddy promised I could hold a sparkler. I can't wait. Janet

Dear Diary, My cousin Ted said that if you would lay a firecracker in the palm of your hand, and leave your hand open that it won't hurt when it goes off. Sounded reasonable to me. Rusty

Dear Diary, Holding the sparkler was scary, but it was beautiful. When I waved my hand around, it looked like one long string of light.

Dear Diary, I don't think I'll ever get the feelin' back in my hand. Ted is so stupid.

Dear Diary, My friend Karen's sparkler made little back spots on her new sweater. She was very upset.

Dear Diary, My cousin Coy decided to tear open a chaser to get the whistle out. He got gunpowder all over the front of his T-shirt while he was tearin' into it.

Rusty Mitchum Life & Times



Guess what? There weren't no whistle in there. How'd they do that? Life's sure a mystery. Rusty

Dear Diary, Good news! My mother was able to get the spots out of Karen's sweater. My mom is the greatest. Janet

Dear Diary, Poor Coy. He lit a firecracker to throw at Rex and a spark fell on his T-shirt right where that gunpowder was. I didn't know Coy could run that fast. He looked like a giant sparkler. It was kind of purdy. Rusty

Dear Diary, Daddy drove us out in the country so we could watch him and my brothers shoot off some bottle rockets. You wouldn't believe what we saw. It looked like a boy that was on fire running down the road. Surely not. Janet

Dear Diary, Well, we finally got Coy put out. But that T-shirt of his is history. I think he is OK, but one of those things on his chest now looks like it is winkin'.

Dear Diary, Daddy stuck some Roman candles in the ground and we all counted the little balls of fire as they came out. Boy, now that was fun. Janet

Dear Diary, Durin' our Roman candle war, Ted thought he had shot all six rounds. The dummy looked down the barrel just as number seven emerged. It hit him right between the eyes. I've never laughed so hard in all my life. Rusty

Dear Diary, Daddy made us stand back when he set off the bottle rockets. He said it was for safety's sake. Janet

Dear Diary, Man, Rex had the biggest bottle rocket I've ever seen. We decided to send an extra payload up with it. We duct taped firecrackers all around the bottom of it. Man, I bet when it goes off, it'll make a mushroom cloud. Rusty

Dear Diary, The bottle rockets were so exciting. We screamed when they exploded up in the air. Janet

Dear Diary, The firecracker payload must have been a little too much for that bottle rocket. Oh, it went up all right, but only a couple of feet. Then it just sort of hung there like it was strainin' to go higher. All of a sudden, it sort of leaned over, and here it came. I turned and started runnin'. I looked back and it was gainin' on me. I turned back and tried to pick up some speed, but I tripped over Wee Whoa's dog Bones. I landed face first on the ground. My face was smashed, but fortunately that trip probably saved my life. 'Cause that rocket zoomed right over me just as I hit the ground. Unfortunately, everybody that was runnin' in front of me weren't as lucky.

That rocket bounced off of Little Rusty, then Wee Whoa, and finally Greg Hunt. It looked like a giant pinball machine ball as it ricocheted around. Finally, it stuck nose first in the ground right in the middle of all of us.

We got up to run, but we were so banged up that all we could do was hobble. Then the rocket exploded. And exploded. And then exploded some more. Those duct-taped firecrackers were blown everywhere. One of them landed in the sack that held all of the rest of our fireworks. Man, you've never seen such a show. We tried to get up and run, but we'd get hit with a bottle rocket, or a fire ball from a Roman candle, or who knows what else. Rusty

Dear Diary, The sky over where we thought we saw the boy that was on fire lit up with quite a fireworks display. It was wonderful. I bet those people were having the time of their lives. Janet

Dear Diary, At last, the last firecracker popped. We didn't move for a while just to make sure. Finally we all tried to get up. Injuries were numerous. Coy was shirtless and his chest was still smolderin'. Ted had a big red dot between his eyes. Rex's hair was smokin', and Greg, Little Rusty and Wee Whoa all had huge bruises on various parts of their bodies. My nose was bleedin' and I had dirt caked up under my eyelids. Bones, the dog, was the only one of us to escape injury. Rusty

Dear Diary, Well, after the fireworks, we headed home. This was the best New Year's ever. Janet

Dear Diary, Despite our injuries, we were all able to crawl back home. Boy Howdy, this was the best New Year's ever. Rusty

Janet and I would like to wish you a Happy New Year and may God Bless each and every one of you.

Times of Lindale



EDITOR'S NOTE: This column comes from the archives of the Lindale News and Times, which is available online for \$2.99 per month. Call 903-882-8880 to set up your online subscription.

ONE YEAR AGO, Jan. 5, 2023

Lindale High School football players and one trainer were named to the All State Academic Team from the Texas High School Coaches Association in Class 4A.

Senior trainer Aliah Price earned Honorable Mention All-State honors for her work with the team and her classroom work.

On the football side, first team honors were earned by senior defensive lineman Christian King and offensive lineman Will Hutchens. Both King and Hutchens were also unanimous picks to the District 9-4A All District first team.

Second teamers included senior defensive lineman Gabe Hart, senior offensive lineman Ethan Heller, senior offensive/defensive lineman Cory Watts and senior offensive lineman Trey Mazratian.

Senior defensive back/ wide receiver Christian Widemon was named to the honorable mention squad as were senior offensive lineman Brandon Pettway and senior defensive back/wide receiver Brett Maya.

FIVE YEARS AGO, Jan. 3, 2019

Eight students from Lindale earned nursing degrees from Tyler Junior College.

Associate degrees were earned by Madeline Fenton, Patrick Fenton, Ashley Hamrick, Tabitha Mantsch and Maritza Navarro. Earning LVN-RN Fast Track degrees included Samantha Arias and Samantha Lopez. Earning a vocational nursing degree was Kayla Hasten.

10 YEARS AGO,

Jan. 2, 2014 Three Lindale Junior

High School students wrote winning entries in the 2013-2014 Department of Texas Veterans of Foreign Wars Patriot's Pen contest.

Entries written by Tyra Rodden, Mattison Payne and Madeline Harris were winners in the local VFW Post 9828 contest. Rodden and Payne's entries advanced to the district level competition where Rodden won first place and Payne won second place.

Rodden's essay advanced to win second place at the state level and qualified for the national competition. National winners will be named in January 2014.

The essay competition topic was "What Patriotism Means to Me." The Patriot's Pen writing contest is conducted nationwide annually with the goal of giving students an opportunity to write essays expressing their views on democracy, according to contest information.

Resolve to increase fraud immunity in '24

The loss of money, personal information, and perseverance of scammers continue with online purchase scams as the riskiest of scams.

"In this day and age, you can't afford to make mistakes," Mechele Agbayani Mills, President and CEO of BBB Serving Central East Texas said. "Taking preventive measures before providing personal or payment information well worth the time and effort to lower your chances of becoming a victim."

BBB recommends adding a few precautionary steps to the New Year's resolution list and the weight loss and financial goals to help make the upcoming days and months fraud-free.

Resolve to be cautious with email. Be wary of unsolicited emails from a person or a company. Remember, scammers can make emails look like they are from a legitimate business, government agency, or reputable organization (even BBB!). Never click on links or open attachments in com)? Have I checked to see unsolicited emails.

Resolve never to send money to strangers. If you haven't met a person faceto-face, don't send them money. This is especially true if the person asks you to transfer funds using a prepaid debit card or CashApp. Money sent to strangers in this way is untraceable, and once it is sent, there's no getting it back. Scammers will try to trick you into panicking - so before making a move, think the situation through. Don't fall for it!

Resolve to do research before making online payments and purchases. Research the retailer before entering payment information when shopping online, or if asked to pay online, research the retailer before entering payment information. Ask: Is this a person or business I know and trust? Do they have a working customer service number? Where is the company physically located? Would I be making payments through a secure server (https://....

if others have complained?

Resolve to use my best judgment when sharing my personal information. Sharing sensitive personal information with scammers opens the door to identity theft. Never share financial information, birthdate, address, Social Security/ Social Insurance number, or Medicare number with an unsolicited caller.

Resolve to be social media smart. Use privacy settings on social media and only connect with people you know. Be careful about including personal information in your profile, and never reveal your address and other sensitive information - even in a "fun" quiz. Scammers may use this information to make themselves pass as friends or relatives and earn your trust. Also, be careful when buying products you see on social media. BBB Scam Tracker has received thousands of complaints about misleading Facebook and Instagram ads.

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TPWD seeks input on seatrout limits

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department officials are seeking public input on proposed rules which, if passed, would change bag and size limits for spotted seatrout on the Texas coast.

The proposed rules would reduce the spotted seatrout bag limit to three fish and restrict the allowable size to 15-20 inches, with one fish over 25 inches allowed daily.

The rule responds to public scoping and survey efforts by the department which found that many anglers wanted to see more restrictive measures to improve the fishery.

TPWD encourages the public to provide comment on the proposed regulation changes at one of several public hearings hosted on the coast, virtually or over the phone. The proposals will then be considered for final action by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission during the January 2024 Commission Meeting.

Opportunities to provide comments for or against these proposals include:

Public hearings-TPWD Coastal Fisheries staff will host several public hearings on the coast to receive input from anglers and constituents concerning the proposed regulation changes

--Jan. 9, 6-8 p.m. at the Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi Natural Resources Building, 6300 Ocean Dr., Corpus Christi.



- -- Jan. 9, 6-8 p.m. at the Greater Chamber of Harlingen, 311 E. Tyler Ave., Harlingen.
- -- Jan. 9, 6-8 p.m. at the Bauer Exhibit Building, 305 Henry Barber Way, Port Lavaca.
- -- Jan. 9, 6-8 p.m. at the Saltwater Pavilion at Rockport Beach Park, 210 Seabreeze Dr., Rockport.
- -- Jan. 10, 6-8 p.m. at the Bob Bowers Civic Center, 3401 Cultural Center Dr., Port Arthur. -- Jan. 11, 6-8 p.m. at the Nessler Civic Center

Captain's Room, 2010 5th Ave N., Texas City. Online- Provide official public comments on the changes until Jan. 23 on the TPWD public comment page.

Phone or email- The Coastal Fisheries Division at 512-389-8575 or cfish@tpwd.texas.gov.

Zoom webinar-TPWD Coastal Fisheries staff will present proposed fishing regulation changes and answer questions from 6-8 p.m., Monday, Jan. 8 in an online webinar. TPWD will also post the webinar on TPWD's YouTube channel and Facebook page.

Keep up with local news in your community and subscribe today! Call 903-882-8880 to set up your subscription!

OBITUARY

James "Jim" Bowling **Crawford**



Funeral services for James (Jim) Bowling Crawford, age 93 of Lindale, were held Tuesday, Jan. 2, 2024 at Caudle-Rutledge-Daugherty Funeral Home Chapel in Lin-

dale with Pastor Kaiti Lammert officiating.

Interment was in the Lindale City

Jim passed away Friday, Dec. 29, 2023, in Lindale. He was born Dec. 28, 1930, in Caddo, Texas to the late Bridges Edgar and Esther Maureen (Hitt) Crawford. Jim lived the majority of his life in Lindale where he was a member of the First United Methodist Church.

He graduated from Lindale High School and soon after enlisted in the United States Air Force where he served for 4 years. Upon returning from the military, he attended and graduated from Tyler Junior College. Jim worked at Shell Oil Company before beginning a 32 year career at Kelly Springfield Tire Company in Tyler. As a loving husband, father, grandfather, and great grandfather he enjoyed spending time with his family, especially his grand-

He was known as "Mr. Fix-it" to family, neighbors, and friends. Whether it was a home repair, car trouble, a broken lawn mower, or anything in between, he was the one to call. Jim also enjoyed gardening and being at "the farm" just outside of Lindale where he was raised. He was preceded in death by his brother, Bill Crawford; sister, Mary Lou Gibbs; grandson, Jared Sheets, and nephew, Todd Gibbs.

Jim is survived by his beloved wife of 63 years, Linda Beth (Holbrook) Crawford of Lindale; daughters, Carol Johnson and husband, Shane of Josephine, Carla Lammert and husband, Mark of Longview, and Cathy Loveless and husband, Olan of Lindale; 6 grandchildren, Brandon Sheets, Kayla Lammert Snyder and husband, Jason, Michael Lammert and wife, Kaiti, Casey Kinard and wife, Whitney, Tatum Kinard, and Kayce Rivard and husband, Alan; great grandchildren, Lily, Rosie, Kullen, Kaylee Rae, Nolan, and Lydia; brother, Joe Crawford and wife, Yvonne; sister, Ann Crawford and husband, Ralph; brother-in-law, Don Gibbs; and numerous nieces, nephews, and other loving family members and friends.

Serving as pallbearers will be Brandon Sheets, Michael Lammert, Casey Kinard, Tatum Kinard, Mark Lammert, and Olan Loveless. Honorary pallbearer will be Shane Johnson.

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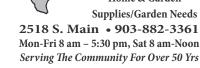
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loshua 1:9 Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afro do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.

Lindale Police Department call logs for Dec. 22-28

FRIDAY, DEC. 22: Verbal Disturbance, 400 block Baker Street, Settled at Scene; Motorist Assist, 13800 block Highway 69 North, Settled at Scene; Assist Smith Co SO, 13000 block Kena Lane, Settled at Scene; Welfare Concern 2500 block South Main Street, Settled at Scene; Traffic Complaint, 900 block North Main Street, Unfounded; Evade Arrest, 12700 block CR 474, Report; Warrant Service, 100 block East Centennial, Arrest.

SATURDAY, DEC. 23: Welfare Concern, 13400 block IH-20, Blk IH-20 East, Settled at Scene; Motor Vehicle Crash, 1500 block South Main Street, Settled at Scene; Escort, 200 block West South Street, Settled at Scene; Hit and Run Crash, 552 IH-20 East, Report; Traffic Complaint, 200 block Perryman Road, Unable to Locate; Suspicious Circumstance, 15400 block Anna Lane, Settled at Scene; Motor Vehicle Crash, 13300 block IH-20 East, Settled at Scene; Assist Smith Co SO, 16900 block Loring Lane, Settled at Scene.

SUNDAY, DEC. 24: Business Alarm, 800 block Lindale Industrial Parkway, Settled at Scene; Motor Vehicle Crash, 555 IH-20 East, Report; Motor Vehicle Crash No. 2, 555 IH-20 East, Report; Motor Vehicle Crash 554 IH-20 West, Settled at Scene; Motor Vehicle Crash No. 3 555 IH-20 East, Report; Motor Vehicle Crash, 553 IH-20 West, Report; Criminal Mischief, 17700 block CR 4112, Settled at Scene; Motor Vehicle Crash No. 2 553 IH-20 West, Report; Motor Vehicle Crash No. 3, 553 IH-20 West, Report; Motor Vehicle Crash No. 3, 553 IH-20 West, Report; Motor Vehicle



Crash, 556 IH-20 West, Settled at Scene; Motor Vehicle Crash 552 IH-20 East, Unable to Locate; Criminal Trespass, 100 block East Centennial, Warning Issued; Public Service, 200 block Summer Tree Circle, Settled at Scene; Suspicious Circumstance, 2300 block Pittman Lane, Settled at Scene.

MONDAY, DEC. 25: Assist Smith Co SO, 16000 block CR 4101, Settled at Scene;

Public Service, 200 block Cooper Street, Settled at Scene; Suspicious Circumstance, 200 block South College Street, Unfounded; Assist Smith Co SO, 15200 block CR 433, Settled at Scene; Motor Vehicle Crash, 100 block North Main Street, Settled at Scene; Motor Vehicle Crash, 555 IH-20 East, Report; Civil Matter, 1300 block Brad Circle, Settled at Scene; Verbal Disturbance, 1200 block Brad Circle, Settled at Scene.

TUESDAY, DEC. 26: Mental Health Welfare Check, 19700 block CR 4118, Settled at Scene; Motorist Assist, 556 IH-20 West, Settled at Scene; Verbal Disturbance, 3500 block South Main Street, Settled at Scene; Assist Another

Agency, 552 IH-20 East, Settled at Scene.

WEDNESDAY, DEC. 27: Parking Violation, 3500 block South Main Street, Citation Issued; Criminal Mischief, 500 block South Main Street, Settled at Scene; Welfare Concern, 13300 block IH-20 East, Settled at Scene; Suspicious Person, 100 block East Centennial, Settled at Scene; Motor Vehicle Crash, 3200 block South Main Street, Report; Assist EMS, 600 block Imagine Drive, Settled at Scene; Public Service, 100 block Ballard Drive, Settled at Scene; Verbal Disturbance, 3400 block South Main Street, Settled at Scene; Suspicious Vehicle, 14500 block FM 849, Settled at Scene; Suspicious Vehicle, 3500 block South Main Street, Unable to Locate; Disturbance, 14600 block Tucker Street, Settled at Scene.

THURSDAY, DEC. 28: Traffic Complaint, 552 IH-20 East, Unable to Locate; Suspicious Circumstance, 100 block Miranda Lambert Way, Settled at Scene; Suspicious Circumstance, 2800 block South Main Street, Settled at Scene; Traffic Hazard, 15000 Country Acres Drive, Unfounded; Welfare Concern, 400 block West Hubbard Street, Settled at Scene; Public Service, 300 East Hubbard Street, Settled at Scene; Criminal Trespass, 3500 block South Main Street, Unable to Locate; Motor Vehicle Crash, 3500 block South Main Street, Report; Public Service, 17300 block Stacy Street, Settled at Scene; Possession Drug Paraphernalia, 100 block East Centennial, Citation Issued; Motor Vehicle Crash, 3200 block South Main Street, Report; Welfare Concern, 300 block South Industrial Street, Settled at Scene; Criminal Trespass, 500 block Pierce Street, Settled at Scene; Possession Drug Paraphernalia, 13700 block Highway 69 North, Citation Issued.

Melissa woman gets 14 months in prison for federal wire fraud

A Melissa woman has been sentenced to federal prison for violations in the Eastern District of Texas, said Davilyn Walston, spokesperson for U.S. Attorney Damien M. Diggs.

Nnenna Mary Jones, 40, pleaded guilty to wire fraud and was sentenced to 14 months in federal prison by U.S. District Judge Sean D. Jordan on Dec. 20, 2023.

Jones was also ordered to pay restitution in the amount of \$16,950.

According to information presented in court, the Texas Muslim Women's Foundation, a 501(c)(3) public charity in Plano, serves Muslim women and their families who are survivors of domestic and family violence. The Foundation offers its clients in-house legal assistance with the immigration process, among other services.

The Foundation advertises that it offers its services—including immigration legal assistance—free of charge. Jones worked for the Foundation as a paralegal and was a Department of Justice Accredited Representative, which allowed her to represent clients in court in immigration matters with

the Department of Homeland Security. She was also a licensed attorney in Nigeria before moving to the United States.

The Foundation's legal team routinely requests waivers of certain fees its clients incur during the immigration process, and most of its clients qualify for these waivers.

If the Foundation's clients do not qualify for a waiver of the immigration fees, then at times the Foundation pays the fee. However, Jones represented to clients of the Foundation that they were required to pay certain fees to the government in relation to their immigration proceedings. In reality, the clients' fees had either been waived by the government or paid by the Foundation.

Clients wrote checks and obtained money orders in the amounts of the fees Jones told them they owed to the government. However, Jones instructed the clients to leave the "pay to" line on the checks and money orders blank. Jones photocopied the clients' checks and money orders, wrote "U.S. Department of Homeland Security" on the "pay to" line of the photocopied checks and money orders, and placed the photocopies in the clients'

files. Jones then wrote her own name in the "pay to" line of the clients' original checks and money orders and cashed them or deposited them into her own accounts.

This case was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Sean J. Taylor.

Oklahoman sentenced in East Texas for federal wildlife violation

An Oklahoma man has been sentenced for federal wildlife violations in the Eastern District of Texas, Walston said.

Dusty Caudill, 37, of Ardmore, Okla., pleaded guilty to the transportation of wild-life in violation of state law – a violation of the U.S. Lacey Act – and was sentenced to 12 months in federal prison by U.S. District Judge Jeremy D. Kernodle on Dec. 19.

According to information presented in court, in February of 2021 Caudill conspired with co-defendants David Bartlett and Darryl Garcia to transport stolen African elephant ivory tusks from Ardmore, Oklahoma to Tyler, Texas for sale. The tusks had been

stolen in the burglary of a residence in Ada, Oklahoma in late 2020. Bartlett negotiated the sale of the tusks with a person he believed to be a resident of Houston, Texas for \$10,700.00.

The investigation revealed that on Feb. 17, 2021 Caudill and Garcia removed the ivory tusks from the trunk of Caudill's car in Ardmore and placed them in Garcia's car.

Garcia then picked up Bartlett and the two of them drove the tusks to Tyler, where they believed they would be meeting with the buyer from Houston. Instead, they were met by federal wildlife agents.

African elephants are a protected wild-life species under the federal endangered species act. The term "wildlife" includes any part of the animal. The U.S. Lacey Act prohibits the transportation of endangered species, valued at more than \$350 in interstate commerce in violation of federal or state law.

This case was investigated by special agents with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services and prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Jim Noble.

Topping trees is destructive practice

By Greg Grant Smith County Horticulturist

Winter is the time of year that glaring examples of tree topping shows up. Crapemyrtles are the most common victim, but this crude practice also occurs on large shade trees and other ornamental specimens.

Topping, however, is never a recommended practice for any shade or ornamental tree.

Topping is the indiscriminate and drastic cutting of tree branches. Topping disfigures trees and is detrimental to the tree's health, structure, and value. Trees are alive, growing, breathing organisms. Topping causes many things to happen, none of which are good.

In the most severe cases, topping can lead to the death of a tree. Topping removes a tree's potential food production (foliage) along with food stored in limbs that are cut.

It also causes a tree to use valuable food stored in the trunk and roots to regrow limbs and branches. Topping redistributes the use of energy and has a substantial impact on a tree's internal physiology.

Topping results in other problems for trees, the most severe being internal decay. When a branch is correctly pruned at its point of attachment to the trunk, just outside of the branch collar, internal decay is usually stopped from progressing into the trunk by a barrier inside the collar.



Example of the bad practice of topping a tree. (Courtesy photo)

A correct cut results in more rapid wound closure by callus tissue so that the bark's continuity is eventually re-established. Stubs produced by topping harbor decay fungi which eventually break down the barrier in the collar and then proceed into the trunk.

Whenever a cut is made in the main leader by topping, there is nothing to prevent decay from developing in the trunk. The tree may be structurally weakened, and its life span reduced.

The drastic removal of limbs by topping also exposes the remaining limbs to the sun. This sudden exposure to intense light and heat can kill or damage a tree's living tissue (the bark and cambium) and is called sunscald. These sunscald wounds are highly vulnerable to insect invasion like borers and decay fungi.

Topping causes the quick growth of dense, spindly, upright branches called water sprouts. Shoots caused by topping grow back quickly and are weakly attached with narrow crotch angles. This sappy growth with narrow crotch angles is easily broken off by high winds or ice loads.

Topped trees are also unsightly. Topping replaces the natural form and beauty of a tree with ugly branch stubs, large wounds, and overly dense branch growth.

Because of the negative impacts on health, structure, and appearance, topping can reduce the value of a large ornamental tree by thousands of dollars.

Trees that are too large or unsafe for their site should be removed entirely.

If a tree needs proper structural work, contact an arborist certified by the Texas Chapter of the International Society of Arboriculture. You can find a listing at

https://isatexas.com/for-the-public/find-an-arborist/.

Tips to help keep pets from being obese

Do you have a pudgy pup's A chunky kitty?

You may not be alone in thinking your four-legged friend is a bit on the heavy

A recently released <u>survey</u> by Purina Pro found that one in five Americans thinks their dog is overweight.

The actual number, however, is almost triple that, estimates the Association for Pet Obesity Prevention, which found that 59 percent of dogs in the United States are overweight, with 22 percent of those being obese.

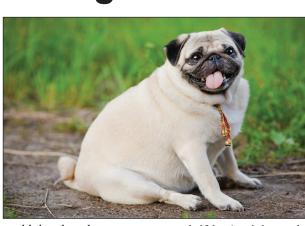
A big part of the problem is how we feed our animals, said Kat Cortelyou, the director of operations at the SPCA of East Texas.

"The cheaper brands of food are filled with more fillers, just kind of like eating fast food as opposed to healthy food for humans. It's the same thing with dogs," said Cortelyou.

Three fourths of the more than 600 survey takers reported feeling guilty when their dog seemed hungry, with 54 percent admitting to giving table scraps. Cortelyou said establishing a normal feeding routine that eliminates grazing can help maintain normal weight for dogs.

"If they don't eat it all, pick it up. They'll be hungry when you put it back down in the evening, and they'll learn to eat on schedule," Cortelyou said.

92 percent of respondents said they were upset that their dogs could no longer participate in activities they



could do when they were at an "ideal" weight.

"Just find a way to let your dog get some kind of exercise because they're just like people if they're sitting on the couch all day," said Cortelyou. "They get sedimentary, and it just puts the weight on, and their bones get old."



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Prepare now for upcoming freeze

By Holly Hollenshead Smith County Master Gardener

Taking care of my tender plants before a freeze happens is always a challenge here in East Texas.

Thinking about wintery weather, especially a freeze, is not on the forefront of my mind.

Suddenly the local weatherman forecasts that freezing weather is coming, and I find myself running around digging out my old sheets from last year that I used to cover my more tender plants.

Where did I put my stakes that help hold down the fabric during higher wind? I keep saying I am going to be more organized than I was last year. Well, this is that year that I am going to be organized and prepared.

Here are outdoor plant freeze protection pointers I have learned over the years as I prepare for that inevitable weatherman's forecast.

Prepping plants for upcoming freeze:

- -- Make sure all plants are thoroughly watered. Watering can help protect plants from freezing. Drought stressed plants are more susceptible to cold damage. Water loses its heat slower than the air as the cold sets in.
- -- Some plants are more sensitive to cold than others. When possible, move those plants indoors or closer to the house. Also, consider placing potted plants where they are exposed



Make sure you cover your tender plants to protect them from winter's freeze. (Courtesy photo)

to the southern or western sun. This little bit of extra warmth can go a long way keeping plants warm.

- -- Towels and sheets can be used to cover larger areas. You want to be careful not to use heavy materials that will weigh down and possibly damage your tender plants. I have found that fitted sheets work well on larger bushes and the elastic helps pull the sheet in at the bottom.
- -- Old plant pots, trashcans, and plastic tubs can be used to cover some of your smaller plants and shrubs.

Placing cardboard boxes (a beneficial use for those

Amazon boxes) over outdoor plants will help provide some protection.

- -- In your flower beds, covering sensitive plants with a layer of mulch, straw or leaves can also help provide protection.
- Remember, anything that can help blanket or cover plants is beneficial

Other important things to remember:

- --Cover plants from the ground up. The warmth of the soil will help keep the plants warmer.
- -- Secure covering with stakes, boards or rocks from the
- wind that might blow covering off.
 -- Covering plants aids in trapping the warmer air close to the ground surrounding the plant.
- -- Do not cover plants way in advance of an upcoming freeze and do not leave plants covering on for extended periods of time. Either can damage your plants.

We know that a freeze is coming. Your local weatherman said so. Hopefully, you will use some of these suggestions to protect your garden and flowerbed. Check out Smith County Master Gardeners website (https://txmg.org/smith) for additional information on many gardening tips and topics.

The Smith County Master Gardener program is a volunteer organization in connection with the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service

Forest Service encourages fire safety this winter

Texas A&M Forest Service officials are urging everyone to use extreme caution when participating in activities that may start a wildfire or house fire this winter.

"We have been fortunate to receive rainfall over the past few weeks and this moisture has helped to decrease the wildfire potential across the state," said Wes Moorehead, Texas A&M Forest Service Fire Chief. "Even though the potential for a wildfire ignition is low, we encourage everyone to be careful with outdoor activities that may cause a spark this holiday season."

Wrapping paper and tree recycling

The danger doesn't end just because the holidays are over. In Texas, careless debris burning causes the largest number of human-caused wildfires, and unsafe burning of wrapping paper, gift boxes and Christmas trees after the holidays could spark outdoor fires. There are several alternatives for safe disposal.

Chip the tree and use the material as mulch in landscaping beds. Cut the trunk of the tree into small pieces to use as pathway edging. Composting is a great way to dispose of your tree and tissue paper. Remove tape, ribbons, and bows and recycle the wrapping paper, or save it to use again.

Always check with local officials for burn bans and other outdoor burning restrictions. Pay attention to local guidelines regarding open fires. Burn ban information can be found by contacting local fire departments or by visiting https://tfsweb.tamu.edu/TexasBurnBans/.

Firewood safety

Firewood stacked too close to buildings can also pose a threat. Firewood is often cured, or dried, so it is easier to light in a fireplace. This drying process does not just make it easier to start a fire in the chimney — it makes it easier to light everywhere. When firewood is stacked too close to a home, it can lead a wildfire right up to the structure. Keep firewood stacked at least 30 feet away from all structures.

Fireworks safety

Fireworks are often used to mark special events and holidays. When using fireworks during the holidays, don't let your fun turn into flames. Check for local restrictions on fireworks and burn bans before use. Fireworks should be used outdoors on flat, smooth surfaces away from dry grass and flammable materials. Always have a water source nearby



in case a fire ignites while using fireworks.

Professional fireworks displays are an excellent way to safely enjoy fireworks while celebrating the holidays.

Practice fire safety while enjoying the outdoors

Campfires can be a great source of warmth and fuel for cooking but be sure to keep these safety tips in mind. Locate a safe spot for your campfire, away from anything flammable and far from overhead hazards. Pile up rocks around your fire to help keep the wind out and fire embers in. When you are done with your campfire, fully extinguish it. Drown, stir and feel the area for heat. Hold your hand just above the wet ashes – if you feel any residual heat, continue to add water and stir. Remember, if it's too hot to touch, it's too hot to leave.

When hunting, be aware of any action that could cause a wildfire. Hot exhaust systems could ignite dry grass. Park only in designated areas or in areas free of anything that can catch fire. Your ammunition type matters when hunting; steel core and full metal jacket ammunition have the highest potential to start wildfires.

If a wildfire is spotted, immediately contact local authorities. A quick response can help save lives and property.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Yes, let's keep Jesus in the season

Dear Editor,

Agreeing with the response of Robert R. Rozean: "If it is Christmas in Lindale, where is Jesus, also known as Emmanuel?"

As many know, Emmanuel means "God with us". His birth celebration is the reason for the season. So we ask again, "where is Jesus in Lindale"?

Is He only located and proclaimed in churches? Like Mr. Rozean says, "the Spirit of God moves and is so highlighted this time of year. So why isn't the emphasis on Jesus/Emmanuel instead of more and more on fictitious characters like the man in the red suit that is almost worshipped?"

As one drives around downtown Lindale and throughout suburban Lindale one can see a lot of pretty decorations, Santa's, snowmen, and grinches, but very, very few nativity scenes. This area is certainly not "the belt buckle of the Bible Belt" anymore.

With the world, as well as our nation trending toward a godless society, let's all be praying for a change back to what our God desires — a Loving and Christian society that chooses to worship our heavenly King on His birthday as well as the rest of the year.

> Sincerely, in His love, Edmund Kaup Lindale

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Fuzzy caterpillars and "weatherman" mystique

Bv Laura Muntean Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service

If you've been watching your step, there's a good chance you may have spotted some fuzzy black caterpillars inching their way across roads, sidewalks or yards over the past several weeks.

Woollybear caterpillars are common across the U.S. and include several species of caterpillars that transform into tiger moths. Texans may have particularly noticed saltmarsh caterpillars, Estigmene acrea, one species found throughout the state.

But, before they can transform into tiger moths, these caterpillars must make haste to find suitable locations to overwinter as mature larvae, said Wizzie Brown, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service integrated pest management specialist, Travis County. And they're likely to capture plenty of attention on their way as their population reaches its height for the year.

Together, the seasonal population peak and mass movement have created a "weatherman" mystique around these caterpillars, much like the famous Punxsutawney groundhog. Unfortunately, they don't actually predict how harsh winter will be.

Still, their movement and soft, fuzzy appearance might tempt anyone looking downward, especially children, to pick them up.

Here, Brown answers common questions about these insects and explains whether their presence should be a cause for concern.

What are woollybear caterpillars?

Woollybear is a term used for several species of caterpillars that are densely covered in hair, or setae. Two common species of woollybear caterpillars found in Texas are the saltmarsh caterpillar and the garden tiger moth caterpillar. The saltmarsh caterpillar ranges in color from black to brown to yellowish, while the garden tiger moth caterpillar has a fuzzy black top and brown bottom.

Both caterpillars are present throughout the year but more prevalent in the fall. They can reach high numbers at that point, and then they start to wander around, looking for places to overwinter. You may see them cross roads or sidewalks, where they tend to be more visible.

Saltmarsh caterpillars got their name from a type of grass they eat, but, like the garden tiger moth caterpillar, they have a huge range. From late summer to fall, the weeds they normally feed on start to die off, so they move into areas that are maintained or irrigated.



The fuzzy caterpillar, or Woollybear caterpillar, is a common sight during the winter. (Courtesy photo)

Are woollybear caterpillars poisonous?

Many people see the hairs on this caterpillar and automatically think, 'Don't touch that — I'm going to be stung.' Fortunately, these are not stinging caterpillars, so you can handle them, and they won't hurt you.

There are many different species of these woollybear caterpillars that look very similar. Their coloration can be slightly different — some are more of a creamy yellow, some are darker brown or black — but all of these are nonstinging caterpillars.

Still, if you aren't 100% sure what an insect is, it's best not to touch it with your bare hands. If you want to pick a caterpillar up, put on some gloves; that way, you're safe if it is a stinging caterpillar.

Are woollybear caterpillars beneficial insects?

Every insect has beneficial aspects. People think about bees and butterflies as being our pollinators, but there are a lot more pollinators out there than we give credit to. These would definitely fit into that category as adults, as the moths feed on the nectar of flowers.

The caterpillars also fit into the food webs of other insects, arthropods and mammals. They can be helpful in that regard. Birds and bats are likely to feed more on the adult moths than the caterpillars, because the caterpillars are so fuzzy.

To a kid, these caterpillars may be viewed as a potential pet. But, if they're eating your vegetable garden, then they'll probably be considered a pest. The larvae have chewing mouthparts and feed on the foliage of plants, which can

The amount of damage is dependent upon the size of the

larva. The larger the size, the more damage it's going to

How long do woollybear caterpillars live?

Their life cycle includes four life stages — egg, larva, pupa and adult — which, depending on environmental conditions, can last up to six months. Adults lay up to 1,200 eggs on plants.

Larvae go through several instars before pupation. An instar is the insect between molts. When it hatches out of the egg, that's the first instar. It molts into the next one, and that's the second instar. And, in each successive molt, they're getting larger. Typically, they're in the larval stage for about a month to a month and a half. Environmental conditions like food availability, moisture and temperature affect how long the larval stage lasts.

The pupal stage is typically going to be in leaf litter or soil. The caterpillars form a cocoon with silken hairs that they build around their body, and that usually lasts about two weeks.

During the winter, they're not going to be as active. They may come out on warmer days, but they'll overwinter in a nice, cozy area. They go into something like hibernation. For insects, it's typically called diapause.

Are there more woollybear caterpillars this year?

I don't think there are necessarily any more this year than any other year. Most people don't look down on the ground for bugs, so it all depends on who's paying attention.

They're also found in clusters usually. They're widespread over Texas, but there won't be huge numbers everywhere.

What is behind the myth that woollybear caterpillars predict winter severity?

With the banded woollybear, there is a belief that the size of the brown band on the caterpillars versus the black will say how severe that winter will be. The larger the band, the more severe the winter.

The problem with that is, firstly, there are around eight different species of caterpillars called woollybear caterpillars, and not all of them are the same color. Secondly, the coloration can also depend upon what stage the caterpillar is in. If it's in one of the smaller instars, the coloration or the size of the band will be slightly different than if you have the later stages. It can also depend on what they've been eating and how much food they've been getting. There's a lot of stuff that goes into it.

So, while it's an interesting wives' tale, it doesn't actually hold water.



LEGAL NOTICE

NOTICE TO CREDITORS NO. 47950P

Notice is hereby given that on the 11th day of December, 2023, Letters of Testamentary upon the Estate of Lloyd Duane Bryner, Deceased, were issued to Elizabeth Anne Wall by the Honorable County Judge of Smith County, Texas in Cause No. 47950P pending on the Probate Docket of said Court.

All persons having claims against said Estate are hereby required to present the same within the time prescribed by law to the address being shown below:

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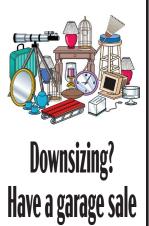
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ET unemployment figures drop

Continued from Page 1

"Texas continues to lead the nation and break records for economic growth," said TWC Chairman Bryan Daniel. "With more than 26,000 positions added in November, TWC continues to connect job seekers and employers to keep Texas working."

Statewide, eight of 11 major industries in Texas expanded over the month. Professional and Business Services saw significant growth with 9,900 jobs added while the Construction industry gained 9,200 jobs in November. Another 5,100 positions were added in Private Education and Health Services. Furthermore, six of the 11 major industries set new employment highs in November, including Construction, Financial Activities, Professional and Business Services, Private Education and Health Services, Leisure and Hospitality, and Government.

"Texas continues to outpace the nation in job growth as Texans take advantage of the many options available for their next career opportunity," said TWC Commissioner Representing Labor Alberto Treviño III. "TWC has various programs and services available to provide the right training and tools needed by job seekers to enter into a diverse range of high-demand occupations."

The Midland Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) maintained the lowest unemployment rate among Texas MSAs with a not seasonally adjusted rate of 2.2 percent in November, followed by the Amarillo MSA at 2.6 percent, and College Station-Bryan at 2.7 percent.

"The Texas labor market has continued to thrive month after month, and continues to lead the nation in many categories," said TWC Commissioner Representing Employers Joe Esparza. "As we head into 2024, the future looks bright for Texas employers across the state seeking to expand their business and tap into the state's growing workforce."

ShareLunker embarks on 38th season

ATHENS – New Year's Day arrived on Monday and with it came the kickoff of the 38th Toyota ShareLunker season. Anglers from across Texas and the nation will cast their lines in anticipation of landing a Legacy Lunker largemouth bass (13-plus pounds) in Texas' world-class fisheries.

The Toyota ShareLunker program has played an integral part in making Texas a destination for hundreds of thousands of anglers in search of this prized sport fish. Grabbing a pole, hitting the water and hauling in a 13-pound plus largemouth bass would be a great way to jumpstart the new year. The cast of the line, the lure landing just right on the water and a strike from a possible fish of a lifetime is what many anglers strive to experience.

"ShareLunker season sparks excitement, not just for big bass catches, but for a shared commitment to conservation," said Natalie Goldstrohm, Toyota ShareLunker program coordinator. "Anglers, scientists, and industry partners unite to gather vital data for trophy bass management, stocking of world-class offspring, and critical genetics data to make bass fishing bigger and better in Texas. The 2023 season was full of achievements, and we are enthusiastic about what unfolds in 2024."

The 2023 season was another banner year for the program, with multiple milestones reached and memories made by anglers working with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) Inland Fisheries Division staff that make the program a success. Key highlights from the 2023 Toyota ShareLunker collection season include:

- A record 15 Legacy Class ShareLunkers produced from O.H. Ivie.
 - Five fish weighing more than 14 pounds.
- Angler Kyle Hall recorded a Legacy Lunker in back-to-back seasons.
- Anglers Dalton Smith and Caden Cowan reeled in Legacy Lunkers at O.H. Ivie on the same day (Feb. 2).
- Anglers from seven states, including Texas, etched their name into the program's record book: Texas, Colorado, Kansas, Kentucky, Minnesota, New Mexico and Washington.
- Anglers have submitted 650 Legacy Lunkers in the first 37 years of the Share-Lunker program and during the 2022 and 2023 collection seasons, all the loaned fish were healthy and returned to the lake where they were caught.
- During the first three months of the season (Jan. 1 through March 31), anglers who reel in a 13-plus pound bass can loan it to TPWD for the ShareLunker selective breeding and stocking program. These anglers can call the ShareLunker hotline at (903) 681-0550 to report their catch 24/7 through March 31, 2024.

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