

# Gladewater Mirror

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50¢



## Independence Day celebrated locally July 3 at Lake Gladewater

July Fourth is a day of celebration across the United States. The Fourth of July commemorates American independence and millions of people throughout the country celebrate the day with family and friends.

Communities host their own celebrations on July Fourth and Gladewater plans to get a jump on all the festivities as it celebrates Independence Day on July 3rd at Lake Gladewater.

Food trucks will on Lakeshore Drive from 5-10 p.m. and the annual boat parade hosted by Austin Bank will be at 8 p.m. in front of the boat ramps and docks. The grand finale - the fireworks display - will begin at dark.

Paid parking will be available for \$5/vehicle, while free parking will be available around the swimming area. Please observe all designated restricted areas, which need to be kept clear for emergency vehicles.

Gilmer's annual Independence Day fireworks and air show is also set for July 3rd at the Yamboree Event Center. Gates open at 7:30 p.m., with the air show scheduled for 8:30 p.m. and the fireworks show at 9:15. Admission is free.

While some celebrations like Gladewater's and Gilmer's are community based, others are must-see events for any patriot. The following are some of the more noteworthy Fourth of July celebrations that will entertain millions in person or on television this year.

• Washington, D.C.: It should come as no surprise that the capital of the United States hosts an especially awe-inspiring Fourth of July celebration. In addition to a concert featuring well-known musical acts on the National Mall, the festivities in the nation's capital are marked by a fireworks extravaganza that will impress anyone seeking a unique way to celebrate the holiday.

• Boston: Estimates suggest roughly half a million individuals take in the Fourth of July festivities in Boston. A hotbed of patriotism during the American Revolutionary War, Boston embraces that spirit each July with a celebration on the city's Charles River. The Boston celebration spans two days and includes a popular performance by the Boston Pops.

• Philadelphia: Another city with deep ties to the American Revolutionary War, Philadelphia celebrates the nation's independence against the backdrop of the Philadelphia Museum of Art, which is one of the city's more notable and recognizable buildings. Individuals along both sides of the Delaware River can view the impressive fireworks display.

• New York, NY: Perhaps no Fourth of July fireworks celebration is as well-known as the one hosted by the Big Apple. Typically taking place on the East River, the New York City fireworks display can be viewed from various points throughout the city. Individuals looking for a unique way to take in the show can book a spot on a boat sailing in New York harbor.

## Think before leaving car - it could mean the difference between life and death

As we've now officially reached summer and temperatures are set to begin climbing in East Texas, it is important to remember that parked vehicles can warm to over 130° in under an hour in these sunny and very warm conditions.

ALWAYS check the back seat for your children (and pets!) and be sure to LOCK the door so younger children cannot trap themselves inside.

An average of 40 children a year die from heatstroke after accidentally being left in a car or trapping themselves inside.

If you're a parent thinking this would NEVER happen to you, check your ego, then check the backseat. It could save a life!

Outside Temperature	Inside Temperature	Time Elapsed
80°	99°	10 Minutes
80°	109°	20 Minutes
80°	114°	30 Minutes
80°	123°	60 Minutes

weather.gov/heat nhtsa.gov

## NO VACANCIES

### Council takes aim at empty buildings, absentee owners

Gladewater has too many buildings languishing in limbo in the hands of absentee and apathetic owners, Mayor Brandy Flanagan says, and progress demands action.

"I want us to be strict on this," she told council members, city staffers and residents last week: "I don't want to do anything that's going to hinder people that want to come into Gladewater and do business the right way, but I for sure want to make it difficult on people that want to come in and hold buildings hostage and continue to make our community look blighted when we have businesses trying to get in here."



The rest of the council seemed eager to act as well, directing City Hall employees to get the ball rolling on a committee that will reshape local ordinances to curtail the growing number of empty properties and unresponsive owners – soonest, before an anticipated influx of business interest tied to Toll 49.

"There are substantial businesses that would benefit our town so much," Flanagan said, frustrated, "but we can't get property owners to contact us back to be able to have the conversations because at the end of the day they don't want to sell the building."

Re-zoning will be part of the discussion, along with possible guidelines on how long a building can remain for sale without some degree of intervention.

"One thing that's happening, some people are buying property, make a little money upfront and just letting it stay vacant as a tax write-off," councilman Rocky Hawkins agreed.

It makes Gladewater look "closed" to new businesses, Flanagan said, at a time when TxDOT's road project will drive interest.

"We will have businesses that before never looked at us, certain chains, that will come in now just because of Toll 49. These things have got to be addressed because we've got to have places for these businesses to come in."

In other business during the council's monthly meeting June 20:

- the group weighed comments supporting and opposing a beer and wine at Chad's (809 E. Broadway Ave.) before unanimous approval of a Special Use Permit for the business;
- approved new regulations to mitigate "aggressive panhandling" and limit permit-free solicitation to local organizations, requiring an application and \$500 fee from outside groups;
- authorized City Manager Charlie Smith to advertise for bids for work on Guy Street in light of drainage issues apparently caused by lax rules under previous city administrators;
- took no action on the Gladewater ballpark following more discussion in closed session but authorized use of ARPA grants funds for the purchase of property on Hwy. 271 for a new lift station;
- adopted updated rules for manufactured housing – find more coverage at GladewaterMirror.com.

## GISD locks in budget for FY2025, tax rate pending

By James Draper

Total revenues and expenditures increased by 4 percent in Gladewater ISD's \$22 million financial plan for Fiscal Year 2024-2025.

Notably, GISD trustees did not adopt a tax rate June 24 for the new budget – it's not uncommon as the district (and other taxing entities) await certified values from local appraisal districts, due later in July.

In other business Monday, the board signed off on exemptions tied to the district's switch to a four-day week and rubber-stamped policy updates handed down by the state legislature.

The balanced budget adopted for the current FY2024 totals \$21,078,340. The FY25 budget comes in at \$21,915,710, a year-to-year increase of \$837,370.

Chief Financial Officer Candy Keller walked trustees through the finalized budget ahead of unanimous approval. During the requisite public meeting, Keller noted the revenues were right in line with projections.

"I felt we had good, solid numbers," she said. Notably, "The number we get from our taxpayers (\$6,346,022) is now lower than the number we get from the state (\$15,219,688), which is opposite where we were several years ago."

The curriculum line item in the budget stands out, increasing 135 percent on paper – one position will now utilize operating expenses, previously covered by sunseting ESSER funds.

District of Innovation Co-Chair Opal Smith laid out the necessary state policy exemption that will allow GISD to begin the school year Aug. 6 on a four-day schedule.

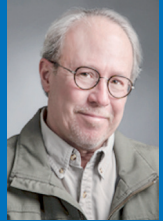
Continued on Page 2



# OPINION/COMMENTARY

**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.

## Gary Borders Capital Highlights



### Electric demand could double by 2030

The chief of the Electric Reliability Council of Texas told state lawmakers recently that the state's power demand could nearly double in just six years. The reasons: population growth, new requests for grid connections, and a rise in requests from data centers and other heavy users.

ERCOT chief executive officer Pablo Vegas told lawmakers the grid operator has sharply increased its prediction of power demand in coming years, The Texas Tribune reported. "All of that is putting together a picture of a very significant, different demand growth that is forcing us to really re-think how we're looking at planning to make sure we can meet those needs and continue to deliver on the expectations of all Texans," Vegas told lawmakers.

In a post on X (formerly Twitter), Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick said the Legislature should "take a close look" at data centers and crypto operations.

"We want data centers, but it can't be the Wild, Wild West of data centers and crypto miners crashing our grid and turning the lights off," he wrote.

### STAAR scores in math, science decline

Texas student scores in math and science showed marked drops in science comprehension, according to the Texas Education Agency. The 2024 results show declining math and science scores across all tested grade levels.

Only 34% of elementary and middle-school students met or mastered grade-level science, a drop of 5.7 percentage points from last year. Math scores also dropped slightly.

"Pandemic-induced disruptions to learning exacerbated students' difficulties in mastering fundamental math concepts, TEA Commissioner Mike Morath said. "As a result, we must keep our foot on the gas to intensify efforts in providing targeted interventions and research-based education strategies to ensure that students obtain necessary foundational skills and concepts and achieve the desired academic outcomes not only in math but across all subject areas."



## Happy Fourth of July!

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## Make it sparkle...

Remember the July 4ths of childhood? St. Augustine grass freshly mown and soft as a carpet on tiny bare feet scampering through a sprinkler while shrieking with glee. I thought it couldn't get any better but of course it did.

Daddy came in from the field and four generations filled the front yard of the ranch house that was sheltered by a grove of Post Oak trees whose canopies shaded the huge yard, the picnic table and the smoking barbecue pit.

Pap'paw would be cranking the old wooden ice cream bucket while the kids took turns either sitting on the towel covered top or 'helping' with the cranking. Mam'maw, of course, brought the cooked banana pudding. None of this instant Jello pudding business for her.

My stars, no!  
My cousins, little brother and I waited impatiently for twilight as the adults sat on the porch swing, or the green and white striped lawn chairs and lazily recalled memories from their own childhood and laughed. Their laughter was the background of my childhood.

At twilight, as soon as we saw the lightning bugs flashing it was time to bring out the sparklers. Daddy would light them for us and we would whirl away ignoring the tiny sparks that hit our arms. As we got older, bottle rockets and Roman candles were just dangerous enough to get us in trouble, but not too much because our parents remembered their own childhood fireworks.

Hopefully our son recalls the July 4 fireworks of his youth. When our neighbors Belle and Mr. Marion would sit in their swing across the road and pray that Josh and his Dad's firework shenanigans wouldn't catch their roof on fire while clapping loudly for the little boy who had the same glee his Momma did when it came to July 4.

Frankly, a sprinkler and sparklers may be more fun than the grandest of fireworks displays. After all, when you add in homemade ice cream and love, it just doesn't get any better than that.

Happy Independence Day friends and neighbors! May your holiday sparkle with memories.

## Insurance Rates

While prices for virtually everything have risen in recent years, few items have rivaled the spike in insurance prices. Texas rates for home and auto policies have surged, putting a strain on households and businesses alike.

Private passenger auto rates rose by 23.8% in 2022 and 25.5% in 2023. Reasons include more expensive cars and higher costs for repairs. Parts are also hard to obtain (particularly when body work is required), and labor costs have escalated. The result is that insurers are raising rates as they attempt to bounce back from massive losses over the past few years (claims and expenses from home and auto policies were \$1.10 for every \$1.00 in premiums in 2023).

Homeowners' average rates rose 10.8% in 2022 and 21.1% in 2023. Again, the cost of home repairs is a major reason for the increase. Construction costs are higher than in the past, as are the prices for materials and labor.

Weather events and climate phenomena are also a factor, particularly as they intersect with population dynamics. Texas has long been adding new residents faster than other states, and one outcome has been the appearance of thousands of homes in areas prone to hail, hurricanes, wildfires, and tornadoes. For example, a hailstorm north of Dallas-Fort Worth 10 or 15 years ago might have fallen primarily on fields and grassland where there are now rapidly growing cities and high-end housing developments. Many communities along the Gulf Coast have also seen substantial growth, thus magnifying the costs of storms. The number of weather events generating losses of more than a billion dollars has skyrocketed.

Some insurers are reducing their exposure in Texas and other areas prone to weather calamities. Less com-

## GISD locks in budget for FY2025, tax rate pending

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"It balances the length of the fall and the spring semester to align with summer school, internships and different things like that," she said. A second variance adapts standard 10-month/187-day teacher contracts for the truncated schedule: "The benefits would be reduced teacher contract days with no effect to teacher salaries," consequently in-

## The Best of Suzanne Bardwell



## Dr. Ray Perryman THE ECONOMIST



petition is compounding the problem, reducing choices and placing upward pressure on prices. A growing number of people are opting to only partially protect their homes or forego insurance altogether, which could prove financially disastrous. Although some amount of auto liability coverage is mandated by Texas law, higher prices will inevitably increase the number of uninsured motorists on the road, thus escalating risk exposure and costs for carriers.

The Texas Windstorm Insurance Association (TWIA) provides wind and hail insurance to coastal homeowners and businesses that cannot obtain it elsewhere. TWIA manages a trust fund and has mechanisms to raise additional reserves if needed. As with many carriers, it relies on reinsurance (essentially insurance for insurers), the price of which has also soared.

Looking ahead, the pace of increase will likely ease, but premiums will unfortunately remain above historical patterns and settle into a "new normal" – an unavoidable consequence of a growing economy and population in a geography characterized by more frequent and expensive weather events. Stay safe!

**Dr. M. Ray Perryman is President and Chief Executive Officer of The Perryman Group ([www.perrymangroup.com](http://www.perrymangroup.com)), which has served the needs of over 3,000 clients over the past four decades.**

creasing the daily rate of pay for teachers, enhancing recruitment and improving morale.

Trustees also approved an exemption tied to transfers – per updated policy, on the rare occasion a student's behavior warrants suspension, out-of-school placement or expulsion, the district will not be required to honor the pupil's enrollment for the standard one-year minimum.

## IF THE BLIND FOLLOW THE BLIND

There is a lot said in the Bible about "following." To Peter and Andrew, Jesus said: "Follow Me." (Matt. 4: 19). In Hebrews 13: 7. Speaking of elders, the writer said: "Whose faith follow." In 1 Cor. 11: 1, Paul said: "Be ye followers of me." There is nothing wrong with following others as long as others are following the Lord. Problems come when we "blindly" follow some man. Jesus said: "And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the pit (ditch.)" (Matt. 15: 14). In such a case, both the leader and the follower are in trouble!

For example, if one comes "Teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matt. 15: 9), the teacher is condemned, but if I follow him, I am condemned also! How much better to check out what one teaches, and make sure it is the truth, before following what he says. Acts 17: 11 speaks of the honest and fair-minded Bereans, who, when they heard Paul and Silas preaching, did not take their word without checking the Scriptures for themselves to see whether what they said was so. Such healthy skepticism demonstrates how the gospel should be received. Please don't be gullible and naïve and blindly follow whatever the preacher says. There are plenty of false teachers and false prophets in the world, The Word of God is the benchmark by which teachers are to be measured or tested. (1 Jn. 4: 1).

The story is told of a motorist who decided to play it safe while driving in a very dense fog, and just follow the taillights of the automobile in front of him. For a full hour he drove without worry. Suddenly, the taillights disappeared, and he plowed into the car ahead. "Hey, he yelled, why didn't you put out your hand when you stopped?" "Why should I?" was the calm reply. "I'm home in my own garage!"

The moral: Follow others, but not blindly. Imitate them as they imitate the Lord. Follow their faith if it is based on the Word of God. (Rom. 10: 17). Ask yourself: "Who do I follow, and why?" Think on these things.

**Dennis C. Abernathy-White Oak Church of Christ**

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# WHAT'S HAPPENING

## Church's 'Boot Camp' set July 27

Sit 'Em Down Cowboy Church's annual Kids for Christ B.O.O.T. Camp returns July 27 at 231 PR 3487 in Big Sandy.

The 'Biblical Outlook & Outreach Training' is crafted for children who have completed Pre-K (4 years-old) through those who have finished 5th grade.

The camp begins with registration at 8 a.m. then runs 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Breakfast and a hot dug lunch will be provided.

## Storytime Thursday

Two books will be read to small children Thursday, June 27, at both of the

Upshur County Library's "Storytime" sessions in Gilmer.

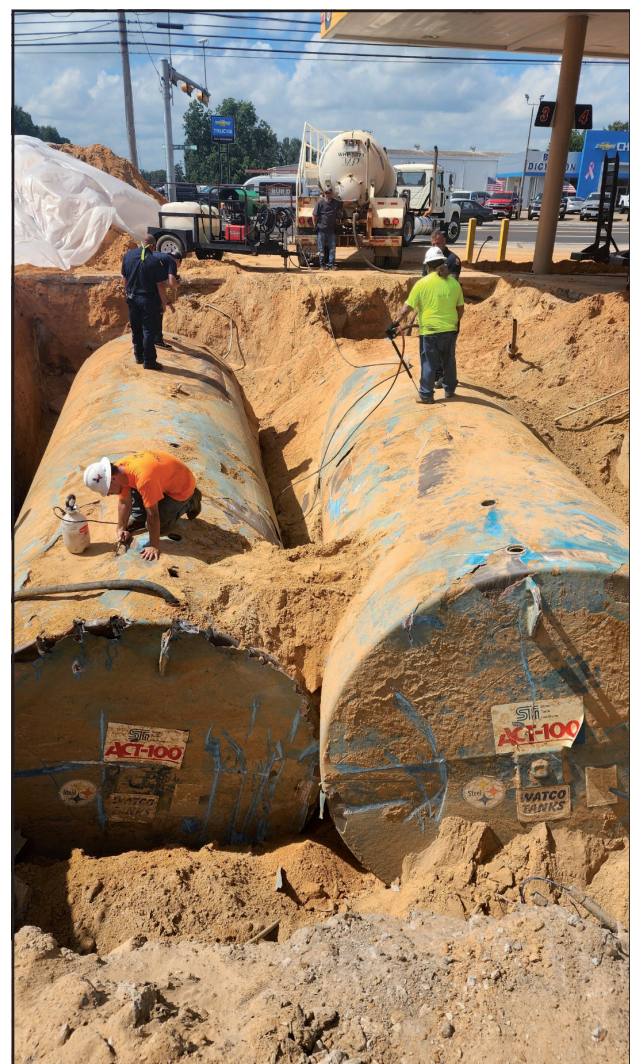
To be presented at the 10 a.m. and 4:15 p.m. gatherings are "Giraffe is Too Tall for This Book" by DK Ryland, and "Sienna the Spotless Giraffe" by Daryllen Stone, illustrated by Hiruni Ishara. A craft will follow each gathering at the library, 702 W. Tyler.

## Shake, rattle & Roll

A '50s and '60s show group is ready to getting things rockin' come August. The national and international award-winning women of Shake Rattle & Roll will be performing at 2 p.m. Saturday, Aug. 3, at the invitation of



Saturday's Juneteenth celebration downtown was the largest in recent years as more locals lined up for the annual parade organized by the Gladewater MLK / Juneteenth Committee. Celebrating June 19, 1865, the day slaves in Texas finally learned they'd been emancipated, freedom was at the heart of the festivities that ultimately descended on Bumblebee Park. "I know that a lot of people think of Juneteenth as primarily an African American holiday," said committee chair Odette Alexander, "but in all actuality it's an American holiday and it's a time for us to all come together as a city, unite, learn and appreciate each other." (Courtesy photos from Gladewater Chamber of Commerce)



Removal of gas storage tanks at the former CEFCO station on the corner of Hwy. 80 and the loop was done last week to make way for the upcoming Toll 49 expansion of the roadway.

Gladewater Former Students' Association. Tickets are \$25 per person for the concert in the GFSA Building at 2509 Hendricks St. All seats are General Admission, and free for children younger than 12. For more information, call 903-845-2631.

## Goudarzi to lead national trial lawyers

Veteran Gilmer and Longview attorney Brent Goudarzi has been named 2024 president of the National Trial Lawyers Top 100 organization, which bills itself as comprised of the nation's top 16,500 attorneys.

The founding partner of Goudarzi and Young, L.L.P., "brings a distinguished record of achievement" to his new post, "having secured numerous historic verdicts and settlements in commercial motor vehicle cases."

The group said Goudarzi "has consistently demonstrated exceptional skill and dedication throughout his legal career," having been

recognized as a Texas Super Lawyer, a National Trial Lawyers Top 100 Trial Lawyer, and a member of the American Academy of Trial Attorneys-Premier 100."

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# Happy Birthday America

and enjoy the July 4th weekend everyone!

# Grill safely on Independence day

Plenty of people can be found working their grilling magic year-round. But the vast majority of people do the bulk of their grilling over the summer and this July 4th, when warm temperatures contribute to a relaxed atmosphere that makes outdoor cooking and dining that much more appealing.

The relaxing nature of summer can make it easy to overlook safety, particularly when grilling. However, the right safety measures when cooking over an open flame can prevent home fires and other accidents that can cause injury and even death. In recognition of the many things that can go wrong when grilling, the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the U.S. Fire Administration offer these simple fire safety tips that every grillmaster can keep in mind as summer grilling season hits full swing.

- Only use a grill outside. Grills should never be used indoors, and that includes in garages with the doors open. Before lighting a flame, make sure the grill is at least three feet from siding, deck rails and eaves.
- Establish a safe zone around the grill. A three-foot safe zone around the grill can decrease the likelihood that pets will run into and potentially tip over the grill. Kids can be taught to respect this zone as well so they avoid being burned.
- Open a gas grill before lighting it. Charcoal grills, hybrid grills and smokers cannot be lit unless the lid is lifted. That isn't the case with gas grills, but gas grills should never be lit with the lid closed. If a gas grill is lit with its lid closed, gas can build up inside and that could cause an explosion. Even if there's some summer rain falling, open the lid on a gas grill before turning the ignition switch.
- Keep an eye on the grill at all times. It's tempting to walk away from a grill while food is cooking, but someone should always be tasked with staying close to the grill. If cooks must walk away, ask another adult to stay close to the grill until you return. All it takes is a few seconds for a fire to start.



- Clean the grill regularly. Regular cleaning of the grill is both healthy and safe. Cleaning helps to ensure the cooking surface is clean and unlikely to cause food poisoning. But a grease-free grill also poses less of a fire hazard than one that hasn't been cleaned.
- Let coals cool before discarding them. Coals from the grill should be given ample time to cool before they're removed from the grill and discarded.
- Remember to turn the gas valve to the off position after cooking. When cooking with gas grills, cooks must remember to turn the valve to the off position once all the food has been cooked. Simple safety measures can ensure summer grilling season goes off without a hitch.

## Interesting facts related to July 4th



Americans celebrate Independence Day every July 4. The holiday has become synonymous with summer fun, as grand fireworks displays and backyard barbecues are integral components of many people's July 4 celebrations.

As Americans and residents of the United States prepare for some festive Fourth of July celebrations, they can keep these interesting facts related to Independence Day in mind.

- There have been many iterations of the American flag. The American flag has become an iconic symbol of freedom recognized across the globe since the United States declared their independence from Great Britain in 1776. But few July 4 celebrants may know that the current version is the 27th iteration of the American flag. According to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the current version of the flag officially became the flag on July 4, 1960.
- The United States is not the only place to celebrate American independence. Such celebrations occur in various countries, including Australia, Denmark, Ireland, and Norway. The festivities in Rebild National Park in Denmark is believed to be the largest celebration of American inde-

pendence outside the United States.

- The National Hot Dog and Sausage Council estimates that 150 million hot dogs are consumed on July 4. Though there's no corresponding estimate related to how many hamburgers Americans eat on July 4, various reports suggest Americans eat roughly 50 billion burgers annually, so it's fair to conclude many a burger will be consumed this Independence Day.
- July is a popular month for nations to celebrate their independence. In addition to the United States, various countries, including Algeria (July 5), Argentina (July 9), The Bahamas (July 10), Belarus (July 3), Burundi (July 1), Canada (July 1), Cape Verde (July 1), Colombia (July 20), Kiribati (July 12), and Liberia (July 26), celebrate their Independence Day in July.
- John Adams, a Founding Father of the United States and the second president in the country's history, felt Americans should celebrate their independence from Great Britain on July 2. That's because the Continental Congress voted for independence on July 2, 1776. However, the Declaration of Independence was not approved for two more days, thus making July 4 the day to celebrate America's independence.

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### PUBLISHED NOTICE TO CREDITORS

Notice is hereby given that letters of guardianship for the person of CHRISTOPHER MICHAEL HAMPTON an incapacitated person, were issued on May 22, 2024, in Docket No. 90000042P, pending in the County Court of Gregg County, Texas, to SARITA "KIM" HAMPTON, Successor Guardian, as successor guardian of the person of CHRISTOPHER MICHAEL HAMPTON.

The residence of Guardian is in Harrison County, Texas, and the mailing address is:

Successor Guardian of the person of CHRISTOPHER MICHAEL HAMPTON, c/o SARITA "KIM" HAMPTON 504 Shadowood Drive, Marshall, Harrison County, Texas, 75672.

All persons having claims against this estate, which is currently being administered, are required to present them within the time and in the manner prescribed by law.

DATED the 18th day of June 2024.

HARRIS & HARRIS, ATTORNEYS AT LAW MATTHEW C. HARRIS State Bar No. 24059904 mch@matthewharrislaw.com

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**Newspaper & Public Notice Advertisement**

White Oak ISD will be accepting Requests for Proposals for its Property and Liability insurance coverages. A proposer's questionnaire may be obtained from the district's consultant Robert V. Reim Company, by e-mailing [bobreim@robertreim.com](mailto:bobreim@robertreim.com). Completed Questionnaires must be returned by 2:00 p.m., July 1, 2024. Proposers will be qualified, and insurance companies will be assigned. If you have any questions, please call Mr. Reim at (512) 345-8921. Final proposals will be due July 25, 2024. The district's current coverage expires September 1, 2024.

**CITY OF GLADEWATER**  
 PUBLIC NOTICE

The Gladewater City Council met on Thursday, June 20, 2024, at 6:00 p.m., to discuss and consider Ordinance O-24-10 amending §11.15.010 Definitions and adopting §11.16 Aggressive Panhandling or Solicitation of the Code of Ordinances of the City of Gladewater, Texas.

This ordinance was adopted and will become effective 30 days after this publication as required by law. A copy of this ordinance may be obtained from Judy Van Houten, City Clerk, 519 E. Broadway, Gladewater, Texas. Or you may request an electronic copy via email to [jvanhouten@cityofgladewater.com](mailto:jvanhouten@cityofgladewater.com).

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# Gilmer man gets life+40 years

By Phillip Williams

A jury in Gilmer last week sentenced Allen Ray Reppond to life imprisonment, and two 20-year prison terms, after he pleaded guilty days earlier to sex-related charges involving female children, said Upshur County District Attorney Billy Byrd's office.

Details of the cases, said Byrd and his office manager, Lisa King, were as follows:

In a case involving a 10-year-old girl, Reppond, 60, of Gilmer, received the life term for aggravated sexual assault of a child, and a 20-year term for indecency with a child, after being named in a single indictment on both charges.

In the other case, the defendant drew the other 20-year term for indecency with a child involving a 13-year-old girl.

Jurors also fined Reppond \$30,000 apiece on all three charges.

The jury was chosen in Judge Dean Fowler's 115th District Court June 10 before Reppond pleaded guilty June 12, and elected to have the jury sentence him. Jurors deliberated fewer than 20 minutes June 18 in the one-day trial in deciding to assess the maximum prison terms and maximum fine in each case.

Byrd and Assistant District Attorney Michael F. Northcutt Jr. prosecuted the case. Gilmer attorney Matthew Patton represented Reppond, who will appeal the case.

Byrd said he sought the maximum sentences in each case, citing testimony that "these children will never forget what happened...They have been sentenced to a life term" themselves. Patton asked for no particular sentence, but to "weigh all the facts," Byrd added Tuesday.



Dancers from Gladewater High School touch up the pavement bear paws downtown on their Mission to Macy's project, fundraising toward an \$80,000 goal to perform in New York come Thanksgiving.




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## "Coot's Corner"

By Coot Putley

### Parity

In the appropriately named movie "Dumb and Dumber" Jim Carrey says "So you're telling me there's a chance....yes!" That belief is the basis for attempts at parity in major league sports. It is the hope that every team has a chance each year to win a championship. Sometimes the system works – sometimes it doesn't.

Adjusting the schedule annually by previous year's outcome and drafting in reverse order of record results in balancing the NFL to some degree. There is usually a handful of excellent teams, but most are grouped in the middle, increasing their odds to get to the playoffs and win it all (except the Cowboys.)

The NBA has had 77 years of champions. Boston and the Lakers have accounted for 34 wins, but 19 other teams have won the finals at least once, so it could be stated that every franchise has had a reasonable oppor-

tunity to collect the trophy. They also allow 20 teams to enter the playoffs each year. Once you're in, anything can happen!

In Major League Baseball there is a curious pattern, with almost every team having a shot at being one of the twelve who get in the playoffs. At this writing, there are only eleven teams that have won more games than they have lost, six in the American League and five in the National League. The other nineteen teams have lost over half of their

games. Four of these teams are currently in a virtual tie for second place in the NL Central Division. Parity or mediocrity? You decide.

Last year two wildcard teams met in the World Series after heating up in the playoffs, and the Texas Rangers have a trophy to prove it! The NBA Finals featured the Dallas Mavericks, who finished fifth in the Western Conference. With these results, I have no complaints.

That's one man's opinion – what's yours?



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# How to handle fireworks safely

Warm weather generally translates to more time spent outdoors. That means more barbecues, days spent poolside, trips to the beach, and even camping excursions. This time of year also inspires people to celebrate. What better way to signal the party has started than with fireworks?

Fireworks traditionally are part of large celebrations, such as national holidays or grand opening events. Many individuals also take it on themselves to set off fireworks during block parties or other neighborhood gatherings. Though fireworks are awe-inspiring, they're also dangerous, which is why it's best to leave them to the professionals.

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission reports that fireworks-related injuries and deaths in the United States have risen by roughly 25 percent in the last 15 years. In 2021, nine people died in accidents involving fireworks, and 11,500 were injured.

"The safest way to enjoy fireworks is to watch the professional displays," said Alex Hoeh-Saric, chair of the CPSC.

Three-quarters of fireworks injuries occur the weeks before and following the July 4th holiday in the United States.

Fireworks can injure any part of the body, but burns to the hands and fingers, trunk, and arms are the most commonly affected areas. Injuries to the eyes, including blindness, also may occur.

Sparklers are not necessarily safe, either. The CPSC reports that 1,100 injuries result from sparklers each year.

As fireworks become widely available, it's imperative that individuals follow these crucial safety tips when using them.

- Never allow children to play with or ignite any type of firework, including sparklers.
- Keep a bucket of water or garden hose nearby to extinguish fires or sparks.
- Only buy and use fireworks if they are legal.
- Light fireworks one at a time in accordance with manufacturers' instructions.
- Choose a field or area free from trees and other obstructions, far away from spectators to light fireworks.
- Never use fireworks while impaired by alcohol or drugs.
- Never point or fire fireworks in the direction of other people.
- Do not place any part of the body directly over fireworks when lighting a fuse.



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## TEXAS CROSSWORD

by Charley & Guy Orbison  
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**ACROSS**

1 TXism: "from womb to \_\_\_\_" (lifetime)

5 \_\_\_\_ vera

6 singer Horne

7 TXism: "keep \_\_\_\_ under your hat"

8 TX-born Stephen Stills tune: "For What \_\_\_\_ Worth"

9 Daniel Defoe novel "Robinson \_\_\_\_"

15 Ozona High class (2 wds.)

16 TXism: "down \_\_\_\_ bones" (lost weight)

19 TXism: "\_\_\_\_ \_ frazzle" (tired)

21 Odessa is seat of this county

22 TXism: "a \_\_\_\_ \_ the pan"

27 high-pitched barks

28 TXism: "you can \_\_\_\_ \_ hog, but you can't take him anywhere"

29 Turkish officials

30 harness racer

32 Pat of Texas-filmed "State Fair" (init.)

33 TXism: "you can take \_\_\_\_ \_ bank" (sure thing)

36 lavish Texas party

37 pronounce Lamesa: "luh-\_\_\_\_-suh"

38 TX B.J. Thomas gospel album "Home \_\_\_\_ \_ Belong"

39 TXism: "\_\_\_\_ \_ without a paddle"

41 Texas pitching legend, Ryan (init.)

42 a legal specialty in Texas: "oil \_\_\_\_"

45 hog fat that is used in cooking

46 intl. distress signal

47 this Teri starred with TX Dabney Coleman in "Tootsie"

48 public school sports and academic org.

49 TX Barbara Mandrell tune: "Sleeping Single \_\_\_\_ \_ Bed"

52 attention getter

53 flightless bird

54 \_\_\_\_-gallon hat

55 TXism: "jumped like a fish \_\_\_\_ \_ hook"

**DOWN**

1 Astros GM in the 1980's, Smith

2 Grand \_\_\_\_ Opry

3 Wood County newspaper

4 TXism: "\_\_\_\_ \_ ever saw" (unusual)

8 what George W. finally could say on 12/13/2000?

9 guys who enforce maritime law (2 wds.)

10 former Cowboy quarterback "Roger the Dodger" (init.)

11 Great Britain & No. Ireland

12 Texas has a chapter of this environmental organization (2 wds.)

13 TXism: "went to the well \_\_\_\_ too often"

14 TXism: "\_\_\_\_ high on the hog" (rich)

15 tornados

16 Pampa's "\_\_\_\_ \_ Texas Rodeo"

17 something never said about 41-across? (2 wds.)

18 ex-Astro hurler Doug (1993-96)

20 pickup rubber

22 TX Fess who was Davy & Daniel on television (init.)

23 old Roman language (abbr.)

24 TX cosmetics queen Mary Kay

25 shoulder wraps

26 "Hell \_\_\_\_ \_ fury like a woman scorned"

28 Texas explorer: Seur \_\_\_\_ \_ Salle

31 TX Wayne Tippit had a part in this 1981 military film

34 TXism: don't give a hoot \_\_\_\_ a holler

35 Texans like it iced

37 singer Haggard who sang about Texans Bonnie & Clyde

40 TXism: "skinny as a \_\_\_\_"

43 this TX Blocker was "Hoss" on Bonanza

44 TXism: "necessary as \_\_\_\_ \_ wine"

50 TX Benton directed this Jess in "Kramer vs. Kramer"

51 Austin univer.

See Answers On This Page

6991-S

**Last Puzzle Solution**

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# July 4 pool party safety urged

Americans gather in backyards across the United States in celebration of the nation's independence each July. Festivities often include delicious foods cooked on the grill, music, laughter, and, if there is a pool in the yard, hours of splashing around.

Pools are great places to cool off from the hot sun. But pools also can be dangerous. According to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, drowning remains the No. 1 threat to children. Previous July 4 drownings should serve as sober warnings to those planning to celebrate in and around a pool this Independence Day. Simple precautionary measures can save lives.

- Never leave a child unattended in a pool or around any body of water no matter how small, even for a minute.
- Teach children basic water safety.
- Avoid overloading the pool with too many boisterous swimmers, especially if adults, older kids and young kids are in the water. Small children can quickly get lost in the fray.
- Avoid swimming if you have been consuming alcohol.
- Designate a lifeguard, whether it's a hired, certified professional, or someone who has taken on the task and will keep eyes fixed on the pool at all times while swimmers are present.
- Establish rules and enforce them. Prohibit diving into shallow water and running around



the slippery edge of the pool.

- Learn how to administer CPR to both children and adults.
  - If a child goes missing, look for him or her in the pool first.
  - Minimize the use of pool floats that can obscure the view of the pool floor when there are many swimmers present.
  - Keep a phone handy at all time. Promptly call for emergency services if the need arises.
  - Ensure everyone immediately exits the pool if thunder is heard or lightning is seen.
  - Turn off the filter pump while guests are swimming, particularly to protect against entrapment on pool drains or pipes.
  - The American Association of Pediatrics advises against allowing infants and toddlers in hot tubs. Older children should not be in a hot tub for more than 20 minutes at a time.
  - Be sure the water chemistry is balanced in pools and spas so that swimmers are not irritated by the chemicals and the water is sanitary. Also, keep in mind that swim diapers are not foolproof. Check youngsters often so that waste does not end up in the pool.
- These are just some pool safety tips to keep everyone protected during July 4 festivities or anytime a pool is used.

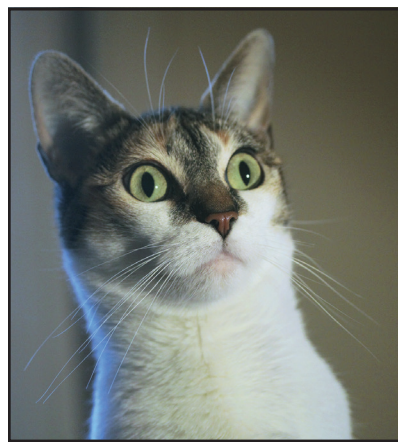
*Have a Safe and Happy 4th of July*

**Maxey Cerliano**  
Gregg County Sheriff

Ad Pd for by Maxey Cerliano

## Prepare pets for Fourth of July festivities

Many people are eager for Independence Day celebrations in early summer. There is much to be excited about, as festivities often begin in the afternoon with barbecues and pool parties, and commence late at night after fireworks shows that light up the night sky. Still, not everyone enjoys the extra noise and busy nature of July 4th parties, particularly furry members of the family.



Animal control services often report an increase in lost animals between July 4th and July 6th. That's because the excitement of the holiday puts pets out of their comfort zones.

While pet owners need not cancel their July 4th plans, they should take heed of the many ways to keep their pets safe during the festivities.

### Update identification

Be sure prior to any July 4th events that pets are wearing collars with current identification information. If an address or phone number has changed since the last time you updated microchip records, be sure to check the account is current.

### Be careful with alcoholic drinks

Party hosts typically serve beer, wine and cocktails. Alcoholic beverages have the potential to poison pets, says the ASPCA. Animals can become very intoxicated, severely depressed or go into comas if they drink alcohol. Keep spirited drinks well out of reach.

### Check with the vet

Many pets are prone to anxiety from loud noises, such as thunderstorms and fireworks, and lots of commotion — something that occurs in spades come July 4th. Some veterinarians recommend a small course of anti-anxiety medication or a sedative to help pets cope with the stimuli.

### Create a quiet space

Allow pets to ride out the day in their comfortable, quiet and cozy retreats. If necessary, create a space in an interior room. Cover the pet crate with a blanket and offer favorite toys or bedding to create a soothing environment.

### Place notes on doors and gates

While it's best to keep pets in a locked room away from the fray, some pets like to socialize with guests and are not bothered by noises. However, alert guests with notes posted on doors and fence gates to check to make sure pets are not trying to escape behind them. All doors should be closed firmly when entering or exiting.

### Pick up debris

Firework debris can rain down on properties even if you were not shooting off the fireworks. Curious pets may pick it up or eat it, which runs the risk of an upset stomach or even an intestinal blockage. Check your yard before letting pets out to play.

### Keep an eye on the grill

Pets can be opportunists, and those burgers and chicken drumsticks smell delicious to pets. Pets that get too close to the grill can become injured. And if pets eat leftovers, they may end up with digestive distress or even be poisoned by foods that are toxic to cats and dogs. Pets need to be protected during summertime parties like Independence Day celebrations.

*Have a Safe and Happy 4th of July*

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