

Rains County Leader

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EMORY, TEXAS - THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 2026

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ELECTION 2026

Early voting ends Friday, primary elections on Tuesday

By **CHUCK FITTS**
Rains County Leader staff

Early voting in primary elections ends on Friday, February 27, with all residents heading to the polls to vote on Republican or Democratic candidates on Tuesday, March 3.

As of press time, 1142 residents have voted early in the primary elections.

The Rains County election office announced on February 22 that the polling

place for registered voters in Precinct 407 had been moved from the Point Community Center to the First Baptist Church of Point.

On Tuesday, March 3, all polling locations throughout Rains County will be open from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. for registered voters to cast a ballot in the primary election.

Local contested races for Republican voters include Rains County Judge, Justice of the Peace, County Commissioner

for Precinct 2 and County Commissioner for Precinct 4.

Candidates for Rains County Judge are Brent Hilliard and Jay Ford. Hilliard is the current Rains County Judge and was appointed by the commissioners court in July of 2025.

After current Commissioner of Precinct 2 Mike Willis chose to not run for re-election, five candidates filed to fill his seat including Bill McBride, Jim Jones, Eric Christian, John Michael Hill

and Pat O'Donnell.

Lori Northcutt is running for re-election as Commissioner for Precinct 4 and will face two challengers for the position, Dustin Briggs and Dennis Wagner.

The election for Rains County Justice of the Peace has Tony Ingram and William Douglas seeking election to the seat.

Candidates that will be running un-

see **ELECTION** on page 2

Regional Finalists



Leader photo by CHUCK FITTS

The Rains Lady Cat varsity basketball team is all smiles as they celebrate the hard-fought victory over Mineola on Monday, February 23, at the University of Texas at Tyler. They will take on the Liberty-Eylau Lady Leopards in the Region 2 Finals this weekend. Celebrating with the Lady Cats' fans are, in the front from l-r, Coach Maci Bult, Izzy Aldaco, Shaylee Stracener, Peyton Bryant, Taytum Osornio and Isabella Marrone. In the back, Coach CJ Cannon, Kenzy Thompson, Caroline Piles, Arianna Philson, Presley "PK" Kilgore, Annie Piechota, Jaycee Phillips, Kamara Ragsdale and Head Coach Colton Smith.

EAST TAWAKONI

Council hires designer, applies for infrastructure grant

By **CHUCK FITTS**
Rains County Leader staff

The East Tawakoni City Council held a regular meeting on Tuesday, February 17, to contract for the design of a new municipal building, learn about the application process for a grant and hire a financial advisor for the grant.

During the meeting, the council reviewed bids for creating an architectural drawing of a municipal building to

be built on city land on Hwy. 276. The presented concept would have a building that is under 5,000 square feet that will include the city offices, council chambers and the police department with room for future expansion.

Discussion from a previous meeting continued on where to locate the building, qualifications of the building designers, cost of the building and long term use of the facilities. A motion was made and unanimously approved to hire Triple M for the design of the

building. Cost for the design will be paid with funds raised for the East Tawakoni Police Department.

Council members were presented with a resolution to authorize an application for financial assistance from the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB). The grant, which the city had scored high in preliminary ratings, would fund around \$5 million in water infrastructure improvement in the city

see **ET** on page 2

POINT

Three candidates sign up for council posts; deadline Monday

By **CHUCK FITTS**
Rains County Leader staff

The final day to file an application to be on the ballot to fill the three vacant seats on the Point City Council is Monday, March 2.

Candidate packets must be turned in by 5:00 p.m. to the Rains County Election office at the Rains County Annex at 220 W. Quitman St.

As of press time, three candidates have filed for seats on the Point City Council. Douglas Vines has filed for Place 4, George Judge filed to run for Place 2 and Heather Rollins has filed for Place 1.

The special election for Places 1, 2 and 4 on the Point City Council will be held on May 2 from 7:00 a.m. until 7:00 p.m.

The election will only be for residents of Point in voting precincts 407 and 408 and the polling location will be the First Baptist Church of Point at 985 Industrial Blvd. for both precincts.

Early voting for the special election will be conducted from April 20 through April 28 in the Rains County Election office at the Rains County Courthouse Annex during regular business hours. Those hours will be 8:00 a.m to 5:00 p.m.

Applications for ballot by mail must be received at the Rains County Election office no later than the close of business on April 20. The mailing address for the election office is 220 W. Quitman St., Ste. E, Emory, Texas 75440.

The Point City Council has been unable to establish a quorum to conduct business since December of 2025 after the resignation of council members, Donna Jones, Ray Lacy and Kim Edwards, from Place 1, 2 and 4, respectively.

see **POINT** on page 2

SPOTLIGHT

Brittany Pitre makes daughters her priority while they are in school

By **JUDY KRAMER**
Rains County Leader contributor

When Brittany Pitre was in seventh grade, she decided she wanted to be a hygienist, and in high school and college, she worked many jobs in Emory to help pay for her education. She had a snow cone stand called Summer Snow in front of her uncle's Texas Performance Diesel business. She worked at Halls Pharmacy, Sonic, Emory Food Mart and was so good at waitressing that her services were requested at different restaurants when there was a shortage of help.

Pitre has worked 14 years as a hygienist in Rockwell, but five years ago she switched from a four-day work

week to one day a week because she wanted to be involved in her two daughter's schools. She enjoyed helping at school, saw the impact that it had and began to invest more time there. Three years ago, she took over the Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) at the elementary school heading up events for kids and teachers. Now that her oldest is in junior high school, she is a member of its PTO.

"Our PTO president does behind the scenes work," said Pitre. "She tells me about our finances, and I am the member who has fun providing treats for teachers such as Valentine sweets. As my kids move up in grade levels, I will move up to work with the PTOs at their campuses."

Pitre also spends time related to her 11- and eight-year-old daughters' sports. The oldest does some traveling with softball and basketball, and the youngest is in recreational basketball and softball.

Pitre met her husband, Brandon, at Rains High School after her family moved to Emory. She said that he kept coming to her snow cone stand until she went on a date with him. They went to college together and married in 2011, the year she graduated as a hygienist. She said that he loved the local newspaper and had a Rains County Leader groom's cake at their wedding.

"My husband serves on the local

see **SPOTLIGHT** on page 2



Brittany and Brandon Pitre and daughters



City Girl:
Does my
vote...
Page 3

Jody Dyer:
True Crime
Solved...
page 3



Community outreach & organizations

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS
Emory - Tues. & Thurs. 7:00-8:00 p.m., open meetings.
Emory Methodist Church Fellowship Hall. For info call 903-243-6766 or 903-439-7573

AL-ANON - Thurs., 7:00 p.m., Crossroads Al-anon Group, 103 N. Houston St., Edgewood, 903-896-7270

AMERICAN LEGION POST 156, Rabb Bro. Mem. Rains Co. - 4th Mon., 5:15 p.m., 215 N. Duffy St., Emory, 903-438-6045. Buffet breakfast - 2nd Saturday 7:00-10:00 a.m.

ARBALA DANCE - Mon., 7:00-9:30 p.m., Arbala Community Center

CELEBRATE RECOVERY - every Tuesday, 6:30 p.m. Emory Baptist Church

EAST TAWAKONI SENIOR CITIZEN GAME DAY - every Wednesday, 9:00 a.m., 255 Oakleaf Trail.

EMORY LIONS CLUB - 1st and 3rd Tuesdays, 12:00 p.m., Dos Charros in Emory. Call for information 903-473-2311

FOOD BANK AT FREEDOM CHURCH OF GOD - 3rd Fri., 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m., 10830 FM 514, Emory. 903-473-2457

FRIENDS OF RAINS COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY - 3rd Thurs., 1:00 p.m., Meadows Cultural Center, Rains Co. Public Library

LAKE COUNTRY NEIGHBORS - 1st Thurs., 11:30 a.m., www.lakecountryneighbors.com

LAKE FORK BAPTIST CHURCH FOOD PANTRY - 2nd Tues., 1-3 p.m. 9483 W. FM 515, Alba

LAKE FORK CHAPTER OF THE WELL ARMED WOMAN - first Thursday, 4-7 p.m. at Winnaboro Gun Club, Winnaboro TX. Sue Parrish 903-473-9819

LAKE FORK SPORTSMAN'S ASSOC. - 2nd Tues., 6:30 p.m. Jamie's Restaurant, Lake Fork Marina

MARS HILL MASONIC LODGE
#1440 - 4th Thurs., 6:30 p.m., Lodge on Hwy. 69

PIECEMAKERS QUILT GUILD OF RAINS COUNTY - 3rd Mon., 7:00 p.m., AgriLife Extension and Conference Center

POINT LADIES CIVIC CLUB - 1st Thurs., 6:30 p.m., Point Community Center, 903-269-8446

RAINS AMATEUR RADIO ASSOCIATION
2nd Sat. of each month 9:00 a.m. Emory Volunteer Fire Dept.,

RAINS GARDEN CLUB - 1st Mon., 11:00 a.m., Rains County Library, Email TheRainsGardenClub@gmail.com

RAINS COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY - 3rd Mon., 6:00 p.m., Jan., Mar., May, July, Sep., Nov., Emory City Hall.

RAINS COUNTY LIBRARY BOARD - 4th Mon., 5:30 p.m., Feb., Apr., June, Aug., Oct., Meadows Cultural Center, Rains County Public Library

RAINS COUNTY GOOD SAMARITANS - Food Pantry open 1:00-4:00 p.m. Mon. & Thurs.

RAINS COUNTY GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY - 3rd Sat., 1:00 p.m. Meadows Cultural Center, Rains County Public Library

RAINS COUNTY REPUBLICANS - July 31 & Oct. 30, 6:30 p.m., Roma Restaurant, 2450 FM 47

STITCH AND LEARN QUILTING CLUB - Thurs., 9:00 a.m.-noon, 903-598-3021 Miracle Faith Baptist Church

WOMEN'S SERVICE CLUB - 2nd Mon., 6:00 p.m., Rose Community Center

WOMEN IN NEED, INC. - A Battered Women's Shelter. Call 903-455-4612 or 903-454-HELP

NEWS BRIEFS

Good Sam Clothes/ Thrift Shop Sales

The Rains County Good Samaritan Clothes Shop will be open Monday-Thursday in the building behind the public library on Hwy. 69 in Emory. Hours for Mon.-Wed. are 8:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m., closed noon-1:00 p.m. Hours for Thursday are 8:00 a.m.-noon. Thrift sales will be open every Saturday in February from 8:00 a.m.-noon. Funds go to buy food for the needy and to operate the center.

American Legion Dinner Sat., Feb. 28

Rabb Brothers Memorial American Legion Post #156 will offer a dinner with

desserts and drinks on Saturday, February 28, from 4:00-7:00 p.m. at the Post home at 215 N. Duffy St. in Emory. Takeouts are offered. Payment is by donation, which goes towards the upkeep of the home and for veterans' projects.

Alba-Golden All Class Reunion

A reunion for all classes of the Alba-Golden school will be held on Saturday, March 7, from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., at the Alba-Golden School Cafeteria. Bring a covered dish. For more information call Marcella Cross at 903-440-5302, or Vickie Riggle at 903-539-4672. Contact your classmates and let them know.

Unlock the full potential of your 401(k)

Your 401(k) is a great way to build retirement savings. But how can you take full advantage of your plan?



BRANDON ROBERTS
Edward Jones
Financial Advisor

First, contribute as much as you can each year - at least enough to earn your employer's match, if one is offered.

Also, consider the Roth 401(k) option, if one is available. There's no immediate tax break like with a traditional 401(k), but withdrawals of earnings and contributions are generally tax-free if you are at least 59 and have held the account for five years. Con-

sult your tax advisor to determine what's appropriate for you.

Whichever 401(k) you choose, make sure the investment mix fits your goals and risk tolerance. Early in your career, you may invest more aggressively. As retirement nears, consider a more conservative portfolio.

Finally, avoid borrowing from your 401(k) or taking early withdrawals - you may incur taxes and penalties and have less money for retirement.

Following these moves can help ensure your 401(k) is a key contributor to your retirement income.

This content was provided by Edward Jones for use by Brandon Roberts, your Edward Jones financial advisor in Emory at 903-473-1592.

ET

Continued from page 1

with no payback required. A representative from U.S. Capital Advisors (USCA) spoke to the city on how the money could be used, how they would help with securing the grant and how their payment for helping the city would come from the grant. The resolution to apply for the grant was unanimously approved. The council unanimously approved a motion to hire USCA as the city's financial advisor for the TWDB grant process.

Council members reviewed proposals for repair of the floating aerator on the oxidation ditch of the city's wastewater treatment plant. They unanimously approved the repair of the "boat" with funds for the repair coming from capital improvements. The council approved a

request to reduce the set-backs on the property at 514 Briggs Blvd. from 25 feet to 15 feet.

In his comments, Mayor Harold Chandler noted the reduced backlog for the installation of water taps, installation of a new playground in the city park, employee training and the success of the candidate forums.

Three residents spoke to the council in the open forum on water leaks in the city, deferred maintenance and road concerns.

All council members were present for the regular meeting.

The next regular meeting of the East Tawakoni City Council is scheduled for Tuesday, March 17, at 7:00 p.m. in the council chambers of East Tawakoni City Hall.

Bass Champ Tournament

A field of 260 teams of two people competed to be in the money at BassChamps team tournament held on Saturday, February 21, at Lake Fork Marina. Cool temperatures and wind gusts made for less than ideal conditions, but Lake Fork was on fire.

Jake Meeks of Farmersville, and Chad Maddux of Wiley, came out on top with a total five-fish bag limit of 19.15 pounds. That included the top weight bass of the day which tipped the scales at 11.16 pounds, caught by Meeks. Their prize was \$25,000 in cash plus another \$1000 for the biggest bass.

The five-fish bag limit still had to abide by the slot rules of Lake Fork so no fish between 16 inches and 24 inches could be brought in. A total of 870 bass were brought in to be measured, weighed and taken to the live release boat. The total weight of all fish was 1561 pounds. Four over the slot bass were caught.

While the teams were out on the lake fishing, Jay Simons arrived with his Ford F150 pickup pulling Lake Fork Sportsman's Association's live release boat. The LRB is a highly visible and critical component of all the major bass tournaments on

Lake Fork. While Simons was loading supplies onto the pontoon boat prior to launching, white smoke started coming from under the hood of his truck. Flames soon followed and several bystanders brought six or eight fire extinguishers in an attempt to stop the fire. The flames quickly spread and the smoke, now black, consumed the entire truck. Bullets which were in the enclosed truck bed started shooting off, as people took refuge behind vehicles in the parking lot. Attempts to disengage the hitch were initially unsuccessful after the front tires of the pickup popped and added more weight.

Lake Fork Marina maintenance manager Doyle Hatcher and owner Kenneth Donahue were able to attach a tow line to the back of the LRB and Hatcher's truck and yank it off the ball and away from the burning pickup. The Alba fire department was called, but Simons' truck was totally burned. The live release boat however, was able to resume its duties taking care of the 870 fish and releasing them back into Lake Fork.

Reported by Vivian Leopold
Lake Fork Sportsman's Association

ELECTION

Continued from page 1

opposed for positions include incumbent Laura Pate for District Clerk of Rains County, incumbent Mandy Sawyer for Rains County Clerk, Maria Cook for Rains County Treasurer, Nicole York for Rains County Tax Assessor/Collector, Angela Breikreutz for Rains County Republican Chair and Johnnie Abernathy-Hobbs for Rains County Democratic Chair.

With no Democratic candidates in local elections, the candidates elected in the Republican primary will run unopposed for their respective seat in the November election.

State and federal level races for representation of Rains County include the redrawn 32nd Congressional District, U.S. Senator for Texas, Governor and Texas House District 5.

The Republican primary for the 32nd U.S. Congressional District has Ryan Binkley, Paul Bondar, Aimee Carrasco, Darrell Day, Gordon Heslop, Monty Montanez, Abteen Vaziri and Jace Yarbrough vying for the seat. Democratic candidates are Anthony Bridges and Dan Barrios.

Republican candidates for U.S. Senator of Texas are incumbent John Cornyn, Anna Bender, Gulrez Khan, John O. Adefope, Ken Paxton, Sara Canady, Virgil Bierschwale and Wesley Hunt.

Ahmad Hassan, James Talarico and Jasmine Crockett are the candidates running in the Democratic Primary for U.S. Senate.

Incumbent Cole Hefner will seek re-election to Texas House District 5 and will opposition in the Republican Primary from Dewey Collier. Hector Garza will run unopposed for the Democratic nomination to the seat. In the Republican primary

for Governor of Texas, Bob Achgill, Mark Goloby, Ronnie Tullos, Nathaniel Welch, Pete Chambers, Arturo Espinosa, Kenneth Hyde, Evelyn Brooks, Charles Andrew Crouch and Stephen Samuelson will look to unseat incumbent Greg Abbott.

The Democratic Primary will have Andrew White, Angela Villescaz, Bobby Cole, Carlton Hart, Chris Bell, Gina Hinojosa, Jose Navarro Balbuena, Patricia Abrego and Zach Vance running for the party's nomination for Governor.

The Republican primary ballot has 10 propositions, while the Democratic primary ballot has 13 propositions for their parties to vote on.

Rains County residents will be able to cast a ballot at eight voting precincts throughout the county including:

Voting precinct 101 in the Rocky Point Community Center at 2134 Hwy. 19 South.

Voting precinct 102 in the East Tawakoni City Hall at 288 Briggs Blvd. in East Tawakoni.

Voting precinct 203 in the Bright Star Church Memorial Hall at 1399 RS CR 3480.

Voting precinct 204 in the Rose Community Center at 109 Ravine St. in Emory.

Voting precinct 305 in the Della Blanton Memorial Hall at 200 RS CR 4370.

Voting precinct 306 in the Emory VFD Fire Station at 1205 W. Lennon St. in Emory.

Voting precinct 407 in the First Baptist Church of Point at 985 Industrial Blvd. in Point.

Voting precinct 408 in the First Baptist Church of Point at 985 Industrial Blvd. in Point.

GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES

EAST TAWAKONI CITY COUNCIL
3rd Tues., 7:00 p.m., East Tawakoni City Hall

EMORY CITY COUNCIL
2nd Tues., 7:00 p.m., Emory City Hall

POINT CITY COUNCIL
2nd Tues., 6:45 p.m., Point City Hall

RAINS COUNTY APPRAISAL DISTRICT
3rd Thurs. of every month, Rains Tax Office at 12:00 p.m.

RAINS COUNTY COMMISSIONERS' COURT
2nd & 4th Thurs., 10:00 a.m., Rains County Courthouse

RAINS ISD SCHOOL BOARD
2nd Monday, 6:30 p.m., Philip Alexander Board Room Rains ISD Administration Building.

RAINS COUNTY EMERGENCY SERVICES DISTRICT #1
3rd Monday, 6:30 p.m., Emory Fire Station

RAINS COUNTY VETERANS SERVICE OFFICE:
Mon., Tues. and Thurs., 8:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m., 110 E. North St.
TRANSPORTATION:
To schedule a ride Call 903-474-7231

RAINS COUNTY ROAD & BRIDGE
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H.W. Martin - 1887
Sam Fitzgerald - Before 1900
W.O. Heblson - Before 1900
A.S. Hornbeck - Before 1900
J.H. Bradford - 1901-1904
Tom W. Hill - 1904-1937
Earl Hill, Sr. - 1937-1960
Kathleen Hill Becknell - 1962-1995
Earl Hill, Jr. - 1995-2019

SUDOKU

The aim of Sudoku is to complete the entire grid using the numbers 1-9. Each number can only be used once in each row, once in each column, and once in each of the 3x3 boxes. Visit www.sudokuoftheday.com for further tips and help about how to play - and good luck!

	4				7			
3	1	7						6
				5				1
	5			6			3	
4	6		2		9			8
	7		4			5		
6			2					
7					1	8		5
	1				7			

POINT

Continued from page 1

Mayor Angela Nelson, Councilwoman for Place 3 Tammy Hooten and Councilwoman for Place 5 Becky Decker remain on the city council.

For more information on

the special election, contact the Rains County Election office at 903-473-5009, lisa.kneifl@rains.co.tx.us or www.co.rains.tx.us/pages/rains.Elections.

SPOTLIGHT

Continued from page 1

school board and has a tremendous heart for this community," said Pitre. "We truly believe that when we pour into our staff and students, we're investing in the future of our community. My family is also deeply rooted here. My parents own Tri-Point Surveying and have long been committed to serving this area.

Brandon Pitre owns BP Home Inspections, and his wife helps with it too. The couple and their girls live on land with a barn where their

daughters raise pigs for show. They also have an indoor dog. Pitre considers her PTO work, sport events and practices as hobbies and likes to bake. She used to bake cupcakes to sell but now only makes them for friends and family.

Pitre, who has never spent more than two nights away from her girls, was invited to make a recent trip with her sister to Antigua. She looks forward to more travels with her immediate family in the summer.

CITY GIRL

Does my vote really count?

By Linda Brendle

After my column last week about pushback and feedback, I had an interesting conversation with two ladies at the Senior Center about voting. As frequently happens in such conversations, the subject of whether one vote really matters came up.

When I sat down to write about that topic this morning, I realized I had done so two years ago about this time. I'm rerunning that column (with a few updates at the end about voting dates) in the hope that it will encourage some who normally abstain to go to the polls. Remember, you don't really have a right to complain about the results if you don't take part in the decision.

The United States Constitution, as originally written, did not define specifically who could or could not vote—but it did establish how the new country would vote. Article 1 of the Constitution determined that members of the Senate and House of Representatives would both be elected directly by popular vote and that the president would be elected by the Electoral College.

The question of who could vote was left to the states into the 1800s. In most cases, only landowning white men were eligible. Black men gained the vote in 1869 and women followed in 1920. Voting rights were further expanded in 1964 by the elimination of the poll tax, in 1965 with the end of Jim Crow laws, and in 1971 when the voting age was lowered from 21 to 18.

It would seem that, since people fought so long to win the right to vote, that everyone would be eager to exercise that privilege. Too often, though, that is not the case. According to one source, 35-60 percent of eligible voters don't take part in any given election. The main reason given for not voting seems to be because they don't think their vote

matters. They may think their candidate is so far ahead that their vote isn't needed or that one person's vote won't swing an election one way or another. Some don't think their vote counts because of the Electoral College System.

The truth is that voting is a right, people have died to win that right for you, and every vote counts. Logic would tell us that one vote in a sea of millions doesn't make a difference, but several close elections tell a different story. The 2000 presidential election between Gore and Bush was decided by 537 votes in Florida. While your vote may not directly elect the president, it matters in the outcome of the electoral vote. In 2016, although the vote wasn't decided by a few individual votes, the Electoral College vote was very close because of individual votes in several swing states. And don't forget local and state elections which generally get a much smaller voter turnout. According to a Portland State University Study, as few as 15 percent of eligible voters take part in local elections, and these are the decisions that have the most effect on our daily lives.

Many non-voters don't believe anything will change regardless of who is elected. They don't know anything about the candidates, or maybe they know too much and don't like any of the candidates. Some don't know where their polling place is and others don't vote because of long lines at the polls or because they don't get paid time off from work to vote. Early voting times aren't any more convenient, and they don't trust mail-in ballots, so they just don't vote at all. Health issues, physical disabilities, lack of photo ID, and other situations can also be barriers to exercising the right to vote.

On the other hand, the reverse of the estimate of eligible voters who don't vote would indicate that 40-65 percent do vote, and their reasons are as varied as those who stay home. They might think that voting is a civic duty that gives them the power to make a difference. Others are moved by peer pressure or driven by anger about a certain issue or

because they realize that voting affects them directly. Besides electing a candidate, voting gives you an active role in issues that affect not only the country as a whole but also your community, your family, and you personally like the economy, foreign policy, healthcare, education, taxes, the infrastructure and so much more.

It's important to vote not just in national elections but also in state and local elections. The fact that a few votes can determine an election is especially true on the local level. Your vote could sway a result from someone who doesn't have your best interests at heart to someone who believes like you do.

The upcoming election is the primary election for the November national election, but there are a number of county positions to vote on as well as several propositions. If you don't like any of the candidates in one particular race, skip it and cast your vote for someone in another race that you support.

By the time this column is published, early voting for this year's primary election will almost be over. But I've posted a copy of the remaining schedule at the end of this column for your convenience. If you need information about who is running or what propositions are on the ballot, go to <https://www.co.rains.tx.us/page/rains.Elections> where you will find sample ballots and Rains County Voter Information that includes voting locations and a precinct map.

Don't sit out the March 3 election. Your vote is powerful, but it must be exercised to tap into that power. Cast your vote or the votes of others will make uncontested decisions for you.

EARLY VOTING SCHEDULE
Thursday, Feb. 26, 2024 – Friday, February 27, 2024 – 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.
ELECTION DAY
Tuesday, March 3, 2024 – 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.

Linda Brendle writes a weekly column for Believers' Baptist Church. She is a published author and also writes about caregiving, faith, and family on her blog at <http://www.LifeAfterCaregiving.WordPress.com>. You can e-mail her at LindaBrendle@yahoo.com.

True Crime Solved by AI?

"For weeks, for months, I pondered upon the means of the murder."

Edgar Allen Poe
The Tell Tale Heart



JODY DYER
Typewriter Weekly

recent developments connecting them. Some believe these two cases — *The Black Dahlia* and the *Zodiac Killer* - have now been solved with the help of artificial intelligence (AI).

One of the most disturbing cold cases in history is the murder of Elizabeth Short — a.k.a. The Black Dahlia. An aspiring actress, Short's body was dismembered with surgical precision and found in the Leimert Park neighborhood of South Los Angeles on the morning of January 15, 1947. After her murder, she was dubbed The Black Dahlia.

One of the most spine-tingling unsolved serial murder cases of all time took place in the San Francisco Bay area in the 1960s and early 1970s. After the attacks began, the killer started sending coded messages to the *San Francisco Chronicle* and signed them The Zodiac. His victims were shot, stabbed, and bludgeoned to death. His methods varied greatly between murders, making this a truly bizarre case. Letters from the killer continued until 1974. He is credited with at least five murders but claimed that he had killed 37.

Recently, amateur sleuth and true crime investigator Alex Baber has made the claim that the perpetrators of both the Black Dahlia and Zodiac murders are the same person. His conclusions are so compelling that the FBI is now investigating. Alex Baber believes the one man

responsible for these murders, and perhaps many more, was a former U.S. Navy corpsman and WWII combat veteran Marvin Margolis. The mountain of evidence against Margolis may be circumstantial, but it appears incriminating.

Marvin Margolis was in a relationship with Elizabeth Short in the months before her death. Short had confided to friends that she feared for her life because of her jealous ex-boyfriend. Margolis was known to the police and was on the original suspect list.

Margolis had received medical training as a Navy corpsman, serving in combat with the 1st Marine Division in the South Pacific in WWII. His military records show he had mental health and aggression issues. He was discharged from the Navy with a 50 percent mental disability. At the time of his relationship with Short, he was a pre-med student at USC, hoping to become a surgeon. During this time, he had a friend and roommate named Bill Robinson. Robinson had served in the U.S. Army Signal Intelligence Service code breaking division where they used cryptographic techniques seen later in the Zodiac ciphers.

Because there was no blood at the crime scene, police believed Short's killer had used a bathtub. In the Los Angeles suburb of San Pedro, employees at the Harbor Moon Motel, the Hillcrest Motel, and the Normandie Motel, when interviewed by the police, all recalled a nervous individual matching the physical description of Margolis, needing a room with a bathtub for his wife. When no room was available, he left. Just north of these accommodations in the city of Lynwood was the Zodiac Motel, which at the time advertised modern facilities, including a bath in each room. Alex Baber believes that the inspiration for the Zodiac killer's moniker was this motel where he believes Margolis killed Short.

Following Short's murder, Margolis moved to Chicago and changed his last name to Merrill. Government records show that Marvin Margolis and Marvin Merrill share the same social security number. Police were never able to track him down. Merrill, as he was now known, married, had two children, and worked as a used car salesman in Chicago. After divorcing his first wife, he remarried, had two more children and moved to Kansas, later returning to California in 1962.

A break in the case came when Baber and his team began working to decode the famous Z-13 cipher, believed to conceal the Zodiac's real name. Using AI technology linked to letter frequency analysis and cross-referencing names found in the census records from 1950, one suspect emerged with the name Marvin Merrill — the alias used by Marvin Margolis. Margolis died in California in 1993.

After contacting his living relatives, Baber obtained an ink drawing that Margolis had made in the last year of his life. It pictures a young woman, nude from the waist up, showing wounds that match autopsy photos of Elizabeth Short. Along with his signature, Margolis wrote the name Elizabeth in large letters at the bottom of the drawing. And using image-enhancing software they discovered the word "ZoDiac" hidden underneath the ink in one corner. The drawing was made after Margolis was diagnosed with terminal cancer. Baber believes it is a deathbed confession linking the Zodiac and Black Dahlia crimes. I'm convinced these crimes have been solved...

JODY DYER is a columnist, author, and former teacher. Described by some as a Renaissance man, he is a baseball fan, coffee roaster, and accomplished feral hog trapper. He likes to read, appreciates the outdoors, and is good with dogs and children. He is the father of three, and lives with his wife in Texas.

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TEXAS CROSSWORD
by Charley & Guy Orbison
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ACROSS

- newspaper: Azle
- half of Texas mohair goes to this continent
- Texas actress Robin Wright's former hubby, Sean
- teacher helper (abbr.)
- rattlesnake casa
- TXism: "it's water off _____ back" (unconcerned)
- TXism: "_____ and parcel of"
- TX Tanya's "_____ A Time"
- TXism: "want _____ I could split"
- TXism: "_____ these parts" (unknown)
- Texas singer _____ Morse
- Granbury historic "_____ House"
- "sticks and _____ can break my bones . . ."
- Kermil had the last _____ oil derrick in the U.S.
- hymn: "_____ Light"
- dir. to Minicola from Pittsburgh
- TXism for a nice guy (3 wds.)
- TXism: "he's got the morals _____ alley cat"
- TX Dennis Quaid 1988 noir film
- seat of Uphur County
- grocery chain in the Metroplex (2 wds.)
- TXism: "_____horse town"
- TXism: "pill wrangler"
- "6 muncie ago I coodn't evin spel gradjuwat and now _____ one"
- TXism: "two-bit _____"
- TXism: "happy as _____ in slop"
- Yoko _____
- in Wharton County on highway 71
- unit in a list
- old VW sports car: "Karmann _____"
- TXism: "active as a fox in a _____ house"
- TXism: "_____ every trick in the book"
- Leon, TX
- electric component testing initials
- heated disagreement
- Brownsville NBC TV, channel 23
- TX Nokona gloves are hand-_____
- keyboard support? (2 wds.)
- former Texas Oatmeal Festival race: "_____ -Thon"
- TXism: "_____ gravel" (fill)
- mop a boat deck (2 wds.)
- TXism: "_____ as a bartender on payday"
- LBJ's choice to lead the "Warren Commission" (init.)
- TX Mandrell, younger sister of Barbara (init.)
- TX Farrah Fawcett 1984 TV film: "The Burning _____"
- Palo _____ Canyon, site of musical drama, "Texas"
- TXism: "I'm gettin' the _____ of it" (catching on)
- noisy far southern Texas bird: _____ chalsaca
- TX Tanya Tucker's 1980 tune: "Can I See You _____"
- old legs?
- asn. for Texas MDs

DOWN

- it's a "siesta" south of the border
- dir. from Grapeland to Lufkin
- in Rurnless County on U.S. 83
- early route up from Mexico: "Old _____"
- TX Perot met wife on a blind _____
- TXism: "put two _____"
- obvious conclusion)
- TXism: "that _____ won't float"
- British toilet
- TXism: "about as graceful as _____ ice"
- Hondo is the seat of this county
- Dallas rock singer "Sam the _____" (and the Pharaohs)
- song "_____ Texas"

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I am asking for you to VOTE for me



Growing up in this modest home at 3720 Holley in Odessa, Texas, wasn't always easy. I walked or rode my bike to school. My father served in the U.S. Army during the Korean War, and afterward, he was a mechanic for Sewell Ford while my mom worked as a bookkeeper at a bank when I was born. My grandparents took my mom and me to Oklahoma when I was just 6 weeks old, where my dad was stationed on an Army base. My mom worked various other jobs during my childhood. We weren't wealthy. My parents divorced when I was 10, and times got tough—as a single mother, it was a real struggle for my mom to pay the bills and feed us. Those hard days stuck with me.

I've worked since I was 8 years old—helping my uncle deliver potato chips to grocery stores, cleaning buildings with another uncle, and working on a farm (not a family one) in the summers, moving irrigation pipe that fed water from ditches to rows of cotton in the Pecos Valley.

Then, after Stacy and I married, oil prices crashed to almost \$8 a barrel. We had our gas shut off, power disconnected, and nearly lost our house. We had no television, so we played board games. We were thankful when our parents brought us food for the week. These were VERY hard times for us. Our marriage survived, and we did too.

I've lived through booms and busts, and I know how to navigate them to come out stronger. No one should face those struggles alone. I call them my Character Building Years!

I've worked ALL my life. My work ethic hasn't changed—I still work hard. It's just who I am. And I've been working hard for you too! I love solving problems, building teams, and seeing those teams execute at a high level.

Everything that I am and all that I have is ONLY by the grace of God. God has had His hand on my life since the day I was born. I remember praying for God to convince Stacy to marry me, and I thank God every day for His gift. He has blessed us with a wonderful, loving family. My success is my family, not financial wealth. I've never focused on money. Every last thing in my life comes from God and belongs to God. I'm only a steward of the blessings God has bestowed on my life, and I fully understand they are solely a gift from God.

That's why, as your Rains County Judge since July 2025, I'm committed to keeping taxes affordable, managing growth wisely to stay rural, and ensuring transparent government that supports families. I've been there, and I truly understand when folks share their hardships. Let's Keep The Fresh Start Going so Rains is a place where we lift each other up!

Together, we can do it!
I am humbly asking for your vote.
Thank you, Brent D. Hilliard

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ REPUBLICAN ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

BRENT HILLIARD

FOR RAINS COUNTY JUDGE

KEEP THE FRESH START GOING

#KEEPTHEFRESHSTARTGOING #RAINSCOUNTYSTRONG

Sports

RAINS LADY CAT BASKETBALL

Lady Cats earn Region II Finalists with wins

By **CHUCK FITTS**
Rains County Leader staff

The Rains Lady Cat varsity basketball team heads to the Class 3A Region II finals after wins over Dallas Madison and Mineola.

The Lady Cats took on the Dallas Madison Lady Trojans in the area round of the Class 3A playoffs on Thursday, February 19, in Royse City.

They built a 31-point halftime lead over the Lady Trojans and cruised to a 76-40 playoff win.

Senior Kenzy Thompson led the Lady Cats with 17 points, while junior Jaycee Phillips had 16 points and senior Caroline Piles contributed 15 points in the victory.

The Lady Cats traveled to Tyler on Monday, February 23, to take on the Mineola Lady Jackets in the Herrington Patriot Center on the campus of the University of Texas at Tyler.

Rains overcame a cold shooting night to stay ahead of their well-known neighbor on Hwy. 69 by seven at halftime of the regional semifinal game.

Mineola was able to finally tie the game at 40 in the fourth quarter, but the Lady Cats hit crucial free throws and gritted out a 49-42 playoff win.

Junior Arianna Philson



Leader photo by CHUCK FITTS

Lady Cat Shaylee Stracener (22) zoned in as she shoots a three pointer during the 76-40 win over Dallas Madison.

had 15 points to lead Rains in scoring. Thompson scored 12 points, and senior Presley Kilgore finished with 10 points.

The Rains Lady Cats improve to 33-4 for the

season.

The Lady Cats will continue the Class 3A playoffs against the Liberty-Eylau Leopards this weekend.



Leader photo by CHUCK FITTS

Fighting through the swarm, Lady Cat Caroline Piles (3) drives to the basket and draws a foul during the 49-42 victory over the Mineola Lady Jackets on Monday, February 23.

LUKE CLAYTON

Experience saves the day at Lake Texoma

Most folks that read my column, listen to my radio shows or watch my outdoor adventures on A Sportsmans Life TV show probably know

I absolutely love hunting wild hogs and enjoy the pork from the wild. The question I most often get is, "Luke, are those wild hogs really good eating?" My answer is always, yes, some are and some are not followed by a question of my own. If you were at a livestock auction to purchase a hog to eat, what would you choose, a fat younger hog or an old, tough boar?" This is the best reply I've come up with and one that pretty well sums up eating pork, wild or domestic.

Old boars are definitely not the best eating; they can be downright rank. But what about younger boars? I've found young boars that have yet to reach puberty are just as good eating as sows.

I have become very selective when choosing a wild hog for meat. For standard cuts such as pork chops, ham steaks, sausage and shoulder cuts, a heavy feral sow without a litter of pigs is my top choice. A big sow weighing upwards of 150 pounds provides some of the best eating from the wild, I prefer the flavor over venison and I love venison. The meat is not only very flavorful but tender as well (for a wild hog). As a general rule, wild porkers are not as tender as their domestic counterparts and for good reason, they have to stay on the move looking for food, rooting in the ground and getting plenty of exercise. Domestic hogs are kept in tight quarters and fed a diet of feed so they will grow quickly.

I live in an area with plenty of wild porkers and have a couple of farmer/rancher friends nearby that allow me to hunt on their property. Throughout the year, I kill a good number of these hogs, usually shooting them over corn feeders rather than running and gunning them out in open fields with and AR. I use a .223 bolt action CVA Cascade VH rifle and usually shoot them while they are feeding under a feeder. I do the lion's share of my hog hunting at night with an ATN Thor mini 6 thermal scope, shots are usually inside 50 yards and at that range I am able to precisely place my shots, right behind the jaw in the middle of the neck. This shot anchors the hog in place and if it's one I wish to put in the freezer, it does no damage to the prime cuts of meat.

I obviously don't eat every hog I kill. It's those big boar that root up my friends hay fields and I target them whenever possible. Left in the woods, they are eaten in a couple days by coyotes and buzzards. I usually make a cut down the hogs back, which allows the predators to devour the carcass more quickly. But I have several friends that also enjoy the wild pork and when on one of my 'pork procurement' hunts, I am very picky about the hog I choose to shoot.

A couple nights ago I went on one of these meat hunts and it was definitely no wilderness excursion. I have a corn feeder hanging from the limb of a big pecan tree about 20 yards across a treeline that is thick with cover. I have a ground blind near the feeder for deer hunting but decided to make things more comfortable for night hunting hogs. I chopped a hole through the brush in the tree line so that I could back my pickup to the fence and have good visibility under the feeder across the fence. I sat a very comfortable padded office chair in the back of the truck, and that became my hunting stand. The hogs can't see me at night and from my elevated position, I have very good visibility of hogs approaching through the woods to my

feeder. With a thermos of hot coffee, I'm quite comfortable while waiting for the hogs. If the weather is cold, I even carry an insulated blanket to knock off the wind. This style of hunting is very convenient, I have everything to make butchering easier including, plastic bags for the meat, lanterns, knives, water, etc. If I'm hunting in warm weather when mosquitoes are out, I fire up my Thermocell.

I turn 76 this week and think I have devised a method of hunting that will keep me in the woods a good while longer. Gone are the days when I could drag a hog several hundred yards out of the woods. I should have thought of this method of hunting years ago!

There really is no need to field dress wild hogs in the conventional manner. I simply remove the prime cuts, beginning with a long cut down the top of the back to remove the backstraps and then the four quarters. Sometimes I only take the two hams. I usually remove the quarters, hide on and finish the work of skinning and deboning back at home where there is good light. There is really very little meat on the ribs of wild hogs but if I target a smaller pig, say 60 pounds or less for cooking whole on the smoker, I will skin and leave the meat intact.

Until our 'visit' next week, try to find time to get outdoors. The white bass run is underway on most creeks and rivers above our reservoirs and Cedar Creek guide Chris Webb is hammering crappie on a feeder creek on 2-inch soft plastic jigs set a foot under a floater. I have a trip planned with Chris this week. More on creek crappie catching next week!

Listen to Luke's weekly podcast "Catfish Radio with Luke Clayton and Friends" just about everywhere podcasts are found. Email Luke through his website www.catfishradio.org.

An Endorsement for Real Justice.

As a judge, my role is to serve, not to rule. My first duty is to know the law and apply it fairly in every case, without favor, fear, or politics. Real justice means listening very carefully, treating every person with dignity, fairness, compassion, patience and respect, and maintaining order and dignity in the courtroom. People who come to court deserve a fair hearing, clear procedures, and decisions based only on the facts and the law. That is what judicial integrity requires, and that is the standard I hold myself to every time I take the bench.

I would like all Rains County citizens to know that I am proudly endorsing Brent Hilliard for Rains County Judge.

Since Judge Hilliard was appointed to this position, he has demonstrated unwavering dedication, strong leadership, and a clear vision for Rains County, its citizens, and the departments that make up our county government. As our county continues to grow, it is essential that we have leadership with foresight, integrity, and a practical plan for the future. Judge Hilliard has proven that he possesses those qualities.

I have personally worked in conjunction with Judge Hilliard since July 2025 and have witnessed firsthand his energy, focus, and commitment to serving the needs of our county and its citizens. He is not a leader who just sits behind a desk. Whether it is standing and supporting the road and bridge crews at a water main break or cleaning the jail kitchen alongside jail staff, Judge Hilliard leads by example. He is willing to roll up his sleeves and work right beside those he serves.

If the citizens of Rains County truly want transparency, integrity, and meaningful progress, Judge Brent Hilliard is the right choice.

I would like to personally invite any and all Rains County citizens to stop by the Sheriff's Office. I am happy to answer any questions or concerns and to share my experience working with Judge Hilliard.

Serving as County Judge, Sheriff, or any elected official in Rains County is a humbling responsibility. Those elected are entrusted by the citizens to represent them with honor, accountability, and a servant's heart. In a time when misinformation can spread easily through social media, I strongly encourage citizens to seek the truth, ask questions, and have open conversations.

It is my honor to endorse Judge Brent Hilliard for Rains County Judge.

Rains County Sheriff
Michael Hopkins

***** REPUBLICAN *****

BRENT HILLIARD

FOR RAINS COUNTY JUDGE

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Sheriff's Report

The Rains County Sheriff's Office took the following reports of activity during the week of February 16-22:



MICHAEL HOPKINS
Rains County Sheriff

Arrests

2-18: Eric Glen Roden. Theft of property greater than or equal to \$750 less than \$2,500, \$6,000 bond.
2-18: Zachary Conrad Garrett. Warrant - Criminal mischief, \$3,500 bond.
2-22: Michael Roy Her-

rman. Assault causing bodily injury, no bond listed.

Calls

2-16: FM 2946 Business alarm; Center Dr. Debris in roadway; FM 515 Medical assist; Hwy. 69 Accident; Ave. A Medical assist; CR 3345 Medical assist; FM 515 Aggressive animal; PR 6181 Grass fire; CR 3330 Vehicle in roadway.
2-17: FM 275 Livestock on roadway; CR 3030 Medical assist; Hwy. 276 Medical assist; Quitman St. Escort; Catfish Rd. Meet complainant; CR 2610 Livestock

on roadway; Hwy. 276 Welfare concern; W Quitman St. Fraud; FM 515 Reckless driving; CR 1220 Reckless driving; W Quitman St. Special assignment; S Texas St. Criminal trespass warning; N Planters St. Business alarm; Clark Dr. Noise complaint.
2-18: Hwy. 276 Reckless driving; Hwy. 19 Problems with a juvenile; Shoreline Dr. Warrant service; Meadowview Ln. City ordinance violation x 2; Hwy. 276 Investigation; CR 2220 Debris in roadway; Hwy. 69S Reckless driving; CR 1490

Suspicious vehicle; FM 515 Medical assist; CR 1490 Warrant service; FM 47 Medical assist; CR 1640 Disturbance; Sheriff's Office (SO) lobby Problems with a juvenile; 1st St. Medical assist; SO lobby Follow up investigation; E Lennon Dr. Brush fire; CR 3440 Motorist assist; W Tawakoni Dr. Animal bite; CR 3374 Problems with a juvenile; CR 1308 Medical assist.
2-19: CR 1628 Medical assist; W Quitman St. Business alarm; CR 2181 Medical assist; E Lennon Dr. Business alarm; Hwy. 69 Controlled burn; CR 1220 Abandoned vehicle; CR 3210 Shots fired; State Park Rd. Agency assist; CR 2620 Medical assist; Duffy St. Welfare concern; N Texas St. Accident; SO lobby Meet complainant; CR 2470 Grass fire; FM 779 Medical assist; Quitman St. Follow up investigation; FM 47 Civil matter; SO lobby Meet complainant x 2; CR 3363 Medical assist; Lakeshore Ln. Agency assist; Bay Dr. Quinlan Animal bite; CR 3450 Welfare concern; E Lennon Dr. Suspicious activity; SO lobby Investigation; CR 3250 Motorist assist.
2-20: E Lennon Dr. Suspicious vehicle; Hwy. 19S Medical assist; CR 3501 Residence alarm; Hwy. 19 Medical assist; Hwy. 275 Grass fire; CR 1610 Controlled burn; Hwy. 69W Public assist; CR 1310 Follow up investigation; FM 47 Controlled burn; FM 47 Animal welfare concern; Industrial Blvd. Medical assist; CR 1430 Brush fire; S Texas St. Controlled burn; S Texas St. Medical assist; CR 3060 Controlled burn; CR 3371 Found property; Hwy. 19 Reckless

driver; Emory 2nd St. Follow up investigation; Sunset Cove Brush fire; CR 3202 Medical assist; FM 514 at Hwy. 69 Accident; CR 1402 Meet complainant; Harris Harbor Rd. Medical assist; Mohawk Tr. Noise complaint; SO lobby Problems with a juvenile; Duffy St. Suspicious person; Clark Dr. Welfare concern.
2-21: FM 2795 at FM 515 Reckless driver; Hwy. 19 at FM 514 Livestock on roadway; Hwy. 19 Suspicious activity; CR 1534 Suspicious person; CR 3231 Medical assist; Hwy. 276 Emory Accident; CR 1410 Public assist; FM 514 Livestock on roadway; FM 2324 Accident; E Lennon Dr. Follow up investigation; CR 3367 Medical assist; SO lobby Meet complainant; FM 514 Assault referred to another agency; CR 1534 Follow up investigation; Hwy. 19 Accident; FM 513 Suspicious person; Clark St. Criminal trespass; CR 3385 Medical assist; CR 1540 Assault; FM 779 Medical assist; Hwy. 69 Livestock on roadway; Tawakoni Dr. Medical assist; N 1st St. Point Medical assist; Hwy. 69E Livestock on roadway; SO lobby Meet complainant; PR 7795 Follow up investigation; FM 515

Neighbor dispute; CR 1410 Livestock on roadway; E Lennon Dr. Suspicious person; Hwy. 276 Suspicious person.

The Sheriff's Department reported 316 calls for the week. Among the calls were: 2 criminal trespass, 2 debris in roadway, 1 escort, 1 disturbance, 3 brush fires, 9 follow up investigation; 1 found property, 1 fraud, 1 structure fire, 2 investigations, 7 livestock on roadway, 12 meet complainant, 1 neighbor dispute, 2 noise complaint, 3 grass fires, 4 problems with a juvenile, 26 public service calls, 9 reckless drivers, 1 shots fired, 1 special assignment, 2 suspicious activity, 5 suspicious persons, 2 suspicious vehicles, 1 terroristic threats, 1 theft, 1 vehicle in roadway, 2 warrant service, 4 welfare concerns, 6 accidents, 5 controlled burns, 1 aggressive animal, 4 public assist, 1 abandoned vehicle, 2 agency assists, 4 business alarms, 1 residence alarm, 2 animal bites, 1 animal welfare concern, 2 assaults, 2 motorist assist, 2 city ordinance violations, and 1 civil matter.

There were 27 medical calls and 18 transports; 148 traffic stops, 58 citations and 86 warnings.

TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION SERVICES

A Matter of Balance

According to a compiled list of fall-related statistics by the National Council on Aging (2023), 1 in 4 Americans over age sixty-five fall every year, making falls the leading cause of fatal and non-fatal injuries in the United States. Additionally, every eleven seconds someone over age sixty-five is treated in the emergency room for fall-related injuries and every nineteen minutes someone dies from a fall-related injury. In other words, falls are responsible for more than 3 million ER visits and more than 32,000 deaths annually. The fear of falling can lead to reduced activities, physical health decline, social isolation and depression.



SARAH LATHAM
Rains County AgriLife Agent

Aging comes with a variety of unique quirks, oddities and issues, but falling and fall-related injuries are at the top of the list of concerns. Factors contributing to fall risks include, **Physical Factors:** Age-related changes in vision, balance, and muscle strength can increase the likelihood of falls. Chronic health conditions such as arthritis, osteoporosis, and Parkinson's disease can also impair mobility and balance, making individuals more suscep-

tible to falls.

Environmental Hazards: Cluttered living spaces, inadequate lighting, slippery floors, uneven surfaces, and lack of handrails or grab-bars significantly contribute to fall risks.
Medications: Certain medications, particularly those that cause dizziness, drowsiness, or changes in blood pressure, can increase the risk of falls.
Lifestyle Factors: Sedentary behavior, lack of physical activity, and poor nutrition can weaken muscles, decrease bone density, and compromise overall health, thereby increasing susceptibility to falls.

Falling, fall-related injuries, and a fear of falling do not have to be a guaranteed part of aging. Falls can be avoided through lifestyle changes and participation in evidence-based fall prevention programs. **A Matter of Balance (AMOB)**, an eight-session evidence-based fall prevention program, has been specifically designed to help seniors aged sixty and older reduce their fear of falling and increase activity levels. Many older adults who develop this fear often limit their activities, which can result in physical weakness, making the risk of falling even greater. Activities are conducted in two-hour sessions once a week over an eight-week period. AMOB addresses physical,

environmental, medical, and lifestyle factors associated with falling along with introducing evidence-based exercises. Attending an AMOB course significantly reduces the risk of falls and helps improve quality of life for aging individuals.

Rains County AgriLife will be hosting A Matter of Balance. This eight-session program will be held every Wednesday from 10:00 am -12:00 noon beginning April 1 at the Rains County AgriLife Extension office, located at 410 Tawakoni Dr. in Emory. Please consider joining if you are concerned about falls, have fallen in the past, have restricted your activities due to falling concerns, or have an interest in improving balance, flexibility, and strength.

Call to reserve your spot! If you or someone you love has experienced a fall or has a fear of falling, call the Rains County AgriLife Extension office at 903-473-4580 to reserve your spot. Space is limited. This program is open to all and is free of charge.

If you have questions or concerns, contact 903-473-4580 or email Sarah.Latham@ag.tamu.edu. To view upcoming events or additional information visit <http://rains.agrilife.org/> or follow Rains County AgriLife on Facebook.



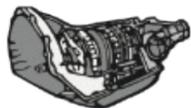
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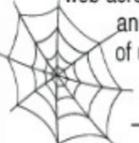


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"The spider looks for a merchant who doesn't advertise so he can spin a web across his door and lead a life of undisturbed peace!"



-Mark Twain

This Is Our Home.

And it deserves steady, responsible leadership.



Rains County isn't a talking point. It's where we raise our families, run our businesses, and look out for one another.

As County Judge, I'll bring steady leadership, honest communication, and practical decisions that respect our values and our tax dollars.

I ask for your vote ~ not for politics, but for the future of the place we call home.

— Jay Ford

ELECTION DAY MARCH 3

Elect Jay Ford for Rains County Judge

PAID FOR BY JAY FORD CAMPAIGN FUND

Believers' Baptist Church

By Linda Brendle

"You hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of earth and sky, but why do you not know how to interpret the present time?"

Luke 12:56

It was a busy week at BBC. Ignite-style Olympics were held Wednesday night featuring lots of fun and many winners. On Saturday, Believers' hosted a Deep Dive into Baptism Seminar.

Following last week's guest speaker, Adam Burrell from HeartCry Missionary Society, Pastor Jason Rolan returned to The Incomparable Christ series with a sermon from Luke titled "Signs of the Times." The

text, which highlights Jesus' roles as Prophet and Judge, is divided into three sections and he warns of impending judgment and calls for repentance from dead works by turning to Him where there is no condemnation.

Coming Events:

Every Sunday until Easter, 4:00 p.m., Easter Choir rehearsal

Every Sunday in March, 9:30 a.m. - Prospective Members' Class

March 1, Home Group Fellowships

The Asking for a Friend Podcast Episode #241 is titled "Systematic Theology, Creation." Find the link at www.bbcmemory.org.

Emory Methodist Church

By Mary White

Jesus answered, "It is written: Man does not live by bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God."

Matthew 4:4

The first Sunday of Lent and the Word has power over Satan. Rev. David Banks' message titled "Shaped By The Word: Shaped in the wilderness" with scripture text taken from Matthew. After forty days of fasting, Jesus' need for food was understandable. Satan used this need to tempt Jesus. We have needs and sometimes we are tempted, but the strength Jesus exhibits and

words He spoke encourages us. That mean if we want to be the person God want us to be we must let the potter shape us.

We went to Emory Health & Rehab Outreach this Thursday at 10:00 a.m.. We always enjoy visiting with our friends there. Our Methodist Women's Stew Luncheon last Friday was so very good and we appreciate all of you all who supported this fundraiser for school supplies for our kids.

Birthday wishes go to Mackenzy Willis. Pray for our pastor as he travels to Israel, Jimmy Bennett and Cay House. Have a good week and be kind.

Christ's Glory and the Prophetic Word

For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased," we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain. And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

2 Peter 1:17-21 (ESV)

SAVVY SENIORS

Medicare Can Help Older Smokers Kick the Habit

Dear Savvy Senior, Does Medicare offer any coverage that helps beneficiaries quit smoking?



JIM MILLER Savvy Senior

New Beneficiary

Dear

New,

If you're ready to quit smoking, Medicare can indeed help! Medicare Part B covers up to eight face-to-face counseling sessions per year to help you kick the habit, and if you have a Medicare Part D prescription drug plan, certain smoking-cessation medications are covered as well. Here's a guide to help you get started.

It's Never Too Late

According to the Center of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) 8.3 percent of Americans age 65 and older still smoke. Many older smokers indicate that they would like to quit, but because of the nicotine, which is extremely addictive, it's very difficult to do.

Tobacco use is the leading cause of preventable illness, responsible for an estimated one-fifth of deaths in the United States each year. But research shows that quitting, even after age 65, greatly reduces your risk of heart disease, stroke, cancer, osteoporosis and many other

diseases. It also helps you breathe easier, smell, and taste better, and can save you money. An \$8 pack-a-day smoker, for example, saves about \$240 after one month without cigarettes, and nearly \$2,880 after one year.

How to Quit

The first step you need to take is to set a "quit date," but give yourself a few weeks to get ready. During that time, you may want to start by reducing the number or the strength of cigarettes you smoke to begin weaning yourself.

Also check out over-the-counter nicotine replacement products - patches, gum and lozenges - to help curb your cravings (these are not covered by Medicare). And just prior to your quit day get rid of all cigarettes and ashtrays in your home, car, and place of work, and try to clean up and even spray air freshener. The smell of smoke can be a powerful trigger.

Get Help

Studies have shown that you have a much better chance of quitting if you have help. So, tell your friends, family, and coworkers of your plan to quit. Others knowing can be a helpful reminder and motivator.

Then get some counseling. Don't go it alone. Start by

contacting your doctor about smoking cessation counseling covered by Medicare and find out about the prescription antismoking drugs (bupropion and varenicline) that can help reduce your nicotine craving.

You can also get free one-on-one telephone counseling and referrals to local smoking cessation programs through your state quit line at 800-QUIT-NOW or call the National Cancer Institute free smoking quit line at 877-44U-QUIT.

It's also important to identify and write down the times and situations you're most likely to smoke and make a list of things you can do to replace it or distract yourself. Some helpful suggestions when the smoking urge arises are to call a friend or one of the free quit lines, keep your mouth occupied with some sugar-free gum, sunflower seeds, carrots, fruit or hard candy, go for a walk, read a magazine, listen to music or take a hot bath.

The intense urge to smoke lasts about three to five minutes, so do what you can to wait it out. It's also wise to avoid drinking alcohol and steer clear of other smokers while you're trying to quit. Both can trigger powerful urges to smoke.

For more tips on managing your cravings, withdrawal symptoms and what to do if you relapse, visit 60plus.SmokeFree.gov. There are also a variety of helpful quit smoking apps you can download like EasyQuit, QuitNow and Quit Genius.

Send your senior questions to: Savvy Senior, P.O. Box 5443, Norman, OK 73070, or visit SavvySenior.org. Jim Miller is a contributor to the NBC Today show and author of "The Savvy Senior" book.

WEST OAKS FUNERAL HOME

At West Oaks Funeral Home, the premier funeral home of Sulphur Springs, our objective is to create a meaningful ceremony celebrating a life lived and honoring the memory of your loved one.

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- Funerals
- Cremations
- Monuments

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FIRM NO: 10194233

FISH DAY!

IT'S TIME TO STOCK YOUR POND!

Friday, March 13
Canton 1:15 PM-2:00 PM
NE Texas Farmers Co-op
Emory 2:45 PM-3:30 PM
Potts Feed Store
Greenville 4:15 PM-5:00 PM
NE Texas Farmers Co-op
Saturday, March 21
Minacia 7:30 AM-8:15 AM
Big Country Farm Center
Quitman 8:45 AM-9:30 AM
Potts Feed Store
Sulphur Springs 10:15 AM-11:00 AM
NE Texas Farmers Co-op

FISHWAGON
To place an order, call 1-800-643-8439
www.fishwagon.com

Church Directory

EMORY METHODIST CHURCH

We All Matter To God

Dr. David Banks
456 Texas St.
One Block from the Square
Sunday School 9:30 a.m.
Worship Time 10:30 a.m.
903-473-2411 • EmoryMC.org

MIRACLE FAITH BAPTIST CHURCH (Independent)

820 SH 276 • Emory

Sunday School 9:00 a.m.
Worship Service 10:00 a.m.
Wed. Night Youth 5:30 p.m.
Wed. Night Service 6:30 p.m.

Pastor: Robert Burns II
Church: 903-473-3238

Pilgrims Rest Baptist Church

1140 FM 2964, Emory

Sunday School.....9:45 a.m.
Morning Worship...11:00 a.m.
Evening Worship.....6:00 p.m.

"Reaching Out Because We Care"

Pastor Keith Prather
www.pilgrimsrestbaptistchurch.org

Point Church of Christ

Bible Classes 9:00 a.m.
Worship Service 10:00 a.m.
Evening Worship 6:00 p.m.
Wed. Eve. Service 7:00 p.m.

Everyone welcome!
Richard Kellam
www.pointchurchofchrist.org

Calvary Baptist Church

INDEPENDENT FUNDAMENTAL BAPTIST

11:00 a.m. Worship
6:00 p.m. Worship

Pastor: Jimmy Jarrett
Hwys 515 & 779
2-1/2 Miles East of Emory
903-269-8737

Daugherty Baptist Church

2 miles west of Hwy 19N on FM 514

Sunday School 10:00 a.m.
Morning Worship ... 11:00 a.m.
Evening Worship 6:00 p.m.

Pastor Joe Pierce
903-259-1147 & 903-259-0348

St. John the Evangelist Catholic Church

Rev. Michael Ledesma
551 East FM 2795
903-473-5116

Visit stjohnemory.org for Mass times.
From Brookshires, go east 1.2 miles. Turn right onto FM 2795

County Line Baptist Church

Bro. Wayne Darty

Sunday School 9:45 a.m.
Morning Worship 11:00 a.m.
Sunday Evening 6:30 p.m.
Wednesday Night 7:00 p.m.
nursery available

HWY. 275, 3 miles south of Miller Grove
903-994-2125 • 903-459-3219

We invite you to study God's word with us soon.

CHURCH OF CHRIST

Hwy. 69 N. • P.O. Box 68
Emory, TX 75440
903-473-2658

Sunday Bible Classes 9:00 a.m.
Sunday Morning Worship 10:00 a.m.
Sunday Evening Worship 4:00 p.m.
Wed. Bible Study 7:00 p.m.
emorychurchofchrist.org

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH Point, TX

9:45 a.m. Sunday School
11:00 a.m. Morning Worship
6:00 p.m. Evening Worship
6:00 p.m. .. Wednesday Service

Pastor Dan Wynn
903-598-3220
www.fbcpoint.com

EMORY BAPTIST CHURCH

On The Square
Corner Of North & Planters
Downtown Emory
903-473-3357
emorybaptist.org

Dr. Richard D. Piles—Pastor

Chris Henderson—Minister of Music & Sr. Adults
Ronnie Witt— Minister of Youth & Education

Sunday
Sunday Morning
Small Groups 9:15am
Morning Worship 10:30am
Evening Worship 6:30 pm

Wednesday
Wed. Worship 6:30pm (Adults, Youth, Children)
Choir Practice 6:30pm

Believers' Baptist Church

Sunday
Sunday School 9:15 a.m.
MorningWorship 10:30 a.m.

Wednesday
Adult Bible Study 6:30 p.m.
Student Ministry 6:30 p.m.

Dr. Jason Rolan — Pastor

Jerod Haygood — Student & Family Pastor
Duffey Henderson — Music & Media Minister
www.bbcmemory.org 903-474-0027

903-473-2653 to have your church placed in this directory

Pastor Rudy and CJ Bond

Come worship with us
Sundays - 10:45 am
Wednesdays - 7:00 pm

Clarks Chapel Church of God

Our Mission and Vision is to help connect people to Jesus

6345 FM-47 Point TX
<http://clarkschapelcog.org/>
<http://www.facebook.com/clarkschapelcogemorytx>

Classified Ads

We Accept **903-473-2653**
CLASSIFIED DEADLINE 5:00 P.M. TUESDAY

FOR SALE
SALES
 Large Yard/Garage Sale, Fri. & Sat. 9am-4pm, 1949 FM 275.

The Rains County Good Samaritan Thrift/Clothes store will be open Saturdays in February from 8 am - noon. Clothes sale is open Mon.-Wed., 8 am-12 pm, and 1 pm-4 pm. Open 8 am - noon on Thurs.

HOOTEN'S HARDWARE, LLC
 Browse our wide selection of RV Parts and Accessories. Hwy. 69N in Emory. 903-473-8788.

RENT/LEASE
 RENTAL HOMES AVAILABLE in Emory. \$1,350/mth & \$1,200/mth. Call 903-474-4007.

For Rent 3BR/2BA manufactured home on Duffy St., \$1,300/mth. Apply at eagleinnapartments.com.

EAGLE INN APARTMENTS
 2-BR \$726/mth. No deposit! Apply at eagleinnapartments.com.
 For Rent 3BR/2BA 2023 house in Emory, \$1,900/mth. 903-368-2028.

Visit us online: rainscountyleader.com

PUBLIC/LEGAL NOTICE

PUBLIC NOTICE
 THE CITY OF EAST TAWAKONI has an immediate opening for a Water/Sewer Field Tech. This position will include water distribution system, sewer collection system. Applicants must be highly motivated, hard worker, on time, trustworthy and have dependable transportation. Some heavy lifting and handling of chemicals is also required. Must be able to work holidays and weekends if needed. Licensed operator is preferred, but not mandatory. Must possess a valid Texas driver's license. Must have high school diploma or GED and references. Applicants are subject to a pre-employment criminal background check. Benefit programs are available to eligible employees after a probationary period such as Life Insurance, Major Medical Insurance, Sick leave, retirement to name a few. Go to cityofeasttawakoni.com, under Government, Employment Opportunities to download the application. Email application to citysecretary@easttawakonitx.com or drop it off at City Hall, 288 Briggs Blvd., East Tawakoni TX 75472. The City of East Tawakoni is an Equal Employment Opportunity Employer.

STORAGE UNITS
 EMORY SELF STORAGE, Hwy. 69S, 410 E. Lennon. Now offering climate-controlled units. 903-474-9150, 903-348-5459.

HELP WANTED
 RAINS ISD NEEDS: Custodian/Custodian Substitutes, Bus Drivers/Substitutes, Food Service Employee/Substitutes, Child Development Center Employee/Substitutes. Salary based on experience. \$320/month of full-time employee health coverage paid. Apply on-line at <https://www.rainsisd.org> Equal Employment Opportunity.

SERVICES

CONSTRUCTION
ROHRAL REPAIR
 Welding, machining - all metals. Tractor repair & Equipment upgrades, mechanical, electrical, broken bolts, etc. Small jobs are welcome! 903-474-0899, 430-306-4165, Emory, TX.

MCKENZIE LAKE WORKS. Building boathouses and docks since 2001. Steel/metal bldgs., & home remodeling. www.mckenzielakeworks.com. 903-269-6173.

CONSTRUCTION
 G&G GRAVEL. All types of gravel, chipped asphalt, available for spreading, free estimates. Miller Grove. Bret Garrett 903-268-6910.

HOOTEN'S HARDWARE, LLC
 Has all your welding, welding repair and lumber needs available on site. Hwy. 69N in Emory. 903-473-8788.

DODSON AND SONS
 Painting, drywall, carpentry and more. 903-259-8541. For plumbing needs call Scott Trieb 903-474-4129.



PUBLIC/LEGAL NOTICE

PUBLIC NOTICE
NOTICE TO ALL PERSONS BUYING PROPERTY IN THE VICINITY OF THE SHIRLEY WATER SUPPLY CORP.
 Shirley Water Supply Corp. urges any prospective buyer to verify with the manager at the office, located on FM 1567, east of Hwy. 19, north of Emory, Tex., or south of Sulphur Springs, Tex., whether or not water is available at the tract of land in question.
 Shirley Water Supply Corp.
 6684 FM 1567W
 Sulphur Springs, Texas 75482

PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN TO ALL INTERESTED PERSONS IN THE CITY OF EMORY, TEXAS THAT A PUBLIC HEARING WILL BE HELD BY THE CITY OF EMORY PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION ON TUESDAY the 3rd DAY of MARCH 2026 AT 5:30 PM, AT THE EMORY CITY HALL COUNCIL CHAMBERS, LOCATED AT 399 N. TEXAS STREET (State Hwy. 19), EMORY, TEXAS FOR THE PURPOSE OF MAKING A RECOMMENDATION TO THE EMORY CITY COUNCIL ON THE FOLLOWING:
 The location of the PROPERTY INVOLVED in REQUEST: 726 W. Lennon Drive.
 RECOMMENDATION to change the zoning of the 2.1980 Acres from residential to COMMERCIAL.
 A SECOND PUBLIC HEARING will be held by the Emory City Council on Tuesday, the 10TH DAY of MARCH 10, 2026, at 6:45 P.M. The public hearing will be held at Emory City Hall, located at 399 N. Texas Street, Emory, Texas 75440.

LAWN/LANDSCAPE/MOWING
HOOTEN'S LAWN & TREE SERVICE, LLC
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SMITH'S LAWN CARE
 Landscaping, fencing, hedge trimming, weekly/biweekly rates. 903-521-8506, free estimates.
 Get your fence rows spring ready now. The roots of vegetation are more accessible for removal limiting future regrowth with minimal impact on wildlife habitat. Affordable pricing, Marvin 903-348-4399, text please.

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LEGACY TREE SERVICE. www.TheWilsonLegacy.com 903-455-1587. Insured, credit cards, appointments. We specialize in high risk removals. Trimming, Removals, Stumps.

TREE SERVICES
HOOTEN'S LAWN & TREE SERVICE, LLC. Tree trimming/removal. Credit cards, insured. LI0019094. 903-473-8706, 903-474-4402.



PUBLIC/LEGAL NOTICE

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

The Emory 4B Emory Development Corporation (EDC) will conduct a public hearing to receive comments for the following proposed project and expenditure of funds:
 • The EDC will receive comments for proposed project incentives and the expenditure of funds for BXR Venture Project, to promote new or expanded business development. Proposed project incentives and the expenditure of funds may be used for building improvements interior and exterior, including but not limited to facade upgrade, signage, electrical, window, door, and landscape improvements and other expenses related to the same. Total of all project incentives and the expenditure of funds not to exceed \$5,500.
 • The EDC will hold the public hearings in which all interested persons shall have the right to be heard regarding such proposed project incentives and expenditure of funds. The public hearings will be held at the EDC Board Room 329 N. Texas St., Emory, Texas, 75440 on Wednesday, March 4, 2026, at 11:30 a.m.
 Elizabeth Davis, Administrative Assistant, Emory Development Corporation

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

The Emory 4B Emory Development Corporation (EDC) will conduct a public hearing to receive comments for the following proposed project and expenditure of funds:
 • The EDC will receive comments for proposed project incentives and the expenditure of funds for JC's Automotive LLC project, to promote new or expanded business development. Proposed project incentives and the expenditure of funds may be used for building improvements interior and exterior, including but not limited to facade upgrade, signage, electrical, window, door, and landscape improvements and other expenses related to the same. Total of all project incentives and the expenditure of funds not to exceed \$2,500.
 • The EDC will hold the public hearings in which all interested persons shall have the right to be heard regarding such proposed project incentives and expenditure of funds. The public hearings will be held at the EDC Board Room 329 N. Texas St., Emory, Texas, 75440 on Wednesday, March 4, 2026, at 11:30 a.m.
 Elizabeth Davis, Administrative Assistant, Emory Development Corporation

THE STATE OF TEXAS COUNTY OF RAINS CITATION BY PUBLICATION

TO: UNKNOWN OWNERS OR CLAIMANTS OF THE SUBJECT REAL PROPERTY; RESPONDENT, GREETINGS:
NOTICE TO DEFENDANT: YOU HAVE BEEN SUED. YOU MAY EMPLOY AN ATTORNEY. IF YOU OR YOUR ATTORNEY DO (DOES) NOT FILE A WRITTEN ANSWER WITH THE CLERK WHO ISSUED THIS CITATION BY 10:00 AM ON THE MONDAY NEXT FOLLOWING THE EXPIRATION OF FORTY-TWO (42) DAYS FROM AND AFTER THE DATE OF ISSUANCE HEREOF, THE SAME BEING THE 3RD DAY OF FEBRUARY, 2026, (WHICH IS THE RETURN DAY OF SUCH CITATION) A DEFAULT JUDGMENT MAY BE TAKEN AGAINST YOU.
 The PLAINTIFF'S ORIGINAL PETITION file by **BILLY MIKE COOKE**, was filed in the 354TH DISTRICT COURT of Rains County, Texas on the 3rd day of February, 2026, styled,
CAUSE NO. 12116 BILLY MIKE COOKE -VS- UNKNOWN OWNERS OR CLAIMANTS OF THE SUBJECT REAL PROPERTY
 The **real property** made the basis of this suit is described as follows: **80 ACRES, WILLIAM GARRETT SURVEY A-103; 1.1 ACRES WILLIAM GARRETT SURVEY.**
 Plaintiff requests "TO ESTABLISH TITLE BY LIMITATIONS OF THE SUBJECT REAL PROPERTY, IN FEE SIMPLE ABSOLUTE, INCLUDING ALL OIL, GAS, AND OTHER MINERAL INTEREST IN AND UNDER AND THAT MAY BE PRODUCED FROM THE SUBJECT REAL PROPERTY." as is more fully shown by Plaintiff's Petition on file in this suit.
 The Court has authority in this suit to enter an order that will be binding on you.
 ISSUED AND GIVEN UNDER MY HAND AND THE SEAL OF SAID COURT, at office, this **3rd day of February, 2026.**
 LAURA PATE, DISTRICT CLERK
 RAINS COUNTY, TEXAS
 By: LAURA PATE, DISTRICT CLERK

SUDOKU SOLUTION

5	8	4	6	1	2	3	7	9
3	2	1	7	9	4	5	8	6
9	6	7	3	8	5	2	4	1
2	5	8	1	6	9	4	3	7
4	3	6	5	2	7	9	1	8
1	7	9	8	4	3	6	5	2
6	4	5	2	7	8	1	9	3
7	9	2	4	3	1	8	6	5
8	1	3	9	5	6	7	2	4

LAST WEEK'S SOLUTION

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 314 W. Lennon • Emory
 903-473-4449
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 Quick-pay Bills
 Copies - Faxing
 Computer & Internet workspace
 Passport Photos
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 Open Mon.-Fri. 9 am to 5 pm

Shopping in Rains County
More than just feed ...
 Boots, Jeans, Pet supplies, Home décor & more!

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 903-473-2249

REMEMBER GOOD THINGS HAPPEN WHEN YOU SHOP LOCAL

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 Mon-Fri: 8AM-6PM • Sat: 9AM-6PM
 Pharmacy • Gift Shop
 Soda Fountain & More
 Merideth Chavez, PharmD
 Owner/Operator
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www.rainspharmacy.com



Vote for Brent Hilliard Rains County Judge

Early Voting: Tuesday, February 17-27, 2026
Election Day: March 3, 2026

A Legacy of Service for Rains County

A Life Rooted in Faith and Family

Stacy and I met in junior high; years later, God answered my prayers and brought us back together. We're blessed with three grown Christian sons, wonderful daughters-in-law, and six grandbabies who light up our lives. My life's journey has been guided by a commitment to Christ since the age of twelve. Having served as an ordained deacon, my leadership style is rooted in the calling of Micah 6:8: to act justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God. Today, Stacy

and I are proud members of Emory Baptist Church, where we continue to grow in our faith alongside our neighbors.

Deep Roots, Proven Results

In 2019, we put down permanent roots at the historic John Little Ranch—Rains County is home. As an entrepreneur in energy and IT, I employ 15 neighbors right here in Emory. From delivering Midland's 62-mile water pipeline to running my businesses, I've always focused on results, respect, and fiscal responsibility.

Your County Judge: Progress You Can See

Serving as your appointed County Judge is the honor of my life. I've applied decades of experience to prioritize better roads, stronger public safety, and a taxpayers-first approach. In just six months, we've made real progress—but we're just getting started. I'm asking for your vote to keep that momentum going and ensure Rains County remains safe, rural, and affordable for our children and grandchildren.

Let's Keep the Fresh Start Going!



Highlights From Just Six Months

Roads

- Improved coordination between the Judge's office, Road and Bridge Department, and Commissioner's Court to improve quality and effective implementation of services
- Reconstructed 11.96 miles of paved road and growing
- Shifted to patching larger areas with better, longer-lasting materials
- Added two new positions in Road & Bridge to boost productivity and delivery
- Improved manpower/equipment utilization and supervision
- Prioritizing drainage and water evacuation
- Cleared rights-of-way of trees and foliage for safer, better-maintained roads
- Close to securing \$2.81 million of grants for culverts, bridges, and roads
- Better planning by utilizing existing and newly obtained data moving forward
- Added two new trucks to reduce maintenance costs

Safety & First Responders

- Improved coordination between the Judge's Office and Sheriff's Office to strengthen public safety and our environment as a whole
- Improved hiring for experienced TCOLE-certified deputies and dispatchers
- Added Records Retention position to meet state requirements
- Purchased and equipped a transport van and two new trucks for the Sheriff's Department
- Brought jail into full compliance with Texas Jail Standards
- Implemented weekly mental health support (Navigator Program with Andrews Center)
- Hired experienced Jail Compliance Officer, dispatchers, and deputies
- Modernized jail software and systems for better compliance
- Cleaned out years of expired evidence (in accordance with CCP 59 Penal Code) and hired consultant to maintain evidence processing long term
- Secured the assignment of a qualified retired visiting judge from the 12th Court of Appeals when needed for county cases
- Secured \$892,102.21 in grants for the Sheriff's department

Taxpayers First

- Increased transparency with an open-door policy and direct communication with taxpayers
- Pursuing TXDOT, federal, and other grants—including nearly \$4.746 million (and counting) for Library, Safety, and roads/bridges—to fund priorities
- Added cybersecurity software to protect county systems from ransomware, malware, phishing, and denial-of-service attacks
- Hired General Counsel to provide legal advice on county business and civil matters
- Implemented a new communication program to improve efficiency across county operations
- Fostered a positive and productive work environment for county employees
- Focused every dollar on essentials—getting more done with existing resources
- Improved efficiency and compliance to protect taxpayer money and avoid costly fines

Better Roads, Stronger Safety, Taxpayers First

Looking Ahead: My Commitments To You

Managing Growth Wisely



"Managing growth so Rains County stays safe, rural, and affordable."

Honesty & Responsible Taxation



"As values rise, I will work to protect taxpayers and make every dollar count."

Integrity & Access



"Open door, open records, and open books—so you always know what your county government is doing."



KEEP THE FRESH START GOING

903-913-6003 | ElectBrentHilliard.com