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The only newspaper in our world that cares exclusively about the community of Comfort, Texas
and has been reporting its news and events for more than 120 years.

“Cultivating a Community of Stewardship” theme of recent HCA Leadership Summit

Saturday is your day to cleanup your yard and “Make Comfort Sparkle”



More than 270 people registered to attend this year's Hill Country Alliance Leadership Summit either online or in person. The one-day Summit was packed full of information about ongoing efforts to preserve and conserve the Hill Country's natural resources and the people who are working to make that happen. (Staff photo)

On Saturday from 8 a.m. to noon the Comfort Area Foundation will once again accept area residents' trash and junk in a push to “Make Comfort Sparkle.” The annual event will be held at Altgelt Field between 6th and 7th Streets. As in past years a number of things will not be accepted. Those include ordinary household trash, toxic chemicals, paint, trees or brush and tractor tires. Vehicle tires up to 30 inches will be accepted for a \$4 donation per tire. Other things you can get rid of include household junk, metal items and appliances. Other than the tire recycling fee the service is free, but donations are welcomed to help defray the expenses incurred. Shown above are members of the Comfort Area Foundation working at last year's Sparkle event. (File photo)

Editor's note: By way of full disclosure, The Comfort News has been a sponsor of the Hill Country Alliance Leadership Summit for the last three years.

By Michael Hawkins
Last Thursday the Hill Country Alliance held its annual Hill Country Leadership Summit. The Summit has become a must-attend event for Deborah and I because of its unwavering focus on what people and organizations are getting right in the work they're doing to preserve the Texas Hill

Country and its amazing natural treasures.

The theme this year was “Cultivating a Community of Stewardship” and the day-long event was packed full of information from individual speakers and panel-members. More than 270 people were registered for the event, either as in-person or online attendees.

The first presentation was by Stephen Hummel with the McDonald Observatory. Hummel, who was instrumental in establishing the Greater Big Bend

International Dark Sky Reserve, spoke to his experiences working with communities and businesses while seeking their buy-in on what is now the largest area in the world to be certified by DarkSky International. In his work with large oil and gas producers in the region he was able to show that by reducing light pollution they could not only preserve the dark skies, but increase worker safety and save money at the same time. Planting Seeds for

Continued on page 4

Tuesday, October 8 at 6 p.m.

Susan Herndon to perform at Comfort Music in the Park



Susan Herndon will perform Tuesday at Music in the Park. (Courtesy photo)

The final 2024 performance of Music in the Park will feature the music of Susan Herndon on Tuesday at 6 p.m.

Born in St Louis, raised in Tulsa and bred in Oklahoma, Susan has earned several degrees including one in French. Herndon's youthful wanderlust took her to the

south of France for many years, where she began her musical journey by playing for francs on the busy streets of Pau deep within France.

Herndon has a large volume of material, thirteen albums worth. Her music moves between genres; blues, country, indie rock, jazz and

pop. She also performs songs by well-known artists, particularly paying homage to any number of fellow Oklahoma songsmiths including Woody Guthrie, Jimmy Webb, Leon Russell and J.J. Cale. Her latest album release is “L'amour est Etrange”.

For more than a decade, Susan has played around 200 gigs a year. You might have seen her perform at a nearby Hill Country venues. She is a true troubadour, sharing her passion for song and stirring thousands of kindred spirits throughout Oklahoma, Texas, the American heartland, and in Europe. “Music really is our universal language,” says Herndon today. “And I do believe that good songs – in any language – can truly touch souls. I know they have saved my life on numerous occasions.”

Music in the Park is a free concert series sponsored by Gaddis United Methodist Church and the Comfort Chamber of Commerce. This concert is held in Comfort Park, bring your lawn chair and a friend, and everyone is invited.

Focus on spirituality by Pastor David Guthrie Gluttony is probably not what you think it is

In our examination of the Deadly Sins, Anger and Pride, we have stressed what sin really is and why it is detrimental to our spirituality. The definition of sin that we have been working with is probably not what we have come to regard as sin. In many religious and theological circles, the concept of sin usually encompasses the fear of being sent to Hell because of sins of the flesh, which are considered violations of God's laws. However, in my theological understandings, Hell is not a place of fiery punishment that smells of Sulphur accompanied by the agonizing screams of souls

damned to an eternity of physical torment. Fire can only torment a physical body and as spirits there would be no flesh to be tormented by it. Perhaps Hell is rather a state of being than a place defined by space and time.

My belief is that, yes Hell exists but, not in the way you may think or believe. We can make our own Hell right here and now by living a life that is not in a relationship of love with God and one another. Perhaps the torment of Hell in the hereafter is the recognition that after a lifetime without being in a relationship with others, and most importantly God, we have missed so many

opportunities in life that we can never recover; opportunities that would have brought joy to us and others, and enabled us to live without fear or regret.

Perhaps the eternal torment of knowing what could have been is more painful to our spirits than any other form of torment because opportunities to comfort and care for others are no longer possible. In other words, we have failed to miss the mark of living like Jesus, and the torment of losing the chance to live in Jesus is the consequence of sin or missing the mark. Of

Continued on page 4

Important voting deadlines for the Nov. 5 General Election

Last Day to Register to Vote - Monday, October 7, 2024

First Day of Early Voting by Personal Appearance - Monday, October 21, 2024

Last Day to Apply for Ballot by Mail (Received, not Postmarked) - Friday, October 25, 2024

Last Day of Early Voting by Personal Appearance - Friday, November 1, 2024

Remember to take your photo ID when you vote

Op-Ed by Roy Quillian

If it's "the economy, stupid," what does that mean for this election?



The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), a non-political international forum for global economic data analysis and policy improvement, has recently concluded that the United States will likely NOT experience a recession in 2025, given the current handling of the U.S. economy by the Biden administration. The Federal Reserve has done an admirable job of reducing inflation to a reasonable level. The labor market has returned to pre-pandemic levels and energy prices have been falling. The stock market is soaring. So, the question is this: Why should any American voter concerned about the economy be willing to gamble on turning it over to Donald Trump? According to most economists and business leaders, the very few economic policies Donald Trump has proposed would make things worse, not better.

The OECD made it clear that most consumers do not understand the economic picture or how we got to where we are. Consumers *feel* price pressure at the supermarket but are not aware of how bad things *could have been* without the measures taken by governments and central banks around the world, including those implemented by the Biden administration, that have allowed us to achieve these 'improved' economic conditions. Widely respected and *successful businessman*, Mark Cuban, has pointed out that while Trump may be a good salesman, the few economic ideas Trump has proposed regarding the economy and trade are, in his words, 'insane. Cuban has achieved genuine and legitimate business success, so his opinions are worth listening to. Across the board tariffs, a Trump proposal for the economy, would re-ignite inflation and likely cause a recession. Across the board tariffs are in effect a tax on the consumer, because companies are not going to stop selling their products here. They will simply pass on the cost of the tariffs to the consumer. Trump has even threatened John Deere, one of our best

international companies, with potentially onerous tariffs. Trump has said he will impose a 200 percent tariff on Deere if the company elects to have any portion of its products sourced in Mexico. Such a tariff, Cuban pointed out, will make more money for Deere, help the Chinese overcome their own lower tariffs and will cost the American consumer more for both Deere and Chinese products. Insane. Cuban has endorsed Kamala Harris for President, because he believes Harris will behave more like a conscientious CEO who will try to do what is best and right for the American 'stakeholder.' Cuban calls Harris clearly 'pro-business.' On the economy, the choice for President is becoming increasingly clear. The economy has improved dramatically under the Biden/Harris administration since the pandemic, despite all the untrue right-wing talking points out there. As far as inflation and the economy are concerned, electing Trump will not help the consumer. We may not like everything that any candidate says or believes. No leader is perfect, but Kamala Harris' economic policies appear not only sane but beneficial to the middle class, as well.

Letters to the Editor

Editor's note: Readers are encouraged to submit letters to the editor to be considered for publication in The Comfort News. Letters selected for publication must be signed. The final decision regarding which letters are published rests with the publishers of The Comfort News.

and bipartisan action that doesn't demonize either political party or those who immigrate legally. We also need US Representative Chip Roy to be part of the solution, not part of the problem. The last major policy revision was in 1996. Earlier this year, a group of senators, including James Lankford (R-Okla.), Kyrsten Sinema (I-Ariz.) and Chris Murphy (D-Conn.), proposed a bill to limit border encounters. If that limit were exceeded, the border

would have been shut down. While not perfect, this could have provided relief and time for Congress to negotiate comprehensive change. Instead of supporting this bipartisan bill, Roy rambled about cartels and Ukraine, and the bill died before coming to a vote. Roy seems more interested in scoring debate points than solving problems. We need someone who will solve problems. *Whitney L. White, Boerne*

From page 1 Spirituality

Gluttony

course, this is not to say that God, in His unconditional Love and Mercy will not, or cannot forgive us for missing the mark even when we stand before Him in judgment. What would be your reaction if you knew that even in eternity all of us can still be with God if we repent in the next life of our missed opportunities to love given to us in our mortal life? Would you rejoice in God's saving Love for everyone, or be angry because you led a good life and yet everyone gets the same reward? Sin is more about an existence right now that separates us from God and one another, rather than dwelling upon how it might keep us from going to Heaven. As we examine the Deadly Sin of Gluttony, we once again focus on how gluttony can cause us to miss the mark and sin against God and one another. Gluttony is characterized by a limitless appetite for food, drink, or other indulgences. Gluttony becomes a deadly sin when one is no longer eating to live, but rather so addicted to food and drink that one is now living to eat. In years past, gluttony was depicted as an obese person surrounded by, and consuming large amounts of food. However, we must be careful to not judge people who suffer from obesity as being a glutton. There are many medical conditions that encompass obesity, and the person we are judging may be struggling medically through no fault of their own. It is possible for one to be guilty of the sin of gluttony, the addiction of over consumption of food, and still not be obese because gluttony is not just about the overconsumption of food. Gluttony is a preoccupation with an addiction to pleasurable material objects or pastimes. A person who is

addicted to cell phone use, computer games or watching constant television, or online offerings can also be guilty of the Deadly Sin of Gluttony when it interferes with relationships or responsibilities. Although it is a horrible thought, even an addiction to Amazon offerings can perhaps be considered as gluttony. Gluttony has become such an accepted part of our culture that even the fast-food chains and restaurants encourage it by offering portions of food that encourage us to overeat. Do we really need a hamburger with four beef patties, nine pieces of bacon, and smothered in cheese to satisfy our lunch time hunger? Do we really need an all you can eat endless dinner to satisfy our hunger? However, we fall prey to gluttony because we reason that if we buy the supersized burger, we also get a large order of fries and a large drink for just pennies more than the regular meal that is not supersized. While it may seem totally innocent to constantly over indulge in food or other pleasurable activities, when it becomes a constant way of life, it becomes an addiction. We all are aware of the role that food plays in our health. When we repeatedly eat foods that we know should be limited in our diet, and do not exercise portion control, we are risking our health for a short-term pleasure and appetite. This is also an indication of *missing the mark* because God gave us life and we are the caretakers of our health and lives. When we do things that may injure our bodies, we are not hitting the mark of loving ourselves, our families, and God. We are rather instead embarking on a path of self-destruction. Everything God has created is good including the food we eat. There is nothing sinful

about enjoying fine food or a well-prepared meal, nor to me is it sinful to enjoy a fine wine or drink. In fact, Irish monks distilled whiskey and called it *uisce beatha*, which is Gaelic for Water of Life. I personally enjoy a glass of fine Irish Whiskey in the evening, but I limit myself as to how much I can drink without it becoming a health problem and gluttonous. It is when drinking exceeds what is healthy and causes problems in our relationships or responsibilities that it rises to the sin of gluttony. We can say that gluttony develops into a deadly sin when we become so obsessed with a material pleasure or activity that it becomes a stumbling block to our relationship with God and one another. When obsessed by our own desires we become oblivious to the feelings and well-being of others. We live only for ourselves and no one else. Although we may not want to admit it, when gluttony replaces the place of God in our lives, our relationship with God and one another begins to die. God is Love, and Jesus has distilled all of the Laws of God into just two easy to remember Laws: Love God with all of your heart and mind and strength, and love your neighbor as you would love yourself. When we allow the Deadly Sins of Anger, Pride or Gluttony to take over our lives, there is no room left in our hearts to Love God with all of our strength and mind, nor to love our neighbor because we are lost in self-love. We trade a relationship with a loving God for the love of material objects and desires which cannot extend love nor caring. May our spirits find their purpose and our rest in God and not food, drink or other addictions. This is the true meaning of life and our life quest.

From page 1

Leadership Summit

Community Stewardship was the subject of the panel following Hummel. Their focus, on training and empowering the young people of today to become the environmental stewards of tomorrow, spoke to the recognition of the need for a long-game. The population growth in the Hill Country is forecast to increase for the foreseeable future. As we're all well aware this growth creates demand-pressures for natural resources that are already diminished and growing scarcer. The next generation of leaders in the ongoing work to preserve the Hill Country must be ready for the task. Many organizations are stepping up to help prepare those next leaders. Two long-time conservationists were honored this year with the Heart of the Hill Country Award. Steve Nelle, who has been working with Texas landowners for more than 50 years helping them better manage their natural resources, was one of the honorees. Brent Evans, who with his wife Carolyn founded the Cibolo Nature Center, was the other honoree. Evans served as the executive director of the Cibolo Conservancy Land Trust for 22 years.

After lunch a keynote address followed by a panel discussion focused on how small towns in the Hill Country can overcome stagnation and decline. The panel focused on revitalization efforts in Sabinal where community members have been working for the last year to "bring back Main Street." "Building for a water-scarce future," was the subject of the next panel. They pointed out that achieving water-use efficiency is possible through technology in facility design whether we're talking about a single building or a neighborhood development project. The "Lighting Round" was a fast-paced opportunity for six speakers to spend five minutes apiece sharing their "Conservation Wins through Storytelling." Topics included Comal County's First Parks Plan, Private Dams on Public Waters: A South Llano River Story, Fighting Water Woes with a Kayak and a Camera and more. It's worth the ticket to the Summit just to hear these information-packed mini-presentations. The final speaker of the day was Katherine Romans, executive director of the Hill Country Alliance, which is celebrating its 20th year.



Katherine Romans, executive director of the Hill Country Alliance, welcomes attendees to the annual Hill Country Leadership Summit.

Romans took a look back at the Alliance's 20-year past and how it got to where it is today. She also spoke to the years ahead - the challenges and the growing swell of energy and purpose that drives the Alliance and its many partners. It's hard to summarize an idea-packed day into a few paragraphs, especially when it's a day of positive and uplifting stories about people doing important work that often receives little to no attention unless there's conflict involved. If it sounds like the Alliance and what it does, is something you'd like to know more about check out hillcountryalliance.org. Perhaps the Summit will become a must-attend event for you, as it has for us.

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