

THE COMFORT NEWS

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Hill Country Alliance Leadership Summit once again educates, encourages and inspires



A panel discussion at last week's Hill Country Alliance Leadership Summit addressed the challenges faced by local leaders in the region and the solutions they have employed to meet those challenges. (Photo by Michael Hawkins)

By Michael Hawkins

Last week the Hill Country Alliance held its annual Leadership Summit at Camp Lucy in Dripping Springs.

True to form, this year's event, with the theme "Rooted in Resilience," was packed from beginning to end with valuable information, insights

and opportunities for attendees to grow their knowledge bases and their networks of experts

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The Geriatric Geriatrician by Jerald Winnakur The technology trap

Manufacturing jobs in America have been declining now for quite some time. The "health care industry" has replaced these...and more. Indeed, in the last year, one-third of job growth has been in health care; manufacturing and retail have been flat. Can you believe that in Texas, health care is now the largest employer? That we spend more on health care than groceries?

There are many reasons for this. One is the rise of technological procedures. Don't get me wrong: I'm all for medical technology that facilitates diagnosis, aids in treatment, and extends meaningful life. But using technology appropriately is not always easy.

A man in his forties developed a fever and cough, had a chest x-ray, was diagnosed with pneumonia and treated with antibiotics—appropriately so—by a young physician working in a "doc-in-the-box" clinic owned by a for-profit hospital system. The patient quickly recovered.

I would have had the patient come back in a month and obtained another chest x-ray to make sure the pneumonia had totally cleared up. If it had I would have sent the patient on his way. His young "urgent care" doc, wanting to be "thorough" (or to generate more dollars for his corporate employer—upon which he is bonused), ordered a CT scan of the patient's chest to make sure there wasn't a tumor

lurking in the area of his lung where he had had the pneumonia. The lung was fine on this study but coincidentally showed a possible nodule in the patient's liver. The radiologist recommended a sonogram of this organ to perhaps discern a fluid-filled cyst—and thus nothing of concern. (The radiologist, of course, is paid based on the number of studies his group performs.)

So the patient had a sonogram—which, as often happens—could not clearly differentiate this nodule as cystic. These sorts of coincidental findings—"red herrings" are another good term for them—turn up all the

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On spirituality by Rev. David Guthrie Heresies and Apostasy - what they are and how they influence the politics of our time

After the Ascension of Jesus, the Apostolic Church no longer physically had Jesus in its midst to guide the Apostles as they began to follow the command of Christ to go and make disciples in all nations. However, as Jesus had promised, the Holy Spirit would guide them in all things. In setting up the structure of Christ's Church, the direction of the Holy Spirit was found in discussions among the Apostles as well as debates and personal opinions. In the end however, the Apostles came together in a consensus as to where the Holy Spirit was leading them as they sought to be faithful witnesses to the Gospel of Jesus.

With the deaths of the twelve Apostles, a vacuum was created not only in leadership, but also the orthodox teachings of the Apostles.

Men who sought their own importance over the truth contained in the Gospel began to challenge the Apostle's teachings and teach their own versions of Christianity. As a result, by the late first century and second centuries, the Church was beset by heresies, which means a departure from the basic truths of Christianity. Heresies began to appear which denied the divinity of Jesus, and some even taught that Jesus was not physically man, but merely a divine apparition that only those who were chosen could see. Another popular heresy was that the Trinity did not exist. Yet another heresy taught that salvation could only be attained through a secret knowledge given by God to certain enlightened individuals, and that the flesh and physical world were both inherently evil and not of God.

To combat the false teaching of heresies, the Church declared that those who promulgate them, and those who follow them, are heretics and their teachings were to be shunned. However, many of the heresies of the first two centuries are still with us today in the teachings of modern-day spiritual movements. These heresies are usually led by a very wealthy man or woman seeking to gain wealth from those searching for a connection to God. These later day heretics claim to have the secret to prosperity and wealth which they have gleaned through Scripture or Divine revelation. As proof of their claims these heretics offer their own financial wealth as to the truth of their teachings. The heresy of wealth is that if

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Monday last day to register to vote in November Uniform Election

Monday, October 6, is the last day to register to vote for the November 4, 2025 Uniform Election in Texas. In that election voters will decide whether to approve or turn away 17 Amendments to the Texas Constitution.

Those Amendments were recently published in this newspaper and are available as they will appear on the ballot at sos.texas.gov. They cover many aspects of life in Texas including property taxes on residences, parents' decisions about their children's education, providing a portion of revenue from sales taxes for the Texas water fund, taxes on securities transactions and

more. And while the language is direct, it does not fully explain the possible impacts of the Amendments on everyday life in Texas.

For that, the League of Women Voters of Texas offers a number of resources. On their website at lwvtexas.org, the League provides a Voter's Guide to the Constitutional Amendments. The Guide is available in four languages. There are also "Constitutional Amendment Explainer Videos" that explain each of the Amendments in clear, easy to understand language. Hard copies of the Guide are

expected to be available at most public libraries.

The League is a nonpartisan organization that encourages voters to be informed about and participate in their government with no attempt to persuade voters to take one position or another.

Early voting in this year's Election will begin on Monday, October 20. In Kendall County early voters will cast their ballots at the Kendall County Courthouse Annex located at 221 Fawn Valley Drive in Boerne. Early voting runs through Friday, October 31 and Election Day is the following Tuesday, November 4.

Kendall County 2026 Primaries starting to take shape

As we approach the 2025 Uniform Election in early November, candidates for the General Election in November 2026 are starting to make their plans known. With the Primaries coming up in March of next year, the field of primary candidates is taking shape.

D'Spain announces for Precinct 4 Commissioner

Recently Brett D'Spain announced his 2026 candidacy for Kendall County Commissioner, Precinct 4, a position held by Chad Carpenter since he was elected in 2022. A Republican, D'Spain would face Carpenter in the March 2026 Primary Election if Carpenter runs for re-election. According to the news release announcing his candidacy, "D'Spain's campaign is built on three

clear priorities: Protect the Hill Country, meet infrastructure needs and safeguard taxpayer dollars. As Commissioner, D'Spain will focus on the issues that matter most to Kendall County families—roads, water, and public safety—while ensuring county government remains efficient and taxes stay low. D'Spain is committed to working closely with state leaders in Austin to protect the Hill Country's natural beauty and resources. His goals include preserving the region's landscapes, protecting its water supply, and maintaining the character that makes Kendall County a special place to live."

"I will work as your full-time Commissioner to keep our county safe, strong, and a place we are proud to call

home," said D'Spain.

Stolarczyk will seek re-election as County Judge

Kendall County Judge Shane Stolarczyk has also officially announced his candidacy for re-election in the upcoming March 2026 Primary. "Since taking office, Judge Stolarczyk has prioritized fiscal responsibility, government transparency, and long-term planning for Kendall County," said his announcement release. "Since taking office, Judge Stolarczyk has prioritized fiscal responsibility, government transparency, and long-term planning for Kendall County. Drawing on his experience as an attorney, military officer, and small business owner, he has

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Deer Sweep Blanco and Llano - undefeated in District



Emily Hill (7), Faith Diaz de Villegas (10), and Corrine Brown (4) celebrate another victory over a District opponent. The Deer have swept Florence, Blanco, and Llano thus far in District and have matched last year's win total (22) already. (Photo courtesy of Justin Tinney)

By Coach George Edwards

Last year's Deer Volleyball team did the unthinkable. They bested Wall in the first round of the playoffs. It was their first trip to the Area

round in five years. This year the Deer have set their sights on even more success. Thirty-three matches into the season, the 2025 Deer have 22 wins. Not quite through the first

round of District play, the Deer have already matched last year's win total. With 8 regular season matches to go

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Hill Country Alliance Leadership Summit



Becky Etzler, Executive Director of the Riverside Nature Center, was one of two recipients of this year’s “Heart of the Hill Country” Award at the 2025 Hill Country Alliance Leadership Symposium. (Staff photo)

in various areas related to the challenges facing the Hill Country.

After opening remarks by Katherine Romans, Executive Director of the Alliance, the first speaker was John Nielson -Gammon, a Professor of Meteorology at Texas A&M University and the Texas State Climatologist. Gammon’s topic, “The Challenges of the Hill Country Climate,” was based on 200 years of recorded weather and climate data in the state. Using climate models Gammon also talked about what new weather possibilities could happen in the future. Despite the wealth of information and data he presented, quite possibly the best and most pertinent point he made in his presentation was in his last, three line summary.

- Yes, the Hill Country is still habitable
- Respect the weather extremes
- Just because it hasn’t happened yet...

A panel discussion followed. Emily Kirchner, Mayor Pro Tempore for the City of Fredericksburg moderated the discussion “Our Regional Future: A Conversation with Local Leaders.” Her panelists were Drew Paxton, Director of

Planning and Development for Kerrville; Bella Rubio, County Judge for Real County; and Commissioner Damon Beierle of Burnet County.

They spoke to the topics that we can all agree sometimes keep us up at night: unchecked population growth and the impacts that has on everything from water supplies to wildlife habitat and night skies; years of drought, catastrophic flooding; the impacts of aggregate mining on our rivers and more. It became clear that in the 17 county area that is the Texas Hill Country, we all deal with many of the same problems. Sharing solutions and ideas in forums just like this one will make us stronger as a unified front against both the human-made and natural forces that threaten the future of the region.

If you’ve never heard Angela Blanchard speak. Make it a point to do so. Blanchard, who was the keynote speaker at the Symposium, has worked in the wake of all manner of disasters across the world. She is no stranger to rebuilding lives, infrastructures, purpose and meaning, visions of the future when everything you thought you knew about your world

has just been shattered. She was honest, direct, with humor and the distilled knowledge of all her years helping people recover from absolute ruin.

One of my favorite nuggets from her presentation was this. When after a disaster everyone shows up to help, the question usually arises - “what do you need from us to help you now.” To this Blanchard spoke the truth. The obvious work that needs to be done is right in front of us. Sometimes there are more people volunteering than we need to be there.

Give it one year, she said. That’s when the real work begins. That’s when the truth of what’s happened, its magnitude and long term impacts are becoming agonizingly clear. That’s when rebuilding to recreate the past shifts towards reimagining and building for the future.

So show up then, she said. One year after. Ask the question then. “What do you need from us to help you NOW?” Let’s all keep that in mind next July 4.

After lunch it was a real treat for Deborah and I to watch as Becky Etzler, Executive Director of the River Side Nature Center in Kerrville, was honored. She and Barbara Bowerman were both presented with this year’s Heart of the Hill Country Award for their tireless work to care for, preserve and promote the natural beauty that is the Texas Hill Country.

All of this happened within the space of a few hours. Then there was lunch, networking and afternoon programs that were just as informative and interesting as the morning’s.

But my space is limited, and the room to touch on everything is just not here. Suffice it to say we plan to go back next year. And I strongly urge anyone, everyone, to make plans to attend whether in person or online. It will reinvigorate and recharge you and make you understand that you’re part of a much bigger effort to preserve our unique Hill Country, with many more hands, minds and hearts engaged in that effort than you thought possible.

For more information about the Hill Country Alliance go to their website at hillcountryalliance.org.



Comfort Nation



8th grade Bobcats edge out Llano 27-26



Gio Lopez (1) sizes up his opponent during the 8th Grade Football game against Llano. Lopez was a key factor as the 8th Grade Bobcats won a thriller over the Yellow Jackets 27-26. (Photo courtesy of William Houghton)

From page 1

Deer undefeated in District

plus potential playoff matches, they are flirting with the 30-win mark which hasn’t been accomplished in over a decade.

The Deer have not lost a set in 2 weeks. They have won 12 straight sets going back to the Harper match. Remarkably, they did it without senior setter Corrine Brown, whose ankle injury kept her out for half of the season. But juniors Savana Womble and later Emily Hill filled in admirably to keep the squad on course. Brown is back now and with Tindall Ahrens having a career year, the Deer look unstoppable.

Last week the girls dominated their District foes.

Blanco was the first to fall 25-14, 25-21, and 25-23. Ahrens delivered 14 kills from the outside. Senior Jordan Judkins added 6, also from the outside, and middle Faith Diaz De Villegas scored 5. Blanco’s offense was stymied by a ferocious Deer block led by Diaz De Villegas’s 4 solo blocks. Ahrens added 2 and Hill, Alexa Lozano, and Molly Gowan added 1 each. If an attack did make it through the block, it rarely got past the able defensive specialists. On this night, Libero-Rubi Lozano had 20 digs. Ahrens added 9 and Womble 7. After being dominated by the Evil Empire, the Deer now seem to have their number.

On Friday the Llano Lady Jackets came to town and it was much the same. Ahrens blistered the Jackets with 23 kills while Diaz de Villegas added 8. The Deer block dominated as Hill recorded 4 block assists and a solo block. Gowan and Ahrens had 2 total blocks each. Brown dealt out 34 assists as the Deer squashed the bugs in straight sets—25-17, 25-19, and 25-21.

With the victories the Deer improved to 22-11 overall and 3-0 in District 5-3A play. After a well-deserved bye on Tuesday, the Deer will face their first true test as they host undefeated in District Ingram on Friday at 5:00 p.m..



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