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BASTROP COUNTY INSIDER

Section B • Page 1
Wednesday, April 13, 2022

Your Guide to Bastrop County
News • Shopping • Entertainment

Mail voters: Ensure your vote counts

Press release
Bastrop County Elections Department

If you're a Texas voter who has cast your ballot by mail in recent years, you may have noticed some differences on your mail ballot materials this year. Voting by mail had substantial changes beginning with the March 2022 Primary Election. From changes in the application, to changes in the requirements on the Ballot Carrier Envelope, and finally, to new options for correcting a problem with your ballot, voting by mail is not the same as it was in the past.

It's important for all voters who are eligible to vote by mail to be aware of three substantial changes to the ballot by mail process in Texas. Understanding these three modifications of the election law will help you make sure your vote counts.

Change No. 1: Applications

Not everyone in Texas is eligible to vote by mail. If you fall into one of these five categories, you are able to request an application to vote by mail from your local election office. These include those who are:

- 65 years of age or older;
- Disabled or have a sickness/physical condition that would prevent you from entering the polling place without injuring yourself or needing assistance;
- Expected to give birth within three weeks before or after Election Day;
- Expected to be absent from your county during Early Voting and on Election Day; or

See **VOTE**, Page 12

FIREFIGHTERS THANKED WITH LUNCH FOR ROLLING PINES WORK

Local officials and businesses thanked the firefighters and other first responders who fought the Rolling Pines Fire in January. On Tuesday, April 5, Southside Market & BBQ in Bastrop hosted a free lunch with the help of MVBA Law for these firefighters and first responders who risked their lives to contain and control the Rolling Pines Fire, a prescribed burn in Bastrop State Park which got out of containment on January 18 and burned an additional 812 acres but did not destroy any structures or cause any injuries.

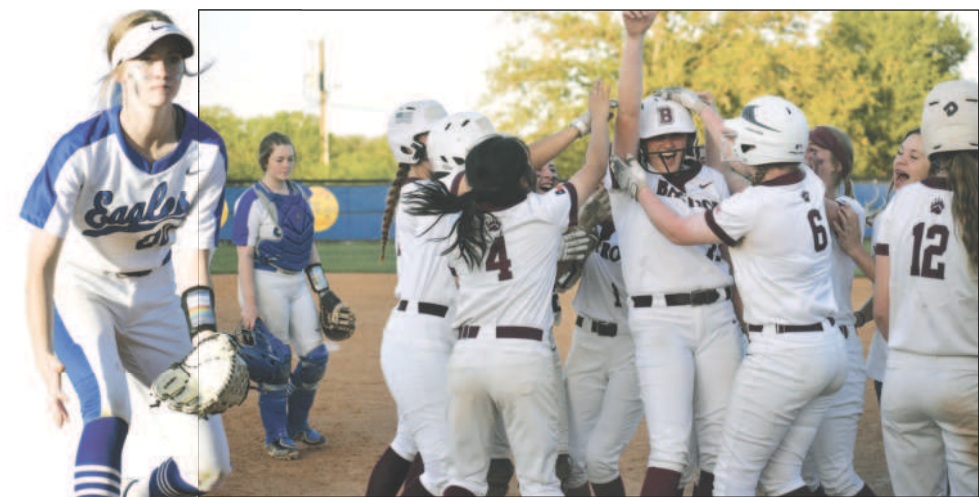
See **LUNCH**, Page 16



Local firefighters and first responders enjoy lunch at Southside Market & BBQ in Bastrop as thanks for their work in responding to the Rolling Pines Fire.

Photo by Julianne Hodges

Offensive surge continues for Lady Bears softball



By Corey Smith
Sports Writer
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Cedar Creek's varsity

softball club hosted the Bastrop Lady Bears for a district showdown last Friday, April 8, on what was Teacher Appreciation Night.

An on-field ceremony honored educators of Bastrop ISD, as teachers high-fived Eagles softball

players in the "pre-game tunnel" while the starting lineups were being introduced.

Once the festivities had concluded, Bastrop's offense got right to work, utilizing two base hits, two walks and an Eagles error to register four

runs in the top half of the first. Laicey Sullivant's two-out double drove in a pair of runs, as part of her three-hit, three-RBI outing. Sullivant doubled three times, in fact, en route to a 3-for-4 night.

See **SOFTBALL**, Page 11

Bastrop Middle School hosts ribbon-cutting of soccer mini-pitch

By Corey Smith
Sports Writer
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On Friday, April 8, a new soccer mini-pitch area was unveiled at Bastrop Middle School, as local youth soccer players, coaches, families and

project contributors gathered for the occasion.

The ceremony was followed by a 5-on-5 soccer tournament for middle school students, among other activities.

The mini-pitch was made possible through donations made by Austin FC's nonprofit 4ATX Foundation, Soc-



Project contributors, and Bastrop area youth soccer players, participating in the ribbon-cutting portion of Friday's mini-pitch opening.

Photo by Corey Smith

cer Assist. St. David's HealthCare, St. David's Foundation, US Soccer Foundation, and The Butler Bros, who accord-

ing to an April 9 4ATX press release designed the mini-pitch pro bono.

See **SOCCER**, Page 12

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Community Calendar
APRIL



APRIL 14

LOCAL LORE

Elgin Depot Museum, 14 Depot Street, 5 - 8 p.m. History comes alive in downtown Elgin at Local Lore during Sip, Shop & Stroll, with games from the past and walking tours.

APRIL 14

SIP, SHOP & STROLL

Downtown Elgin, 5 - 8 p.m. Enjoy an exciting evening downtown with Local Lore, the Elgin Farmers Market and more.

See **CALENDAR**, Page 19

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Bastrop High School
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• Apr. 14 @ Pflugerville
• Apr. 19 @ Elgin

JV Baseball
• Apr. 14 Pflugerville
• Apr. 19 Elgin

Varsity/JV Softball
• Apr. 14 @ Pflugerville
• Apr. 19 Elgin

Girls Varsity Golf
• Apr. 18-19 @ Margarita-ville - Regionals

Cedar Creek High School
Varsity/JV Softball
• Apr. 14 @ Manor
• Apr. 19 Weiss (*Senior Night)

Varsity Baseball
• Apr. 14 @ Manor
• Apr. 19 @ Weiss

JV Baseball
• Apr. 14 Manor
• Apr. 19 Weiss

JV Girls Golf
• Apr. 18-19 @ Margarita-ville - Regionals

Elgin High School
Varsity/JV Softball
• Apr. 14 @ Connally
• Apr. 19 @ Bastrop

Varsity Baseball
• Apr. 14 @ Connally
• Apr. 19 Bastrop (*Senior Night)

JV Baseball
• Apr. 14 Connally
• Apr. 19 @ Bastrop

McDade High School
Varsity Track
• Apr. 18 @ Runge - District

Smithville High School
Varsity/JV Softball
• Apr. 14 Eastside
• Apr. 19 @ La Grange

Varsity/JV Baseball
• Apr. 14 Eastside
• Apr. 19 La Grange

Boys Varsity Golf
• Apr. 19-20 @ Raven Nest G.C. - Regionals

Academics first for West Texas A&M commit Joseph Overton

By Corey Smith
Sports Writer
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Bastrop High School senior Joseph “JoJo” Overton is heading to West Texas A&M University this summer to continue his career as a student-athlete, after signing a letter of intent with the Buffaloes on February 2.

The football standout shares that he’s “more than ready” for Bastrop High School’s upcoming May 26 graduation, as he remains eager to arrive in Canyon, TX for the start of organized team activities. He’s also aiming to capitalize on the current moment, as Overton readies his mind and body for the fast-approaching freshman season.

“I am ready to get to the college level,” said Overton last week. “I wish I was there already, but at the same time, I’m gonna play it out, I’m gonna finish here, keep my mind right. Finish through high school, keep my grades where they need to be, and just go from there.”

In speaking about his

current priorities, the young man stresses time and time again that academics always come first.

With ambitions set on majoring in Psychology in pursuit of a career as a clinical psychiatrist, Overton confirms that a key factor in his selection of West Texas A&M is the university’s strong reputation in his intended area of study. He’s also drawn to the fact that the school offers a Master’s program.

“Keeping the education side up to par is 100 percent No. 1,” declared Overton. “Staying on top of my football is definitely No. 2.”

Overton is already well underway with offseason football training, as he prepares to inherit a defensive end-outside linebacker hybrid role on the West Texas A&M defense.

The edge rusher met with the program’s strength coach during an official visit to campus earlier this academic year to seek a weekly workout regimen, as he aims to get ahead of the game.

Overton credits his father as an enormous influence in his development as an athlete and as

a man. It is a philosophy of “tough love” that guides JoJo’s constant desire for improvement in his game.

“He always gave me the resources and guided me on things that I needed to work on,” Overton explained. “He always kept it real with me. He wasn’t one of those parents that just said, ‘Oh yeah, you’re good at this sport.’ Or, ‘You’re doing great.’ He kept it real. If I sucked at something, he was gonna let me know, and let me know what I needed to do to work on it.”

That perspective may serve as a significant reason for Overton reaching the level he has as a student-athlete. It may just be what propels him to success at the next level



LEFT: Overton’s speed keeps opposing offensive linemen up at night. He led the Bears with a combined 10 sacks between 2020 and 2021. RIGHT: On February 2, Overton signed a letter of intent to continue his career as a student-athlete at West Texas A&M University. Photos by West Texas A&M Photography

and beyond.

Overton enjoyed a prolific high school career – beginning as a quarterback his freshman year before shifting to defensive end during his sophomore season, for what was

his first go-round with the varsity. As a junior, he went back and forth between defensive end and linebacker. During his senior season, Overton says, “I just played everything.”

See **OVERTON**, Page 12

SOFTBALL ...

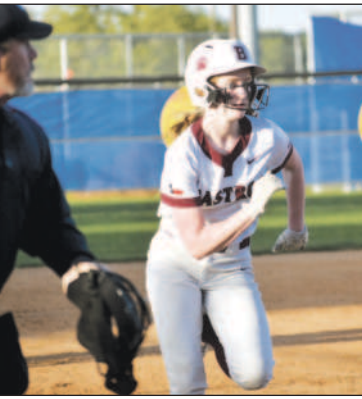
From Page 10

Bastrop starter Abby Abraham opened the bottom half of the first

inning by setting the Eagles’ top three hitters down in order, and she would coast through three innings without conceding a run.

A Melody Beck two-run home run to right-centerfield in the top half of the third helped Bastrop break open a 6-0 lead. A five-run fourth inning then put the Lady Bears ahead 11-0, as Bastrop reached double digits in the runs column for a third consecutive game.

Cedar Creek would answer in the home half of the fourth inning, bringing around a pair of runs thanks to base hits from Zoey Knudsen, Amanda Dyson, Rylee Justice and Jordan Medina. Justice’s sin-



TOP: Cedar Creek softball held a pre-game ceremony Friday, April 8 in observance of Teacher Appreciation Night. LEFT: Bastrop’s Jada Canada coming around third base for the opening run of Friday’s district matchup. Photos by Corey Smith

gle brought in Jazmin Martinez, who opened the bottom of the fourth with a walk, while Medina’s single scored Knudsen as Bastrop’s lead was cut to 11-2.

After a quiet top of the fifth, Bastrop’s bats came back to life in the sixth inning, as Christina Salinas, Fallon Hall and Laicey Sullivant each collected base hits and runs scored to surge the Lady Bears to a 14-2 advantage.

The game would conclude in the same score, as the Eagles were held without a run in the bottom half of the sixth, and Bastrop locked in its second district win in the span of eight days.

Finding themselves very much in the playoff mix with a 4-6 league record, the Lady Bears face Connally and Pflugerville this week. Thursday night’s trip to Pflugerville will be an interesting test, as the Lady Bears aim to hand the Panthers (9-1) their second league loss of the 2022 campaign. Earlier this season, on March 22, Bastrop fell to Pflugerville in a competitive 9-6 game.

The Eagles, meanwhile, still contending at the middle of the district standings with a 3-7 league record, need a strong finish to secure a state playoff berth.

Connally presents a winnable matchup in the regular season finale April 22, as Cedar Creek won the season’s first head-to-head by a 17-1 final on March 29. But the Eagles may also have to defeat Pflugerville (Apr. 12), Manor (Apr. 14) and Weiss (Apr. 19) – each currently planted in a playoff spot – in order to secure a top-four district position.

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SOCCKER ...

From Page 10

Soccer Assist founder and board chair, Dr. Aaron Rochlen, explained Friday that the newly-installed mini-pitch is the fourth of its kind that his charitable organization has been a part of.

By converting what Bastrop ISD superintendent Barry Edwards described as an “underutilized tennis court,” into a state-of-the art mini-pitch, Bastrop area youth now have another safe place to play.

“The love and appreciation for this sport that you have in your eyes and in your hearts, we feel it. And it makes it worth every single effort and dollar that everybody put into this,” said Rochlen.

Rochlen’s organization, which was founded seven years ago, holds the organizational mission to “help underserved, deserving youth participate in well-organized soccer leagues,” according to Soccer Assist’s website.

Rochlen, who grew up outside of Detroit, Michigan, states that with soccer’s growing popularity, “...we need more places for kids of all ages and all skill levels to play without being supervised or yelled at by people like

me, and parents, and coaches.”

“Well, we’re not in the inner city. But, the inner-city basketball court... that’s where skills developed,” said Rochlen. “That’s where teamwork, and technical and tactical (development), and all this stuff happened. So this is both a community – a mental and physical health story – and a soccer story.”

Rochlen then handed it over to Abena Asante of St. David’s Foundation, who introduced a key part of her role with the organization as “developing strategies for programs and grant making in the area of rural health.”

“As a foundation, we believe that there should not be any barriers preventing any individual community from achieving optimal health,” said Asante.

“In the work that we do, partnering with so many people – individuals, organizations, business, communities – we are looking at ways in which we can eliminate some of these barriers to improve health and wellbeing,” continued Asante. “Having access to a safe place to play helps increase play equity.”

Asante would subsequently announce a wholehearted ‘thank you’

to Bastrop High School varsity girls soccer coach and assistant athletic coordinator, Leslie Rangel, for making the project possible.

“Behind every successful project, there is somebody,” said Asante. “And that somebody here is Leslie Rangel.”

Earlier in the program, Bastrop ISD superintendent Edwards stated that when Rangel approached him with the idea for the project a couple years prior, it was “probably the easiest decision (he’s) made in about two years.”

“It just made perfect sense,” said Edwards to kick off Friday’s opening. “It took care of so many things that we need here in Bastrop and that we aspire for for our kids.”

“For our community as a whole, the main and the biggest thing is it gives more people the opportunity to have a space to play soccer,” said Rangel in a phone interview with the Bastrop County Insider last week.

“All skill levels, anybody who wants to be a part of it and doesn’t necessarily have a team or access, our middle school kids who are in the PE programs... it is another venue for people to fall in love with the game,” she explained.

With an intense, com-



TOP: Abena Asante of St. David’s Foundation explained Friday that a focus of her organization is eliminating barriers that prevent communities from achieving optimal health. BOTTOM: Soccer Assist founder and board chair, Dr. Aaron Rochlen, speaks to a packed house at the grand opening of the Bastrop Middle School mini-pitch on Friday, April 8.

Photos by Corey Smith

munity-wide passion for soccer that was evidenced by the opening’s enthusiastic turnout, and a relative scarcity of field space in Bastrop, Rangel confirms that Bastrop was an ideal recipient for

such a facility. “We have the fields off of 95 that we use for (Bastrop Youth Soccer Organization) and our select teams, but those are really the only soccer spaces that we have

in this community,” said Rangel. “We have a couple park spaces that we utilize, but we need to grow soccer in this community. And I think this is a step in the right direction for that.”

OVERTON ...

From Page 11

Wherever he ended up on the field, Overton was productive. Sometimes a pure speed rusher off the edge, other times a run enforcer at the center of Bastrop’s defensive line, Overton amassed 10 sacks, an interception, and an eye-popping 27 tackles for loss over his final two varsity campaigns.

Saving one of his best high school performances for what he considered to be the biggest game of his varsity career, Overton racked up six tackles, a tackle for loss, three hurries, half a sack, and a vital interception as Bastrop secured a 21-18 overtime win over East View on October 21 of this past season, in a game Overton said, “No one expected us to win.”

From there, the previously-winless Bears would secure three more consecutive victories to earn the team’s first playoff berth since 2018.

Overton isn’t resting on his high school accolades. “Getting this scholarship offer has prob-

ably made me look at everything that I’m doing wrong versus what I’m doing right,” said Overton. “Versus saying, ‘Okay, I got this scholarship and now I’m set. Now I’m where I want to be, I can just relax until summer now.’ No, getting this scholarship has really made me look at myself and see where my skill level actually is.”

With such love for the game, Overton doesn’t shy away from the fact that he strives to keep progressing in football – even beyond the college level. But his outlook is one of a man mature beyond his years.

He pursues football with every ounce of energy and effort he has. Overton also pursues academic excellence with everything he has.

“I’m really big on both. I’m 50-50 with both. I’m working on one just as I am the other, because I need both,” he explained.

“I’d rather have football. I’d love to say, ‘I’m an NFL player,’ over college. But at the same time, I’d also love to say, ‘I’m a clinical psychiatrist.’ So I’m going to work on both equally, as I should.”

VOTE ...

From Page 10

•Confined in jail or civilly committed, but otherwise eligible to vote

With the new laws, be sure to fill out the application completely. One of the new requirements is that you must include an ID number on the application. This can be your Texas Driver License number, your Personal ID number or the last four digits of your Social Security Number. The vast majority of registered voters in Texas have both numbers on their voter registration record, but if you are unsure which number to put – you can feel free to put both just to be safe. The law only requires that one of the numbers matches a number on your voter registration record.

Remember: you will need to put this ID number on your application as well as your ballot carrier envelope.

Change No. 2: Ballot Carrier Envelope

Once you complete your ballot, put it in

the white secrecy envelope and place it in the purple and white ballot carrier envelope. Do not seal the envelope yet.

There are several pieces of information that you must provide on your ballot carrier envelope before you seal the security flap. Just like you did on the application, you must put an ID number – your Texas Driver License, Personal ID number or the last four digits of your Social Security Number – in the space provided under the security flap of the envelope. This is similar to showing your photo ID if you vote in person. It ensures that the person who was supposed to vote the ballot is, in fact, the person who completed and sent the ballot. These numbers are required in order for your vote to count.

After you fill this part out, you seal the envelope. The flap protects your personal information as it goes through the mail!

Be sure to sign the carrier envelope. If an assistant or witness helped

you with the ballot and carrier envelope, they must fill out the section of the envelope with their information completely.

Please make sure to mail your ballot with plenty of time for the election office to receive it. Ballots must be received by 5 p.m. the day after Election Day and postmarked no later than 7 p.m. Election Day to be counted.

Change No. 3: Correcting your Ballot Carrier Envelope to make your vote count

In the past, if you made a mistake when voting by mail, your ballot was rejected, with few — if any — opportunities for a second chance. With the new laws, you have the ability to correct a problem within six days after Election Day. You can also vote in person instead of by mail, if you are aware of a problem by Election Day.

Adding a phone number or e-mail address to your carrier envelope is the best way for county officials to contact you regarding any

issues with your ballot. The Early Voting Ballot Board will reach out if you provide your contact information on your mail ballot materials.

Many voters forgot to provide a personal ID number on the carrier in the March election. Correcting this is as easy as:

•Going to your elections office to certify your ID information within six days after Election Day;

•Going to www.votetexas.gov, and click ‘Track My Ballot’ to confirm your ID information within six days of Election Day; or

•Voting in person by the time polls close on Election Day.

By remembering a few key changes, you can make sure your vote will count. Fill everything out completely. Look over your application and ballot carrier envelope carefully. Within a few elections, you will know exactly what to do. Visit our website, www.bastropvotes.org or give us a call, 512-581-7160, for more information.

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