



COVID-19 figures begin to dwindle in county

State health leaders reorganize data reports

By Lew K. Cohn
Managing Editor
The Highlander

Burnet County coronavirus numbers are trending in the right direction.

On Aug. 8, Burnet County had a total of 552 confirmed COVID-19 cases, including 388 active cases, according to the Department of State Health Services (DSHS) dashboard.

As of Thursday, Sept. 17, the number of active cases in Burnet

County had dropped to just 33 — a decrease of more than 91 percent — while the number of total cases had risen to 681.

Meanwhile, within a 16-day window from Aug. 28 through Sept. 14, there were 96 new tests in Burnet County resulting in just 43 new positive cases — a positivity rate of 4.6 percent for that period. The overall positivity rate for Burnet County (beginning with the first reported case in March)

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“Our overall number of active cases has trended down along with the number of new cases, and we hope they continue to drop as the virus runs its course.”

— James Oakley
Burnet County Judge



Left: In May, the state hosted free COVID-19 testing at the Marble Falls Fire Rescue fire hall.

Abbott eases virus rules

From staff reports

Businesses in Burnet and Llano County will be able to expand to 75 percent capacity beginning Monday, Sept. 21, after Texas Gov. Greg Abbott announced easing of some coronavirus restrictions Thursday.

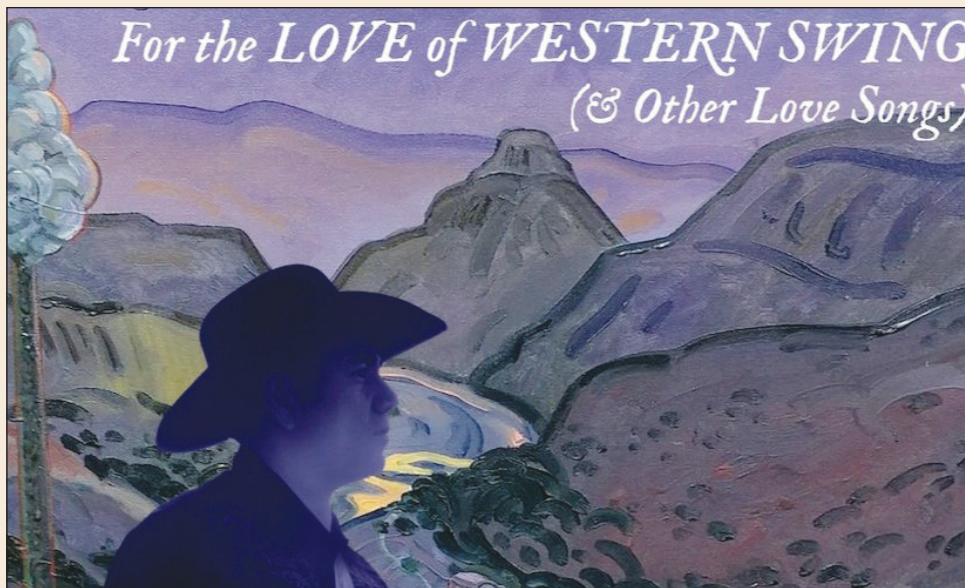
Hospitals in the area also will be able to offer elective procedures once again and nursing homes may be able to reopen Thursday, Sept. 24, for visitations by people the state Health and Human Services Commission deems “essential family caregivers.”

“With the medical advancements we have made and the personal hygiene practices we have adopted, Texans have shown that we can address both the health and safety concerns of COVID-19 while also taking careful, measured steps to restore the livelihoods that Texans depend on,” Abbott said. “Achieving both goals requires safe standards that contain COVID-19, emphasize protecting the most vulnerable, and establish clear

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jAm Session

Contributed
The title track of John Arthur Martinez’ 14th album “For the Love of Western Swing (& Other Love Songs)” recently received the 2020 Western Swing Song of the Year award from the Academy of Western Artists.



Award crowns Martinez the ‘King of Swing’

By Lew K. Cohn
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The Highlander

The best songwriters in the world have it — the ability to capture the essence of a moment in time, great or small, in music and lyrics.

For John Arthur Martinez, that moment was a side trip he and his band made to the famed Bob Wills Museum of Western Swing in Turkey, Texas.

His ode to that pilgrimage, “For the Love of Western Swing,” has garnered the Cottonwood Shores resident a coveted honor — the 2020 Academy of Western Artists Award for Western Swing Song of the

Year. The awards ceremony was held Thursday, Aug. 13, at the Radisson Hotel Fort Worth North-Fossil Creek.

Other artists nominated in the category included Susie Blue and the Lonesome Fellas for “Spadella,” Rod Moag for “There’s Not a Cow in Texas,” Tommy Thomsen for “Going Away Party,” and Carlos Washington for “Little Bit of Texas.”

The winning composition is the title track of Martinez’ 14th album, “For the Love of Western Swing (& Other Love Songs).” In the song, Martinez belts out vocals and rhythm

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Postal service addresses mail security

By Connie Swinney
Staff Writer
The Highlander

United States Postal Service officials have enhanced their public outreach as concerns about mail-in voting security have reached fever pitch on social media platforms and the national stage.

Coronavirus concerns have shrouded the Nov. 3 general election in suspicion about USPS’ ability to handle a ballot influx in the state and on the local level. However, officials said they are fortifying efforts to retain public confidence.

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Contributed
Motorists stopped to take images of an unattended USPS collection box Sept. 11 on Second Street just west of Avenue H and shared concerns on social media about security of the mail-in election process.

Llano Co. picks EMS provider

By Phil Reynolds
Contributing Writer
The Highlander

Llano County is another step closer to reaching an agreement with Hamilton County Emergency Medical Service to provide ambulances after the first of the year.

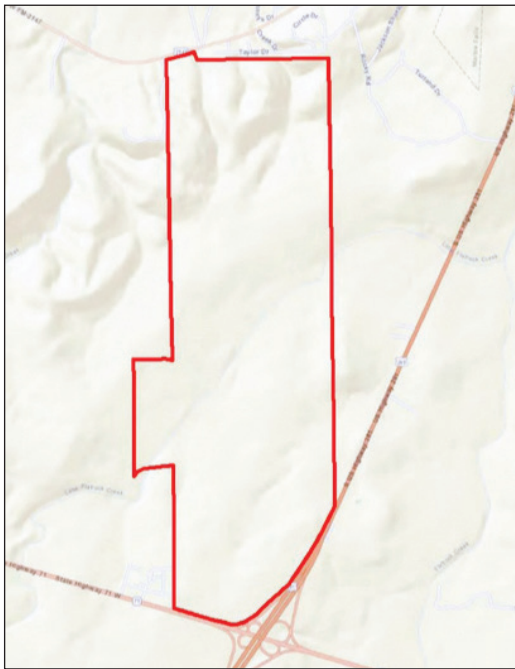
County commissioners Monday voted to extend an interlocal agreement to the hospital district in Hamilton, 89 miles up State Hwy. 16 and U.S. Hwy 84. But the Hamilton EMS operation also covers Mills County (Goldthwaite) and San Saba County, which is only 17 miles north of Llano.

Commissioners also approved a budget and tax rate for the coming fiscal year and, with thunderstorms on the

EMS ... see Page 8

Contributed

The planned Thunder Rock development — in the northwest intersection of Texas 71 and U.S. 281 is expected to break ground by the end of the year with a sports complex planned in the first phase, along with homes.



MFalls council thunders ahead on development

By Connie Swinney
Staff Writer
The Highlander

From the tax-funding process to seating a board, Marble Falls City Council members forged ahead Sept. 15 to clear the way for a development on over a thousand acres at the intersection of U.S. 281 and Texas 71 in the southend of town.

During a regular meeting, the council approved the creation of a tax increment reinvestment zone

(TIRZ) — a funding mechanism that will re-allocate a portion of the tax collections within the planned Thunder Rock subdivision for amenities of the development such as proposed sports complex (phase 1) and public recreation center (phase 3).

The newly-created TIRZ No. 2 is aimed at jumpstarting construction of phase 1 of the development, which is a portion of approximately 1,073 acres.

Other overall development features include: 1,966 single family residential homes; 539 multi-family units; 225 active adult units; 75,000 square feet of commercial development; 26.3-acre sport complex; 10.3-acre tract of land for recreational center and municipal use; and 20,000 square foot recreation center shell building with all exterior building and grounds improvements to

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Phoenix Center groundbreaking date set

By Lew K. Cohn
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Just as the mythological phoenix was reborn, so too has the Phoenix Center started its own journey towards rebirth with the construction of a new facility in Horseshoe Bay.

The non-profit will hold a groundbreaking ceremony at 9 a.m. Wednesday, Sept. 30, to officially

kick off the new construction of a 7,380-square-foot, state-of-the-art mental health counseling center — the first phase of building a flagship trauma-informed campus in Central Texas, which also will include an equine therapy center and therapeutic camp facilities.

“Meeting the critical mental health care needs of our community at our current location is an ever-in-

creasing challenge,” said founder and executive director Sarah Garrett.

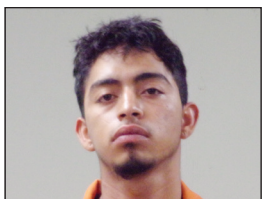
“Due to our current space limitations, coupled with rapid growth in the number of children and families in need of mental health care, we have been searching for the ideal site for our expanded future location. Our new campus will mean

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Contributed
Phoenix Center officials released a rendering of the proposed new facility in Horseshoe Bay. Groundbreaking is scheduled for Sept. 30.

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Feds nab alleged border smuggler

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HSB fire captain honored for 15 years of service

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Lady Mustangs volleyball opens season

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