

BUZZ

January 2026



GOVERNOR GREG ABBOTT reappointed **SONJA CLARK**, the leader of **BELL'S MILITARY AND COMMERCIAL AIRCRAFT ASSEMBLY AND DELIVERY CENTER** to the **AEROSPACE AND AVIATION COMMITTEE**. Sonja Clark, of Amarillo, is the site leader of Bell

Textron's Military and Commercial Aircraft Assembly and Delivery Center. Previously, she had a career in health care as a registered nurse and administrator. Her shift to the aerospace sector occurred in 2006. Since then, she has held multiple leadership roles in Environmental, Health & Safety, Human Resources, and Integrated Operations. She is a board member of the Amarillo Area Foundation, West Texas A&M University (WTAMU) Foundation, Texas Association of Community Colleges, Amarillo Chamber of Commerce, High Plains Food Bank, and the Laura W. Bush Institute for Women's Health. Additionally, she is a former board member and former president of the Panhandle Texas Nurses Association and former board chair of the Northwest Texas Healthcare System. Clark received a Bachelor of Science in Nursing and a Master of Science in Nursing Administration from WTAMU. Her term is set to expire on Sept. 1, 2029. The Committee assists in the state's economic development efforts to recruit and retain aerospace and aviation jobs and investments in Texas.



THE BRIDGE Executive Director **SHELLY BOHANNON** announced **THE BRIDGE CAPITAL CAMPAIGN** and expansion of services for Texas Panhandle kids. "Generous donations to the project have been secured over the past 18 months and we are well on our way

to raising \$10M for a new home for our agency," shared Bohannon. "The new building will accommodate expanded medical and mental health services for our Texas Panhandle children experiencing abuse, including co-housing space for Amarillo Police Department's Special Victims Unit and Child Protection Investigators, and greatly expands training capacity for child abuse

prevention. The Bridge's current location has been a wonderful home; however, there were just six staff members when it opened. Today, due to increased demand and expansion of services, 19 employees have maxed out the building's capacity." Land for the new building has been generously donated by Harrington Regional Medical Campus. Groundbreaking for the project will be scheduled for Spring 2026. Donors are welcome to contribute to the project and all gifts are tax deductible. Visit www.bridgecac.org to make a gift, or mail your donation to: The Bridge, 804 Quail Creek Drive, Amarillo, TX 79124. The Bridge opened its doors in 1989 as the first Children's Advocacy Center in the state of Texas, serving the 26 counties in the Panhandle area. Each year, close to 1,000 children who experience sexual or physical abuse and their non-offending family members find a safe haven at The Bridge. The Bridge offers educational services to children, teachers, law enforcement, medical service providers, and faith communities to further the prevention of physical and sexual child abuse.

KAMP HOTELS is excited to announce the acquisition of the **COURTYARD BY MARRIOTT AMARILLO DOWNTOWN**, located in the Fisk Building on historic Polk Street. This addition marks another major milestone in the growth of the Amarillo-based ownership and management group and brings their hotel count in Amarillo and Lubbock to six. The Fisk Building is one of Amarillo's most significant high-rises, originally constructed in the mid-1920s during the oil boom. Designed by renowned architect Guy Carlander, the 11-story, steel-frame structure was built to house doctors and dentists before becoming home to the First National Bank and later Zales Jewelers. In 2011, the historic building was transformed into the 107-room Courtyard by Marriott. In 2013, it was honored with a Texas Historical Marker and listed on the National Register of Historic Places. "This acquisition means a great deal to us because the Fisk tells the story of our past while continuing to shape our city's future," said **KEVIN NELSON** of KAMP Hotels. "As part of a group of local investors, we are proud to say this wonderful hotel will now be locally owned and locally managed." KAMP Hotels and 39:23 Management now own and operate 506 rooms across Amarillo and Lubbock, employing over 140 team members. In addition to the Downtown Courtyard, their portfolio includes Tru by Hilton Amarillo West, Hyatt Place Amarillo West, Home2 Suites by Hilton Amarillo West, My Place Hotel - Amarillo West/Medical Center, and My Place Hotel - Lubbock.

Several **WEST TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY OPERA STUDENTS** will compete this month in a national competition named for the former director of the **WT SCHOOL OF MUSIC**. Two students will compete in the graduate contest and seven will compete in the music theatre classification Jan. 8 at the National Opera Association's **ROBERT HANSEN COLLEGIATE OPERA SCENES COMPETITION** in Boston. Local students competing: **KYLER HILTON**, a senior music major from Canyon; **CADENCE BROWN**, a sophomore music education major from Canyon; **KELTON HARBISON**, a senior music education major from Canyon; and **C.J. HERNANDEZ**, a freshman music education major from Amarillo. The contest, which was founded in 2009, was named for Hansen in honor of his 25 years of service as NOA's executive director. Robert Hansen, who was Regents Professor of Music, retired in 2024 as director of the School of Music.

Current Potter County Judge **NANCY TANNER** recently announced her retirement. On the ballot to fill that position: **JERRI GLOVER** (Dem) and **MICHELLE EGGLESTON** (Rep). Those vying for Potter County Commissioner Precinct 2: **JEFF RAEF** (Rep) and **BLAIR SCHAFFER** (Rep). And for Potter County Commissioner Precinct 4: **WARREN COBLE** (Dem), **TIMOTHY GASSAWAY** (Dem) and **JOSE PEREZ** (Rep). In Randall County, **JUDGE JAMES ANDERSON** is set to retire. There are five candidates for his seat as Randall – Judge, County Court at Law No. 1: **CLAIRE HAMKER GRAMMER**, **QUENTON TODD HATTER**, **PAUL HERRMANN**, **DALLAS MCKIBBEN**, and **ANDRW CALEB SMITH** (all Rep). For State Representative District 86: the candidates are **JAMIE HAYNES** (Rep), **HOLLY JEFFREYS** (Rep), and **CULLIN KNUTSON** (Dem). For State Representative District 87 the race will be between **CAROLINE FAIRLY** (Rep) and **DIANA LOYA** (Dem). For U.S. Representative District 13, the candidates are **RONNY JACKSON** (Rep), **CHASITY WEDGEWORTH** (Rep), and **MARK NAIR** (Dem). Last day to register to vote in this election is February 2. Early voting opens February 17 and closes February 27. November 3 is the general election.

TEXAS A&M FOREST SERVICE awards \$17 million to Texas fire departments and Rural volunteer units receive fire and rescue

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equipment funding. Thanks to a historic investment by the 89th Texas Legislature, Texas A&M Forest Service approved an additional \$17.6 million in funding to award 687 fire and rescue equipment grants and 66 dry hydrant grants to Texas volunteer fire departments through the Rural Volunteer Fire Department Assistance Program on Dec. 5. The Rural Volunteer Fire Department Assistance Program was established by Texas House Bill 2604 in 2001 to provide grants to rural volunteer fire departments for essential firefighting equipment and training. Since its onset, the program has awarded over \$500 million in grants to Texas fire departments. The latest funding was the second phase in distributing over \$192 million to Texas volunteer fire departments, following an appropriation approved by the 89th Texas Legislature for departments that submitted funding requests on or before Nov. 7, 2024. Texas fire departments are eligible to apply for grants and assistance through FireConnect, a Texas A&M Forest Service database that provides a streamlined grant portal for the agency and fire departments. Among the area counties receiving funding: **WHEELER, RANDALL, LIPSCOMB, OLDHAM, CHILDRESS, PARMER, HUTCHINSON, GRAY, LUBBOCK, SWISHER, ROBERTS, HALE, POTTER, PARMER, and CARSON**.

WELCOME PARDNER announced that their November 2025 RANDOM ACTS OF KINDNESS recipient was **INTERIM POLICE CHIEF JIMMY JOHNSON**. Their December 2025 FIRST RESPONDER OF DISTINCTION was awarded to **APD ASSISTANT POLICE CHIEF JOE LOFTUS**. Also receiving the December 2025 RANDOM ACTS OF KINDNESS award was Assistant City Manager **FLOYD HARTMAN**. He retired end of 2025.



◀ Left to Right:
Interim Police Chief
Jimmy Johnson;
APD Assistant Police
Chief Joe Loftus;
Floyd Hartman