

# BUZZ

April 2026

The **AMARILLO CITY COUNCIL** approved a lease agreement for the **AMARILLO ZOO** between the city and **AMARILLO ZOO & SANCTUARY, INC. (AZS)**. According to a news release, the agreement establishes a long-term partnership to enhance and modernize the zoo while preserving it as a city-owned public asset. The city retains ownership of the zoo, the land and the animals. Amarillo Zoo & Sanctuary, Inc. will manage daily operations with an emphasis on conservation, education and community programming. **STEPHANIE BRADY**, Executive Director and Founder of **WILD WEST WILDLIFE REHABILITATION CENTER (WWWRC)**, has been instrumental in the agreement. Since 2016 the nonprofit WWWRC has cared for thousands of injured or abandoned wild animals in the Texas Panhandle. The new vision would establish the zoo as a nonprofit, and as such be able to fundraise, unlock private donations and seek grant funding to expand habitats, and tell the stories of the animals in a way that connects people to conservation.



Kim Hill

**FIRSTBANK SOUTHWEST ("FBSW")** announced the retirement of **KIM HILL**, Pampa Market President, marking the close of an extraordinary 46-year career dedicated to community banking and service across the Texas Panhandle. Hill began her career on April 1, 1980, at First National Bank of Perryton, which would later evolve into what is now FirstBank Southwest. She steadily advanced through nearly every area of the bank, including bookkeeping, consumer and commercial lending, and mortgage services. She was named Pampa Market President in 2012, a role in which she led with a relationship-first approach that reflected the core values of FirstBank Southwest. "Kim Hill's career is truly a living history of FirstBank Southwest," said **ANDY MARSHALL**, FBSW President and CEO. Following Hill's retirement, **KEVIN HUNT**, Senior Vice President and Commercial Lender, will assume leadership of the Pampa market.



Andy Marshall



Kevin Hunt



**JOHN S. DENTON, CLTC** of Amarillo, has qualified for Life membership in the **MILLION DOLLAR ROUND TABLE**, the Premier Association of Financial Professionals, a coveted career milestone that marks 10 continuous years of **MDRT** membership. MDRT members set a high bar for professional knowledge, client service and ethical standards. John is a 29-year member of MDRT and three times **NORTHWESTERN MUTUAL FORUM** for Top Agents.



"**THE NEXT WAVE: Celebrating Young Profess10nals**" is a bi-annual award for young professionals (under 40 years old at the time of nomination) that are employed in the AAF 10th District. The **AMERICAN ADVERTISING FEDERATION TENTH DISTRICT** represents Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, and Texas and is part of the American Advertising Federation — the nation's only trade association representing all segments of the advertising industry. Sponsors for the Next Wave will be recognized at the awards ceremony. The award and induction ceremonies will take place in Dallas, Texas on April 10, 2026 as part of the annual conference. Among the recipients is **STEPHANIE PRICE** of Canyon, Senior Manager, Digital Marketing & Ecommerce at **HISTORIC HOTELS OF AMERICA & HISTORIC HOTELS WORLDWIDE**, Canyon, TX Advertising, public relations, effective communication, event planning, and team building are among Stephanie Price's core strengths. She holds a B.A. in Advertising and Public Relations from West Texas A&M University and an M.A. in Public Relations from Kent State University. She also completed a certification in Hospitality and Tourism Management from Florida Atlantic University and earned her Certified Tourism Executive designation through the Texas Travel Alliance. As Senior Manager of Marketing and Ecommerce, she leads digital strategy for Historic Hotels of America and Historic Hotels Worldwide, overseeing annual marketing plans, ecommerce initiatives, and revenue growth for more than 600 historic hotels around the globe. Before joining Historic Hotels, she spent 11 years as Director of Marketing for the Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum and TEXAS Outdoor Musical, operating under The Cultural Foundation of the Texas Panhandle. With over two decades of involvement in the American Advertising Federation, Stephanie has served in key local, district, and national leadership roles, including 2024–2025 Chair of the Council of Governors and 2021–2022 Governor for District 10. Her work has earned numerous honors, including WTAMU's Communications Hall of Fame Rising Star (2023), AAF Governor of the Year (2022), Texas Travel Alliance Rising Star (2018), and multiple district, state, and local awards.



State Representative **CAROLINE FAIRLY** announced the launch of the inaugural **PANHANDLE STUDENT LEADERSHIP PROGRAM**, an immersive educational experience designed to inspire the next generation

of civic leaders in House District 87. The program, scheduled for May 4, 2026, will bring select seventh and eighth-grade Texas history students from across the district to Austin for a firsthand look at state government in action at the Texas Capitol. The Panhandle Student Leadership Program aims to spark civic curiosity and provide students with a fun, engaging, and memorable experience exploring how Texas government works. "This program is about giving students the opportunity to see that government isn't something distant, but something they can be part of," said Rep. Caroline Fairly. "We want young people in the Panhandle to understand that they can play a role in shaping the future of our state." Participating school districts will select two students through an essay contest responding to the prompt: "If you were a state legislator, what bill idea would you introduce in the state of Texas?"

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From the pool of submissions, a select group of students will be chosen to present their "bill" during the Capitol visit. "Encouraging students to think critically about real issues facing Texas is one of the best ways to develop leadership skills," Fairly added. "I'm excited to hear their ideas and give them the experience of presenting in a setting where real policy decisions are made." School districts interested in participating are asked to notify Rep. Fairly's Chief of Staff, Ellie Berry, at 512-463-0470 to begin coordination. "This is the first year of what I hope will become a lasting tradition," said Fairly. "Our district is full of bright, capable young leaders, and I can't wait to welcome them to the Capitol." *AW*

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Buzz 4/26