

BUZZ

June 2026



FIRSTBANK SOUTHWEST ("FBSW") has been selected as a recipient of the **CORNERSTONE AWARD** by the **TEXAS BANKERS FOUNDATION** for its Faith. Family. Bank. Fund, a program rooted in disaster recovery and ongoing community and employee support. The award was presented last month at the Texas Bankers Association's 141th Annual Convention during a special awards luncheon. The Faith. Family. Bank. Fund was established in 2023 following a devastating Perryton tornado to provide immediate, locally managed financial assistance to those facing sudden hardship. While originally created to support community recovery efforts, the fund has since evolved into a sustainable, employee-driven program that also assists FirstBank Southwest team members during times of personal crisis—reflecting the bank's long-standing commitment to serving both its communities and its people. **ANDY MARSHALL** is President and CEO of FirstBank Southwest.

A trio of **WEST TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY** students from the College of Engineering advanced to nationals in a surveying competition. **KARLA BERKSHIRE**, a senior civil engineering major from Wichita Falls, **DYLAN FURMAN**, a senior engineering major from Amarillo, and **KASTON HAWKINS**, a senior civil engineering major from Fredericksburg, won first place at the American Society of Civil Engineers Utility Engineering & Surveying Institute's regional surveying competition. This is the first time a WT

From left: Karla Berkshire, Kaston Hawkins and Dylan Furman



Dr. Kenneth Leitch

team has won the contest and advanced to the national competition, to be held June 25 to 27 at Fairmont State University in Fairmont, West Virginia. Designed to test technical precision, field expertise, teamwork and problem-solving under pressure, the competition draws some of the region's top emerging engineering talent. **DR. KENNETH LEITCH** is WT professor of civil engineering. For Amarillo-based **FURMAN LAND SURVEYORS AND GEOSPATIAL DATA INC. (GDI)**, the win carries special meaning. Hawkins and Furman both work for the firm, and Dylan Furman represents the third generation of surveyors in a family legacy that stretches back decades.



Carl Beard



Jason Armstrong

Located at the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA's) **PANTEX PLANT** near Amarillo, the **HIGH EXPLOSIVES SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING (HESE)** facility was completed recently and will consolidate nuclear-based activities like weapons maintenance and surveillance that were previously performed across 15 World War II-era facilities. Pantex is the nation's primary site for the final assembly or disassembly of nuclear weapons, while HESE refers to the new facility within Pantex that brings high explosives functions together from multiple aging buildings. HESE consolidates high explosives staging, laboratory work and diagnostic technologies under one roof to support Pantex's weapons maintenance and surveillance mission. Pantex will begin a phased demolition of the buildings being replaced by the High Explosives Science and Engineering facility. Along with assembly and disassembly, Pantex as a site is used for testing and evaluating nuclear weapons in support of the NNSA stockpile stewardship program. That includes performing research and development in conventional high explosives, serving as an interim storage site for plutonium

pits removed from dismantled weapons. Pantex Production Operations Division Director **CARL BEARD**, in a statement, called HESE another upgrade in its continued investment in modern technology, adding, "The facility serves as another critical piece in fortifying Pantex's role within the Nuclear Security Enterprise." Pantex field office manager **JASON ARMSTRONG** added in his own statement that the facility will offer "new and innovative ways to accommodate and meet production demands." The announcement comes at a volatile time globally, notably as the United States continues its military operation in Iran to



Kelly Beierschmitt

as it says deter the Middle Eastern nation from having nuclear weapons and to limit its enriched uranium. PanTeXas Deterrence President and General Manager is **KELLY BEIERSCHMITT**. "The completion of Pantex's new HESE facility is a major win for the

Texas Panhandle and our national security," said **REP. RONNY JACKSON** (TX-13), who since taking office, has secured \$136.36 million in federal funding for the project through the National Defense Authorization Act and annual appropriations process. Funding secured includes: FY2025 - \$15 million, FY2024 - \$101.36 million, FY2023 - \$20 million.



KENNETH H. COOPER, MD, MPH, (who recently turned 95 and still works out at least five times weekly) has spent six decades teaching others the value of staying fit. Recently he passed on his research and lessons

to **TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY HEALTH SCIENCES CENTER**. **TEDD L. MITCHELL**, Texas Tech University System Chancellor Emeritus, couldn't be happier. TTUHSC was chosen over a number of universities

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Tedd Mitchell

as the institute's home because it graduates more health care professionals annually than any other in the state and has a varied range of programs, including pharmacy, nursing and public health.

The Institute will be housed in Dallas where the university already has a strong presence, and **LAURA DeFINA**, remains the executive director, a role she's held since 2014. Mitchell has known

Cooper for more than three decades: did part of his medical residency at Cooper Clinic and eventually became president and CEO. (When he left in 2010 to become president of TTUHSC, he remained on The Cooper Institute board).

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