

BUZZ

October 2025



BOWDEN JONES, JR., Chief Consumer Officer, of **FIRSTBANK SOUTHWEST ("FBSW")** in Amarillo, has been appointed to the **AMERICAN BANKERS ASSOCIATION'S EMERGING LEADERS COUNCIL** for the 2025-2026 association year. The Council is focused on

identifying, connecting, developing, and engaging, the current and next generation of bankers to lead the industry, guiding ABA in the creation of new opportunities in leadership development, networking, advocacy, financial literacy, and industry promotion. Jones has more than 25 years of banking experience with a focus on consumer/retail banking and executive leadership. He attended Wayland Baptist University where he earned both a Bachelor's and a Master's degree in Business Administration. Jones currently serves on the boards of the Amarillo Area Foundation and the Don and Sybil Harrington Foundation. He has previously served on the Amarillo College Foundation and Northside Toy Drive boards, chaired Leadership Amarillo, and contributed his time to numerous other boards and organizations. **ANDY MARSHALL** is FBSW President and CEO.



LEADERSHIP AMARILLO & CANYON (LAC) announced the appointment of **MISSY MACON** as its next Executive Director. Since 1981, Leadership Amarillo & Canyon has strengthened the community by providing leadership development opportunities for

individuals who desire to make a difference. Each year, through monthly sessions, the program (August-May) introduces participants to leadership skills, networking, community awareness, and social consciousness. Macon is a graduate of West Texas A&M University with both bachelor's and master's degrees in communications, she has spent nearly two decades in leadership, education, and nonprofit development. Most recently, she served as Director of Resources at Fairly Group, and prior to that as Leadership Coordinator and Program Director for Rogers LEAD WT at WTAMU, where she mentored students, managed community service initiatives, and coordinated leadership conferences.

LOUISE RICE, DNP, RN, has been named regional dean of the **TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY HEALTH SCIENCES CENTER SCHOOL OF NURSING** on the Amarillo campus. TTUHSC School of Nursing Dean **HOLLY WEI, PH.D., MBA**, said



Rice brings more than three decades of nursing and health care education experience to the role and is deeply committed to advancing nursing practice and student success in the region. "Dr. Rice brings both heart and expertise to this role," Wei said. "She has a deep

understanding of the unique strengths and needs of Amarillo and I am confident she will inspire excellence among our students, faculty and community partners." Her work in health care education began in 2011 and continued at several institutions of higher education until she joined the TTUHSC School of Nursing faculty in 2021. "Nursing education is especially important here in the Panhandle because our communities depend on local providers for their care," Rice said. "With fewer large medical centers nearby, having well-prepared nurses right here at home makes all the difference. When we educate nurses in the Panhandle, we're not only building a stronger health care workforce—we're also shaping professionals who understand the unique needs of our region and who are committed to caring for their neighbors, families and friends." The School of Nursing at Amarillo prepares nursing students to meet the challenges of today's complex health care environment with multiple BSN degree paths available.



Texas House Speaker Dustin Burrows has appointed **REP. CAROLINE FAIRLY** to the newly-formed Committee on Civil Discourse & Freedom of Speech in Higher Education. The committee's purpose is clear: to protect free expression and religious liberty on Texas

campuses and to foster an environment where every student and professor can engage in open, respectful dialogue. This effort honors the legacy of Charlie Kirk, whose life's work was dedicated to defending the right to speak, to listen, and to live out one's faith without fear. Fairly said "Civil discourse and the protection of free speech are not only vital to higher education but to the strength of our democracy."



CLAUDIA STUART is the author of several books and textbooks and is an award-winning poet, this year releasing her latest, "Poetry, Prose & Penguins," which she not only wrote but also illustrated. Fascinated by penguins, her penguin art has been featured in several

venues, galleries and exhibitions. Stuart now has a series of children's books featuring Albie, an adorable penguin who has many adventures, traveling the world. He is the epitome of love and happiness, strength and courage. The books are available from Amazon. Claudia is a graduate of WTAMU with a Master of Arts degree in Social Science and a Bachelor of Science degree in Sociology.



UNDERWOOD LAW FIRM welcomed Associate Attorney **KORIE KOETTING** to the firm. Korie focuses her practice on business and corporate law, including business transactions, contract drafting, business development, and general corporate

litigation. Korie works closely with clients to craft clear, compliant employment policies and agreements, ensuring businesses—from startups to established companies—are protected under both state and federal law. She also has a strong foundation in transactional work, drafting a wide range of business documents, including consulting agreements, real estate contracts, and construction service agreements.

A \$5 million gift to **WEST TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY'S COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING** will establish a research arm that will advance vital innovations in the region. The gift, from a foundation that wishes to remain anonymous, is the largest single gift to date for WT's engineering college. It also pushes WT's historic **ONE WEST** comprehensive fundraising campaign over its \$175 million goal. The foundation's gift will help establish an institute for engineering research. Under the terms of the gift, the College will continue to secure a minimum of \$500,000 for each of the next 10 years in external research funding that will focus on opportunities and issues in the Panhandle region. The foundation then will contribute \$500,000 annually for use by the College to establish endowments to support its people, programs and places—the priorities of the One West campaign. **DR. EMILY HUNT** is dean of the College of Engineering and board member for the American Society for Engineering Education's Engineering Research Council. **DR. ANGELA SPAULDING**, vice president for research and dean of the Graduate School, said the "transformative" investment in the WT College of Engineering will enhance WT's ability to pursue research that addresses the most pressing challenges facing the Texas Panhandle and similar research worldwide.

In further news from **WEST TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY**, thousands of school employees throughout most of the western part of Texas and at small schools around the state now are eligible for 50-percent discounts for continuing their education at West Texas A&M University. The **WT EDUCATORS EXCELLENCE INITIATIVE** launched in June in the Region 16 Education Service Center in the Panhandle, offering half-off tuition and mandatory fees for full-time teachers, administrators, librarians, nurses, counselors or paraprofessionals, as well as employees of the ESC. Now, the initiative is expanding to Regions 17 (based in Lubbock) and 18 (based in Midland), as well as 1A and 2A school across the state. The initiative's expansion is expected to cover tens of thousands of full-time educators in the state. "WT began as a

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normal school, providing a training ground for educators, and the Terry B. Rogers College of Education and Social Sciences remains central to WT's mission," WT President **WALTER V. WENDLER** said. "The success of the WT Educators Excellence Initiative in Region 16 proves that rural teachers and other school employees are eager to further their education, and we are committed to assisting districts around the state in preparing their employees for the unique opportunities and challenges with smaller school districts." Prospective students from those ESCs or school districts may enroll for spring 2026 classes in undergraduate courses or through the WT Graduate School. Students interested in pursuing a doctorate in educational leadership can apply to join the January 2027 cohort.

The **AMARILLO AREA BEEF COMMUNITY** recently presented a check for \$100,907 to the **SNACK PAK 4 KIDS (SP4K) BEEF FUND**. One hundred percent of the money raised will provide high-quality beef protein to food-insecure students through the Snack Pak 4 Kids® weekend backpack program. The check was presented at the seventh annual Beef 4 Kids Classic golf tournament. Over \$800,000 has been raised since the tournament started. **DYRON HOWELL** is Founder and Executive Director of Snack Pak 4 Kids. The SP4K Beef Fund launched in October 2017. The program was designed to provide more protein over the weekend for hungry students in the Texas Panhandle. "Texas Cattle Feeders Association members are committed to caring for the communities that they live and work in," said **LINDSEY SAWIN**, TCFA Communications Manager. "The cattle feeding community is proud of the beef they produce and grateful for the opportunity to partner with Snack Pak to help ensure students across the Panhandle have beef in their backpacks each week."

The **MAVERICK BOYS & GIRLS CLUB OF AMARILLO** celebrated **PANDA CARES DAY**, a special event in collaboration with **PANDA EXPRESS**, dedicated to empowering youth through food, fun, and learning. As part of this year's celebration, Panda Express generously provided backpacks and books to Maverick members, ensuring that every child is prepared and supported as they headed into the school year. The celebration continued with Panda Express serving an exciting, freshly prepared meal for all Club members, highlighting their commitment to nourishing both body and mind.

BUZZ

October 2025 *continued*

The **AMARILLO HARLEY OWNERS GROUP** and **TRIPP'S HARLEY-DAVIDSON** present a \$12,000 check to the **TEXAS PANHANDLE FIRST RESPONDERS' MEMORIAL** to honor our area's fallen law enforcement, firefighters, and EMS personnel. "This is actually the second gift to the Memorial from Amarillo HOG and Tripp's Harley-Davidson," says **WENDI SWOPE**, who serves on the board tasked with constructing the First Responders Memorial. "These two philanthropic groups committed to helping make this project happen, and they are following through full force." Amarillo HOG and Tripp's Harley-Davidson donated \$5,000 to the Memorial following the 2024 High Plains Raffle Run and \$12,000 following the 2025 Raffle Run. Organizers of the Texas Panhandle First Responders Memorial will launch a final fundraising campaign this fall, with the goal of raising the final \$150,000 needed to begin construction on the Memorial, which will be located in downtown Amarillo at the corner of 11th and Polk Streets. More information and a secure payment portal for donations can be found at firstrespondersmemorial.org.

First responders from across the region are standing strong in honor of their fallen brothers and sisters with a new campaign aimed at raising funds to build the Texas Panhandle First Responders' Memorial. "We have teamed up with KAMR Local 4 to raise awareness and funds to begin construction on the Memorial this calendar year," explains Potter County **SHERIFF BRIAN THOMAS**.



"We are asking the Panhandle community to help us begin this worthwhile community project by considering a donation between now and First Responders Day on October 28th. To date, organizers of the Texas Panhandle First Responders' Memorial have raised more than \$850,000 with a goal of raising another \$150,000 by First Responders Day. "We are nearing the finish line and hope the community will give us that extra push we need to begin construction," says Regional Director **WILL HENDON** with Amarillo Medical Services. The Memorial will recognize first responders from 45 area first responding agencies who made the ultimate sacrifice while protecting their communities." This is a monument to true heroism and service honoring area firefighters, law enforcement, and EMS personnel who have died in the line of duty," says Amarillo Firefighter **JASON LOVE**. "It includes first responders we tragically lost back in 1882 through 2024." *AW*

▼ FAJS High Plains Raffle Run Check Presentation





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Time Varies on Ticket Selection**

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\$2,500 | Table for 8 | 7:00 PM

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This event is for 21+

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