

Superintendent Clay Rosenbaum spoke briefly about Edwards' service and how he came to be on the board, beginning with his attending meetings to learn more for himself how the board operates and sharing with Rosenbaum his motivation to "be part of the solution if there

tion."

A VATRE (Voter Approved Tax Rate Election) for Blanco ISD will be on the ballot in November. A contract between the school district and Blanco, Hays and Kendall counties for election services was approved. There was some discus-

request. There were a total of 5,271 votes in the election, with 2,967 voting against the proposal and 2,304 voting in favor of it.

The board voted to affirm support for the homestead exemption increase, which will be on the Nov. 4 ballot. The constitutional amend-

2025 bond projects. Joeris had the lowest fee and the highest vendor score of the three contractors who participated in the search.

The 2025 bond projects include construction of a new career and technical education building, renovations and improvements to agri-

which completed the projects from the 2022 bond.

Average daily attendance was also discussed with principals at each campus and they gave their goal for an attendance number for the year. The district receives funding based on the average daily attendance.

BPGCD board approves tax rate, budget; protest received on Johnson City permit

By Tricia Hartmann

Blanco Pedernales Groundwater Conservation District board members met Sept. 16 for a regular meeting.

Board president Jimmy Klepac opened the first public hearing and general manager Erik Kubinski said that one protest had been received for the Johnson City permit.

Greg Ellis, BPGCD legal counsel, shared the formal protest process. "The protestant has the burden of proof to demonstrate by showing that they would be personally affected in a way different from the general public, and that the protestant must raise a justiciable issue relevant to groundwater management."

Ellis said a preliminary hearing to determine party status would be conducted by a hearing examiner. Options for hearing examiners include retired Judge Steven Ables, former administrative law judges or the board itself.

If the protestant is found to have standing, an evidentiary hearing would follow.

The hearing examiner will produce a proposal for decision with findings of fact and conclusions of law, and the board will make a final decision based on this proposal. Parties may reach a settlement agreement during the process.

Ellis encouraged settlement discussions to avoid the expense of a contested case hearing. Eddie McCarthy, attorney for Johnson City, said he has attempted to contact the BPGCD attorney for the protestant, who is out of the country. McCarthy said they will try to reach a settlement when the protestant returns.

After the public hearing, board directors James Sultemeier of Precinct 2 and George Cofran of Precinct 3 motioned to refer the Johnson City permit application to a hearing examiner for the preliminary hearing and to

instruct the general manager and general counsel to solicit hearing examiner proposals for board consideration for the October board meeting.

The board discussed possible action on the Hye Development permit amendment. Kubinski said a public hearing was held last month, and there were concerns about plugging a well. Kubinski provided documentation that the well had been plugged.

Cofran asked about the adequacy of the well plugging and for confirmation it had been properly sealed. The applicant is represented by James McGarr, who said that although he did not personally do the plugging, the report said that 42 sacks of bentonite and 16 sacks of Portland cement were used to seal from the water-bearing formation to the surface.

Cofran asked if the top of the well needed proper capping to prevent deterioration over time from weather ex-

posure, and if this had been done, according to district rules and Chapter 36 requirements. The board tabled action until it can be verified that the well was properly capped.

The board held a public hearing on the 2025-26 fiscal year tax rate of \$0.016176 per \$100 of valuation, the proposed 2025-2026 district budget, and the 2025-2026 district fee schedule. A member of the public asked for clarification on what was included in personnel expenses. Kubinski said they include a vehicle contract, health insurance costs and other similar expenses.

After the public hearing closed, the board approved the tax rate, budget and fee schedule.

Action on the district drought status and drought conditions was discussed, and Kubinski presented an aquifer management update. According to the update, monitoring wells across the district show steady and healthy trends following the early July rains.

"The overall well drop this month was 3.6 inches compared to 2.4 inches in July," he said. "It's been over the two months since the July

floods, and the average draw-down has been about 6 inches. The current levels are hovering along the Desired Future Condition (DFC) line."

Staff members recommended maintaining the district drought stage at Stage 1, based on well data, recent climate observations and forecasted conditions.

BPGCD staff member Gregory Stevens attended the recent Region K regional planning meeting on Aug. 27. Stevens reported that the meeting was mostly house-keeping matters and procedural.

Kubinski said that groundwater district general managers often attend and participate in Region K board meetings, and referenced three appointments he is targeting. These are Groundwater Management Area 9, Groundwater Conservation District and county representative which all have alternate positions.

"Region K is working to finalize the 2026 water plan, committee appointments and officer nominations in the coming months," Kubinski said.

Sultemeier has previously served on the board. "The main purpose is to approve

low-interest loans for cities and MUDs and meetings can be important because they feed into the state water planning process."

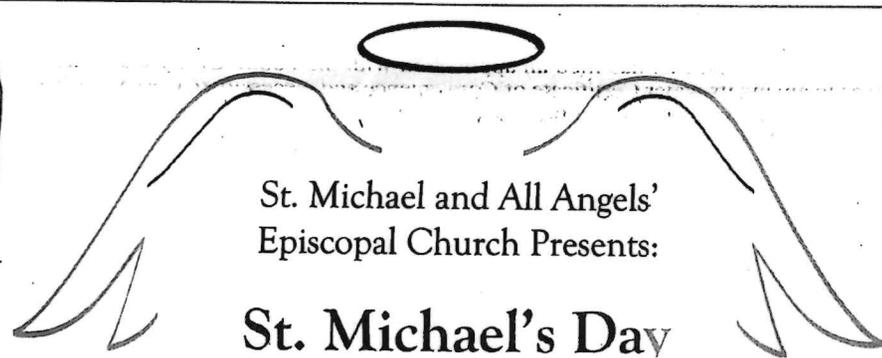
Sultemeier emphasized the importance of having Blanco County representatives who will work to keep local water resources in the county.

Kubinski gave an update on the Sept. 9 GMA9 regional planning meeting. "Consultant James Beach gave a presentation and took questions. Key points were that all districts in GMA9 are using versions of Scenario 6 of the current GAM," he said.

Kubinski said that two districts, including the BPGCD, are using the original Scenario 6, while others are using a "ramped-up" version that accounts for additional pumping and growth.

The board decided to move forward with the existing model as updated with current data. The consultant will run numbers for the districts and give an update on Oct. 21. The deadline for completing the DFC is in May 2026, and a public hearing and resolution are required before that time.

The next board meetings are scheduled for Oct. 16 and Nov. 20.



Blanco sales tax revenue jumps in September

By John Verser

2025 was up 2.02 percent. Dan 1.11

COMMUNITY NEWS

BCCI kicks off 'Land and Wildlife' art contest

The Blanco County Conservation Initiative is once again calling on artists, students and creative minds of all ages to pick up their paint brushes for the 2025 "Best Practices Art Contest."

"Land and Wildlife" is the theme of 2025. The artist who can best capture Blanco County's reverence for its natural heritage, as well as inspire best practices to protect it, will receive a \$2,000 prize. They will also

be featured on this year's BCCI posters and be honored for their creative contribution at the Art Contest Finale held on Friday, Nov. 14, at the Blanco Library.

Since land conservation is water conservation, this year's theme is a natural follow-up to the success of last year's "Blanco County Runs on Water" campaign. That contest brought dozens of entries and filled Blanco County with art celebrat-

ing its springs, rivers and creeks. The effort united local governments and conservation groups such as the Hill Country Alliance, Texas Water Foundation, and the Blanco-Pedernales Groundwater Conservation District, along with the cities of Blanco and Johnson City. The Blanco Library also played a key role by hosting an art display and a grand finale celebration, which brought together local artists and musicians, conservation advocates, government leaders and neighbors from across the county for an evening of

community and inspiration.

"We are so excited to be hosting the county-wide art contest again," said BCCI President April Sansom. "We were delighted to focus on water resources here in Blanco County last year and we look forward to celebrating our beautiful Blanco County land and wildlife this year."

The contest is open to all residents of Blanco County. Entries must be original works in portrait format (9x12 inches) and submitted with a completed entry form. To support local artists and the conservation

mission, both the Blanco Library and Johnson City Library are providing free entry forms and official-size 9x12 canvases for anyone who needs them.

Submissions will be accepted in person from Oct. 15 through Oct. 31, 2025, at the Blanco Library and the Blanco-Pedernales Groundwater Conservation District Office during regular business hours.

With the artist's consent, entries may also be included in a silent auction at the Blanco Library from Nov. 8-14, giving the community an opportunity to bid on

local art while supporting BCCI's mission. Proceeds will be split 50/50 between BCCI and the artist, with artists setting the minimum bid for their work. All artwork, along with the inspiration statement provided on entry forms, will be displayed on the BCCI website www.bccitx.org.

Winners will be announced at the art contest finale on Nov. 14, where the community will gather to celebrate creativity, conservation and local talent.

For full contest rules and entry forms, visit www.bccitx.org/art-contest.



Keep Blanco Beautiful and the Liberty Garden

By Retta Martin
Keep Blanco Beautiful

For the first anniversary of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, Keep America Beautiful asked its affiliates to create a Liberty Garden



Celebrating Our Hometown Heroes

Martin reflects on teaching while dealing with loss of son to cancer

By Emily Hilley-Sierczula

Ricky Martin just belongs in a classroom full of kids, much like a songbird fits in a tree.

"Teaching has been an incredible experience for me," said Martin. "When I walk in the room, it doesn't matter which grade, the kids all run up to me and hug me. They probably don't realize they're coming to my rescue."

The 69-year-old spoke with the News this week and humbly reflected on life, family and the myriad ways that being a teacher—even part-time—at the Blanco Independent School District has set him on a path toward healing after the loss of his 34-year-old son to cancer.

"I had the best life until the world came to a screeching halt on June 4, 2020, and I didn't know how to grieve or what to do," Martin said.

Until, he did.

"I couldn't spend my days crying; I had to do something," he said. "Jana, my wife of 43 years, suggested that I try substitute teaching. My first reaction was, 'Are you out of your mind?' Even though I've been a coach in the past and I've always loved kids, I couldn't see myself in the classroom."

Fast-forward five years and Martin now makes an appearance three or four days a week as a substitute, and he's willing to walk into almost any classroom in the district.

"I've had to draw a line with kindergarten," he said with a chuckle. "I'm just not my best with the littles ones."

Many were present for the substitute teacher's commencement speeches at Blanco High School in 2024 and earlier this year. Martin received hug after hug from

students as they received their diplomas.

"Those kids have saved my life," he said. "BISD, as a whole, just took me in and I'm forever indebted. People who didn't even know me cared for me from day one. It's been wonderful to be part of such a loving community."

Martin, a native Texan, took a circuitous route into teaching. He earned a bachelor's degree in animal science from Texas A&M University, worked for an energy company for 25 years, retired, and then embarked on a second career in the insurance industry for about 15 years.

Martin became a nontraditional student in his late 50s when he attended Hardin-Simmons University in Abilene to obtain a master's degree in clinical counseling.

"Jana already had a doctorate in English and taught at the university level when she decided to go back to school for clinical counseling," Martin said. "She was in the program for a year when she said, 'You'd be great at this,' and we ended up getting our degrees together."

The Martins had lived in Abilene for many years and had purchased land near Blanco County, intending to retire in the Hill Country and spend more time with their two grandchildren. Their plans were hastened by Dr. Martin's illness and they made the cross-state move in 2019.

LOVE AND LOSS

Dr. Joshua Jed Martin.

"His name is still on the door," Martin said of the optometry store in Bulverde that Dr. Martin and his wife, also an optometrist, opened together in 2019.

It was only a few weeks

after opening the store that Dr. Martin was diagnosed with cancer.

"He hadn't been feeling well and he thought maybe it was just an ulcer," Martin said. "I took him to a doctor in San Antonio and they ended up finding a tumor the size of a tennis ball in his colon."

Martin said that the family was forever changed.

"We're a family of faith and that has carried us," he said.

Another way the Martin family has channeled their energies is through their Jed Martin #6 Foundation, which originated in 2023 and for the past two school years has awarded scholarships to graduating Blanco High School seniors who have been accepted into the Texas A&M University System. Last school year, 12 scholarships were awarded by the 501(c)3 nonprofit.

Jess Whitehead was first recipient of the memorial scholarship in 2024.

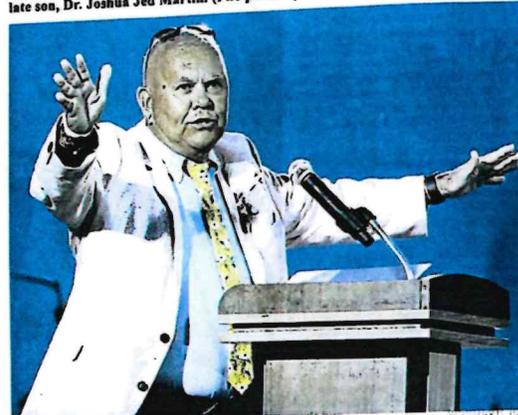
"We gave him \$1,000, but you'd have thought it was a million bucks," Martin said.

Importantly, Whitehead did not get the money only because he was the salutatorian with a stellar grade point average. It was because of the life the student led outside of the classroom.

"Jed was a very smart guy and he worked his tail off but he was number three in his class when he graduated from Pampa High School," Martin said. "He'd thought he would be valedictorian but two students—who otherwise were uninvolved in activities like athletics, band, choir or clubs—got ahead of him. They had done nothing but study and Jed thought that wasn't fair. So, in his memory, we award the scholarships to kids who make good grades



Ricky and Jana Martin present Jess Whitehead with the #6 Jed Martin Memorial Foundation Scholarship in the amount of \$1,000 at the Blanco High School Academic Awards Ceremony in 2024. The scholarship is given in honor of the Martins' late son, Dr. Joshua Jed Martin. (File photo by Diana Schwind)



Ricky Martin was the invited speaker at the Blanco High School graduation ceremonies in both 2024 and 2025. The senior class picks the speaker each year. (Photo by Diana Schwind)

but who also are involved in the community. I'm hoping that the future of our foundation is to be able to give

full scholarships to some kids."

Both of Martin's speeches can be found at <http://www.jm6.org>, along with more information on Dr. Martin and the scholarship in his name.

LOOKING FOR HOMETOWN HEROES



Have someone that you want to recommend as a Hometown Hero in the newspaper?

Blanco County News will be featuring people within the community recognized for doing something special or noble for others and should be recognized. Doctors, police, paramedics, nurses, teachers, or local citizens can be considered.

Please submit your suggestions to us at editor@blanconews.com

The feature will run once a month starting in June.

HERE'S TO THE EVERYDAY HEROES—NEIGHBORS, TEACHERS, FIRST RESPONDERS, AND VOLUNTEERS—WHO MAKE OUR COMMUNITY STRONGER, KINDER, AND SAFER. THANK YOU FOR SHOWING UP AND STANDING TALL!



601 WEST MAIN STREET
JOHNSON CITY, TX 78636
(830) 868-9196
www.BPGCD.org

New Eye Clinic in Blanco



700 4th St.
Blanco, TX 78606
(830) 554-9322
rollinghills-eye.com

To have your ad included in the monthly Hometown Heroes page, contact Jill Hunter at jhunteradsales@gmail.com or 210-771-2070

Blanco Performing Arts

Season 16:
Currents




Julia Pautz and Friends
Dvořák Piano Quintet
feat. Jeffrey Sykes
Saturday Sept. 27th, 2025



Uptown Blanco Ballroom at 7:30PM

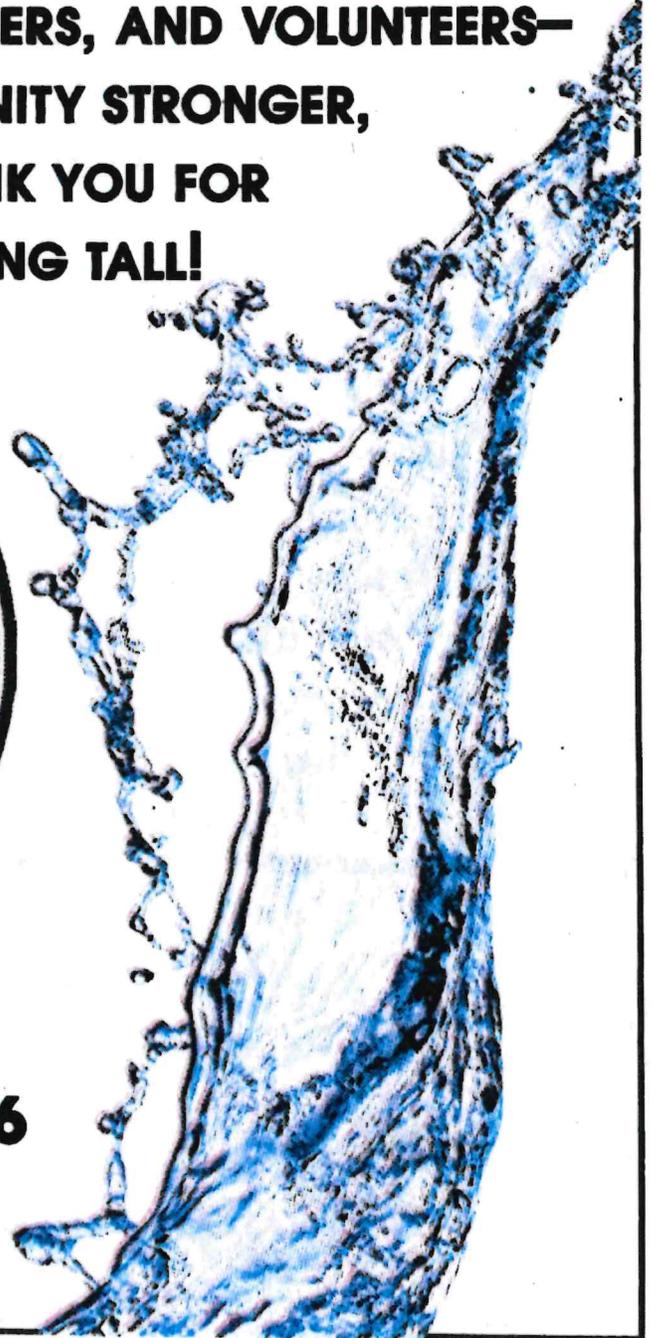
Tickets can be purchased by scanning the QR code, visiting blanconperformingarts.com, or calling 830-385-1173.



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**601 WEST MAIN STREET
JOHNSON CITY, TX 78636
(830) 868-9196
WWW.BPGCD.ORG**



Blanco County Appraisal District mails 2025 property tax statements

JOHNSON CITY, TEXAS — The Blanco County Appraisal District has mailed approximately 19,700 property tax statements for the 2025 tax year as of Wednesday, October 1, 2025.

The district is responsible for billing and collecting taxes for eight taxing entities, with total projected collections estimated at \$52,120,580.

These statements reflect the assumed approval of new homestead and over-65 exemption increases, which will be voted on during the upcoming November 4, 2025 election.

If voters approve additional ballot measures that affect property tax amounts, revised statements will be mailed to affected property owners.

Payment options available

Taxpayers have several options for submitting their payments:

By Mail:
Blanco County Appraisal District
P.O. Box 338
Johnson City, TX 78636

In Person:
615 N. Nugent Ave.,
Johnson City, TX
Accepted forms of payment: checks, money orders, cashier's checks, and exact-change cash only
Drive-through window and night drop available

Online or In Office with Card:
www.blancocad.com

Note: A convenience fee applies for credit/debit card payments.

Taxpayers who are unable to pay their taxes in full are encouraged to contact the appraisal dis-

trict to discuss available payment plan options. Property owners who are 65 or older or disabled and who receive exemptions through the district may qualify to pay in quarterly installments. If eligible, the payment schedule will be outlined on their statement.

Key Deadlines

Full Payment Due: February 2, 2026

Penalty & Interest Begins: February 3, 2026 (unless on an approved installment plan)

Contact Information

For questions about your property tax statement, exemption status, or payment options, please contact the Blanco County Appraisal District:

Phone: 830-868-4013

Email: info@blancocad.com

Website: www.blancocad.com

Rainfall has been more plentiful in Blanco County in 2025

By John Verser

Blanco County's rainfall totals through the first eight months of 2025 are among the highest 25 percent since records have been kept.

The county received 24.77 inches of precipitation from January through August, according to the National Centers for Environmental Information. That is the 29th wettest first eight months of any year in Blanco County since 1895. September data is not available at this time and will not be updated until the federal government shutdown ends.

This year's precipitation totals through eight months are the most seen in Blanco County since 27.56 inches fell in the first eight months of 2016. The 2025 totals through August are also the fifth highest of the first eight months of any year in the county since 2000. The only years with more precipitation since that time were 2007 with 43.05 inches, 2004 with 32.04

inches, 2015 with 29.03 inches and 2016 with 27.56 inches.

The totals during the first eight months of both 2024 and 2025 are a marked improvement from 2022 and 2023. The rainfall totals during the first eight months of 2024 and 2025 were 46.47 inches combined, which was much higher than the 20.17 combined inches of precipitation that fell during the first eight months of 2022 and 2023.

Drought conditions in Blanco County have gotten slightly worse over the last part of September. While over half the county (51.28) is not in any drought, 48.72 percent is listed as abnormally dry, which is the lowest of five steps on the U.S. Drought monitor. The latest numbers were issued last Thursday.

Only 3.73 percent of Blanco County was listed in drought, at abnormally dry, in the Sept. 9 monitor. That increased to 27.27 percent in the abnormally dry category on Sept. 16 and to 48.72 percent

on Sept. 23. Blanco County was in single digits on the drought monitor from July 15 to Sept. 9.

Blanco County was listed in the 500-600 range Monday in the Keetch-Byram Drought Index. That's the fifth of seven steps on the index. The county's average number Monday was 585, while the minimum was 492 and the maximum was 675.

The only county surrounding Blanco County that is not in the 500-600 range or higher is Gillespie County, which was listed in the 400-500 range on Monday. Llano, Burnet and Kendall counties were listed in the 500-600 range, while Comal, Hays and Travis counties were in the 600-700 range Monday.

A burn ban is in place in Blanco County through noon on Oct. 14. As of Monday night, a burn ban was also in place in Comal, Kendall, Travis, Llano and Burnet counties. There was no burn ban in place Monday night in Gillespie

and Hays counties.

Driest first eight months	
1.2011	5.61
2.1954	6.51
3.1956	7.33
4.2022	7.87
5.1967	9.97
6.1984	10.00
7.1925	10.03
8.1901	10.56
9.1963	11.33
10.1917	11.99

Wettest first eight months	
1.2007	43.05
2.1997	37.16
3.1919	36.78
4.1992	33.71
5.2004	32.04
6.1968	30.69
7.1957	30.62
8.1900	30.43
9.1944	30.41
10.1935	29.59
