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Tuesday

May 6, 2014

18 pages
\$1

Inside

Baseball
playoffs



BHS's Denver Finch slides under the tag at third base during Saturday's playoff game with Poteet. For more on baseball and softball playoff games, look in today's sports section, pages 1B-2B.

Happy...

...Birthday

May 6

Dorothy Ballard
 Helena Brown
 Don Dunlap
 Sam Ellis
 Jim Glover
 Mary Kret
 Alma Norman
 Robert Onefrey
 Janet Payne
 Bryon Tesch
 Weldon Dunn

May 7

Hal Harwell
 Marianne Hobin
 Juanita Jonas
 Peggy Schott-Nickel

May 8

Hazel McElroy
 Joy Rice
 Willie Wellman

...Anniversary

May 6

Charles & Mary Graves

Deaths

Nancy Ann Judson
 Elwood S. 'Woody'
 Nelson Sr.

For complete obituaries, see page 2A. See the latest obituaries at www.boernestar.com.

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Volume 108 • Number 36



Population boom expected soon

Boerne Independent School District key component in city, county growth

By GAIL YOVANOVICH
 Public Affairs Reporter
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Numbers don't lie and, like it or not, they're coming. And they're coming in droves.

At the Greater Boerne 2014 Economic Development Forum Thursday Regional Director for Metrostudy and San Antonio native Jack Inselmann described the booming new-home market in the Boerne area and the dynamics that will influence that market over the coming years. Metrostudy consults with home builders, pri-

ivate investors and various institutions about trends in the Texas economy and their effect on real estate values and housing demand. Its studies cover all of the greater San Antonio metropolitan area, including Bexar County and the emerging housing markets in Kendall, Comal and Guadalupe counties.

"You need to know what's going on outside your little cocoon," said Inselmann, noting Texas had generated about 300,000 jobs per year for the last four years and issued more than 91,000 new single-family home permits per year during that time.

Locally, the San Antonio metro area added

around 20,000 jobs per year over the last three years and expected to add another 20,000 to 28,000 during the coming year. Total employment for the San Antonio metro area - including the city and Kendall and Comal counties - stood at 918,500 through 2013.

"Without growth a city dies, plain and simple, and we're always working for growth as a state and as a region," Inselmann said.

He stressed the greater Boerne area was not insulated from that growth. In the last 20 years, Kendall County's population doubled from just

See POPULATION, page 11A

Hauptstrasse Quiltfest fun



Charlotte Agnew carefully chooses a crayon to color a block for this year's Community Quilt at the Hauptstrasse Quiltfest on Saturday.

Star photo by Anya Maltzberger

May elections canceled; local candidates run unopposed

By GAIL YOVANOVICH
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Municipal and school day is coming up Saturday, May 10, but since all local candidates are unopposed, contests were canceled at city council and board meetings throughout the area.

In Boerne, the city council declared elected incumbents District 1 Jeff Haberstroh and District 5 Christina Bergmann, along with District 3 Charlie Boyd, and all will take the oath of office at the May 13 city council meeting.

Only Boyd filed for the District 3 council seat, and he will replace J. Kuper who chose to step down at the end of his term.

The Boerne Independent School District declared Place 6 Donna Sharp and Place 7 Rich Sena elected to its board of trustees. Sharp will replace Bob Ogle who chose not to seek reelection after serving two terms, and Sena will replace Richard Elkins who stepped down to run for the Kendall County Commissioner Precinct 2 seat. The swearing-in will take place May 19.

In Fair Oaks Ranch, the city council declared elected the unopposed candidates for mayor and city council Places 1 and 2.

Incumbents Mayor Cheryl Landman and Place 2 Glenn Damstra, along with Place 1 Mary Anne Havard, will take

See ELECTIONS, page 11A

Wildscape proves to be sustainable lawn alternative

By ELENA TUCKER
 Features Writer
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Second in a two-part series

According to the Environmental Protection Agency, the millions of acres across the United States that are planted as "carpet grass" lawns suck up to 60 percent of urban fresh water thanks to sprinklers and irrigation systems.

Sixty-seven million pounds of synthetic pesticides are distributed across these surfaces as well as five-and-a-quarter billion dollars in fossil fuel-derived fertilizers. That's how much Americans love their lawns.

However, as water conservation becomes a more and more prominent part of the social consciousness landscape, lawn alternatives such as xeriscape and artificial grass are gaining in popularity.

Also on the rise as substitutes for lawns are pocket prairies - also called habitat islands, wildscapes or mini meadows."

Given that suburbia and groomed grass are practically synonymous, it's not terribly surprising that pocket prairies, too, have been slow to take seed in American minds.

It even happens that where pocket prairies are in evidence, the lawn-conscious public has been known to file complaints, believing such habitats to be "weedy" or "unkempt."

Longtime School Street resident Dani Vollmer says that her home's wildscape more

often receives compliments, particularly during the wildflower months of spring.

Vollmer's pocket prairie journey began two decades ago when she and her husband Bob moved into a Cibolo Creek-side house.

"The person who owned it had had all the scrub cut off of it and there was just one oak left," Vollmer said. "It was really raw. So we just sort of planted the native seeds and let things happen."

While Vollmer concedes that a wildscape may be an acquired taste, she's learned to enjoy the yard's different looks and colors as the seasons pass.

"It doesn't look the same all year long, but you can learn to enjoy brown grass," Vollmer said with a laugh. "We're extremely glad that we don't have something that we have to water to keep it alive. And there's a whole lot less mowing."

The Vollmers do start up their mower from time to time, sculpting the look of their yard, particularly when fire danger is high. But the mower's always set to the tallest level possible, and wildflowers are always allowed to seed.

When the couple first began their pocket prairie project, they were forced to appear before the city council in order to get the rules changed, Vollmer said.

Still, homeowners wishing to grow such habitat islands of natural grasses and wildflowers must register with the city, otherwise

See LAWNS, page 11A

Area water entities prepare for growth

By CARLINE SCHWARTZ
 News Editor
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As Kendall County's population is expected to increase, area water entities have been preparing for growth.

From July 1, 2012, to July 1, 2013, Kendall County's population increased by 5 percent, from 35,968 to 37,766, according to a U.S. Census report released in March.

Boerne Deputy City Manager Jeff Thompson said Boerne has enough water for a population of 35,000, which is close the county's current total population.

He said the city has four sources of water including surface water from Canyon Lake, surface water from Boerne City Lake, groundwater from Cow Creek wells and reuse water from the City of Boerne Wastewater Treatment and Recycling Plant.

"There's not many cities that can say that they have four supplies," Thompson said. "It's not to say we're going to be extravagant in our use of water. We are not. Conservation is still the key for everything we do, but the city is well prepared for both growth and drought."

Boerne has 1000 acre feet of water available in wells, 833 acre feet from Boerne City Lake and 3611 acre feet from the Guadalupe Blanco River Authority, Thompson said. In 2013 the city used 479 acre feet of water from wells, 638 acre feet from Boerne City Lake and 983 acre feet from GBRA.

One surface acre foot of water equals 325,851 gallons. "While we are permitted to use 1000 acre feet of Cow Creek well water, we drew only 479 in an effort to conserve groundwater, which is the sole source for other

See WATER, page 9A

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Boerne resident, Dani Vollmer, has opted for a "pocket prairie" or "wildscape."
Star photo by Anya Maltzberger

LAWNS FROM PAGE 1A

their lawns have to be maintained at heights of 12-inches or 24-inches, depending on lot size.

According to Boerne's public relations coordinator Pamela Bransford, the code enforcement office only has two registered native landscapes.

Despite having a yard that's something of a rarity, Vollmer said she is happy about having made the choice.

"For one reason we see a tremendous number of birds," she said. It's a space that encourages wildlife."

Vollmer's un-manicured philosophy is shared by George Cates, chief "seed wrangler" for the Native American Seed Co.

"Let's shrink the lawn, and do something really interesting with the rest. Urban landscapes are essentially wastelands for most native wildlife," Cates said from his company headquarters in

Junction.

Cates has a more urgent - even dire - tone than others.

"As the drought deepens, as water rationing becomes the norm, as human population booms and as indicator wildlife populations drastically decline, people are stuck wondering what kind of world we will leave to the next generations," Cates said.

Cates said the numbers of such concerned people are certainly growing and the shift toward native plants is picking up steam.

"Traditional lawns benefit only the aesthetic needs of the individual, while the majority of the costs are externalized and absorbed by society as a whole," Cates said. "It just seems like we would all want so much more from and for our property."

"When we pay attention, prairies provide us with simple truths," Cates explained. "They are beautiful, alive, sustainable and ever-changing. They are not weed patches."

Vollmer - who recommends the Cibolo Nature Center and the local chapter of the Native Plant Society as the

best area resources - said that she and her husband have seen their own pocket prairie concept catching on as other similar wildscapes have begun to sprout up on nearby properties.

For homeowners who regard their yard as more of a financial investment, Steve Fey, owner of Sierra Landscape, knows exactly how they feel.

In order for his business to flourish long-term, his landscaping efforts must flourish long-term, too, so he pays close attention to area water issues and the continuing drought.

"It is an investment and you want it to do well. Landscaping that's not intended to survive in the Hill Country's present climate won't last," Fey said. "People who plant St. Augustine lawns are going to have to replace them. By far the better investment is to plant smaller areas of drought-tolerant grass like Zoysia."

San Antonio landscaper Tony Carranza's final words are simple, short and perhaps even more to the point: "Watering the lawn is a thing of the past."

POPULATION FROM PAGE 1A

under 20,000 to nearly 40,000, and the county added about 1,800 residents to its total in 2013 alone.

Boerne Economic Development Director Jeff Thompson noted growth was "on the doorstep," and said the city would strive to maintain its character and quality of life through the housing upswing.

"We have approximately 5,000 homesites in some stage of development at this point. Boerne has about 5,000 homes now, so basically another Boerne is being built as we speak," said Thompson.

And Mayor Mike Schultz told the crowd, "We must expand our perspectives, always looking at the bigger picture. We're going to have new neighbors and more schools."

In discussing future population trends, Inselmann pointed to BISSD as an example of a growing population in the San Antonio metro area directly impacting Boerne and Kendall County. He noted the district extended into Bexar and Comal counties in Fair Oaks Ranch and also encompassed some unincorporated portions of northwest Bexar County.

"The number one thing families look for is a quality school district," he said, a consideration that motivated many working in San Antonio to relocate to BISSD neighborhoods over the past few years, along with residents new to Texas taking advantage of job opportunities in the state.

Among the top school systems in Texas - and widely acknowledged as a destination district - BISSD had 3,922 single-family housing starts over the last ten years, an average of 392 a year. Specifically, there were 428 starts in 2012 and 441 in 2013,

with a pace in 2014 that should finish with 518 new homes within the district, an upward trend expected to continue well into the future.

Addressing BISSD representatives in the audience, he warned, "Make sure you're ready. You can't over-prepare for all this growth - these are big numbers, and it's going to go higher. If you're involved in the school district in any way, you've got a lot of school children coming."

He pointed out from 2001 through 2009, 60 to 80 percent of BISSD students came from within Kendall County. But from 2010 to 2014, the county numbers dropped to less than 50 percent.

Inselmann said in the last 15 to 20 years, Boerne went from Main Street Americana to part of the San Antonio mainstream. "For a long time, moving to Boerne was a lifestyle choice - a small community with a charming, small town atmosphere."

"Boerne was a quaint, cool small town, but it's not small anymore. That doesn't mean it has to be bad, it's just going to be different," he said.

Speaking of infrastructure, Inselmann named roads as more important than water and wastewater issues, saying, "You can't build them fast enough. You need more roads, and you need it done quickly. I cannot overemphasize that. Within a couple of years, you're going to have a few thousand more vehicles on the roads, and you're going to have several hundred to a thousand more students in BISSD."

In closing, Inselmann said, "If you're looking for positive news in growth, you have people out there supplying this housing demand. There's too much good about Boerne and BISSD for this to ever fade away. You're in the path of growth, and in a couple of decades, it will be past you and headed for Fredericksburg."

ELECTIONS FROM PAGE 1A

the oath of office May 16, the day the regular canvassing period would have ended.

Only Havard filed for the Place 1 seat, and she will replace Allen McDavid who chose not to run for a full term after taking over the position when Fred Jones stepped down in January.

The Cow Creek Groundwater Conservation District also declared its unopposed candidates elected, and all will be sworn in May 13. Curt Campbell will fill the Precinct 4 seat currently held by Tommy Matthews who decided to step down after

serving as board president for 14 years.

Incumbents Precinct 1 Bob Webster and Director at Large Don Dietzmann will retain their seats.

Finally, the Kendall County Water Control and Improvement District 1 board of directors declared its candidates elected, with incumbents Randolph Bohnert and Fred Collins staying on. Donald Kirchhoff will replace Steven Salvaggio who chose not to seek another term. All are unopposed, at-large positions. The candidates will take the oath of office June 12.

Just as local entities must formally order an election, state law dictates that if all its candidates run unopposed, those entities must declare the candidates elected and formally cancel their elections.

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