



Playoffs
Salado looks to close out Lorena in bi-district series
- 1B



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Reclassified
Medical marijuana reclassified as less-dangerous drug
- 8B

Today's Outlook
High: 85
Low: 70
35% chance of showers

EDUCATION

Texas school voucher awards announced

BY STAFF REPORT

AUSTIN — Acting Comptroller Kelly Hancock recently announced the first round of student awards for the Texas Education Freedom Accounts (TEFA) program, according to a news release from the state comptroller's office. More than 42,600 students will receive award notices this week, including all students in the program's top priority tier — those with qualifying disabilities in households at or below 500 percent of the federal poverty level

— and their siblings. “The Legislature made low- and middle-income students with disabilities the first priority for the first year of school choice here in Texas, and that is exactly where this process starts,” Hancock said. “These awards put tens of thousands of Texas families one step closer to the educational path that works best for their children.” This initial round of award notifications were distributed in batches, beginning April 22, and continuing

through April 24. Parents may appeal funding determinations within 30 days of receiving their notice; however, adjustments will be made only based on school district and Individualized Education Program documentation. The Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts also is releasing a detailed breakdown of participating students in the top priority tier. About half of these students previously attended a public school. Two-thirds have a documented disability.

Additional families will receive TEFA award notifications in the coming weeks. A lottery will be conducted during the week of April 27 to determine which students in the second priority tier — students in lower-income households — will receive award notifications for the 2026-27 school year. The lottery also will assign wait list positions to the remaining students in tier 2 and below. Students who receive awards will

have until July 15 to confirm enrollment in a participating private school, select homeschool/other (which qualifies them for \$2,000 in funding) or opt out of the program. If awarded students opt out, additional funding will become available to move more students off the wait list. More information about Texas' school choice program, including a link to express interest in future participation, is available at EducationFreedom.Texas.Gov.

Blooming in the rain



Nan Dickson/Special to the Telegram

A hibiscus bloom is drenched in raindrops Wednesday in South Temple. More rain is in the forecast for Temple with a 35 percent chance of showers today. For more weather details, see Page 8B.

TEMPLE

City: Collection changes improved efficiency

BY IAN CAMACHO
TELEGRAM STAFF WRITER

The city of Temple reports improved efficiency in its brush and bulky-item collection after switching to a request-based system in August.

Residents may now request brush collections and bulky-item collections once a month.

Data provided by the city shows strong community use, with monthly totals ranging from about 1,800 to more than 2,600 requests, totaling more than 14,600 brush and bulky collection requests from August through February.

A city press release stated the updated approach lets solid waste crews focus service on active areas rather than covering every street on a fixed cycle.

According to the release, crews have completed their weekly schedules on time every week since the switch while boosting overall operational efficiency.

By streamlining routes and reducing unnecessary travel, the city stated it has cut fuel consumption, minimized equipment wear and made more effective use of staff time.

According to data provided, the new system delivered major cost savings, particularly in landfill expenses. Landfill fees, collected through the city's brush

	Aug 25	Sept 25	Oct 25	Nov 25	Dec 25	Jan 26	Feb 26
Tonnage	309	178	196	104	147	174	136
Mileage	4038	5461	3930	3744	5476	5112	6268
B.R.A. Trips	79	90	71	54	82	62	114
Landfill Trips	109	54	66	48	80	83	68
Brush Req.	1,123	1,322	1,478	991	813	807	815
Bulk Req.	711	902	1,163	942	1218	1208	1149
Total Req.	1,834	2,224	2,641	1933	2031	2015	1964

Courtesy

This data set shows the figures the city of Temple measured under the new bulky, brush collection program. Tonnage: The total weight of material collected and disposed of during the reporting period. This typically includes the material hauled by city crews to the landfill from scheduled collections. Mileage: Refers to the number of miles driven by city collection vehicles as part of brush and bulky item service operations during that month. B.R.A. Trips: Brazos River Authority. They operate the Temple Belton Wastewater Plant on FM 93. This is where the brush is delivered for the mulching process. Landfill trips: Landfill trips reflect the number of trips made by city crews to the landfill to dispose of collected items. Brush Req., Bulk Req., Total Req.: The number of brush, bulk, and total pickup requests submitted by residents during the reporting period.

and bulky item program are paid by the city as part of operating the service. Residents support the program through their regular monthly solid waste utility

fees, which help fund standard collection services.

Please see BRUSH, 5A

BELL COUNTY

Fatal house fire in Nolanville

BY CAROLINE REED
TELEGRAM STAFF WRITER

NOLANVILLE — Multiple fire departments helped Nolanville Fire Department extinguish intense flames from a double-wide manufactured home that killed one person early Thursday afternoon, according to the Bell County Sheriff's Office.

The Bell County Communications Center received a report of a residential structure fire in the 9300 block of Whitmire Lane outside Nolanville around 11:38 a.m. Thursday.

Deputies with the Bell County Sheriff's Office responded alongside the Nolanville Fire Department and Emergency Medical Services. As they arrived, firefighters observed a single-story, double-wide manufactured home fully engulfed in flames.

Due to the fire's intensity, additional assistance was requested. Harker Heights, Morgan's Point Resort, Salado, Emergency Services District No. 1, and Fort Hood Fire De-

partments all responded. In total, five fire engines, two tankers and one squad assisted at the scene.

After the fire was brought under control, firefighters located one victim within the debris of the home.

Justice of the Peace Gregory Johnson pronounced the victim dead at the scene and ordered an autopsy to be conducted by the Dallas County Medical Examiner's Office.

The next of kin has been notified. The identity of the victim is being withheld at this time out of respect for the family and to allow for proper notifications.

The residence was determined to be a total loss. No other structures were damaged.

The Texas State Fire Marshal's Office has assumed the lead in the investigation to determine the cause and origin of the fire. The Bell County Sheriff's Office Criminal Investigations Division is assisting.

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EDUCATION

Locals win state SkillsUSA awards

STAFF REPORT

Dozens of local students brought home an array of awards — including a national competition qualification — at a state event this month.

Temple and Belton school district students competed at the SkillsUSA state competition April 11, school officials announced Wednesday.

The Belton High School SkillsUSA TeamWorks construction team, which received national media attention for its performance at the national competition last year, qualified for a second trip to the big stage. Temple ISD students earned awards and ribbons at the event.

“Being a part of this competition has taught me the impor-

tance of leadership, teamwork, communication and technical skills on a job site and really in any situation,” Belton High School construction team electrician and safety officer Erik Schiller said.

Schiller clinched the state championship alongside teammates Joseph Fuentes, Bryson Necessary and Dylan Sanders.

Construction Instructor Michael Carrillo, who helped the team prepare for the competition, attributed the team's success to “a level of intuitive communication that only comes from experience.”

He stated their performance at the competition was exceptional.

Please see SKILLSUSA, 5A

TEMPLE

Mini golf, 24/7 golf simulator add to local entertainment

BY BELLA CASEY
TELEGRAM STAFF WRITER

Two Temple businesses are taking a swing at bringing new entertainment options to town.

The pair of venues are teeing up just in time for summer.

Midnight Mulligan, a round-the-clock private golf simulator in West Temple, started accepting bookings this week. Spare Time Texas opens

a mini golf course today, an addition that joins go-karts, batting cages and ropes courses on the event venue's list of outdoor entertainment.

“I'm a golfer myself.” Midnight Mulligan Owner Kurt Canuteson said. “I want to be able to just give back.”

Midnight Mulligan is a private golf simulator customers may reserve online anytime for \$45 an hour for up to four golfers. Additional players

may join for \$15 a player, and members may pay \$99 for four hours of playing time in one month or \$299 for 12 hours of playing time in one month.

The 1,500-square-foot private space features one golf bay, a seating area, a bar, a patio, some golf clubs and golf balls. Customers enter the space using a code on the door and are permitted to bring their own food and drinks into the facility.

Canuteson said he hopes to collaborate with local youth golf teams to offer free playing time and simulator tournaments.

He's hosting an open house event today to allow community members to visit the venue from noon to 6 p.m. at 7373 Honeysuckle. Midnight Mulligan is open for booking at <https://www.themidnightmulligan.com/>

“It's pretty cool,” Canuteson said.

“We just opened, so I am gonna do some more aesthetics outside.”

Spare Time Texas mini golf course also welcomes visitors this weekend.

General Manager Josh Sullivan stated in a news release Spare Time Texas officials are eager to bring this new outdoor activity to the venue. The 18-hole course opens at 5 p.m. today at 5434 205 Loop.

Please see GOLF, 5A



TODAY'S BIBLE VERSE
“The Lord is high unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth.”
— Psalm 145:18



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Dow Jones Industrials -179.71
49,310.32
Nasdaq composite -219.06
24,438.50

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