



Texarkana Gazette

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Teens arrested, accused of school bus joyride

LORI DUNN
TEXARKANA GAZETTE

TEXARKANA, Texas — Three teens are facing charges of unauthorized use of a vehicle after allegedly taking a Pleasant Grove Independent School District bus for a drive in July. Matthew Lacey, 18, Trip Wilson, 17, and Brooks Wilhite, 17, have all been identified as suspects, according to the Texarkana Texas Police Department. Wilhite and Wilson were arrested earlier this month, and Lacey was picked up over the weekend. All are free after posting bail. Wilhite's bail was set at \$25,000, and bail for Wilson and Lacey was set at \$20,000, according to jail records.

A charge of unauthorized use of a vehicle was filed against Wilson on Aug. 13 in Bowie County 202nd District Court, according to court docu-

ments. He is represented by the Bowie County Public Defender's Office. Charges against Lacey and Wilhite had not been filed as of Wednesday.

At 4:30 a.m. July 13, TTPD received a 911 call about a Pleasant Grove school bus driving down Richmond Road. Officer Derrick Bowers met the bus himself just a couple of minutes after the call. Bowers turned around to stop the bus but found it had already rolled into a tree while the suspects bailed out into the dark, according to police.



Matthew Lacey, from left, Brooks Wilhite and Trip Wilson. (Submitted photos)

After the bus was returned, school police and administrators reviewed bus camera footage and identified the three teens. The footage showed the teens entering the bus at 4:25 a.m. with their shirts wrapped around their heads, according to the probable cause affidavit. The cameras have audio, and the teens used each other's names, according to the affidavit. All three took turns driving the bus and bailed out when they saw Bowers pass them. The bus was left to roll down the road, according to the affidavit.

Man dies in plane crash in Lafayette

GAZETTE STAFF

BRADLEY, Ark. — A Tennessee man died Monday night in a single-engine plane crash in Lafayette County.

The pilot and sole occupant, Barry Boes, 54, of Ooltewah, Tennessee, was pronounced dead at the scene, according to a news release from Arkansas State Police.

At approximately 9:30 p.m., the Lafayette County Sheriff's Office received a report of a possible downed aircraft two miles south of Bradley near Arkansas Highway 29.

At 3:30 a.m., an ASP helicopter located the wreckage of the aircraft in a remote, wooded area. Troopers from Troop G Highway

Patrol, LCSO deputies and area first responders arrived on scene around 5:15 a.m.

The aircraft, a single-engine 2021 Lancair Super Barracuda, had departed from Austin, Texas, traveling to Chattanooga, Tennessee.

ASP has turned the investigation over to the Federal Aviation Administration and the National Transportation Safety Board, which will lead efforts to determine the cause of the crash.

Boes will be transported to the Arkansas State Crime Laboratory for determination of the manner and cause of death.



Nonprofit hosts paint parties for cancer awareness

SHARDA JAMES
TEXARKANA GAZETTE

TEXARKANA, Texas — In preparation for Breast Cancer Awareness Month, the Tough Kookie Foundation is inviting the Texarkana community to join its breast cancer painting parties.

"The paint party is for warriors and survivors," Tough Kookie Founder Ka-

tina Levingston said. "But at the same time, it is for people who have lost a loved one due to breast cancer or childhood cancer."

The purpose of the paint party is to provide a way for survivors and the Texarkana community to come together and honor loved ones, according to Levingston. It's also an opportunity for people going through similar journeys to

connect and support each other.

"This paint party is for relaxation and to have fun," Levingston said.

The foundation is hosting its annual paint panel parties on various dates ahead of the organization's fifth annual breast cancer awareness race on Saturday, Oct. 18 at Texas

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Participants work on painting panels during the Tough Kookie Foundation's paint party at the Texarkana Regional Arts and Humanities Council on Wednesday in Texarkana, Texas. The event invited community members to come together to honor loved ones affected by breast and childhood cancer while raising awareness. (Staff photo by Sharda James)

Trump's voting order would have to go through state legislatures

JAMES BRIGHT
TEXARKANA GAZETTE

TEXARKANA — President Donald Trump's plan to end mail-in ballots may be more complicated than issuing an executive order.

Election administrators refer to their respective state legislatures for guidance on the voting process, which would mean any presidential executive order would not have jurisdiction over their administration.

"We would refer to the state legislature to see how we would handle it with their direction," Miller County, Arkansas, Elections Coordinator Beth Bohn said.

Because Gov. Sarah Sanders was a high-ranking official in the first Trump administration, Bohn expects the Natural State would comply with the order, she said, but it would take time to implement.

"I could see it happening further down the road than the 2026 elections," she said.

Voter turnout could also be affected, according to Bohn. She suspects if the executive order is issued and implemented, then in-person voting will increase.

"It would just decrease a step for us, but it would have an impact on those people who truly need mail-in voting," she said.

Bowie County, Texas, Election Administrator Pat McCoy said he had no comment on how the prospective executive order would impact the county's voting process. Currently, Bowie County has 25 voting centers, and residents can vote at any of those locations regardless of which precinct they live in.

Trump has frequently claimed that mail-in ballots are corrupt and susceptible to fraud.

RENEW Academy aims to help Arkansas-side students with behavior

MALLORY WYATT
TEXARKANA GAZETTE

TEXARKANA, Ark. — Texarkana Arkansas School District's Board of Directors on Tuesday heard a presentation from Arkansas Middle School's principal about a new endeavor to address student behavior.

Thelma Forte, AMS principal, introduced the Board to the school's new program, RENEW Academy.

"RENEW stands for re-engage, empower, nurture, enable and wellness," Forte said. "We're getting ready to address the whole child."

The principal said the staff came up with a collective agreement for how they wanted the Academy to be, which ended up summarized with the acronym SWAG: Student-Centered, Welcoming Environment, Academic-Focused, Goal-Oriented, Growth Mindset.

"As you look at this presentation, you're going to see all of those elements that

aligned not only with the district's vision, but also with our campus mission and vision," Forte said.

Forte said the program was created with the specific goal to decrease repeated disciplinary infractions by teaching students self-regulation skills, while preserving the learning environment for all AMS students. The program also aims to provide

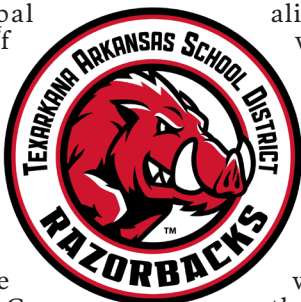
structured opportunities for behavior reflection and building social skills.

"A reflective person is a person that can always make a better choice the next time," Forte said.

Forte said the program was for short-term placements, meant to be in increments of 10 to 20 days of Academy time for the students. The program's capacity is 15 students, and parents' cooperation is required.

RENEW Academy will have academic instruction from a certified staff or a

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A granite Ten Commandments monument stands May 29 on the ground of the Texas Capitol in Austin. (AP Photo/Eric Gay)

Judge rules against Ten Commandments law

11 Texas school districts affected

ANDREW DEMILLO
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

SAN ANTONIO — Texas cannot require public schools in Houston, Austin and other select districts to display the Ten Commandments in every classroom, a judge said Wednesday in a temporary ruling against the state's new requirement.

Texas is the third state where recent laws about putting the Ten Commandments in schools have

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