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FRIDAY, DECEMBER 5, 2025

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Data: Many Tyler areas lack childcare

LEEZA MEYER

Standing in front of a crowd of 13 women in childcare careers, Kim Kofron answered questions and engaged in conversation about challenges East Texan childcare facilities face.

Kim Kofron, senior director, and Lyn Lucas, associate director of education at Children at Risk, a nonprofit

organization that researches and advocates for Texas children, made their last stop on the organization's "Fall 2025 Texas Tour" at the downtown Tyler Area Chamber of Commerce on Nov. 20. The tour embarked on a 12-city tour to showcase the latest data on childcare deserts, early childcare education and connect local stakeholders in conversations about

triumphs and challenges providers currently face through a data presentation and small workshop. The tour's observations will be used in Children at Risk's new Local Workforce Development Board report.

"There's been so much good work, but there's so much left to do," Kofron said. "There's families that can't find care and some places

aren't open so we use these different opportunities to learn."

OVERALL DATA

The data revealed this year there are 39 Tyler-area zip codes classified as childcare deserts, areas with insufficient childcare options to meet demand, measured by an area with 30 children under the age of six where

the demand is three times greater than the supply. Lucas said one in 10 children live in Texas with 2.3 million under the age of six and 40% of Texas zip codes are childcare deserts for low income families.

Lucas said the recommended spending on childcare should be less or equal to 7% of an individual's income, but with rising costs,

working parents now spend 15 to 50% of their income on childcare.

"Children at Risk's catalyst of change is we look at the data and the research about what's happening in the state and then we go out in the community to see if what is happening on paper is actually what's happening

DATA >> PAGE 5A

Rotary donates \$100K to UTT

South Tyler club's gift will help medical, nursing students pursue career paths

LEEZA MEYER

Standing in front of a crowd of Rotarians in her white lab coat, Mariam Abeje said before she even applied to medical school, the fear of college debt loomed in front of her career dreams potentially changing the course of her decisions. But because of a scholarship to attend The University of Tyler School of Medicine, all of that changed.

"You hear a lot about the amount of debt that you graduate with and how it follows you throughout your life, and the financial burden was a constant source of anxiety for me and for my family," said Abeje, a third-year medical student at UT Tyler School of Medicine. "I was fortunate enough to receive a scholarship and this scholarship was more than just financial relief, it was a profound validation and signaled that my hard work and potential was recognized and that my dream was within reach now."

The South Tyler Rotary Club, through its foundation, presented a \$100,000 grant to UT Tyler School of Medicine and UT Tyler School of Nursing for student scholarships next school year during their weekly meeting Monday at

DONATES >> PAGE 5A



Community members drive through to view a live Nativity scene in Kilgore in 2020. (Tyler Morning Telegraph File)

Story Comes to Life

Churches across East Texas plan live Nativity events

JORDAN GREEN

Churches throughout East Texas will celebrate the birth of Christ by hosting live Nativity events in December.

From Tyler, Longview, Marshall, Carthage and everywhere in between, here's what you need to know about the churches reenacting the birth of Christ this Christmas.

Events are open to the public.

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, WHITEHOUSE

First Baptist Church in Whitehouse will hold its "Drive through Bethlehem" from 6 to 8 p.m. Dec. 7 and 8 at 801 E. Main St.

The drive-thru event

will include eight narrated scenes, including a Bethlehem market; Mary, Joseph and the baby Jesus in the stable with live animals; King Herod and the three wise men; and more. All who attend will receive a free cookie.

MT. SYLVAN BAPTIST CHURCH, TYLER/LINDALE

Mt. Sylvan Baptist Church will hold the "Journey to Bethlehem" live drive-thru nativity from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. Dec. 18, 19 and 20.

The event will be at 13073 Texas Hwy 110 N., Tyler.

WEST LAKE BAPTIST CHURCH, CHANDLER

CHURCHES >> PAGE 3A



Emily Snider (left) and Codi Arndt, portraying Mary and Joseph, rock a baby doll, representing baby Jesus Christ, in their arms in a manger during rehearsal for a live Nativity reenactment at West Lake Baptist Church on Dec. 11, 2019, in Chandler. (Tyler Morning Telegraph File)

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"I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile." (Romans 1:16)

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