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From Castleberry ISD

Castleberry ISD Celebrates School Board Recognition Month



Kenneth Romo



David Holder



Cathy Gatica



Mary Lou Martinez



Tracy Gallman



Linda Aguillón



Ariela Martinez

January is School Board Recognition Month and Castleberry ISD is honored to celebrate its board members for their volunteer dedication and commitment to the district's schools and students.

"Our School Board Members are selfless volunteers who work to ensure the students at Castleberry ISD have the best educational opportunities available," Renee Smith-Faulkner, Acting Superintendent of Castleberry ISD said. "Celebrating School Board Recognition Month is one way to say thanks for all they do."

Serving as a link between the community and classroom, school board members are elected to establish the policies that provide the framework for public schools.

"School boards are essential to a strong public education system," Texas Association of School Boards (TASB) Executive Director Dan Troxell said. "They provide the local governance and oversight that makes it possible for school districts to serve students, including establishing a strategic plan, adopting policies, approving a budget and selecting and evaluating a superintendent. It's fitting that we celebrate them in January as their leadership is key to the success of every school district in Texas."

Thanks to the district's school board, major projects such as the renovation of Irma Marsh Middle School, the approval of the CISD STEM Academy @ River District, updated athletic facilities and fields, additional safety precautions to prevent the spread of COVID-19, and the purchase of security equipment to ensure district facilities are safe and secure, have all been approved.

Throughout January, Castleberry ISD campuses and departments will honor and show appreciation for the district's board members. Each campus in the district has adopted a school board member to celebrate and recognize.

To learn more about school board service visit the [Texas Association of School Boards website](https://www.tasb.org/). For more information about serving on CISD's school board and upcoming elections, visit the [Board Elections](#) page on the district's website.

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Around the Town with Denise Honeycutt

Robotics at the Benbrook Library



During the holiday vacation, **Arturo** and **Evander Cardenas** created Robotics at the Benbrook Library.

They represent the First Lego League (FLL), a competition using Lego Mindstorm Robots.

Individuals build and program robots to accomplish missions and compete with other teams in North Texas.

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From StatePoint Media

Is it Too Late to Reduce Your Mortgage
Payment by Refinancing?

Experts say that with mortgage rates adjusting upward, you may wish to convert beginning to rise, refinancing your home to a fixed-rate mortgage that provides you now might be your last best chance to with the security of consistent payments. lower your monthly mortgage payment, as rates remain near all-time lows.

Those who refinanced early in 2021 have already reaped the benefits. Borrowers who refinanced their 30-year fixed rate mortgage during the first half of 2021 saved over \$2,800 in mortgage payments on principal and interest annually, according to a recent Freddie Mac research report.

But mortgage rates are rising. Indeed, in October 2021, the 30-year fixed-rate mortgage, which is the most common type of

mortgage, rose to its highest point since April, surpassing 3.0 percent. Freddie Mac forecasts that mortgage rates will continue to rise, averaging 3.5 percent for the year fixed in 2022. That's up from an average of 3.0 percent in 2021.

So is it time to refinance your home loan? To help you make an informed decision, here are some answers to commonly asked questions about the refinancing process:

• What does refinancing mean? When you refinance your mortgage, you're applying for a new mortgage to replace your current one, which will result in a new rate, term and monthly payment. The most common type of refinance is a no cash-out refinance, in which you're refinancing the remaining balance on your mortgage.

• When should I consider refinancing? Generally speaking, refinances make the most financial sense when average interest rates are at least half a percentage point lower than the interest rate on your current mortgage. Another reason to consider refinancing is if your financial situation has improved, allowing you to secure a loan with a shorter term and own your home sooner. Finally, if you currently have an adjustable-rate mortgage (ARM) and it's

• Is refinancing free? Although refinancing your mortgage could save you

money both in the long- and short-term, it isn't free. For the most part, refinancing involves costs are similar to what you paid when you purchased your home, including a loan origination fee. There are required services involved, such as appraisals, and state and local fees that can vary significantly based on where you live. The average cost to refinance is almost \$5,000, so you should carefully consider how long you plan to stay in your home to ensure the savings to outweigh the costs.

• Who should handle my refinance? You don't have to use your current lender to refinance your loan. In fact, it's in your best interest to shop around and compare multiple lenders' loan estimates in search of the best terms and cost. It may take more time, but even a difference as small as one-quarter of a percentage point can save you thousands of dollars over the life of your home loan. The good news? Rates are often negotiable. In other words, you can ask lenders to match the rate quoted by another lender.

There may be no time like the present to lock in the lowest possible rate and receive the highest monthly savings.

As with any big financial endeavor, you'll want to do your homework, look carefully at your short- and long-term goals, and work closely with your lender to do a cost-benefit analysis.

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From Tarrant County

Jury Services: Reporting for Jury Duty

Jury service plays a vital role in sustaining the American system of justice.

Why was my name drawn for jury service?

The Texas Legislature is responsible for all laws pertaining to jury service. Every other year the Secretary of State receives the Tarrant County voters list, the driver's license and identification card lists from the Department of Public Safety. The Secretary of State then combines these lists and sends Tarrant County their jury list for the upcoming two years. The Tarrant County jury list begins in January of the even years and ends the last week of December in the odd years. Currently, there are over one million names on our jury list and we mail over 200,000 summons annually. The reason some people never receive a summons is because we are not able to exhaust the list before the end of the two-year cycle.

However, it is now easier than ever to report for jury service. Gone are the days of reporting to the Central Jury Room and waiting all day to see if the courts would need a jury. Now you have a choice. You can report in person as summoned to the Central Jury Room. Or, you can use our online system, [eResponse](#). As long as you register online at least two business days in advance and confirm your status; we will email your jury service instructions. The date you are summoned to appear will not change. If you receive an online assignment, your time and place will change. By using eResponse, you will be sent an email with instructions regarding your jury service which generally, allows you to bypass the Central Jury Room.

E-Response Online Services Requirements:

- Must have daily email access
 - Must have telephone number
 - Sign into eResponse using your candidate number and date of birth from the summons.
 - Check your email daily
 - You will receive an email to verify your email address.
 - Add juryroom@tarrantcounty.com as safe sender to avoid emails going to the Junk Folder (especially if you are a gmail or yahoo user.)
 - Generally all email notifications are sent out by 5 p.m.
 - Read all emails, remembering to scroll down to read entire email. Follow instructions in the emails.
 - Complete two questionnaires:
 1. Qualification questionnaire will determine qualifications along with verification for legal excuses. Read each question thoroughly.
 2. Court specific questionnaire - accessed through email when notified of court assignment -- requires some duplicate information.
- If no email is received from Tarrant County Jury Services, then appear at the date and time listed on the summons.

The Selection Process

When you arrive at the Central Jury Room in the Tim Curry

Justice Center, you will check in and be assigned to a court. The courts are primarily in the downtown area. The courts adhere to a strict appearance policy. Appropriate dress for your court assignment should be whatever you would wear to a job interview: no shorts or inappropriate t-shirts and tank tops.

There are two basic types of cases, criminal and civil (including family cases). A criminal case results when a person is accused of committing a crime. You, as a juror, must decide whether the person charged is guilty or not guilty. The accused person is presumed innocent, and the state, represented by the district attorney, must prove guilt "beyond a reasonable doubt." A civil case results from a disagreement or dispute between two or more parties. In a civil case, you, as a juror, must answer questions of disputed facts based upon the testimony and evidence admitted by the judge. The answers to these questions are called the verdict.

Cases will usually be heard by juries of six or 12 jurors (six in county courts and 12 in district courts). A larger group, called a panel, will be sent to the trial courtroom. When you arrive at your court, the bailiff there will instruct you.

Jurors will be questioned by each of the lawyers under the supervision of the judge. This interview process is called voir dire. The voir dire is a way for the parties to select an impartial jury. You may be questioned individually or as a group to determine selection of the jury. For example, the lawyer may ask you questions to see if you are connected to the trial or if you have any prejudice or bias toward anyone in the trial.

The questions of the attorneys and judge are not intended to embarrass you, but rather to help the lawyers in the jury selection process. You may ask the judge to allow you to answer some questions away from the other jurors. A juror may be excused from the panel if it is shown that the juror cannot act impartially concerning the case to be heard. In addition, each side is allowed to remove a given number of jurors from the panel without having to show any reason.

The trial jury will be the first six or 12 of the remaining jurors on the panel. After the voir dire, the selection of jurors will be announced and the remainder of the panel will be returned to the central jury room. If you have a special need or an emergency after you have been selected as a juror on a trial panel, tell the bailiff in the courtroom.

Should the parties to a suit unexpectedly reach a settlement or agree to a plea, the bailiff will announce this to the panel and instruct you to return to the jury room for further instructions. A settlement or plea does not mean a juror's time has been unproductive.

NOTE: You may be asked to complete a questionnaire either in the central jury room or after you arrive in the court. The information on these forms is used by the attorneys for both sides during the voir dire process to expedite the jury selection. The oath has been administered to you, therefore you are still under oath when you answer these questions.

Different Cultures Observe and Celebrate a New Year *by Dr. Ken Bridges*



A weary world looks ahead to this new year. New Years observances are usually a time of reflection over the past year as news organizations replay the top stories of the previous year and poke fun at the failed predictions for the year while millions of people look back on their experiences of the previous year and ponder their expectations for the year ahead.

The year 2022 will be noted for many things, especially Feb. 22, a day, which will happen to be a Tuesday, which will be all twos: 2/22/22.

Millions of people will make new years resolutions, some will be kept and others will fall by the wayside. The most common resolutions for 2021 were: losing weight/getting into shape, saving more money, traveling more, making new friends, and finding a new/better job. Public opinion polls for new years resolutions for 2022 are not that different: getting into shape, spending more time with loved ones, and saving money.

Observances of the new year date back thousands of years as ancient peoples recognized the regular shifting patterns of stars at night and the sun in the day and their connection to particular seasons. Many ancient cultures would mark the winter solstice, Dec. 21, as the beginning of the year as the days started getting longer and spring approached. In some societies, the vernal equinox, the beginning of spring in March, was seen as the beginning of the year as well as the time to begin

planting. The Babylonians were known as early as 2600 BC to mark this day with celebrations and new year's resolutions.

The earliest observances of Jan. 1 for the beginning of the year began with the Romans around 713 BC. The Romans named the first month of their lunar calendar year January after the Roman god Janus, who supposedly was the god of time and also the god of beginnings and transitions. According to legend, Janus had two faces, one looking into the past and the other looking into the future, reflecting Romans looking back and looking forward with the new year's revelry.

During the Middle Ages, New Years celebrations were largely pushed aside in favor of religious observances, such as Christmas. Pope Gregory XIII restored Jan. 1 as the official observance of New Year's Day in 1582. In most countries throughout the world, Jan. 1 is an official holiday to mark the beginning of the new year. Even many non-western countries will observe Jan. 1 as New Year's Day. The Chinese New Year, however, will not start until Feb. 1. Under the Chinese Zodiac system dating back many centuries, 2022 will mark the Year of the Tiger. The year 2021 was the Year of the Ox, a symbol of strength; and 2020 was the Year of the Rat, an animal known as a trickster in Chinese mythology. In China, the tiger is a symbol for strength, bravery, and independence and fireworks are set off to mark the new year and to also scare off demons and forces of darkness. Variations on these new years traditions are found in South Korea, Japan, and Cambodia.

Similarly, Feb. 1 will also mark the traditional Vietnamese New Year, known as Tet. The Vietnamese lunar calendar is very similar to the Chinese calendar. By tradition, a great feast is prepared, family reunions are held, and many celebrations are held in cities across the country. Many in Vietnam see Tet as the beginning of

spring as well. Cleaning the home is also part of the traditional observances to symbolically clean out the bad spirits from the previous year.

In Orthodox Christian nations, the Julian calendar is still used for religious observances. Under this calendar, the new year does not begin until Feb. 14. This is most commonly observed in nations such as Russia and Ukraine.

Different types of food are also associated with New Year's celebrations. In India, rice is eaten for prosperity in the new year. In parts of Europe and the United States, leafy green vegetables such as spinach are seen by many as symbolizing money and prosperity for the new year. In the American South, black-eyed peas are eaten for good luck. In Turkey, pomegranates are eaten for luck as a symbol of life and fertility.

There are many other superstitions for luck surrounding celebrations. In France, the weather on New Year's Day is supposed to be an omen for the year's weather. In Denmark, unused plates are smashed against doors to ward off bad luck. Brazilians wear white for good luck.

To this day, New Year's Day is still a time to reflect on the past and look forward to the days ahead. And the world hopes for a worry-free year with 2022. Ahead lies a calendar filled with possibilities.

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Three Day Weekend Forecast



Friday, Jan. 7:

AM - Sunny; high near 51. Light E/SE wind becoming S/SE at 5-10mph in the morning.
PM - Partly cloudy, with a low around 43. South wind around 10 mph.



Saturday, Jan. 8:

AM - Partly sunny; high near 71. South wind 10-15mph, with gusts as high as 20mph.
PM - Mostly clear, with a low around 47.



Sunday, Jan. 9:

AM - Mostly sunny, with a high near 60.
PM - Partly cloudy, with a low around 32.

[Extended Forecast Click Here](#)