



Spring 2017

COUNTY JUDGE Quarterly

News & Notes from the Tarrant County Judge and important information from Tarrant County

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TARRANT COUNTY: OUR NORTH TEXAS HOME

Helping Tarrant County Seniors Thrive



*Tarrant County Judge
B. Glen Whitley*

The real difference makers for seniors in Tarrant County are your neighbors, the people you worship and work with, the PTA parents at school - all the folks who volunteer time and energy to help older adults as they age.

Volunteers and their community spirit is a great strength of Tarrant County. I am thankful our county is

blessed with so many willing to selflessly give of themselves.

But unfortunately, we need to do more for our seniors than we do now.

Living independently at home for as long as possible is a huge quality of life issue for older adults.

Then someone comes along and takes the car keys away. Or, there's a recognition driving is too dangerous. What then?

Finding adequate transportation to meet their needs can be a significant challenge for older adults.

In Tarrant County, with limited access to public transportation, a visit to the doctor, the pharmacy, the market, or even children, grandchildren and friends can be difficult to arrange.

Van services such as those operated by Catholic Charities or Handitran in Arlington and the Tarrant Riders Network effort to improve transportation opportunities deserves our support.

If an older adult reaches 90 in good health, they still may be stuck at home with few socialization options. Senior isolation can take a heavy emotional toll.

There are some services that people can get at home, but it can be difficult to get help to everyone who needs it and in-home care can be costly for most seniors.

Remember, there is no such thing as a typical older person. Someone at 65 has different needs and opportunities than someone 85. Solutions to the issues older adults face have to be need-based, and not age-based.

We need to prepare to accommodate the growing number of baby boomers becoming older adults.

The number of seniors in Tarrant County is expected to increase by about 30 percent in the next 10 years, rising from an estimated 291,000 to 418,000.

We will need to expand the social service and volunteer network that supports our aging population. We will need to find ways for older adults to get services they need and to engage active seniors.

The need to provide meaningful activities to older adults will only grow as life expectancy increases.

The Senior Synergy Expo on May 4th at Will Rogers Center is part of my effort to support our senior community. At the Expo, you, your family and caregivers can get vital information from more than 150 exhibitors.

There will be workshops on fitness, finance, home safety and fall prevention. You can get information on benefits counseling, mental health care, legal assistance, guardianship services, caregiver resources, van transportation and groups that improve life for seniors. There will be health screenings for high blood pressure, breast cancer, vision problems and diabetes.

If you have a relative or friend in need of assistance, learn about the services offered in Tarrant County. If you are an active senior, please find a way to assist others.

We really should do all we can to support those who came before us - the folks who helped make Tarrant County the great place that it is today.

CONGRATULATIONS!

FOR A GREAT SEASON



2017 NIT
Champions



2017 NAIA
Champions



2017 NIT
Quarterfinalist

DAVID MCCURDY: EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT COORDINATOR



Keeping Tarrant County Safe in an Emergency

For David McCurdy, Tarrant County’s new Emergency Management Coordinator, it’s often all about the weather.

“Tonight I’m worried about storms,” said McCurdy, one March afternoon. “I have a county I’m responsible for.”

McCurdy has the right stuff. He is long on experience.

He was in charge of emergency management at DFW Airport the past eight years, one of the world’s largest and busiest airports. He retired from the airport last year after working there for 25 years. Only he wasn’t ready to quit working and decided to lend his expertise to the county.

“It was always a challenge at DFW, a place the size of Manhattan with 60 million travelers passing through each year,” he said.

The county, with more than 40 cities, presents a different kind of challenge, McCurdy said.

Now, when there is an emergency, weather or otherwise, McCurdy coordinates with the fire marshal, the public health department, the sheriff and local police departments, as well as regional, state and federal agencies.

Some of the cities have well-established emergency management programs, but the county has to help out many of the smaller ones, he said.

“Our main job is to coordinate the response to an emergency,” he said. The county doesn’t have a lot of emergency-response equipment, but it does have road equipment that can be used to clear debris and personnel to help



Tarrant County Emergency Management Coordinator David McCurdy

manage an incident.

“We try to help the cities and do the best we can for them,” he said. “We really don’t need the spotlight.”

On top of the bookcases in McCurdy’s office are some of the many different helmets he wore as a firefighter and emergency responder at DFW Airport.

There’s even an old Civil Defense helmet.

After graduating from Mineral Wells High School, McCurdy got involved in the Palo Pinto County Civil Defense agency and volunteered as a storm spotter.

He went to Weatherford College, transferred to TCU and graduated with a degree in criminal justice.

McCurdy worked as a police officer in Grapevine for 11 years, beginning in 1979, and then taught criminal justice at local police academies for a couple of years.

He hired in at DFW Airport in 1991 as a public safety officer and was cross-trained in fire, police and paramedic duties. He rose through the ranks, ran an airport fire station and eventually supervised emergency management.

Then there are the pigs. Lots of little pigs - wood and plaster and plastic – on the tables and desks and bookcase shelves. A cousin told him they bring good luck.

Always up for a challenge, McCurdy has ridden the 100-mile Hotter Than Hell summertime bike ride in Wichita Falls. Even surmounting that sweltering heat, McCurdy said he has deep respect for Mother Nature and the weather she can produce.

“If you are going to make any bets, don’t bet against Mother Nature,” he said. “She wins every time.”

Severe Weather - KnowWhat2Do

Spring and summer usher in the best and worst of weather in North Texas. Tarrant County gets storms that can bring floods, hail, lightning and tornadoes.

The www.KnoWhat2Do.com website is an online information center with hazardous weather tips so people can participate in their own safety and help those around them.

The **KnoWhat2Do** disaster preparedness program can help you put together a family severe weather response plan. Emergency shelter information is provided, as well as checklists for emergency kits and equipment.

Each Tarrant County community has its own severe weather warning system. Local emergency management offices have details on the warnings used in your area.

The **KnoWhat2Do** website provides lifesaving measures to follow in a severe weather crisis. For example, it recommends buying weather radios to provide alerts. By using www.KnoWhat2Do.com, Tarrant County residents can find solutions that work for their own circumstances.



A health and lifestyle expo event for boomers, seniors and caregivers!



5th Annual SENIOR SYNERGY EXPO

Thursday, May 4, 2017
8:30 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

Title Sponsor
Cigna.

FREE EXPO

Tarrant County Judge Glen Whitley and Cigna invite you to the 2017 Senior Synergy Expo. Come learn about the services available in Tarrant County that will empower boomers, seniors and caregivers to live a healthier lifestyle.

FREE: Admission • Health Screenings • Workshops • Parking • Lunch*

REGISTER

To attend the Expo, register today at:
www.seniorsynergyexpo.com
817-884-1234
klrotter@tarrantcounty.com
*Must register before April 24th to guarantee lunch.

LOCATION

Will Rogers– Amon G. Carter Jr. Exhibits Hall
3400 Burnett-Tandy Drive
Fort Worth, TX 76107

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Knowledge is power, come learn about services available for you to live a healthier and independent lifestyle.

BUILDING AN EDUCATED WORKFORCE

A Campaign to Improve Early Childhood Literacy

Children Must Learn to Read Well Early so They Can Read to Learn Well Later

A new educational program in Tarrant County is working to improve the ability of young children to read at grade level by third grade, a key indicator of future academic success.

Across school districts in Tarrant County, only 43 percent of third-graders are reading at grade level, said Kristin Sullivan, Executive Director of the Fort Worth Literacy Partnership, the organization leading the effort.

Studies show that children who comprehend most of what they read by third grade are most likely to continue on a path to college and career readiness – to become adults who innovate, create and contribute to a vibrant economy, she said.

Children who struggle to read are four times more likely to fall behind and drop out of school.

Within the 87,000-student Fort Worth school district, only 30 percent of third-graders were reading at grade level in 2016. The rates were similar in the Arlington, Everman, Crowley, Lake Worth and Castleberry school districts.

Fort Worth Mayor Betsy Price, Fort Worth schools Superintendent Kent P. Scribner and Matt Rose, Executive Chairman of BNSF Railway, formed the Literacy Partnership last summer.

Tarrant County is growing quickly and there are tremendous economic development opportunities with new businesses, new jobs and schools and new communities locating here. Businesses depend on having a well-educated workforce and without it there is a risk that they may choose to locate elsewhere.

The Partnership initially focused on gathering data and insights to drive strategies that improve childhood literacy.

Research indicates that children thrive when they have access to quality early learning experiences. Good Pre-K programs prepare children socially, emotionally and academically for kindergarten.

To succeed, children must also have excellent classroom experiences and a positive environment for early learning, from kindergarten through third grade.

LEARNING TO READ, READING TO LEARN

Why third grade is a pivotal year for mastering literacy

County leaders have encouraged public-private models as a path to improve outcomes for toddlers – such as the Arlington school district’s Community-Based Pre-K program, which places certified teachers in existing child care centers to increase quality instruction and expand the number of children who arrive at kindergarten ready to learn.

Among the Fort Worth Literacy Partnership’s projects has been support for a Fort Worth district project to determine which teachers are most effective at helping young children advance reading skills.

The Partnership has conducted a literacy assets inventory with the Fort Worth district. It found that lower-performing elementary schools often have fewer books and lower library circulation rates than better-performing schools.

With leadership from the City of Fort Worth and United Way of Tarrant County, the Partnership also has formed a team of more than 25 organizations to enhance summer learning opportunities for very young children.

Children need to learn to read well by third grade, if they are to be able to do the reading needed to learn for the rest of their lives. It is critical to support our schools to create successful students and an educated workforce.

Vote in Local Elections on May 6

Cities, schools and some special districts will hold elections on Saturday, May 6th. Mayors, city council members, school board trustees and some elected agency board members may be on the ballot.

Study the issues, candidates and ballot measures closely, to make an informed decision at the polls. You are voting for people who will have a say on local streets and parks and economic development.

“Casting your vote in a local election is a way to make a statement about how well you think your community is doing,” said Tarrant County Judge Glen Whitley.

A few special districts like the Tarrant County College Board of Trustees, the Tarrant Regional Water District or municipal utility districts may be on the ballot.

Early voting begins on April 24th and runs through May 2nd. Be aware that if there are no contested races in a city, or for a seat on a school board, the organization may choose to save taxpayer dollars and not hold an election.

Fort Worth Literacy Partnership

www.ReadFortWorth.org

FWliteracypartnership@gmail.com



HELPING CHILDREN BREATHE EASIER

ASTHMA 411

A TARRANT COUNTY HEALTH CARE COLLABORATION

Children and asthma don't mix.

Panicked, short-of-breath children scrambling into a school nurse's office for help can feel like they're trying to breathe through a tiny straw.

The nurse may have medication, oxygen and an order from a doctor allowing treatment.

But if not, a 911 call may be placed and then it's the parents who panic on their way to meet their child at a hospital emergency room.

A new collaborative program in Tarrant County, Asthma 411, led by public health researchers at the UNT Health Science Center and Tarrant County Judge Glen Whitley, will enable immediate care for kids in respiratory distress at school and make students, parents and school nurses breathe easier.

The Asthma 411 program will make it possible for more students to return to class after their asthma is under control, reduce emergency room visits and absenteeism as well as help to identify undiagnosed students who need treatment.

Tarrant County school districts that participate in the program can get their schools outfitted with albuterol, a medication to relax muscles in the airways and increase air flow to the lungs; a nebulizer, which delivers the medication as a mist and oxygen, all at no cost to the schools.

In addition to the UNT Health Science Center, Cook Children's Medical Center and the JPS Health Network are partners in the program.

It's estimated that up to 25 percent of children between the ages of six and nine in Tarrant County may have asthma, though many may be undiagnosed, said asthma expert Dr. David Sterling, a public health professor at the UNT Health Science Center and lead researcher on Asthma 411.

The Tarrant County program is modeled after a similar program Sterling developed in St. Louis in 2002 and implemented two years later involving 96 schools, six school districts and 47,000 students.



"There was a reduction in overall absenteeism," Sterling said. "The 911 calls due to asthma were nearly eliminated."

Two Fort Worth schools participated in an Asthma 411 pilot program that began in 2013 with similarly positive results.

"We know asthma is under-reported and

under-diagnosed," Sterling said. "For every child we find with asthma, there may be a couple of additional students who are not diagnosed."

Many of the kids diagnosed with asthma, have an asthma-action plan, medicine at school and have been told by a doctor that they have asthma, he said.

"The question is: How to find the children most at risk who don't have an asthma plan?" Sterling said. "They may never go to the nurse. They may just not come into school."

It will be necessary to look for absences that exceed the expected number and students who exhibit symptoms when they see the school nurse based on symptoms, he said.

There are some simple, common sense activities to help prevent asthma, like not idling vehicles in front of schools, Sterling said. Second-hand cigarette smoke and even air fresheners can be irritants. It's important to clean air conditioning filters, keep humidity right and watch for mold and mildew, he said.

School districts should develop an asthma-management plan for their schools, said Sterling.

It will create a way for the school to know if a student has asthma and how to address student needs. Such a plan would help to identify students who need assistance and help the school nurse know what to do.

To implement Asthma 411, school districts will need standing orders from a physician to avoid calling 911. Cook Children's and JPS are working to find physicians to provide those orders to school districts that don't have doctors who they regularly use for such matters.

"Cook Children's will put up the money for the schools to get nebulizers, the albuterol and other supplies and will train school personnel," said Larry Tubb, senior vice president for Cook's Center for Children's Health.

"We want to remove barriers to children getting the health care they need," Tubb said. "We don't want the mechanics of raising funds to become a barrier to adopting the program."

Sterling has high hopes for Asthma 411.

It is a group effort of physicians, parents, students, schools and community resources in order to sustain good management for a child with asthma, he said.



SAVING LIVES ON THE ROAD THROUGH TECHNOLOGY

New Program Works to Curb Wrong-Way Drivers

Wrong-way drivers and head-on collisions are the stuff of freeway nightmares.

In Tarrant County, an experimental program that combines cutting-edge technology, research and some common sense fixes is making our roads safer.

“We already know there have been some successes,” said Scott Cooner, an Arlington-based Texas Transportation Institute research engineer who studies wrong-way driving. “People have turned around.”

Interstate 30, the road in the county with a history of the most wrong-way drivers on it, was chosen for the innovative study, Cooner said.

Over the winter, sites on I-30 around downtown Fort Worth and in the Arlington Entertainment District were fitted with cameras that can spot drivers going the wrong way - up an exit ramp to enter the freeway, he said.

The cameras trigger a light show of flashing, red LED-trimmed “Do Not Enter” signs that hopefully get a driver’s attention.

The pilot program with the cameras is funded by the Fort Worth District of the Texas Department of Transportation in cooperation with the North Central Texas Council of Governments.



Lower “Do Not Enter” signs on a North Texas Tollway Authority exit ramp

There are some low-cost solutions that can make a difference and can be implemented rather quickly, Cooner said.

The wrong way signs at the entrance to some off ramps now have reflective red tape around the edges and they have been placed lower.

Why lower signs?

It turns out alcohol-impaired drivers don’t look up or to the right or the left when they drive, a subject Cooner researched and tested several years ago.

Inebriated drivers tend to look straight ahead and down, he said.

The majority of wrong-way driving crashes happen in

urban areas between midnight and 5:00 a.m.

Many of the drivers who cause them are impaired, he said.

“The average wrong-way driver is usually driving at about two times the legal limit for alcohol,” Cooner said.

The North Texas Tollway Authority, five years ago was the first North Texas agency, to begin lowering its signs.

Elderly and distracted drivers can make mistakes, too.

Often, a freeway exit ramp is next to an on-ramp and there may be ample room for confusion.

When crossing under a freeway to turn left to get on it, the first road you come to before crossing under the freeway is a one-way exit ramp. A driver in the left-turn lane is often looking at a curved arrow on the pavement pointing them onto the exit road and the wrong way on the freeway.

Those road-painted curved direction arrows are now being repainted straight, guiding the driver under the freeway before being told to make the left turn.

In Dallas County, there are red reflection arrows planted into the road on off ramps telling drivers to go back.



New Juror Shuttle Bus Route and Times

The pick-up, drop-off times and frequency of the free shuttle for jurors parking at La Grave Field have changed.

A new juror shuttle, No. 991, a special Fort Worth T bus service will now provide the rides. The new service is available from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. on weekdays, except for county holidays. It will run every 15 minutes from 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. and then be available every 30 minutes, from 9:30 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.

At LaGrave Field, the pick-up and drop-off locations are the same as they previously were. In downtown Fort Worth, the shuttle can be caught at the intersection of Weatherford and Taylor Streets, at The T bus stop in front of the Subway Sandwich Shop. It can also be boarded at Commerce Street, at The T bus stop across from the historic 1895 Courthouse.

The shuttle service is free for jurors. County employees can park free at LaGrave Field and can ride the shuttle at no cost if they show their badge to the driver.



WEST NILE AND ZIKA

Gear Up To Protect Against Mosquitoes

Don't we know mosquito season is here.

As the weather heats up in North Texas, so does the chance of catching a mosquito-borne virus like West Nile or Zika.

Mosquitoes can transmit serious diseases from person to person and it's worth the effort to do your best to protect yourself and your family.

Tarrant County has about 37 different mosquito species and more than 85 different skeeters live in Texas.

Two in particular - Culex and Aedes – are commonly found here and pose a health threat to residents of the North Texas area.

Culex mosquitos, which can fly up to two miles, can carry West Nile virus. In 2012, 286 people died in the country's most severe outbreak, 89 of them in Texas. Those mosquitos mostly target birds. The trouble comes when a mosquito bites an infected bird and then a human.

Many people infected with West Nile don't have symptoms or get a mild flu-like illness that improves on its own. However, some people develop neurological complications, encephalitis or meningitis, which requires hospitalization and can cause death.

Aedes mosquitoes, which can spread the Zika virus, stick close to home and don't fly very far at all, no more than a few hundred yards. They like humans for a blood meal and will live in closets inside the house.

Zika is a virus spreading worldwide in tropical, subtropical and other areas where the Aedes mosquito lives. It can cause devastating birth defects in as many as 10 percent of the unborn children whose mothers have been infected.

In recent years, some North Texas communities have resorted to ground-level and aerial spraying of insecticide in areas where mosquitoes carrying West Nile virus have been found.

Tarrant County's Public Health Department works with other local health departments, the Texas Department of Health Services and federal health officials to coordinate the response to the threat of mosquito-borne disease.

Public health focuses on mosquito trapping, testing and the elimination of breeding sites.

The department makes mosquito traps available to cities, who then place them in strategic locations, collect the samples and return them for testing.

"It will take individuals and local public health officials, in a combined effort, using all the

strategies available, to kill the adult mosquitoes and the larvae, to protect our community from these diseases," said Vinny Taneja, public health director.



BE MOSQUITO FREE

PREVENT. PROTECT. TAKE CONTROL.

Become a Skeeter Beater

During summer, most of us spend time outside working in the garden, relaxing with family or playing with the kids or grandkids. The more time spent outdoors, the greater the opportunity to be bitten by a mosquito carrying West Nile virus.

Take simple precautions to lower the risk of you or your family being bitten:

- Outdoors? Use insect repellent containing at least 30 percent of the ingredient DEET.
- Mosquitoes are active at dusk and dawn. Wear long sleeve shirts, long pants and socks sprayed with repellent if you are outdoors when mosquitoes are active. Consider staying in when mosquitoes are biting.
- Make sure window screens and doors are in good shape. Keep skeeters from getting indoors.
- Get rid of breeding sites. Empty standing water from flowerpots and buckets. Change the water in pet dishes, fountains and birdbaths. Drill holes in tire swings so water drains out. Keep wading pools empty and on their sides when they aren't being used. Just say no to standing water.

**For Additional Information:
Tarrant County Public Health**

<http://health.tarrantcounty.com>.



INTERSTATE 30 AND STATE HIGHWAY 360

Arlington Finally Gets its Long Awaited Interchange

Reconstruction of Arlington’s historic and troublesome freeway interchange at I-30 and State Highway 360 is in full swing.

“We are updating to a modern interchange,” said Val Lopez, a Texas Department of Transportation spokesman.

Many North Texas drivers, especially those who live in Arlington or are trying to get to Six Flags Over Texas, the baseball stadium or the home of the Cowboys, would say it’s about time.

The new interchange closes the door on mid-20th Century transportation solutions that included the creation of I-30, then called the Dallas-Fort Worth Turnpike. The turnpike opened in 1957 as a toll road and was the first high-speed connection between Tarrant and Dallas counties.

The construction debt was paid off, the toll booths were removed and the road was renamed the Tom Landry Freeway, to honor the great Dallas Cowboys football coach.

But, the 1950s cloverleaf remained, forcing drivers to exit one freeway to get on the other and causing traffic delays.

Construction began last year on the interchange with connection ramps between I-30 and SH 360.

TxDOT, which is overseeing construction of the \$233 million interchange has had to work around an old cemetery in the northeast quadrant of the project area.

The I-30 and SH 360 main lanes will also be rebuilt with



The Interstate 30/State Highway 360 interchange now. On the right, in the 1950s.

additional auxiliary lanes added on I-30 along with one lane in each direction added to SH 360 within the project limits. In addition, the Six Flags Drive bridge over I-30 will be widened.

Most of the construction on I-30 will be between Ballpark Way and Great Southwest Parkway where it passes under the freeway. On SH 360, the majority of the construction will be between Brown Boulevard and Road to Six Flags Street south of I-30. The project is expected to be completed in 2020.

TARRANT COUNTY CONTACTS

<u>County Administrator</u>	817-884-1267	<u>Resource Connection</u>	817-531-7600
<u>County Clerk</u>		<u>Tax Assessor-Collector</u>	
Criminal / Misdemeanor Records	817-884-1066	Auto Tag Renewal / Property Taxes	817-884-1100
Probate Courts	817-884-1770	<u>Texas A&M AgriLife Extension</u>	817-884-1945
Records Intake / Deeds	817-884-1062	<u>Veterans Services</u>	817-531-5645
Records Library	817-884-1069	<u>Sheriff’s Office</u>	817-884-3009
Vital Records: Birth/Death Certificates, Marriage		Jail Information	817-884-3116
Licenses, and Business Records/DBA’s	817-884-1550	Victim Information	817-894-8463
<u>District Attorney</u>	817-884-1400	Warrant Division	817-884-1320
<u>District Clerk</u>		Commissioners Court meets every Tuesday at 10 am Tarrant County Administration Building 100 E. Weatherford Street, 5th Floor	
Civil Records	817-884-1240	County Judge, Glen Whitley.....	817-884-1441
Criminal Records	817-884-1342	Commissioner Roy C. Brooks, Precinct 1 ..	817-531-4500
Family Court / Divorce Records	817-884-1265	Commissioner Andy Nguyen, Precinct 2	817-548-3900
Jury Services	817-884-3820	Commissioner Gary Fickes, Precinct 3	817-581-3600
<u>Fire Marshal</u>	817-838-4660	Commissioner JD Johnson, Precinct 4	817-238-4400
<u>Human Services</u>	817-531-5620		
<u>Public Health</u>	817-321-4700		

GENERAL INFORMATION 817-884-1111



For additional information, visit: www.tarrantcounty.com