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Passion for riding pays off

Marble Falls barrel racer wins Calgary Stampede

By Stephen Colwell
Highlander Sports Editor

Savanah (Koenig) Reeves grew up riding horses in Marble Falls. She always loved riding, and she was good at it, but no one really guessed she would be holding a $100,000 check at the Calgary Stampede at the age of 24.

Reeves was a four-year starter on the basketball court for the Mustangs in high school, but she gave up the sport when she left for college to pursue a nursing degree. After earning her bachelor's in nursing she set that to the side to chase down rodeo dreams.

Her steady stream of successes in everything she attempted was impressive, but her successes were never focused on rodeo only.

Just one year removed from her second-place finish at the Calgary Stampede in 2009, and in her second ever attempt, Reeves took top billing at the Stampede on July 18, securing a victory at one of the largest and highest-paying rodeos in the world.

"The competition was very tough there," Reeves explained. "It's an invite only with 20 riders. They get the best people there."

The win came right in the middle of a tremendous road trip from Marble Falls to Canada and back with stops at rodeos all across the midsection of the U.S.

PHOTO BY STUART GRADON/CALGARY HERALD

Marble Falls native Savanah Reeves looks out over the nose of her horse Thunder in the winning run of the barrel racing championships at the Calgary Stampede on July 18.

Reeves made the trip with her mother, Kim Stevens, and her younger sister, Haley. On the drive north they stopped over in New Mexico, Colorado, Wyoming and South Dakota with their trailer full of horses.

"Haley and I didn't even get to watch her in the finals of Calgary. We had to take the backup horses to Nampa, Idaho for the next rodeo. The finals in Calgary were on the 18th at 1:30 p.m., and we had

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Community mourns Burnet officer killed in Afghan war

By Clay Thorp
Highland Lakes Newspapers

Family and friends of the 28-year-old Burnet Army officer who was killed in Afghanistan last Thursday are mourning the loss of the young man they describe as a true American hero.

Capt. Jason Ellis Holbrook, a 2000 graduate of Burnet High School, went on to graduate from the prestigious United States Military Academy at West Point in 2004. Jason's father said he remembers his son's character and poise when he returned from West Point—Airborne-trained and enamored with military life.

"He loved what he was doing," said his mourning father, James P. Holbrook. "We were real proud."

Holbrook's father, himself a Vietnam veteran, said Jason was deployed to Iraq soon after his graduation and was no stranger to the hazards of war-torn countries.

"He was attacked in Iraq, too," Holbrook said. "He got his first Purple Heart there" for injuries he sustained during an IED (Improvised Explosive Device) attack in 2006.

Following his time in Iraq, Capt. Holbrook trained with the Special Forces and joined the elite soldiers known as Green Berets.

"He had just gotten to Afghanistan," said his mother, Elaine Holbrook. "He was only there a week and a half."

Mrs. Holbrook said she knew her son had a dangerous job as an infantryman, but said she was caught off-guard when a uniformed officer delivered the news of her son's death.

"You're never prepared," she said.

Holbrook ... see Page 4A

COURTESY PHOTO

Services are pending for native son U.S. Army Capt. Jason Ellis Holbrook, who died in Afghanistan July 29 at the age of 28.

MFISD 'Recognized' in 2010 TEA ratings

By Geoff West
Highland Lakes Newspapers

Marble Falls Independent School District earned its first-ever "Recognized" rating under the Texas Education Agency's (TEA) annual assessment of Texas public schools and school districts, and boasted multiple exemplary campuses for the second year in a row.

A recognized district rating is awarded from student scores district-wide on the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) exam, among other factors.

Three campuses—Marble Falls, Colt and Spicewood elementary schools—received exemplary marks, the highest rating awarded under the TEA ratings that were released Friday.

Marble Falls and Spicewood elementary schools also earned an exemplary rating in 2009, the district's first.

School board president Judge Martin McLean credited those on the frontline—parents and teachers—for the district's success.

"Our classroom teachers have done a real good job and they should be congratulated," McLean said. "We've also encouraged all the parents to participate in school...because the more participation you have from parents the better it is for students.

"We had goals entering the (2009) school year...and being a recognized district was one of them," McLean continued. "We've made a lot of progress the last three years."

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LMHS to transfer assets to Scott & White

By Michael Freeman
Highland Lakes Newspapers

The Llano County Hospital Authority board of directors approved a resolution Thursday to transfer the Llano Memorial Healthcare System's assets to the Scott & White Healthcare System.

The resolution is a culmination of more than two years of work aimed at partnering the Llano Memorial Healthcare System with the Temple-based healthcare provider, hospital officials said.

"I think it's a great step in healthcare in the Hill Country," said Mike Jenkins, president of the Llano County Hospital Authority board. "It's finalized; we just have the details to work out."

According to the resolution, the Scott & White Healthcare System will assume all of the assets and liabilities the Llano County Hospital Authority owns, which includes the leases with Llano County for hospital, indigent care and emergency medical services.

As part of an agreement between the two healthcare entities, Scott & White will soon own and operate the Llano Memorial Healthcare System's clinics and hospital; the latter would be open for at least the next 10 years. Scott & White will also build and manage a regional medical center near the intersection of US 281 and SH 71 in southern Burnet County. Scott & White officials are still negotiating with potential developers on the future

LMHS ... see Page 4A

Nine MF swimmers qualify for 'Games'

By Jami Rash
Highland Lakes Newspapers

The success of summer projects—swimming and skate park construction—was the focus of the Marble Falls Parks and Recreation Commission Monday afternoon.

"We actually have some pretty exciting news for the city," said Director of Parks and Recreation Robert Moss. "Our skate park project is right on schedule and we have nine kids on the city swim team that have qualified for the Texas Amateur Athletic Federation swim meet,"

The swimmers will travel to Waco to compete in the 2010 Games of Texas Aug. 5-8, which features 14 state championships.

"We are very proud of these kids and our summer swim program has been phenomenal. We have 44 members on our swim team and our swim classes have been full since May," Moss said.

The good news continued with the construction on the skate park going ahead as scheduled.

"Most of the forms are up for the various ramps and we should see concrete being poured next week," Moss explained.

We have seen some kids walking by with their boards and checking out what is going on, so we know they are very excited to be able to get out there, Moss added.

The group also discussed the possibility of constructing a multi-use tennis and basketball court at Westside

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