

**Thank a School Board Member**

January is School Board Recognition Month and Robert Lee ISD is joining other districts across the state to thank these community volunteers for their commitment and contributions to our public schools.

School board members serve countless hours working to make public education the best it can be for every child. In a climate of change and challenge, they develop policies and make tough decisions on complex educational and social issues that affect the entire community and the lives of individual students. They bear responsibility and oversight in Robert Lee ISD for an annual budget of \$3.8 million; 280 students, in grades PK - 12; 50 employees and two campuses.

We proudly salute these education advocates as they provide vision and leadership for student achievement, academic programs, district funding, and school facilities. Their service ensures that decisions about local public schools are made by those most familiar with the needs of our community's children and families. These dedicated individuals deserve recognition and thanks for their unfailing commitment to the continuing success of our students now and in the future.

The men and women serving are Wes Washam, President; Tom Sawyer, Vice President; Jeffie Roberts, Secretary; Beverly Sinclair, Trustee, Erin Oleksiuk, Trustee, Irma Torres, Trustee and George Grim, Trustee.

Great leadership always begins with a willing heart, a positive attitude, and a desire to make a difference. Please join us as we applaud these local leaders for helping our kids soar to success.

**New Series**

[Editor's Note: The following is the third in a series of articles submitted by Brandon Broadbent.]

**Joy**

How often do we take the time to reflect on the true joy in our lives? Not so much what we call happiness but **TRUE JOY**. Happiness tends to depend on external things around you to exist. However, joy in a Christian is about a choice and an attitude that come from the interaction and connection with the Holy Spirit. As a Christian you are able to have joy (**TRUE JOY**) even when things are not going so well around you. Romans 14:17 "For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit."

We know that our life is eternal and that what is to come is better than anything we could put together ourselves. 1 Corinthians 2:9 "Rather, as it is written: "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no heart has imagined, what God has prepared for those who love Him."

For just a minute lets look at the now, not what is to come. John 10:10 "The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill,

and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." Matthew 11:30 "for My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

As we deepen our relationship with God our life is easier, and we are given better provision and protection than what we would have on our own. Life more abundant. That doesn't sound like a life filled with sorrow and grief all the time. But of joy (**TRUE JOY**) and rest.

Tell someone what Jesus has done for you. Love y'all.

**Texas leaders amplify cotton policy at national level**

The right to repair equipment, the farm bill and general farm policy were among policy resolutions discussed and approved today by farmers and ranchers from across the nation during the American Farm Bureau Federation's 99th Annual Convention & IDEAg Trade Show in Nashville, Tenn. Texas cotton farmers have support from the national Farm Bureau organization to include cottonseed and/or cotton lint as a Title I commodity in the 2018 Farm Bill. The designation makes the commodity eligible for the Agricultural Risk Coverage and Price Loss Coverage farm programs.

"We submitted national policy language that calls for the inclusion of cotton as a Title I commodity in the 2018 Farm Bill, so cotton farmers have the same risk management tools as other covered commodities," Texas Farm Bureau President Russell Boening said. "Cotton is a major crop in Texas, and this is an important policy goal for our organization."

Delegates supported policy that gives farmers an option to select either a program through the farm bill that provides protection against a decline in milk price or a decline in milk margin. It increases the margin

level from \$4 to \$5 and maintains the ability to buy up to \$8 margin coverage.

The policy also supported increasing coverage from 4 million pounds of milk to 5 million pounds of milk for all dairy farmers.

"The Dairy Margin Protection Program isn't working, and we think this is a better solution," Boening said.

Texas delegates led the effort to firmly establish that farmers and ranchers have the right to repair their equipment.

The overwhelming vote also supported an exemption to the Digital Millennium Copyright Act for the repair of agricultural vehicles.

"Farmers and ranchers can run into increased costs and time lost while waiting for an equipment dealer to diagnose and fix a problem," Boening said. "Our work here today shows how important this issue is to farmers and ranchers."

The policy supports allowing owners and independent repair facilities to have access to the same agricultural equipment diagnostic and repair information made available to the manufacturers, dealers and authorized repair facilities.

Rodents and fire ants are a growing issue. Delegates also adopted a policy supporting the use of insulated wire in equipment or automobiles that is repellent to pests.

In addition, delegates adopted policy submitted by Texas Farm Bureau that opposes monopolistic non-compete clauses among farm equipment dealers.

Commercial farming and ranching practices are often targeted by non-agricultural groups, and national delegates voted to oppose any program guidelines set to further those entities' agendas.

"We oppose voluntary programs becoming mandatory programs," Boening said.

A shortage of labor is an issue facing farms and ranches in

Texas and across the nation. Delegates supported changes to policy in order to reduce the H-2A waiting period because of lack of local labor interested and to eliminate the newspaper advertising requirement.

The advertising requirement has yielded few job placements, proving to be an expensive and inefficient process.

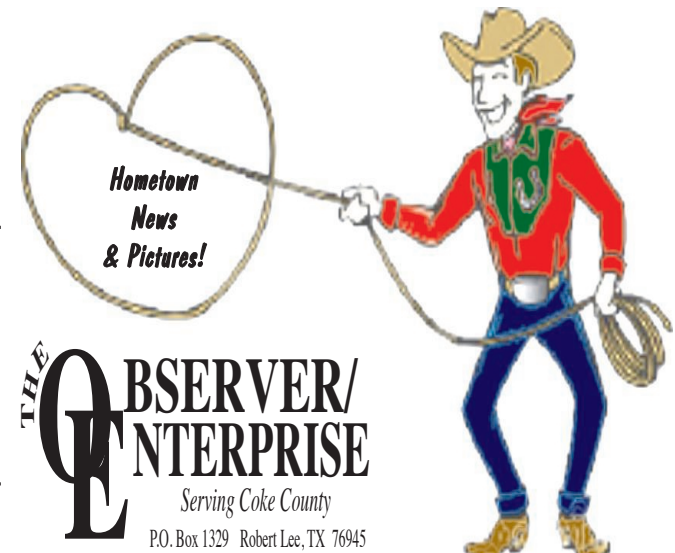
AFBF delegates supported the negotiation and implementation of a revised Softwood Lumber Agreement. Delegates said the agreement should protect U.S. timber producers from Canadian imports subsidized by their government.

Boening noted the mood, despite the poor farm economy, is positive for agriculture.

"We had a lot of consensus on many issues," he said. "The farm economy isn't the best, but our outlook is positive. Our willingness to work together across the country will only help us as we look to another farm bill and face regulatory issues this year."

In other business, Zippy Duvall, a Georgia farmer and rancher, was re-elected as AFBF president and Scott VanderWal, a South Dakota farmer and cattle feeder, was re-elected as vice president.

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