

my recent discussions of mental health.]

“How are you doing?” How do you respond when someone asks you that familiar question? Like most people, you probably give vague but socially acceptable responses - “fine,” “pretty good,” “not too bad,” etc. On the other hand, we all know people who answer in the extremes. We don’t want to ask how they’re doing, because they’ve determined that their life is worse and more miserable than anyone else’s and they’re eager to explain why. But then there’s the other side, the person who wants to tell everyone how life is so much better and more perfect than yours.

Social media fans the flames of both extremes. Some treat Facebook or Twitter as a personal diary of misfortune, while others curate perfection on their Instagram feed and Facebook photo albums so as to display their chosen life narrative to the world.

All of these responses are insincere. It’s easy to pick on the extremes, because folks generally don’t have it worse or better than everyone else on earth, but our vague non-answers aren’t much better. Our attitude matters to the rest of the world. What we display to others, whether it be positive, negative, or forgettable, makes an impact on others around us.

In Matthew 12:33, Jesus says “Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognized by its fruit. You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of. A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him. But I tell you that everyone will have to give account on the day of judgment for every empty word they have spoken.”

All of us will bear fruit to the rest of the world: good, bad, or empty. It’s not our choice as to whether we DO bear fruit, but it is our choice as to what kind of fruit we want to bear. When someone encounters us, what lasting impact do we want to leave? Do we want people to dread seeing us because we talk in insincere extremes of misery or perfection? Do we want to leave them with an empty feeling of meaningless interaction? Or we do we want to be the people who make someone’s day better after we interact with them?

At the same time, this is a reminder that it’s okay to not be okay. The culture of rural America is built on “pull yourself up by the bootstraps” independence, where you rub some dirt on it and keep on going. We tell people we’re “fine” even when we’re not, because we don’t talk about our feelings and we don’t admit weakness or failure. I’ve had too many experiences in the last

**Park Improvements!** On Wednesday, October 14, 2020, groundwork for Robert Lee Park improvements began. RLARestoration Foundation has been hard at work raising funds for park improvements and now is the time to start the grant application process. Crystal Stanford and Shaunna Grantham with RLARestoration, Cole Bosworth with Bosworth Masonry, County Judge Hal Spain and County Commissioner Donnie Robertson, and Luke Sheldon with the City of Robert Lee, walked the grounds in search of a good spot for a restroom to be placed that could be used by the park and ball fields. Once bids have been received for the restroom build, the group can move forward in asking for grants to help with the cost of the new play equipment. The foundation is setting some big goals for 2021! RLARestoration appreciates the community for their continued support of this project and can’t wait to see everyone together again to cut the ribbon on the new play area. Those wishing to donate to the projects can mail donations to RLARestoration Foundation, PO Box 581, Robert Lee, Texas 76945.



few years with folks battling depression or other struggles. Some reached out for help and others never did, with the rest of us finding out too late to help. Our rural independence is a wonderful thing, but so is our level of community. Rural communities band together when someone struggles from a physical illness, so it’s high time we do the same when one of our

friends and neighbors struggles with a mental illness.

We can do better on both sides of the equation. If you’re not okay, take a step and ask for help. But when you ask someone how they’re doing, don’t just ask. REALLY listen to them. Turn those typically vague, insincere “how are you doing?” conversations into something beyond empty words.

If we really want to restore our rural communities, we must have a strong culture of community that helps one another both physically AND mentally. If we renovate buildings and bring in new blood but we don’t work to ensure the physical and mental well-being of everyone in our community, have we really revitalized our community in

ways that truly matter?

We’re all bearing fruit within our community, good, bad, or empty, so what kind of fruit do you want to bear today?

James Decker is a lawyer, farmer, and mayor in Stamford, and the creator of the forthcoming “West of 98” podcast and website. He may be contacted through Facebook at facebook.com/james.decker.

## ECCHD board meetings minutes told

### August 27, 2020, Emergency Meeting

The East Coke County Hospital District Board of Directors met for an emergency meeting on Thursday, August 27, 2020, at 5 pm, at the Bronte Church of Christ Fellowship Hall. President Howard Baker presided over the meeting. Other board members present were Everett Bedford, Lanette Fletcher, Gina McCutchen, and Jerita Taylor. One guest, a resident’s family member, was also present.

The meeting was called to order at 5 pm by President Baker.

A quorum was established and

prayer was led by Everett Bedford.

There were no public comments.

The board moved in to executive session at 5:03 pm. The board returned to the regular meeting at the end of executive session at 6:07 pm. The guest departed the meeting.

Administrator Daisy Toms, Chief Financial Officer Johnny Mathis, and Business Office Manager Fran Sonnenberg entered the meeting.

Everett Bedford moved that the meeting be adjourned since there were no executive items to act on. Jerita Taylor seconded the motion and the motion carried

unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 6:19 pm.

### September 8, 2020, Public Hearing

The East Coke County Hospital District Board of Directors met for a public hearing concerning the 2020 tax rate on Tuesday, September 8, 2020, at 5 pm in the council

room at Bronte City Hall. Vice-President Everett Bedford presided over the meeting. Other board members present were Lanette Fletcher, Gina McCutchen, and Jerita Taylor. Business Office Manager Fran Sonnenberg was also present. Howard Baker was absent.

(Continued on page 6)

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Pd. Pol. Adv. by Marty Boyd

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