



Christmas Festivities in Robert Lee! *The Christmas season began in Robert Lee last Friday with Open Houses in numerous businesses and offices downtown. A tasty array of holiday snacks (left) was available in the Commissioners Courtroom in the Coke County Courthouse for attendees at this year's open house. Delicious chili and stew were among the warming foods available Saturday evening at Vision with a Purpose's Christmas headquarters during A Small Town Christmas.*

Recycling/Convenience Center notes

The Recycling Center in Bronte accepts aluminum cans only. The Convenience Center does not accept brush or tree limbs, according to Bronte City Secretary Crystal Blevins.

Audubon Bird Count set for December 19

The annual Audubon Christmas Bird Count will be conducted in Coke County on Saturday, December 19, by the Midland Naturalists who will gather at a local cafe at 7:45 a.m. Local birders are invited to join them to visit or go on a counting trek. This will be the 116th bird count of the Audubon Society.

There are almost 90 species of birds that are here, or migrate through, this area.

Anyone interested in the program can find the best information by a Google search of the Christmas Bird Count.

The Texas Parks and Wildlife/Texas Department of Transportation nature map lists five birding sites in the Coke County Caliche Loop. One more site will be added with publication of a new map next month.

The group will travel the back roads of the county and will stop at various locations with binoculars ready. There will be an estimated 72,650 bird counters across the whole North American Continent to count birds in our shared environment.

A backyard bird count will be offered February 12-15. A fifteen minute watch and count is all that is needed to participate. See Great Back Yard Bird Count at www.birdcount.org.

TxDOT announces new campaign

The Texas Department of Transportation's "Plan While You Can" campaign urges party goers to plan for a sober ride this holiday season. The campaign runs through Jan. 1, 2016 and coincides with an increase in DUI patrols and enforcement.

"The holidays are a time of celebration and family, but they also require responsible decisions and planning if

alcohol is involved," said TxDOT Executive Director LtGen Joe Weber, USMC (Ret). "Our goal is to save families from the heartbreak of losing a loved one. Finding a sober ride is easy and it can save you from being arrested, injured or killed. There is no excuse for drinking and driving."

During last year's holiday season (Dec. 1, 2014 - Jan. 1, 2015) there were 2,412 alcohol-related traffic crashes in Texas, resulting in 190 serious injuries and 110 fatalities. This was nearly an 8-percent increase in alcohol-related traffic fatalities over the previous holiday season.

Central to the Plan While You Can campaign is a statewide tour featuring an interactive dodgeball game that uses custom gaming technology to replicate the effects of alcohol on a person's reflexes. As participants play, virtual drinks are added and the players' on-screen avatars become less able to dodge incoming "snowballs." The game demonstrates how even one drink can slow reaction

times.

Additionally, TxDOT is hosting a contest on its Facebook, Twitter and Instagram social media accounts. Participants who tag up to three friends in a tweet or a post with the hashtag #PlanWhileYouCan will be entered into a giveaway for a donated gift card from a retailer, restaurant or entertainment venue. To enter and learn more, follow TxDOT on its social media accounts.

As always, TxDOT strongly encourages everyone to plan for a sober ride before going out. Visit SoberRides.org to find alternatives to drinking and driving, such as:

- Calling a taxi or using a transportation app on your smartphone.
- Using mass transit.
- Asking a sober friend or family member for a ride home.
- Spend the night.

For more information, contact TxDOT Media Relations at (512) 463-8700.

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