

felony penalties and enacting civil penalties for vote fraud, and fighting any federal takeover of state elections.

Coke County 98.26%/1.74%; Texas 95.71%/4.29%

Proposition 8

Texas should ban chemical castration, puberty blockers, cross-sex hormones, and genital mutilation surgery on all minor children for sex transition purposes.

Coke County 96.18%/3.82%; Texas 92.55%/7.45%

Proposition 9

Texas parents and guardians should have the right to select schools, whether public or private, for their children, and the funding should follow the student.

Coke County 86.44%/13.56%; Texas 87.53%/12.47%

Proposition 10

Texans affirm that our freedoms come from God and that the government should have no control over the conscience of individuals.

Coke County 97.25%/2.75%; Texas 92.56%/7.44%

...West of 98

(Continued from page 5)

When the Lady Bulldogs advanced to the state tournament, hundreds of folks promptly made travel arrangements to support the team at the Alamodome in San Antonio. Community volunteers immediately organized a free watch party at the Grand Theatre for those who were unable to travel to the game.

On Friday morning, shortly before tipoff, I stepped out of my office and marveled at a downtown square full of cars. School had been dismissed for the game and a crowd of all ages streamed into the Grand, bought popcorn, and cheered on the Lady Bulldogs in their thrilling semifinal victory. On Saturday afternoon, as my own family headed downtown to watch the game, there was nary a parking spot in sight. The Grand held a near-capacity crowd and the neighboring Copenhagen Coffee House (which turned into an unofficial sports bar for the basketball team this past month) had game watchers at every table.

Dan Stewart is the pastor of First Baptist Church and is a new resident of Stamford. He traveled to the semifinal game in San Antonio and was blown away by his new experiences with the Stamford faithful. He wrote in a powerful Facebook post: "we saw Stamford at its best. We were not divided by the things that tend to pull us apart. In the crowd, I didn't see white or black, young or old, rich or poor, Baptists or Methodists. In the crowd, I saw Stamford...United in blue. Sewn together by Bulldog nation. The truth is that the Body of Christ, the Global Church, could learn a thing or two from Stamford today..."

My friend Callie Hernandez is a longtime Stamford resident and on Saturday morning she

wrote how proud she was to scroll her Facebook timeline and see no discord, no bickering, not even a trace of negativity, just a flood of support and excitement for the Lady Bulldogs. Win or lose, Facebook was awash with a community simply supporting its team.

Wendell Berry once wrote that the life of a community "cannot be made or preserved apart from the loyalty and affection of its members." He wrote that outside forces - economics, technology, advertisers, and propagandists - have impacted the loyalty and affection of a community's members and he observes the perils of human nature unrestrained by a sense of community:

"Community life is by definition a life of cooperation and responsibility. Private life and public life, without the disciplines of community interest, necessarily gravitate towards competition and exploitation."

Those words struck true for

me this past weekend. We have seen community life at its best in Stamford. Communities often rally together in times of great excitement or great adversity. Those instances are necessarily fleeting, but what if we could expand that unity? What if we grew that shared community spirit into daily life? What the Stamford that Dan Stewart saw was an everyday affair? What if more community spirit and less negativity became the Facebook norm? What if it does not take an apocalyptic winter storm or a historic basketball season to unify us? What if maybe, just maybe, that old-time spirit of community is just waiting to be unleashed 365 days a year? How might that transform a rural community?

James Decker is the Mayor of Stamford, Texas and the creator of the West of 98 website and podcast. Contact James and subscribe to these essays at westof98.substack.com and subscribe to West of 98 wherever podcasts are found.

Carbon credit brokers contacting Texas farmers, landowners

exponentially. However, there are few cost-effective ways to accomplish this. One alternative that is being pursued is storing carbon in soils, either as organic soil carbon or plant material.

(Continued on next page)

Carbon credit brokers contacting Texas farmers, landowners

In the past year, private investment in removing and capturing carbon from the atmosphere has grown

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