

Perfect Attendance

Pre-K
Cade Bevely, Edrina Carroll, Averie Saunders

Kindergarten
Charles Boyd, Lakynn Bryan, Hattie Jo Burton, Lennox Martinez, Michael Smith

1st Grade
Ellora Carroll, Caroline Franklin, Cooper Johnson, Levi McVey

2nd Grade
Tilden Bryan, Ella Claborn, Gage Finlay, Henley Glenn, Brooks May, Andy Vigil

3rd Grade
Brody Dove, Taygen McVey, Layla Meek, Moriah Smith

4th Grade
Gianna Collier, Drake Glenn, Maria Lopez, Kaelison O'Shields

5th Grade
Hegan Burton, Bella Clark, Makayla McMurtrey, Sydnie Pate, Tatum Pate, Isabella Pico, Gabriel Williams

6th Grade
Paige McVey, Blakely Pritchard, Jazlene Rios, Lilee

Sanderson, Brylee Torres, Brynlea Wojtek

7th Grade
Ryder Antilley, Kreed Cummings, Kassie Flowers, Reece Kid, Jocelyn Martinez, Lydia Pico, Morgan Rasco, Jaxon Shipman

8th Grade
Morgan Dove, Elijah Drake, Hunter Jackson, Makinlee Killough, Kadence Martinez, Marlene Sanchez, Kamahri Sneed

9th Grade
Karter Cummings, Jesus Gonzalez, Shelby Rasco

10th Grade
Luz Cano, Dawson Dominey, Ethan Morris, Matthew Shipman, Dylan Taylor, A'Chyanna Torres

11th Grade
Gloria Gonzalez, Kiley Gregg, Cadi Powers, Stockton Solis, Tyson Walls, Blade Wood

12th Grade
Cameron Coldiron, Darrian Kenney, Allizon Panzer, Nathaniel Shipman, Caleb Sirmons, Carson Sorrells



It Does Not Look Bad

By James M. Decker

[Author's Note: This essay discusses an important topic that might be difficult for some to read.]

This is not the essay I intended to write. On Sunday afternoon, I had a first draft all sketched out on a yellow pad. On Sunday night, my agenda changed. It changed when my wife turned on Oprah Winfrey's primetime interview with Meghan Markle and Prince Harry. To be clear, this essay is not about the British royal family. I have enough headaches in my own life without worrying about their troubles. This essay is about a topic that I have discussed before and which was brought into explosive detail in the televised interview.

On Sunday night, Meghan Markle revealed that her personal misery had sapped her mental health and led to thoughts of suicide and self-harm. With millions of people watching on national television, Mrs. Markle said, "I just didn't see a solution. I just did not want to be alive anymore. Any that was a very clear and real and frightening constant thought."

First, God bless Mrs. Markle for having the courage to publicly share her own mental health struggles. As we have discussed in this space, mental illness doesn't have a "type." It

affects every demographic - men and women, rich and poor, famous and unknown, the pretty and not-so-pretty - equally and without mercy. Mrs. Markle is rich, famous, personable, and beautiful. She seemingly "has it all." And yet, she told the entire world that she, too, struggled with her mental health and contemplated ending her own life. It became so serious that she knew she had to tell her husband or she would attempt suicide. When she told him, she made herself attend a royal function that night because she knew that she could not be safely left alone.

What came next was jaw dropping. Mrs. Markle went to the royal family's advisers and employees for help. In fact, described herself as begging and pleading for mental health assistance, because her situation was that dire. They told her no. They told her that there was nothing they could do and, if she sought help, it would make the royal family look bad. You read that correctly. Mrs. Markle was considering suicide. She asked for help from the people who were ostensibly capable of getting her professional help, and they refused, because a royal family member struggling with mental health would have looked bad.

This made me sad and angry for Mrs. Markle. As I reflected on her words, I was hit with a sobering thought. How many people in our own circles have cried out for help with their mental health and been rejected by people they love and/or respect? How many people have been afraid to ask for help because they fear that rejection? How many people fear that their mental illness will make their family, their friends, their business, and their professional

institutions "look bad"? How many people were slapped in the face last night by Mrs. Markle's words, because even though they are not married to royalty, they knew exactly how she felt?

Folks, I bet her story was more relatable to more people than any of us possibly know. If you do not think that anyone in your circle - friends, families, co-workers, fellow churchgoers - struggles with their mental health, I encourage you to look again. I also encourage you to look inward. If YOU are the one struggling, it is okay. I pray that Meghan Markle's honesty gives you the courage to ask for help. It did not "look bad" for her to need help and it will not "look bad" for you to need help either. If anyone disagrees, send them my way and I will be glad to support you. If you are struggling personally and do not have an outlet for help, please call 800-273-8255, visit suicidepreventionlifeline.org, or text HOME to 741741. You can go to speakingofsuicide.com/resources for additional resources.

If you are tired of my mental health essays, well, I'm not sorry. Too many people are struggling and terrified to ask for help and if I do nothing else in this world, I want to do my part to end the stigma of mental illness, particularly in rural communities.

It is okay to not be okay. Take care of yourself. Reach out for help. Make sure others know that you are a safe resource for help. And above all, if you need help, let me be clear: it does not look bad.

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

HB 901 promotes eminent domain reform

Members of the state's largest general farm and ranch organization continue to advocate for eminent domain reform during the 87th Texas Legislature.

"Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) has long advocated for eminent domain reform," John Ross Copeland, Coke County Farm Bureau president, said. "We will not stop working this issue until meaningful changes have been achieved. Because the way the process stands now, it's often not fair to private property owners."

After a disappointing outcome last legislative session to reform state eminent domain law, the issue is once again a top TFB priority this session to protect private property owners, farmers and ranchers. H B 901, filed by Rep. DeWayne Burns, includes the language negotiated last session to provide meaningful eminent domain reform.

"We're hopeful HB 901 can bring about changes to the eminent domain process in the state, giving private property owners fairness and transparency," John Ross said.

This bill includes agreements from last session on bona fide offers and required easement

terms made to landowners.

"All too often, landowners are at the mercy of the private companies who condemn their property," John Ross said. "We just want landowners to be treated fairly. The rapid growth of Texas will call for careful planning and use of eminent domain only when absolutely necessary. Landowners have a constitutional right to be treated fairly and receive just compensation for the taking of their property," John Ross said.

In Texas, about 95 percent of the land is privately owned, meaning eminent domain doesn't stop in rural areas.

"This is about all of Texas, not just County," John Ross said. For more information on eminent domain authority and landowner rights, visit <https://texasfarmbureau.org/eminentdomain>. Property owner materials, a list of ongoing eminent domain projects and other resources are available.

**Deadline to submit information to
The Observer/Enterprise is Monday at 5 pm.**

IVEY MOTORS

2019 Ford F-250 Lariat 4WD Diesel \$62,500
Magnetic w/Black Leather! Navigation & Heated/Cooled Seats! Great Condition! 28K Miles! #7082

2018 Ford F-350 Lariat 4WD Diesel \$53,900
Gold w/Tan Accent & Tan Leather! Navigation, FX4 Offroad Package, & Heated/Cooled Seats! Beautiful Truck w/76K Miles! #7262A

2019 Chevy Tahoe LT 4WD ~~Price Drop!~~ \$51,995
Satin Steel Metallic w/Black Leather! Black Widow Package! Navigation, Sunroof, & Rear DVD Player! Awesome Looking SUV! Only 32K Miles! #W443A

2015 Ford Fusion SE \$13,795
Blue w/Cloth Seats! Backup Camera & Bluetooth! Great Fuel Efficient Sedan! #7243B

*Let Ivey Motors help you
with your service needs!!*

**State Inspections * Oil Changes * Tires
Vehicle Repair & Maintenance**

**Special Financing Options Now Available!
Ask for Chad!**

453-4561

Ask For:

Cole Flanagan • Buddy Wallace • Kagan Maxcey



**SHOP
LOCAL**

*Please Support
Your
Hometown
Businesses!*