



National FCCLA! Robert Lee High School FCCLA recently attended the national event, held in Nashville, Tennessee. Both teams in the group were gold medal teams, which means that they scored a 90 or above in their rubrics. This puts them in the top percentile in the entire nation. In Entrepreneurship Level 2, Alex Munoz and Myrka Sosa placed fifth in the nation, were state runner-ups, and Texas Region 1 champions. In Repurpose and Redesign Level 2, Kenzie Galicia and Ammleigh Smith placed 21st in the nation, two time state champions, and two time Texas Region 1 champions. Congratulations on your hard work!



State FFA! Robert Lee High School FFA members attended the 93rd Texas FFA State Convention held last week in Fort Worth.

celebrate those jobs and their impact on our local community? 3) Would we encourage our people to pursue those jobs?

It is fair to say that the answers to those questions are something like: 1) wildly excited, 2) of course, and 3) absolutely. But, as I observed, do we treat job opportunities with existing employers the same way? If a local employer, who has lived and worked here for years, hires a couple of new employees at a similar pay rate as Google, would we treat it with equal enthusiasm?

I also observed that there is a "grass is greener" syndrome here. A new employer is different. The existing employer is a known quantity in the community - we know what they participate in, how they donate to organizations, etc. We do not know the same about a new employer. Hypotheticals are fun to consider. There is added mystery to the new employer that makes them "exciting." Mystery is all well and good, but it does not make payroll for local workers. Hypothetical excitement does

not fund taxes that pay for our schools and our city streets. Known quantities do those things.

A few weeks ago, we talked about essential qualities of a good job - qualities like fair compensation, solid benefits, job security, and opportunities to advance. I do not think a "good job" is made merely because it comes from a new-to-town employer. If we truly desire to grow our communities with more good jobs, we need to look inward, not just outward.

I started pondering the concept of rural job creation well over a decade ago. In that time, I have long been stumped by a "which came first, the chicken or the egg?" proposition (forgive me for overuse of metaphors in this essay): do you create jobs to attract a larger labor force or do you build a larger labor force in order to attract new jobs? Google or GM could show up and offer to hire 5,000 people, but if we cannot fill the jobs, they will not do us much good.

As such, I have come to

believe in the importance of strengthening existing employers and hyping current job openings in town, from the entry level to the management role. If existing jobs are going unfilled, that is not much incentive for a new employer to bring more jobs to town. Sure, some of those jobs might not be the sexiest or the highest paying. But they might be a good place for someone to start out in the workforce, from which to springboard into something else and be replaced by the next crop of workers looking to start out.

I think back to my childhood and what jobs were considered "good jobs" in town, the aspirational jobs in which workers seemed to make a good living and have middle-class prosperity and stability, even without advanced degrees. For blue collar workers, many were utility-related - electric, phone and gas companies come to mind - while office jobs included bookkeeping and similar professions. Those were not entry-level jobs, though. They were in demand. People worked

other jobs and had to wait for a retirement or a promotion until one of those true aspirational jobs came open. Dozens of people might apply for a single position. Entry-level jobs were a gateway to a better job and a better position in life. That was true decades ago and it should still be true today.

It is easy to look down upon an entry level job. Employees might think they can do better. Employers might not have high expectations. Community members might not view them with excitement. But if we want more jobs in town, we must start create a bigger, better labor force. To do that, we need to give our workers a place to start. Let us commend them for taking entry-level jobs, not look down upon those jobs. Let us encourage folks to apply for those jobs. Let us all realize that entry-level jobs can be a path to growth and success for everyone concerned.

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.

Powell VA renaming bill announced

Recently Congressman August Pfluger held a press conference announcing his bill to rename the Department of Veterans Affairs community-based outpatient clinic in San Angelo, Texas, the "Colonel Charles and JoAnne Powell VA Clinic" in honor of Colonel Charles Powell, former Wing Commander at Goodfellow Air Force Base, and his wife JoAnne, a cherished congressional staff member for the 11th District of Texas for over 35 years.

Congressman Pfluger was joined by Retired U.S. Air Force Lt. Gen. Ronnie D. Hawkins Jr., President of Angelo State University, and Col. Andres Nazario, Commander of the 17th Training Wing at Goodfellow Air Force Base, who both offered their support for renaming the VA clinic in honor of Colonel Powell and JoAnne.

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ENTERPRISE Serving Coke County. Vol. 132, No. 27. Friday, January 10, 2020. (325) 453-4400 (325) 453-1973

Joke County Water Supply Corporation awarded grant. The Texas Water Resources Board approved a grant to help reduce water loss, estimated at \$200,000 in lost revenue, to the water agency.

SPECIAL OIL & GAS SECTION. By Melissa McCutchen, Publisher. Many Coke County citizens care about the oil and gas industry. We welcome the industry to our county with an open heart.

Special Government Section. Coke County Courthouse • Robert Lee. The county covers 928 square miles on the Edwards Plateau in west central Texas. The county was founded in 1869 and named for Richard Coke, the 17th governor of Texas.

THE OBSERVER/ENTERPRISE Serving Coke County. Vol. 132, No. 27. Friday, January 10, 2020. (325) 453-4400 (325) 453-1973

Year in Review Issue. We are entering a new year as we begin to reflect on the past year. We wish you a very Merry Christmas and a Happy & Prosperous New Year!

2019 Year in Review Issue. We are entering a new year as we begin to reflect on the past year. We wish you a very Merry Christmas and a Happy & Prosperous New Year!

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2019 Year in Review Issue. We are entering a new year as we begin to reflect on the past year. We wish you a very Merry Christmas and a Happy & Prosperous New Year!

THE OBSERVER/ENTERPRISE Serving Coke County. Vol. 132, No. 43. Friday, May 13, 2020. (325) 453-4400 (325) 453-1973

Saluting the Robert Lee High School Class of 2020. Several commencement members for the Robert Lee High School graduates for 2020 have been announced. Congratulations to the graduates of the Class of 2020.

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