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Commissioners recognize service to the community

Service to the community was the unofficial theme on Monday evening as the Ellis County Commissioners' Court approved three proclamations during a regularly-scheduled meeting. The first proclamation designated the month of March as "March for Meals Awareness Month" in Ellis County.

"We deliver about 750 meals a day in Ellis and Johnson counties," said Meals on Wheels board member Charlie Morton. "We are very much appreciative of what the court has done. If you haven't checked your arithmetic, you could think on these lines – you are serving about 250 people for a month with what you are giving, and we would not even get unhappy if next year you served for two months!"

Morton told the Court that Meals on Wheels uses a large number of volunteers to serve meals to homebound citizens five days a week and invited the Commissioners to volunteer.

"There are a bunch of folks that are very much wanting to get out and get a blessing by serving these meals," he said. "Last week we had meals delivered by mayors and even our State Representative – and this week our Congressman is going to deliver."

Commissioner Ron Brown, pct. 4, took Morton up on the offer. "Charlie, I'd be glad to go with you if you give me a day's notice," he said. "You have to buy lunch."

According to Meals on Wheels Executive Director Vinsen Faris, the County's support enabled the organization to obtain a grant from the Texas Department of Agriculture of over \$90,000.

Morton also highlighted the organization's upcoming b-b-q fund raiser, set for Saturday, March 29 at 6 p.m. at the pavilion in Rockett.



A second proclamation designated April as “Child Abuse Prevention Month,” with Child Welfare Board President Sylvia Smith passing out “blue ribbon” magnets.

“April 2nd is set aside as Go Blue Day, with a blue ribbon as the international symbol for prevention of child abuse,” said County Judge Chad Adams, reading from the Court’s proclamation. “The color blue representing the bruises and battering suffered by those abused.”

Some 100 children are currently in foster care in Ellis County, with many more receiving family-based services through the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services.

“You may not realize how many of these children are in each one of your precincts,” Smith told Commissioners. “There are 20 in Red Oak, and maybe 30 in Midlothian. It’s not just ‘the county,’ where it’s not touchable. It’s close to home.”



A third proclamation of the Court recognized some of the County’s outstanding youth – the Problem Solvers of Midlothian High School. For this year’s competition, the students chose to tackle the problem of transportation for the mentally ill when services that are required – such as residential treatment – are not available inside the county. The group was named Grand Champion at the State level and will travel to Michigan at the end of May for international level competition.

“We knew we had a good project because of the number of people it could impact, and it had that heart tug element,” said Cindy Thayer, Midlothian High School teacher and sponsor of the organization. “And they knew it was difficult.”

Thayer said there is still plenty of work for the group to do to prepare for May’s competition, as well as to see their proposed solution come to fruition.

“We have been writing grants and sending out letters to raise funds to buy a mini van,” she said.

“You have done a good job,” said Commissioner Heath Sims, pct. 3. “We’ve got some bright kids in Ellis County, from our FFA programs to the athletic programs to the Problem Solvers. We’ve been very blessed.”



The Court took another step forward in regard to plans to build a new sub-courthouse in the City of Ennis during the meeting as well. A request by County Engineer Joe White to contract with ArchiTexas for architectural services was unanimously approved. ArchiTexas provided architectural services for the restoration of the Historic Courthouse in downtown Waxahachie several years ago.

In other business, Commissioners:

- Accepted the resignation of Matt Craig from the Ferris Emergency Services District #5, effective immediately, and appointed Karen Markgraf to serve the unexpired term;
- Approved a work order under an interlocal agreement for several road repairs within the City of Alma;
- Approved a cooperative agreement to provide additional law enforcement services at Lake Bardwell again this year;
- Authorized the County Judge to sign paperwork to allow Ellis County to apply for funds available for Texas Emissions Reduction Plan grants through the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality;
- Awarded the bid for ½ and ¾ inch rock for 4/1/2008 through 3/31/2009 to Martin Marietta, adding that if the material is not in compliance for a particular location the second low bid, which would be Hanson Aggregates, would be used;
- Awarded the bid for 3/8 to ¼ inch rock for 4/1/2008 through 3/31/2009 to Hanson Aggregates;
- Awarded the bids for limestone flex base for 4/1/2008 through 3/31/2009 as follows: Type A Grade 2 (Delivered) to Martin Marietta for all precincts; Type A Grade 4 (Delivered) to Lone Star Aggregates for pct. 1, 2, and 3 (Italy only); Type A Grade 4 (Delivered) to Trinity Material for pct. 3 (Maypearl only) and pct. 4; Type A Grade 2 (Picked Up) to Hanson Aggregate; and Type A Grade 4 (Picked Up) to Trinity Materials;
- Took no action on the bid for Emulsified Asphalt for the period of 4/15/2008 through 4/14/2009 until further information can be obtained;
- Awarded the bid for Hot Mix Cold Laid Asphalt for 4/1/2008 through 3/31/2009 to the only bidder, Armor Materials;

- Took no action on bids for Asphalt Surface Treatment, Road Base Stabilizer, and Steel Beams and Shapes for 4/1/2008 through 3/31/2009 as no bids were received for these commodities;
- Awarded the bid for Washed Pea Gravel for 4/1/2008 through 3/31/2009 to the only bidder, Trinity Materials;
- Accepted the construction of the infrastructure of the portion of Judy Drive that falls within the subdivision Shiloh Grove, contingent upon obtaining a satisfactory two-year maintenance bond;
- Voted to forward and tender to the citizens of Spring Creek Subdivision for their consideration and approval the Amended Agreement and Resolution to replace the Agreement and Resolution dated July 7, 2005 concerning the old iron bridge over Grove Creek, pursuant to approval by the Court during a previous meeting.