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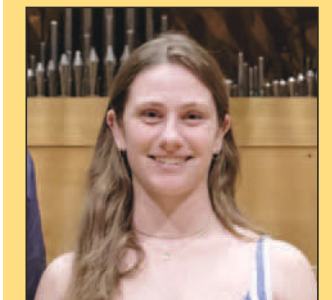
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**Wit & Wisdom**

*The timeless humor of Will Rogers*

“Half our life is spent trying to find something to do with the time we have rushed through life trying to save.”

*From the Will Rogers Museum in Claremore, Oklahoma*



# Inge Festival begins

INDEPENDENCE — The 42nd William Inge Theatre Festival, which celebrates American theatre, will begin today (Thursday) and continue through Saturday in Independence.

The Inge Festival is the Official Theatre Festival of the State of Kansas, as proclaimed by the Kansas Legislature, and produced by Independence Community College. The festival's namesake is Pulitzer Prize and Oscar-winning writer William Inge, a native son and alumnus of ICC.

As part of its mission to support new plays, the Inge Festival will present a fully staged production of “Helens of Troy New York,” by 2024 Inge Playwright-in-Resident Emma Horwitz. It is directed by ICC theatre professor Paul Molnar, with a student and community cast of Ashley Hovell, Tori Kreusch, Larin Tucker, Belinda Faith Thompkins, and Paighton Hall. Stage management is Tonya Mattix. Technical design is by Joel Williams.

Admission is free to the hour-long performances, on Friday, April 18, at 7 p.m., and Saturday, April 19, at 2 p.m., at the campus William Inge Theatre.

Molnar describes “Helens of Troy New York” as “a fun and touching romp through the Emma Willard School for Girls. Feminism is at the core of this production, challenging audiences to consider what it means to be empowered, accepted, and part of a larger movement.”



In a humorous scene from “Helens of Troy New York,” a group of feminist-minded college women attempt to coerce a fellow student into following the ways of feminism. Straddled on the ground is Margo, played by Belinda Thompkins of Altamont. In the fray are (left to right) Celeste, portrayed by Tori Kreusch of Paola, Kan.; Tori, portrayed by Ashley Hovell of Independence; Anna, played by Larin Tucker-Do of Independence, and Hankie, played by Paighton Hall of Altamont.

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“The fast-paced storytelling and dynamic characters create a truly engaging experience that feels like a one-hour sprint,” Mol-

nar said.  
Horwitz lived in the historic William Inge House in Independence.  
• see **INGE FESTIVAL**, page A11

# In wake of bond defeat, BOE seeks answers

BY ANDY TAYLOR  
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CANEY — One week after USD 436 voters gave a resounding defeat to a \$32.3 million bond proposal, local school officials are attempting to learn how their proposal failed by such a lopsided margin.

And, more importantly, members of the USD 436 Board of Education want input from local citizens about another bond issue.

“Our needs aren’t going away,” said Superintendent Blake Vargas. “The results of last week’s election don’t erase the fact that our facilities are much older and in need of upkeep. The big question is this: if voters are not willing to pay for a \$32.3 million bond issue, then what are they willing to pay?”

One thing for certain: local voters were in no mood to pay for a \$32.3 million bond issue that would have been applied in the form of a tax increase on all local properties over the course of 30 years. In last week’s election, USD 436 voters rejected the bond question by a margin of 85 percent (no) to 15 percent (yes).

At Monday’s USD 436 Board of Education meeting, the board discussed how to proceed with another bond proposal . . .

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# Cherryvale stadium’s track to be replaced

Other accessibility upgrades to be incorporated into Logan Park Stadium

BY ANDY TAYLOR  
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CHERRYVALE — Years of discussion and evaluation concerning replacement of the track at the Logan Park Stadium have finally come to an end.

At the end of the 2025-26 school year, contrac-

tors will begin the process of replacing the aging and deteriorating track with anticipation of a new track surface being ready for use in the spring 2026 season.

That was the expectation of the USD 447 Board of Education, which, on Monday, voted to proceed with a track replacement project.

The current rubberized track surface has eroded, weathered and spalled to the point that it has been deemed unsafe for track competition. Cherryvale Middle-High School has had to eliminate its

home track meets in the 2024 and 2025 seasons because of the track’s condition.

At Monday’s school board meeting, board members agreed to name Mammoth Sports Construction of Meriden, Kan., as the contractor for the project. Mammoth provided the low bid of \$1,298,973 for the project, which will begin after the current high school and middle track season concludes in late May.

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# Fast-growing wrestling club finds new home

Caney Wrestling Club in the process of acquiring former hot tub business as permanent location

BY ANDY TAYLOR  
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CANEY — The days of tight practice quarters and limited participation space will soon be a thing of the past for the Caney Wrestling Club.

With a total membership that has ranged from 78 to more than 110 over the past three years, the wrestling club has had to find alternative locations for its growing number of young grapplers.

This week, the wrestling club learned it has secured a contract for a new home: the former Hot Tub Club at 300 S. McGee. The facility is a 4,000 square foot warehouse/storage style building built in 2003. It has largely been vacant or used for storage purposes over the past 20-plus years.

With minimum modifications to the interior, the



The Caney Wrestling Club will move into this location at 300 S. McGee after June 1. The facility was originally built in 2003 as a hot tub business.

ANDY TAYLOR / MONTGOMERY COUNTY CHRONICLE

building will be a perfect venue for a wrestling practice facility, said Michael Freisberg, president of the Caney Wrestling Club.

“We have been handicapped for several years with the lack of space for practices,” said Freisberg. “We have looked all over the Caney community for an available space to house our program. This facility came up in a discussion recently. We followed through with a presentation to the owners, and we have a contract now in hand.”

Freisberg said the wrestling club will likely take ownership of the facility on June 1. With some interior

work, including demolition of one partition wall, during the summer, the facility will be ready for the start of the 2025-26 wrestling year, which, in Kansas, begins on September 1.

Freisberg said youth wrestling has become a year-around activity, with early-season practices in late summer and early fall, followed by practices and competition for the fall-winter season — beginning in October and continuing through state competitions in March.

Although the folkstyle wrestling season ends in March, the freestyle, or

Olympic style, picks up in the spring months. The Caney Wrestling Club is introducing Olympic-style wrestling to its members this year, he added.

“With the addition of Olympic-style wrestling, our club will be practicing and going to competitions for much of an entire year,” he said.

The Caney Wrestling Club, which is a 501c3, non-profit organization, will soon undertake some fundraising efforts to pay for the facility. Although the club has enough money or a down payment, other funds are needed to pay the remainder of the debt.

Freisberg said the club’s officers plan on several fundraisers, including a GoFund-Me account, to secure private funds.

Additionally, the club, thanks to non-profit organization status, is able to collect donations through the Coffeyville Area Community Foundation. Persons who wish to donate to the project can make their contributions to the Coffeyville Area Community Foundation.

While Caney is not among the largest youth wrestling clubs in Kansas, it certainly has grown to be a recognized force, Freisberg said.

However, the club officers and members know that successful clubs have to invest in facilities in order to be elevated to an elite status.

“In this part of Kansas, Rose Hill is looked upon as a successful wrestling community,” he said. “Rose Hill has made a facility investment in its own club, and that has translated into success at the junior high and high school levels. So, we hope the same holds true for Caney.”

“We’re excited about this project and what the future holds for Caney wrestling.”