

Junta Patriotica of Melvin awards G. Rollie White scholarships

By DR. MANUEL PIÑA

The theme of an event held at the Jimenez Event Center in Melvin on Saturday, September 12, 2026 was "Where Our Dreams Were Born/ Donde Nacieron Nuestros Sueños." The event, attended by 70 people, was organized by the Junta Patriotica of Melvin whose mission is to restore the Center and offer it for community events with the proceeds going for its maintenance and scholarships for McCulloch County students.

The event's highlights included awarding four \$1,000 scholarships sponsored by the G. Rollie White Trust to senior students who aspire to further their studies in topics related to the county's rural and farming and ranching needs.

Scholarship recipients from the three county ISDs were Abigail Rodriguez and Emory Ross from Brady; Sergio Sandoval from Lohn, and Elizabeth Brown from

Rochelle.

Board Member Joe Johnson stressed the importance of "planting these young seeds so they may remember where they got their early starts and perhaps find ways to return to meet the needs of our rural residents."

The event was an opportunity to bring the public up to date on the progress that has been made in restoring the Center.

President Ramiro Castañuela pointed out the progress that has been made over the past year and led a dedication of a restored concession stand that was made possible by a grant from Texas Dance Hall Preservation, Inc. He pointed out that many who attended functions there recalled the "puesto" that served soft drinks, tamales, and hamburgers.

A plaque was unveiled to commemorate the life work of Pablo Sandoval and Juanita Pesina Sandoval who ran the



MCCULLOCH COUNTY students from all three school districts received \$1,000 scholarships sponsored by the G. Rollie White Trust. Pictured are Brady ISD scholarship recipients Emory Ross and Abigail Rodriguez with counselor Rebecca Glover; Lohn ISD recipient Sergio Sandoval with counselor Jessie; and Rochelle ISD recipient Elizabeth Brown with counselor Amy Tetens.

stand for nearly 50 years with the proceeds going to the St. Francis Xavier Catholic Mis-

sion and other community needs.

Castañuela fondly recalled how the Sandovals not only gave to the church but also were active in maintaining it. He highlighted his own personal experience with their graciousness for everyone in the community.

The event was also an opportunity to look forward, to envision what Melvin could look like in 10-15 years.

In an open forum, Melvin Resident Tina Biberdorf envisions a Melvin with a health care system tailored for rural and town residents that will meet immediate needs, including ambulance service. She also sees a short-term need to beatify the town to make it attractive to those who may want to live away from urban areas.

Precinct 1 County Commissioner Carol Anderson envisions a place where there are common goals and joint efforts between the town and the county which leads to good infrastructure to support growth, including, in the short-term, the submission of competitive grants to move

toward this idea.

Vice President Manuel Piña, Jr. sees "that rural town with 5-G and fiber optics that offers all kinds of amenities for young couples who want to raise their children in a clean and safe environment, including gardens and a farmers market, and that is close to good schools." In the short term, "it would be free of dilapidated houses, offer clean lots, and have the infrastructure to support new homes."

The event was culminated by the unveiling of a Texas Historical Commission marker recognizing the location of the home of Rafael Riojas who was a key leader in the desegregation of the

Melvin schools in the 1940s (Mexicans and Anglos). The marker is now at the Bible Church Food Pantry.

In attendance and filming the event were Erik and Laurie McCowan from the Texas Dance Hall Show who are visiting and filming dance halls across Texas for a documentary television series that will premiere on Austin PBS later in the year.

He said, "There are no other halls that we've covered with a clear line to education and scholarships like what you've helped to create, and it is refreshing to see a community come together to further the lives and careers of area youth."

McCulloch County Retired Teachers Association

By TERESA SMITH



District 15 Texas Retired Teachers Association unites for fall conference in Ballinger

TRTA members meet for updates, chapter business, memorial service

Members of Texas Retired Teachers Association District 15 gathered Sept. 22 at the First Baptist Church Family Life Center in Ballinger for the district Fall Conference, hosted by Runnels County Retired School Employees.

Members from Erath, Comanche, Brown, Coke, Coleman, McCulloch, Menard, Kimble and Mason counties, as well as the

on retirement matters and association activities.

District 15 President Deborah Davis welcomed attendees, Evan Nicholas, minister of Ninth Street Church of Christ in Ballinger, gave the invocation, and Amanda Kelley, president of the Runnels County chapter, introduced guests. The program listed Cheryl deCordova from Sen. Charles Perry's office and Lori Wilson from Rep. Drew Darby's office among the legislative guests.

Scheduled speakers included Meaghan Bludau, a representative of the Teacher Retirement System of Texas;

Mayor Darlene Kelly welcomed everyone to Ballinger before lunch, followed by silent auction bidding and the afternoon business meeting.

The business agenda called for a review of the 2026 spring conference and planning meeting minutes, the treasurer's report and a vote on the 2026-27 budget. District leaders gave reports on membership and volunteer service, communications and the book project, legislative matters, retirement education, the TRTA Foundation, the ACE Committee and technology. The program also in-

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