



HOOD COUNTY EXPRESS

TRUTH. ACCOUNTABILITY. COMMUNITY.

APRIL 4, 2026

MONTHLY / FIRST SATURDAY

HOOD COUNTY, TEXAS

MARCH IN REVIEW / COUNTY 02 / SCHOOLS 03 / LOCAL LIFE 04

A NATIONAL CHAMPION

Viola Allen sets a finals record. Granbury takes second as a team.



Granbury's rifle team at the March 2026 national championships in Camp Perry. Published March 30. | Granbury ISD

HCE STAFF WRITER

GRANBURY | Senior Viola Allen brought home the individual national championship as Granbury High School's Marine Corps JROTC rifle team finished second at the 2026 JROTC All-Service National Championships in Camp Perry, Ohio.

Allen recorded 469.0 in the finals, a new MCJROTC national finals record, according to the district's March 30 announcement. The score surpassed

the mark previously held by Granbury graduate Kennedy Wells.

Granbury posted a team score of 4695-292 at the Civilian Marksmanship Program's Gary Anderson Competition Center, finishing behind Floyd Central High School of Indiana. The championship field drew programs from across the military service branches.

Mataya Turner also reached the eight-shooter individual finals. Allen

qualified third with 1184-82; Turner qualified fifth with 1182-85. The district also listed qualification scores for Renee Sermarini, Noah Dueck and Ainsley Milligan.

The result gave Granbury a national runner-up team finish and an individual champion in the same competition, closing a season that carried the cadets from postal matches through service championships to the national stage.

Source: GISD national rifle results

COUNTY & CITY HALL

02

Growth, water and the public's voice

MARCH 10 / RULES TIGHTENED 5-0**FORT SPUNKY / APPROVAL REVERSED 3-2**

HCE STAFF WRITER

Hood County commissioners voted unanimously March 10 to strengthen development regulations, then split 3-2 to overturn an earlier conditional approval for Pacifico's Fort Spunky project near Pecan Plantation.

Jeff Osborne reported in the March 14 Hood County News that the new rules largely followed recommendations from the county's Development Commission. Officials described the changes as protections for the watershed, rural character,

recreation and public health under the county's special statutory development authority.

The separate Pacifico vote turned on water supply. The court concluded that the project no longer had valid proposed water sources after the Acton Municipal Utility District rejected its request, Osborne reported.

Pacifico's attorney, Michael Bass, disputed the need to reverse the approval. He said drilling wells on

Hood County Courthouse, June 2018.

Archive; cropped. License:

creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/ |

Michael Barera / CC BY-SA 4.0



the property remained an option and that the company could potentially seek to become a water provider.

The votes followed February's failed attempts to impose a broad industrial-development moratorium. March's actions instead changed county development rules and the status of one project's conditional approval. The developer and county continued to disagree over the project's path forward.

Source: Jeff Osborne, Hood County News, March 14, pages A1-A2

NEWS

Lowery wins primary

HCE STAFF WRITER

Mark Lowery won the March 3 Republican primary for Hood County judge, receiving 7,538 votes to Ron Sutton's 5,140, according to results reported by the Hood County News March 7.

The totals gave Lowery 59.5 percent and Sutton 40.5 percent of the vote. Lowery's margin was 2,398 votes in a contest with 12,678 votes recorded for the two candidates.

The county judge's office leads the Commissioners Court, placing the race at the center of county policymaking. The office also has responsibilities connected with the county's judicial and election functions.

The March result selected the Republican nominee. It did not change the occupant of the office on election night.

Source: Hood County News, March 7, county judge primary results

NEWS

Questions for Coffman

HCE STAFF WRITER

Granbury scheduled a March 24 question-and-answer session with City Manager Chris Coffman under the title "I'd Like to Speak to the Manager."

The city's March 18 announcement invited residents to bring questions, concerns or compliments to City Hall Council Chambers at 116 W. Bridge St. The session was set for 2 p.m.

People unable to attend were offered an email route to submit questions to Coffman, with responses to be shared during the session. That provided a way to participate without being at City Hall during the afternoon meeting.

The announcement created a direct forum for questions about city operations. It did not identify a list of decisions to be voted on or promise a particular policy outcome. The invitation focused on conversation with the manager and answers to residents' questions.

Source: City announcement, March 18

SCHOOLS & STEWARDSHIP

03

A season of leadership changes

NEWS

Whitefield to retire

HCE STAFF WRITER

Granbury ISD Chief Financial Officer Emmett Whitefield announced his retirement in March after 27 years in public education, including 25 school years with the district.

Whitefield began as a Granbury staff accountant in February 1999. His career included financial leadership positions in Granbury and Weatherford, with assignments in accounting, district financial management and facilities. He became Granbury's chief financial officer in 2021.

The district's March 24 announcement credited his work in financial stewardship and accountability. At the time of the announcement, Granbury reported 10 consecutive years of Superior Achievement ratings in the state financial-accountability system, including three consecutive perfect scores.

Whitefield earned the Registered Texas School Business Administrator designation in 2011. Superintendent Courtney Morawski thanked him for his service and management of district resources.

The district said it would begin selecting its next chief financial officer and keep employees and the community informed as the search progressed. No successor was named in the March retirement announcement.

Source: GISD Whitefield retirement announcement

NEWS

Walton takes new role

HCE STAFF WRITER

Granbury ISD named Acton Elementary Principal Maggie Walton its director of strategic initiatives March 23, with the move scheduled for the conclusion of the 2025-26 school year.

Walton brought 16 years in education to the appointment, including 14 years at Acton and four as its principal. The new assignment broadens her work from one campus to priorities across the district.

The district said she would coordinate implementation of its strategic plan, monitor progress, support instructional models and work with campuses and departments on leadership development and professional learning.

The job connects to four district focus areas: student achievement, human capital, culture, and stewardship of resources and facilities. Those responsibilities put both classroom goals and the systems supporting them within the position's scope.

Walton holds degrees from Baylor University and Texas Christian University, along with Texas principal and superintendent certifications. Granbury said it would begin the process of selecting Acton's next principal and provide updates to campus families.

Source: GISD Walton appointment

NEWS

Two principals to retire

HCE STAFF WRITER

Two Granbury ISD campus leaders announced plans to retire at the end of the school year: Kellie Lambert of Emma Roberson Early Learning Academy and Julie Rohleder of Granbury Middle School.

The March 9 district announcement credited Lambert with 32 years in education and 23 years in Granbury ISD. Her 22 years at Emma Roberson included work guiding the district's early-childhood programs and students' first experiences in school.

Rohleder's career spanned nearly 30 years in public education. She had spent six years in Granbury ISD as principal of Granbury Middle School and Baccus Elementary.

Superintendent Courtney Morawski recognized both administrators' service to students, employees and families. The announced timing allowed the principals to finish the 2025-26 school year before retiring.

Granbury said it would begin selecting new principals for both campuses and share information with families as the searches moved forward. March's announcement concerned the outgoing leaders; it did not identify their replacements.

Source: GISD two principal retirements

PUBLIC SAFETY & STREETS

04

Check the caller. Know the road.

SERVICE

Utility scam warning

HCE STAFF WRITER

Granbury warned residents March 27 about a caller who threatened to cut off a customer's electricity unless an immediate payment was made.

The city's Utility Billing department received a report that the caller directed the resident to a local store or another payment location and imposed a short deadline. City officials identified the demand as a scam.

The warning said city utility providers do not demand immediate payment by telephone, require gift cards or payments at retail locations, or threaten disconnection within hours without prior notice.

Residents receiving such a call were advised to hang up, avoid sending money and withhold personal information. To check an account directly, the city supplied

Utility Billing's number: 682-205-2777, option 7.

The practical safeguard is to contact the utility through its published number rather than follow a caller's payment instructions. The city also asked residents to share the warning with neighbors who might receive the same threat.

Source: City utility scam warning, March 27

NEWS

Crossland reopens

HCE STAFF WRITER

City electric crews responded to a power outage on Crossland Road near the Lake Granbury Youth Services building March 5. A morning notice warned motorists to use care around the work area.

By the afternoon, Granbury reported that power had been restored and the street reopened. The completion notice followed the city's initial alert the same day.

The two notices document the response and restoration, but did not identify the cause of the outage, give a customer count or provide an exact duration. The city's final message thanked residents for their patience while crews worked in the area.

Source: City Crossland outage notice, March 5 morning; City Crossland restoration notice, March 5 afternoon

SERVICE

Short road closures

HCE STAFF WRITER

Two city notices gave drivers advance warning of limited closures during March.

The Cresson Bypass was scheduled to close March 10 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. while the Texas Department of Transportation performed maintenance. Granbury circulated the notice the previous evening.

A separate March 17 announcement scheduled Pearl Street between Houston and Crockett streets to close from 6 to 8 a.m. March 18. City electric crews were to replace bulbs, with the closure intended to protect workers and residents.

Both notices described limited work windows rather than permanent changes to local traffic routes.

Source: City Cresson Bypass closure notice, March 9; City Pearl Street notice, March 17

SERVICE

Donate an unwanted car

HCE STAFF WRITER

Granbury's volunteer fire department renewed its invitation in March for Hood County residents to donate unwanted vehicles.

The city's March 18 newsletter directed prospective donors to Fire Station 1 at 817-579-1111, option 1, to arrange pickup. A vehicle had to be located in Hood County, and the donor needed a signed, clear title, its location and keys if available.

M&D Towing Services would collect the vehicle at no charge to the donor, the city said. Calling first lets the department confirm the paperwork and pickup arrangements before a vehicle changes hands.

Source: City Council recap, March 18

YOUNG MINDS

05

BUILDING CONFIDENCE



The Robotic Eels and coach Misty Ingmire are recognized at the March 23, 2026 board meeting. | Granbury ISD

NEWS

Robotic Eels honored

HCE STAFF WRITER

Granbury Middle School's Unified Robotics state champions received recognition at the March 23 school board meeting.

The Robotic Eels team included Alem Webb, Mateo Alvarez, Mason Collado and Finn Burton, with coach Misty Ingmire. The students also helped lead the pledges at the meeting, according to the district's March 24 achievement spotlight.

Principal Julie Rohleder and assistant principals presented the campus report, describing work on academic growth, targeted support and a school culture intended to help students feel connected.

Trustees also recognized Granbury High School senior Shanice Gibson's selection among the Regeneron Science Talent Search's Top 300 scholars and a group of state-finalist swimmers coached by Charles Overton.

The March board program brought achievements from classrooms, robotics and the pool into the same public meeting. The honors acknowledged the students' work and the educators who helped prepare them for competition.

Source: GISD March board achievement spotlight

NEWS

McCarthy reaches regionals

HCE STAFF WRITER

Dane McCarthy, a fifth grader at the STEAM Academy at Mambrino, represented Granbury ISD at the Fort Worth Regional Scripps Spelling Bee March 7.

The competition at Texas Wesleyan University brought together 25 leading spellers from public, private and charter schools in kindergarten through eighth grade. It continued for 12 rounds before a champion was determined.

McCarthy qualified by winning his campus bee and then the Granbury ISD and Area 17 competition. The district recognized his regional appearance in a March 10 announcement.

The regional contest sent its top two finishers to the Scripps National Spelling Bee in Washington, D.C. Granbury's announcement celebrated McCarthy's participation at the regional level and the preparation that carried him through two earlier rounds of local competition.

Source: GISD McCarthy regional spelling bee recognition

ARTS & DOWNTOWN

06

NATIONAL HONORS
FOR THE STOWAWAYS

The Stowaways at MA Dance Nationals. The district published the team photograph March 30, 2026. | Granbury ISD

NEWS

Stowaways win national honors

HCE STAFF WRITER

Granbury High School's Stowaways earned Grand National Champion honors in both team and officer divisions at the 2026 MA Dance Nationals, the district announced March 30.

The 39th Line, directed by Shelby Sargent, collected national titles in three X-Large Classic Team categories: lyrical, hip hop and open. The officer group won novelty, contemporary and pom in the X-Large Classic Officer Division.

Those category wins accompanied the two overall division honors, giving the program a broad set of results across different styles of performance.

The district described the national competition as the close of a season organized around the team's "Stay Golden" theme. Its announcement highlighted the dancers' preparation and leadership throughout the season.

The championships covered six categories, alongside both grand division titles.

Source: GISD MA Dance Nationals results

NEWS

Founders' Day weekend

HCE STAFF WRITER

The Historic Granbury Merchants Association scheduled its 2026 Founders' Day Jubilee and Cook-Off for March 13-15 in downtown Granbury.

The organizer's listing placed the event at 100 E. Pearl St., with the weekend beginning Friday afternoon and continuing through Sunday. The annual gathering linked the town's history with a public celebration and cook-off.

The association's event page identified local sponsors including Bridge Street Market, Iron Horse Inn, Lakeview Dental and Pug On A Pontoon, reflecting the business community's involvement in the downtown weekend.

For residents, the March dates put Founders' Day at the start of the spring festival season. The posted program established a three-day event rather than a single afternoon gathering.

Source: Historic Granbury Merchants Association event listing

WEATHER & COMMUNITY

MARCH’S RAIN GAP

Granbury rainfall

March 2026 / 1991-2020 normal



Editorial illustration / Hood County Express

Source: National Weather Service, Granbury climatology, March station values. National Weather Service station record.

HCE STAFF WRITER

Granbury recorded 1.82 inches of precipitation in March, compared with the National Weather Service’s 1991-2020 March normal of 3.28 inches.

The shortfall was 1.46 inches, or about 45 percent. March nevertheless

brought more rain than February’s 0.93 inch.

January through March totaled 3.58 inches against a combined normal of 7.91 inches, leaving the first quarter about 4.33 inches behind that benchmark.

These are observations for the Granbury station. Rainfall can vary across Hood County, and the monthly total does not describe every neighborhood or individual storm.

Source: National Weather Service, Granbury climatology, March station values

NEWS

Vietnam veterans honored

HCE STAFF WRITER

Granbury’s mayor and council recognized National Vietnam War Veterans Day during the March 17 council meeting. The proclamation identified March 29 as the day of observance.

The city included the recognition in its March 18 meeting recap and linked to a video of the presentation. Its published photograph showed the group gathered with city officials in council chambers.

The recognition was one of several ceremonial and business items highlighted in the recap. The council also marked Procurement Month, drawing attention to municipal employees involved in acquiring the goods and services used in city operations.

Source: City Council recap, March 18

NEWS

Customer care at GMS

HCE STAFF WRITER

Granbury Middle School employees Laura Williams and Melissa McWhorter received EECU Customer Care Awards during a March 11 campus visit by school board members and district administrators.

Principal Julie Rohleder recognized Williams’ classroom work and 34 years in education. She highlighted the science teacher’s efforts to create engaging activities and challenge students to think.

McWhorter was honored for her work as a custodian, including care for the campus’s cleanliness and appearance. Rohleder credited the service she provides to students and fellow employees.

The district’s monthly Customer Care visits recognize employee service across campuses and departments. EECU partners with Granbury ISD in the program and provides gifts to the selected employees.

Source: GISD GMS Customer Care Awards

THE PEOPLE OF HOOD COUNTY

08

CITIZENSHIP
WORTH CELEBRATING

Mambrino students honored at the March 31, 2026 Super Citizens luncheon. | Granbury ISD

NEWS

31 young citizens honored

HCE STAFF WRITER

Thirty-one elementary students were recognized for citizenship March 31 through a partnership between Granbury ISD and Lake Granbury Kiwanis.

Teachers nominated students from five schools: Acton Elementary, Brawner Elementary, Nettie Baccus Elementary, the STEAM Academy at Mambrino and Oak Woods. Honorees and their families gathered at the district administration building for

lunch donated by Granbury Chicken Express.

The recognition focused on the way students contribute to their school communities. It offered a public celebration of conduct and citizenship alongside the academic and athletic awards that fill much of the spring calendar.

Acton's honorees included Mercy Tullis, Amber Velazquez, Reese

Henderson, Blakeley Kuykendall and Lexington Colston. The district published the complete roster of recipients from all five campuses in its March 31 announcement.

By bringing students, families, teachers and a local service organization together, the luncheon made everyday citizenship the reason for the celebration.

Source: GISD March Super Citizens

HISTORICAL EDITION

March-only reporting. Compiled October 4, 2026.