

Texarkana Gazette

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City manager: Plaza plan includes historical preservation



Staff photo by Les Minor

Salvaged historical bricks will be used to create a setting for the “Blessed Be the Tie That Binds” railroad track sculpture at Front Street Festival Plaza, shown, Texarkana, Arkansas, City Manager Jay Ellington told the Historic District Commission on Wednesday.

By KARL RICHTER
Texarkana Gazette
TEXARKANA, Ark. — Plans to improve downtown’s Front Street Festival Plaza will include historical preservation, City Manager Jay Ellington told the city Historic District Commission on Wednesday. “We’re taking all in consideration for the historic nature of the area, as well as the site amenities that will go in there,” Ellington told commissioners during their monthly meeting at City Hall. Ellington presented the same plan for the plaza that he pitched to the city Advertising and Promotion

Commission last month. It includes modernizing the plaza’s stage, installing restroom facilities, adding landscaping and lighting, and improving the “Blessed Be the Tie That Binds” railroad track sculpture at the site. A key part of the plan is to reuse salvaged vintage paving bricks to create an attractive setting for the sculpture, which Ellington envisions as the plaza’s centerpiece and a gathering place for visitors, he said. Benches, landscaping and a shade structure are also included in plans for the sculpture. Ellington estimates the total cost of the project to be more than \$950,000. The

city Board of Directors has approved spending up to \$400,000 for improving the stage, and Ellington asked the A&P Commission for \$700,000 more. During Wednesday’s meeting, the Historic District Commission also approved a number of certificates of appropriateness, some amended after the fact, for changes to buildings in the city’s historic districts. The owner of a home at 2002 Ash St. will be allowed to replace windows with some designed to match the originals. Johnny B’s restaurant at 224 E. Fifth St. can keep plastic signage covering a vintage neon sign for Glass

Pharmacy at the site. The Commission had approved replacing the neon lights in the sign to read Johnny B’s, but the restaurant’s owners found that plan to be cost prohibitive, City Planner Mary Beck said. The Commission also approved new signage at The Hideout, a former Salvation Army thrift store at 311 E. Broad St., and El Frio Express at 204 E. Fourth St. Also approved were most changes underway at the Potter Law Firm, 117 E. Broad St. Contractors have removed a modern facade, revealing the original brick and second-floor windows beneath. The Commission
See PLAZA on Page 2A



During the live Ashdown Community Auction on Saturday night, attendees were able to bid on items donated by businesses and individuals from the community and surrounding areas. Photo courtesy of Ronda Pounds

Ashdown Foundation auction raises \$128,000 for a special playground

By ANDREW BELL
Texarkana Gazette
ASHDOWN, Ark. — The Ashdown Community Foundation raised more than \$128,000 to go towards a new city playground during its 10th annual community auction this past Saturday. The event was sponsored by the Domtar Community Advisory Team and the Ashdown Community Foundation. All proceeds will be used for community development and beautifi-

cation projects in downtown Ashdown and the City Park. The initial funding goal of this auction was \$100,000, which was exceeded. The money raised included a \$20,000 donation presented by Ashdown Mill Manager Jean-Claude Allaire, on behalf of Domtar. “Thanks to everyone who supported this event for the local community,” Ashdown Community Foundation member Ronda Pounds said. “We appreciate everyone

who donated items, purchased raffle tickets, helped with loading and putting items together and attended the event. This event would not be possible without your ongoing support.” These proceeds, plus a 2022 Blue & You Foundation for a Healthier Arkansas grant worth \$150,000, will be specifically used to construct a 4,400-square foot inclusive playground at the City Park. Members of the founda-

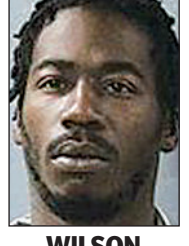
tion believe that an inclusive playground will allow children of all abilities the enjoyment of safe play with a variety of playground components, enabling children to develop physically, socially and emotionally without barriers normally encountered on a playground. “It’s amazing to see what a community can accomplish when they pull together for a cause,” said Tammy Waters, Ashdown Community Foundation Board Member.

State rests in capital murder trial; defense to present its case today

By LYNN LAROWE
Texarkana Gazette

NEW BOSTON, Texas — The state rested its case Wednesday afternoon in the capital murder trial of a man accused of killing another while robbing him of THC vaping cartridges.

Kristopher “Flip” Wilson, 26, is one of two men charged in the Dec. 27, 2020, death of Chase Porier. Porier, 27, was shot in the neck and died of his wound in his home on Forest Circle in the Liberty Eylau area of Bowie County before first responders could arrive. Wilson’s co-defendant, Brandon “BB” Parkman, 19, is scheduled for trial in June.



WILSON

Jurors heard Tuesday from an eyewitness who said Wilson was looking through a box of THC cartridges, known as “carts,” when he turned, pulled a pistol and shot Porier. Dewayne Terry testified that Wilson and a second man took cartridges and his and Porier’s cell phones before leaving in a small cobalt blue car with a black bumper that didn’t match.

Terry testified that he and Porier were in the business of selling the cartridges from Porier’s home. THC is the active substance found in marijuana.

Wednesday the jury heard from Dallas Medical Examiner Tracy Dyer M.D. Dyer testified under questioning by Assistant District Attorney Randle Smolarz that Porier was shot in the center of his neck and that the bullet traveled downward, severing a large artery. Dyer said Porier would have struggled to breathe in the last minutes of his life.

“If I thought it was accidental, I would have ruled
See TRIAL on Page 2A

Magnolia man dies in motorcycle accident on Highway 82

FROM STAFF REPORTS
GARLAND CITY, Ark. — A Magnolia, Arkansas, man was killed Tuesday afternoon in a motorcycle crash on U.S. Highway 82 in Miller County, about 30 miles east of Texarkana. Scott Wilson, 55, was traveling westbound at 2:55 p.m. Tuesday near County Road 123 in Garland City on his 2020 Harley Davidson, according to a report from the Arkansas State Police. According to the report, Wilson drove off the road to the left and struck an embankment, causing him to be ejected from the motorcycle. The accident remains under investigation.

Texarkana College: Leader College of Distinction

FROM STAFF REPORTS
TEXARKANA, Texas — Texarkana College announced on Tuesday that it has been designated a Leader College of Distinction by Achieving the Dream, a national nonprofit dedicated to advancing community colleges as hubs of equity and mobility in their communities. “Texarkana College is incredibly proud to be recognized as an Achieving the Dream Leader College of Distinction,” TC President Dr. Jason Smith said in a news release. “Participation in the Achieving the Dream Network has helped us learn how to better evaluate student outcome data to determine what works best for student success.” ATD created the Leader College of Distinction award in 2018 to recognize colleges that have pursued and met challenging student success goals, often earning Leader College status several times. Leader Colleges of Distinction must show improvement in three or more student outcome metrics, including at least one lagging indicator such as completion or transfer with an earned baccalaureate.



vate sustained and proactive reform efforts that result in greater improvements in student success and equity. “TC has continuously improved student completion rates since joining the ATD Network and now we consistently rank as one of the top colleges in Texas for student success measures,” said Dr. Donna McDaniel, TC’s vice president of instruction. “Over the last three-year period, TC improved students’ four-year completion rates by 15 percentage points and has significantly improved the gap between completion rates among white and black students.” McDaniel said implementation of campus-wide strategies led to changes in advising and curriculum and have proven to be effective for driving student success. Texarkana College is part of the ATD Network, made up of more than 300 colleges committed to advancing equity and supporting student success. TC has been a member of the ATD Network since 2010 and has held Leader College status since 2012

Leader Colleges of Distinction are also required to show they have reduced equity gaps in at least two metrics for at least two student groups. These requirements recognize and moti-