

# Around the State: Church blesses community with groceries, gas

October 25, 2023



Members of Cartwright Baptist Church near Winnsboro purchased groceries for customers. (Courtesy Photo)

When a member of Cartwright Baptist Church near Winnsboro gave an offering designated to “benefit and bless the community,” Pastor **Cody Mize** mobilized members to buy food for shoppers at a local grocery store in nearby Quitman and gasoline for customers at a local service station. Members at the grocery store paid up to \$100 per shopper until funds were exhausted. When they called the pastor to let him know, he sent more money with instructions to continue paying for groceries up to \$50 per customer. “The gift of groceries and gas through the people of the church and the member who made it possible by their donation is God’s work,” said **Debbi Davies** of Quitman. “Those who gave and those who received were blessed.”

The Department of Education awarded Hardin-Simmons University a five-year development grant equaling \$2.1 million, the first-ever DOE grant HSU has received. The funds are from the competitive Strengthening Institutions Program authorized under Title III and will impact student and post-graduation success directly. “This grant will fund two big initiatives to drive students’ academic success at Hardin-Simmons, allowing our professors to maintain the rigor in their courses and to deliver the excellence in education that is the university’s promise,” said **Mike Monhollon**, associate provost and chief data officer at HSU. The grant will support HSU’s Strategic Learning Initiative and its Guided Pathways initiative, both part of the university’s Forward Together program. Funds from the Strengthening Institutions Program grant will go toward hiring faculty and staff to oversee the Strategic Learning Initiative and Guided Pathways program and construction costs to create designated spaces for meetings.



Thomas Sanders, provost at East Texas Baptist University, welcomes Raquel Contreras and Stephen Stookey to campus for the annual ETBU Calling Conference. (ETBU Photo)

East Texas Baptist University hosted its annual Calling Conference for students who sense God’s call to vocational ministry. The conference gives students the opportunity to learn from current ministers serving in various ministry fields as they discuss the call on their own lives and how that calling is informing their current ministries. **Raquel Contreras**, CEO and publisher of the Baptist Spanish Publishing House in El Paso, was the keynote speaker for the conference and spoke in ETBU’s weekly chapel service. “God calls us and guides us,” Contreras said. “He takes us to places we cannot imagine. What are you going to do with your life? In whatever field you choose, when Jesus calls you, he will give you what you need. So, you must get up and go.” Other conference leaders included **Randal Lyle** from Meadowridge Baptist Church in Fort Worth, **Walter Ballou** from Green Acres Baptist Church in Tyler, **David Butts** from First Baptist Church in Arlington, **Kyle Grizzard** from New Beginnings Baptist Church in Longview and **Stephen Stookey**, Texas Baptists’ director of theological education.



Mitsue Rodriguez from San Antonio was crowned as homecoming queen, and Ethan Cortez from Bangs was named homecoming king

at Howard Payne University. (HPU Photo)

Howard Payne University welcomed alumni and other guests to campus for Stinger Spectacular, an annual event that includes homecoming, Yellow Jacket Preview and family weekend. **Mitsue Rodriguez**, a kinesiology major from San Antonio, was crowned as homecoming queen, and **Ethan Cortez**, a biomedical sciences and Honors Academy major from Bangs, was named homecoming king. **Jack Shackelford**, a finance major from Midlothian, was named homecoming prince, and **Rachel Baergen**, a middle school English education major from Rockport, was named homecoming princess. HPU also recognized alumni honorees: **Dale Fisher**, distinguished alumnus; **Micaela Espiricueta Camacho**, coming home queen; **Natalia Lopez**, outstanding young graduate; **Robert and Cheryl Mangrum**, grand marshals; L.J. and Lori Clayton, HPU Medal of Service; Rubén Hernández, the José Rivas Distinguished Service Award; and **Doug Holtzclaw**, the Jacket Alums in Ministry Faithful Servant Award.



Cody Harrington

**Cody Harrington**, assistant director of international and veteran student services at Houston Christian University, was named a “2023 Veteran Champion of the Year in Higher Education” in the fall edition of [G.I. Jobs 2023-2024 Military Friendly Schools](#). Each year, the magazine recognizes 40 individuals who go above and beyond to help student veterans and their

families succeed in education. “This recognition serves as a reminder of the incredible privilege and responsibility that comes with advocating for the well-being of our veterans. I am committed to continuing my efforts to support and uplift those who have served our country,” said Harrington, an HCU alumnus and U.S. Army combat veteran of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. “Together, we can make a meaningful difference in the lives of our veterans,” said Harrington in response to his selection.



Poet Tania Runyan was the speaker for the inaugural forum Lyceum: A Forum for Christian Thinkers, Writers and Scholars at East Texas Baptist University. (ETBU Photo)

Poet, author and National Endowment for the Arts fellow **Tania Runyan** was selected as the speaker for the inaugural forum Lyceum: A Forum for Christian Thinkers, Writers and Scholars at East Texas Baptist University. The new academic forum is designed to provide the ETBU community an opportunity to hear from a prominent Christian scholar whose work is presented and discussed in the context of Christian humanities. Runyan talked about how the evolution of her poetry has positively impacted her walk with Christ and understanding of the Bible. “At some point, I began to change how I approached creativity,” she said. “Instead of writing poetry in order to fall in line or make some sort of evangelical statement, I began to

look at it with a sense of honesty and curiosity. I began to write poetry as a way to know God myself, and to work through doubts and questions I had.”

## **Anniversary**

50th for **Teresa Wells** as church pianist at Northview Baptist Church in Lewisville on Oct. 22.

40th for **Dwight McKissic** as pastor of Cornerstone Baptist Church in Arlington.