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## JEFFERSON ISD INITIATES PLAN TO RAISE STATE TEST SCORES

By BOB PALMER, Jimplecute Editor

Although Jefferson schools received a "met standards" in 2017-2018 from the Texas Education Agency, state test results like only 30 percent of Jefferson students met grade level in two or more subjects while the Texas average was 48 percent have caught the attention of the district staff.

"Many of our STAAR scores are concerning," JISD Superintendent Rob Barnwell told the Jimplecute, "but we are committed to improving in all areas."

The JISD program is wide ranging.

"We are just beginning to implement new expectations/systems concerning student progress, particularly related to Response to Intervention (RTI) and Professional Learning Communities (PLC)," Barnwell said. "These basically require our principals and teachers to assess and review student data in a more detailed way."

In reading the JISD "met grade level" score was 39 percent. For writing the number was 29 percent, science 32 percent and social studies 34 percent.

The JISD plan "also requires our teachers to meet and communicate as a group more, which helps to determine strategies and/or manipulatives that work for some students and may not work for others," Barnwell continued. "Anyway, it's basically a way for teachers to 'share' ideas and communicate with each other about specific students and strategies related to the essential knowledge and skills that are being taught/learned."

Barnwell wants to ensure Marion County residents understand one group is not to blame.

"Low state test scores sometimes tend to make folks think that teachers are not teaching, which is not the case most of the time," Barnwell said. "Our teachers are teaching, and students are learning, but we may have to tweak 'how' we are teaching something, or perhaps the 'depth' of a concept through various questioning techniques in order to induce a higher level of critical thinking. It's almost like the old adage of "don't work harder, just work smarter."

A higher degree of buy-in is part of the effort.

"We have a renewed commitment to increase reading comprehension at the lower grades, which we've recognized as being an issue," Barnwell said. "Poor reading/comprehension skills affect all areas of education, including math, science, and social studies, so that is an area of focus for us."

These efforts have engendered renewed optimism.

"We are absolutely hopeful that scores will improve," Barnwell said. "However, we are mainly concerned about individual, student progress.... learning more, improving individually, and expanding in all areas....every day, every year."

Barnwell resents attempts to compare JISD to any other district or non-educational parallel.

"I don't think public education can be legitimately compared to any other entity," the superintendent said. "There's nothing else like it. Even comparing one public school to another is absurd in most cases."

Differences between districts make comparisons pointless.

"There are too many variables that are not taken into consideration, but should be," Barnwell said. "For example, one could ask the question, 'How did School A stack up against School B regarding state test scores? They both have about the same breakdown regarding student population. So, wouldn't that be a legitimate comparison?'"

Barnwell's answer is "No."

"School A may have a higher tax rate that enables them to hire extra personnel to serve as interventionists - folks to help the struggling students in a small-group setting, or perhaps even a 1-on-1 setting. Therefore, School A has an advantage over School B in that scenario," Barnwell explained. "However, it is a fact that even districts across the state which have the exact same tax rates receive varying amounts of funding per student, which is not fair."

One district may receive about 8-10,000 thousand dollars per student, while a seemingly analogous district receives 5,000 per student, even with the same tax rates.

See more on JISD on page 6

## JIMPLECUTE'S OWN WINS JAKE TRUSSELL AWARD AS LONE STAR CONFERENCE SPORTSCASTER OF THE YEAR

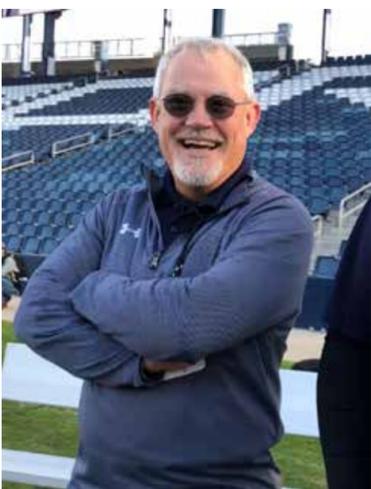
From Staff Reports

Texas A&M University-Commerce play-by-play announcer Charlie Chitwood has been named the winner of the Jake Trussell Award for the Lone Star Conference's Sportscaster of the Year, as announced Tuesday at the LSC's annual football media day.

A Jefferson resident, Chitwood is also the sports columnist for the Jimplecute.

Chitwood was the play-by-play voice of the Lions for the 2017 football National Championship, as well as a basketball playoff run not seen in Commerce for 13 years. He recently completed his sixth season as the play-by-play broadcaster for A&M-Commerce, joining 88.9 KETR-FM and the Lion Sports Network in 2012.

Chitwood called all 15 Lion football games in the National Championship season, including the weather-delayed opener at North Alabama and three consecutive playoff road games in Minnesota, Washington, and a return to Minnesota.



Charlie Chitwood poses ahead of the NCAA Division II National Championship Game in Kansas City, KS.

Chitwood is also a regular fixture in the press box at W.F. Lockett Stadium.

"Covering the Bulldogs and Lady Bulldogs is a touchstone for me and has kept ink circulating in my blood since I left the newsroom in Paris to move here in 1993," Chitwood said.

The Trussell Award and the 2017 season remain important to Chitwood.

"I don't know about 'prominent' - I've never heard of anyone holding up a game because the radio guy wasn't there - but it's a real privilege to be considered a part of the teams and university family in Commerce," Chitwood said. "That 'OI' ET' crowd up there is special - they'll talk about last-year's national championship run forever - just like they have about their NAIA 'Natty' in 1972."

"I've had it pointed out to me by some of my colleagues that there are now three active college football play-by-play guys in Texas with National Championships rings," a smiling Chitwood recalled. "Jon Wallin at Mary Hardin-Baylor (NCAA Division III) got his ring two years ago and of course Craig Way down at UT picked up his 'Natty' back in 2005 with Vince Young. It's crazy to be in such a small circle."

See more on CHARLIE on page 6



Tim Bister with Texas Parks and Wildlife holds one 3,000 of the paddlefish released at the Jefferson boat ramp last week as part of a 10-year program to reintroduce the species into Caddo Lake.

## Prehistoric Fish Gets Fresh Start in Caddo Lake

By BOB PALMER, Jimplecute Editor

Scientists say 50 million years before dinosaurs left their footprints outside Glen Rose paddlefish swam the waters of the earth. American paddlefish populations have declined dramatically, however, primarily because of overfishing, habitat destruction, and pollution.

A small crowd gathered at the Jefferson turning basin and boat ramp recently to watch the first step in a campaign to repopulate the species.

"More than 6,400 American paddlefish were stocked by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) last week into Big Cypress Bayou and Caddo Lake," Tim Bister with TPWD said.

This stocking was a cooperative effort between TPWD and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). The fish were raised by USFWS at the Tishomingo National Fish Hatchery in Tishomingo, Oklahoma. A total of 14,000 fish are planned to be stocked in 2018.

"This is the first year in a 10-year restocking effort to reestablish a self-sustaining population of the American paddlefish in the Big Cypress Bayou and Caddo Lake," Bister explained.

Collins Academy has also played a role in the feasibility study prior to the restocking effort.

"The Paddlefish Reintroduction Project has gone from an experimental posture where scientists were determining whether the species would stay and thrive in the Caddo Lake system to a restocking effort," Collins Academy GM Gary Endlsey said. "Studies have determined that American Paddlefish love the conditions presented. A robust stocking program is now underway."

Prior to any paddlefish stocking, a plan was developed to establish a more naturalized water flow for Big Cypress Bayou and Caddo Lake.

"These flow recommendations have been met using water releases from Lake O' the Pines," Bister explained. "Once paddlefish mature to spawning age, these natural flows will provide important environmental and biological cues for fish during the spring spawning season."

In 2008, USACE completed a project that installed a gravel shoal in Big Cypress Bayou, just upstream of Jefferson. Gravel areas in the river are important for successful paddlefish spawning. The USFWS has also identified other potential gravel spawning areas downstream of Lake O' the Pines that can be monitored in the future for paddlefish spawning.

See more on PADDLEFISH on page 6



## GETTING TO KNOW YOU

Jefferson ISD technology director Jay Patrick and Curriculum Director Dr. Lynn Phillips provide orientation information to teachers joining the district this year. "This is a great place to live," Patrick said. "This is a great place to work."

## NEWSbriefs

MARION COUNTY AARP CHAPTER #3694 is offering the "Smart Drivers Course" on Tuesday, August 21, 2018 at Kelleyville Park Center (130 Kelley Park Road, Jefferson, Tex.), 8:30am - 11:30am. The course fee is \$15 for members, \$20 for non-members. For more information, please contact John T. Cooper at (903) 624-9047.

2018 MARION COUNTY FARMERS MARKET continues each Saturday through October 27 as long as produce is available. They will again be using the park in front of the First National Bank in downtown Jefferson. There will be a single membership for vendors for the entire season. Dues are \$20. For questions contact Doug Weir at (903) 665-2421 or Myra Smith at (903) 639-2910.

GRIEFSHARE, a special help seminar and support group for people experiencing grief and loss, will be held on Wednesday afternoons from 1 pm to 3 pm, at Harleton United Methodist Church beginning August 8, 2018. GriefShare features nationally recognized experts on grief recovery topics. Seminar sessions include "Is This Normal?" "The Challenges of Grief," "Grief and Your Relationships," "Why?" and "Guilt and Anger." Meetings will be held at 13370 FM 450N in Harleton, Texas. For more information, call the program director at (903) 601-1394.

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