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September 2026
Volume 20, Issue 9



Jordan DeWald
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ON THE COVER



Dr. Christopher "Doc" Smith
is training the future of
sports medicine.

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TRAINING TOMORROW'S TRAINERS

— By Jordan DeWald



What does it look like when a school district invests in the health and future of its student athletes? In Burleson ISD, it looks like sidelines full of trained student practitioners, a community health care partnership and a driven educator at the center of it all. Dr. Christopher Smith, the district's head athletic trainer, is quietly building what he believes will become one of the state's premier sports medicine programs.

Dr. Smith, known to students as "Doc," joined the staff at Burleson High School in 2023. He provides care for student athletes from injury diagnosis through rehabilitation to recovery and clearance. Dr. Smith enjoys working with high school athletes as a patient population. "They are healthy, fit, young athletes that are motivated, but also I get to teach them." While at BHS, he has designed a sports medicine program for students that is modeled after successful programs he observed at other schools. Students in the program are often nominated and go through an application and interview process. They take courses each year specific to sports medicine and health sciences. After school, the student trainers assist with the medical care of the school's athletic teams under the direction and supervision of licensed and certified athletic

trainers. Students have hands-on learning experiences where they can apply their classroom lessons. Dr. Smith is passionate about it being a student-driven program. He wants the young people in the program to help shape it into the best learning experience for them. For example, one group expressed interest in collegiate sports medicine programs, so Dr. Smith organized trips and presentations by Texas universities with proven programs. He arranged for the 2025-2026 senior class to tour the Dallas Cowboys stadium and meet with the professional team's athletic training staff. He refers to the people he leads in the program as a "Sports Med Family" and has cultivated an environment of trust and individual ownership. High expectations are placed on the students because of the important work they do, and they are held accountable to the athletic trainers and their peers.

After two years as the head athletic trainer for the Elks, Dr. Smith took on a new role for the district as the Burleson ISD head athletic trainer. Under his leadership, the sports medicine programs at each school were brought under a single umbrella. Dr. Smith likes building a pipeline in recruiting and developing the student trainers in his program. The middle school programs at Hughes and Kerr would become the early training areas for the high school programs at Burleson and Centennial High Schools. The expectation of student responsibility, learning and excellence is the same across all schools, as is the "Sports Med Family" mentality. The school district has been supportive of Dr. Smith and the sports medicine program, and the athletic director shares the goal of uniting the

programs to provide students with practical learning opportunities.

Dr. Smith cares deeply about the student experience because his time as a student trainer in high school led him to this role. While a student at DeSoto, Dr. Smith saw an opportunity to combine his interest in athletics with his thoughts of a health care career. Much of the DeSoto program, under the direction of Scott Galloway, influenced how Dr. Smith has designed the Burleson ISD program. Dr. Smith continued his education at Texas State University, graduating with a Bachelor of Science in Health & Wellness Promotion, and at Tarleton State University, where he was part of the first cohort of its newly designed graduate program, earning a Master of Science in Athletic Training. He graduated with a Doctor of Athletic Training from Ohio University in 2024. Dr. Smith is a leader within the North Texas Athletic Trainers' Society and is respected amongst peers. As a



first-generation college graduate, Dr. Smith serves as an inspiration to his students.

With the support of the district's leadership and the partnership with Texas Health Resources and Texas Health Huguley Hospital, BISD students receive top-of-the-line medical care and instruction. Texas Health Huguley sponsors the sports medicine programs with materials such as new sideline medical tents. The partnership includes the recent opening of THMA Sports and Family Medicine at BISD, where the community can receive medical care, and student athletes have

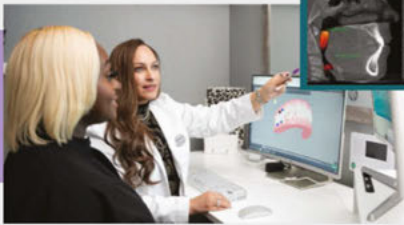
the opportunity for expedited care in the event of an injury. Dr. Smith said, "I think it's important that our community knows that it's not just me. There's an army of students and professionals behind me."

Dr. Smith wants the community to know that the four schools' athletic training programs will grow simultaneously. His prediction is "they are going to see the sports med program lead this side of the Metroplex, if not the state." He sets high expectations but says there are no higher expectations than the ones he first sets for himself. He leads by example, by putting in more work than he asks of anyone else.

When Dr. Smith joined Burleson High School in 2023, he came with a vision that stretched well beyond treating sprains and clearing athletes to play. He is uniting four schools under a single sports medicine umbrella, building a student-driven program rooted in hands-on learning, high expectations and a family atmosphere. **NOW**

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Just north of Burleson, a new kind of neighborhood is taking shape in Crowley, Texas. Karis is a 565-acre master-planned community offering new homes, small-town charm and convenient access to employment, dining, entertainment and shopping. Developed by The Nehemiah Company, which brings more than 30 years of experience in new home construction, Karis



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was built around a simple but powerful idea: a home is more than four walls.

Three award-winning builders — Cadence Homes, Chesmar Homes and David Weekley Homes — are building homes at Karis, which has 2,025 homesites with prices ranging from the \$270,000s to the \$600,000s. A variety of floor plans and styles accommodate different families and budgets. Model homes are open daily, giving prospective buyers a chance to tour designs and discuss options with builders.

One of Karis' most distinctive features is its full-time lifestyle director, Demaris Darnell, who organizes a year-round calendar of events and activities exclusively for residents. From family-friendly



gatherings to adult-only evenings at The Atrium lifestyle center, programming is designed to help neighbors connect and build the kind of relationships that make a neighborhood feel like home.

The Atrium's Phase I is complete and includes a fitness center and a family pool experience designed for all ages, featuring a dedicated toddler zone and a main swimming area. Phase II is anticipated to begin in the fall of 2027. Additional amenities are on the way, with a community building and second pool planned for this winter. The addition of pickleball courts will be completed in the fall of 2026.

Beyond the amenities, Karis is designed to encourage people to slow down and spend time outdoors. More than three miles of sidewalks and nature trails connect parks and open spaces throughout the community, and the road layout itself is intentionally designed to reduce traffic speeds and invite residents to linger, explore and get to know their neighbors.

Families with school-age children will find Karis zoned to Crowley ISD, one of Tarrant County's more diverse districts. An on-site Crowley Montessori Academy, which opened in fall 2024, gives younger residents an educational option right in the neighborhood.

Karis maintains active ties with the City of Crowley and the Crowley Chamber of Commerce, reflecting a genuine investment in the broader community beyond its own boundaries. Proximity to the renovated Crowley Main Street corridor and the Crowley Recreation Center adds to the quality of life residents enjoy. In addition, they are just a short drive to the trails, restaurants and shopping offered by the neighboring City of Burleson. For those ready to put down roots and build a life surrounded by community, Karis offers something increasingly rare — a neighborhood where neighbors genuinely become friends. **NOW**



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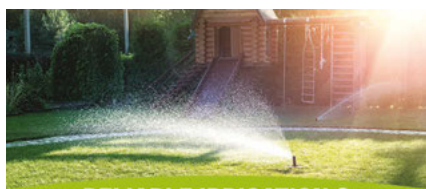
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Zoomed In:
Valerie and Josee Keeran

By Jordan DeWald

Mother and daughter Valerie and Josee Keeran spend most of their days together as hairstylists in the same studio. For the month of August, the two decided to offer low-cost haircuts, with all the pampering a regular priced style would include, for anyone who would be going back to school. This included staff and teachers, and students from preschool to college. According to Josee, she and her mom like to say, “Everyone deserves to feel good about themselves.” They wanted everyone to have the opportunity to start the school year with a fresh style that they could be proud of, without cost prohibiting it.



Niki Widmayer, Jana Loofbourrow and Sue Benner study together in the Advanced Spanish 4 class at the Senior Activity Center.



Noah Caffey, excited to be a Mound Mustang, attends Kinder Camp at The Academy of Leadership & Technology at Mound Elementary.



The Haster family enjoys time together as summer draws to a close.



Master Naturalists with the Rio Brazos Chapter of Texas Master Naturalists share about the program and make nature bracelets at Bailey Lake.

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Zoomed In: Drew Pennywell and Alex Phillips

By Jordan DeWald

The community of Burleson laced up their golf shoes, so that local children could lace up brand-new shoes to start the school year and sports activities. Drew Pennywell and Alex Phillips partnered with Lace Up Hope to host the first Happy Feet Mini Golf Classic to raise money and awareness. Alex said, "Because of all of the sponsors, teams, individuals and community support, we were able to raise over \$22,000!" The team behind Lace Up Hope described their mission by saying, "We believe every pair of shoes represents an opportunity to play, learn and grow." Drew and Alex wanted to support the work of the organization and created a fun event that involved the local community in the work.



With a cheerful demeanor and a warm smile, Jaden Chapman assists guests at the Burleson Public Library.



City employee, Griselda, bravely participates in the Burleson Nature Discovery Back to School Adventure.



Chris Lalik, Mellissa Pierrard and Stephanie Christian, Master Naturalists, help community members make bug hotels.



Friends Matthew Freese, Joshua DeWald, Taylor Gill and Emma McClain spend an evening together before they all move to attend college.



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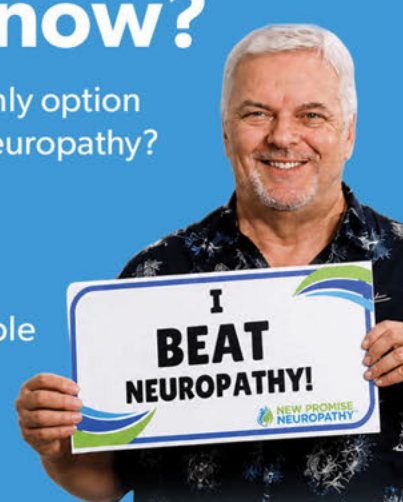
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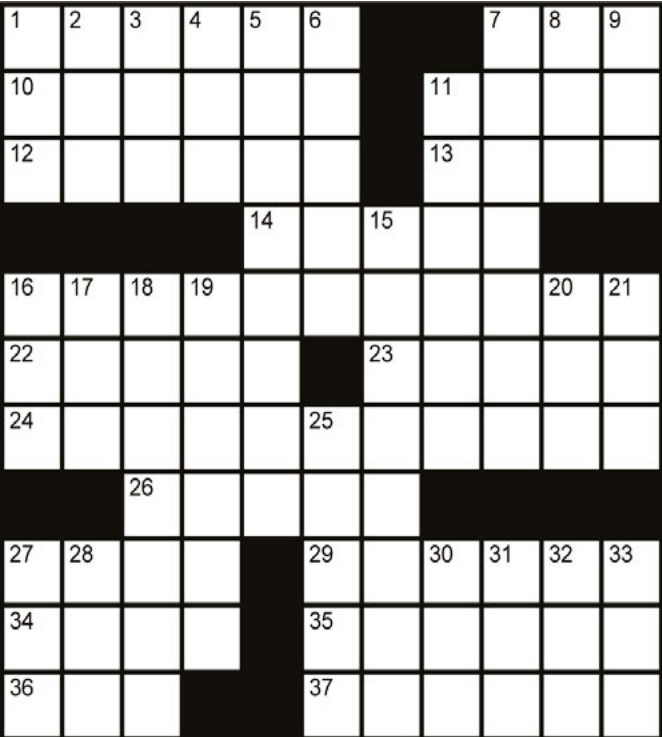


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12 Eurasian
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13 "Good
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14 "... Q T"
16 Rolling
residences
22 Lying flat

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2 "The Man Who
Mistook His
Wife for a ---"
(Oliver Sacks)
3 119.6 square
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4 Gremlin
5 Failure broke
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6 Part of an act
7 Artsy area
8 Boston's
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9 Light time
11 One tenth of a
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15 Autobiography
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16 Measure of
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18 Paying guest
19 Undeniably
20 Savannah
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