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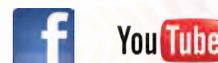
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Mary Kay Kuhrts

THE *upbeat* REPORTER

A Note from the Publisher

New Beginnings



A Case for Catch and Release

Ever since I was a little girl, I remember going fishing with my dad. I was completely awestruck by that little perch we just caught, and asked my daddy if we could throw him back in the water so he could breathe! He said, "Of course we can, this little one's not big enough to keep!" Even throughout high school, I went camping and fishing with my dad at Lake Meredith. He taught me to cast, after he baited the hook! I could reel in the fish too, but Daddy always took the fish off the hook too! We would have fish fries in our backyard in Borger, Texas, inviting friends and neighbors. Even now, my husband, Kurtis, will bait the hook and take the fish off the hook when I catch one! I know I was and still am a little spoiled when it comes to fishing, but I do love the Lake! Nowadays, I still like to fish, but prefer catch and release. It always reminds me of a new beginning!

People and experiences come into our lives for a season. Regardless of whether the season is short (as in "catch and release") or lasts throughout our lifetime, the value of the relationship or experience cannot be overstated. Those memories with my dad are priceless and are rooted in the process of learning to fish and making the decision to release the fish. If we can take time to enjoy each step in the process of catch and release, then we are better prepared to embrace a new beginning.

The Upbeat Reporter has had several "catch and release" situations, each time resulting in new opportunities for growth. It has grown in the quality of its appearance and especially in the nature of the relationships established. We always strive to make the readers' experience with the Upbeat Reporter one of value, and are working on new ways to reach our readers and followers.

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WHAT REMAINS

An Interview with the Cast

By Sharon Miner



On December 1, 2022, *What Remains* premiered at the Amarillo Globe News Performing Arts Center. Filmed and produced in Amarillo by the new Sharpened Iron Studios headed by Sean Doherty, founder and CEO. Over 800 people gathered to watch this thought-provoking film, leaving the audience with deep contemplation about faith, trust, truth and the complicated intricacies of relationships.

Sometimes when we think about people who are in the acting profession, we limit

ourselves to what we know about them based on the characters they have brought to life. But behind every character is a true story about real people with families, beliefs, and struggles, living everyday lives.

At the press briefing for *What Remains*, The Upbeat Reporter sought to dive deeper and discover the hidden nuggets God placed in the personalities of the cast of *What Remains*. In doing so, it became clear they are God's people, doing God's work, in the genre God has chosen for them.

Nathan Scoggins

Writer and Director

The Upbeat Reporter wanted to know why Nathan Scoggins decided on this particular project and how he tackled the weightiness of the subject. Nathan is a master storyteller and he shared his thinking behind the movie and how his faith plays a role in his personal and work life.

He wrote the vision.

"My father was a pastor and the subject of faith has always been of interest to me. I don't think of myself as a faith-based filmmaker, but I think of myself as a filmmaker who likes to explore faith," Scoggins said.

"I had been ruminating on family for a long time. I'm a father and a husband so family matters to me. I have always been interested in the intersection between honesty and loyalty. What are we loyal to? What do we overlook because we want to be loyal? When do we tell the truth and risk losing a relationship? So, when my wife asked what I would write if I didn't have to ask permission, *What Remains* was created in six weeks. I wrote a scene between a father and son where the son asked the father 'whose side are you



on' and when I wrote that scene, I knew I had to make this movie," remarked Scoggins.

Scoggins continued, "My faith is my life. I am fueled, provoked, and challenged by my faith. I can't write a movie that isn't about

faith, because faith is me. So, when people ask me if this is a faith-based movie, I don't know if it is but it certainly grapples with faith. Bono from U2 once said, 'People think that because he is a believer, he has all the answers. Actually, as a believer I just have a different set of questions.' That is what I think I bring to my work. The questions *What Remains* is asking, I was asking 15 years ago and they are the same questions I'm asking now which are rooted in my faith. Hopefully faith brings us to some answers, and hopefully it brings us to more questions. And, ultimately, I get to tell more stories."

Photos by Cathleen Tyson-Day

Cress Williams

Marshall

Cress Williams is no novice to starring roles. In *What Remains* he plays a small-town pastor who is confronted with forgiveness, truth and the power of a father and son relationship. The Upbeat Reporter sought to understand why Cress chose the role of Marshall and how this character has affected who he is today.

He heard from God.

"A lot of the times as an actor, you read a script because someone has said this is the character they want you to play or you are anticipating an audition. Nathan (the director) is a friend of mine, so I initially was reading the script as a friend which allowed me to read it without focusing on any specific outcome. As I read the script, I was struck by the unresolved ending that leaves you stuck in a great way. I connected with Marshall, the choices he had to make and the circumstances he found himself in. I felt like I knew Marshall and understood from a fatherly perspective, why he does what he does. I knew I was hearing God for this role," remarked Williams.



As we listened, Williams continued, "One of the things I love about making films and doing TV is the mixture of people. In a 12 to 14 hour span you rub elbows with every type of person from millionaires to teamsters. Creative conversations take place, and because it is such a mixture it can be very dysfunctional. *What Remains* taught me that they don't have to be dysfunctional. There is a way to do film and television that is fun and healing. It opened my eyes and changed me in a way, that I can identify and see situations that are going to be great, and the ones that may not be great."

"*What Remains* is a tough story. My past life experiences helped me with this character and my faith is part of who I am. Through this project I learned how to lean back, let go, trust God, and know that He has me," said Williams.



Kellan Lutz

Troy

Playing a character in a movie can be extremely challenging. But playing a character that is totally opposite on the spectrum of your core beliefs takes a unique ability to channel something you may not be familiar with. Kellan Lutz steps into the role of Troy who commits a crime in *What Remains* and finds himself struggling with forgiveness. Kellan shared with The Upbeat Reporter what it took to master the character of Troy.

He relied on his faith.

"One of the things I love learning about myself is, learning about myself. Faith is the biggest part of my life. I am such a faith filled person. It is a spiritual gift and I believe wholeheartedly in forgiveness. So, when a role like this presents itself and I play a character that is so outside of who I am at the core, it is probably the biggest challenge I feel comfortable playing. I jump at the opportunity because I get to learn and dive deeper into my beliefs, said Lutz. "The character of Troy solidified my belief system and it helped strengthen my faith. It made me look at who do I need to still forgive because forgiveness is such a release and unforgiveness is a poison to your own soul."



Lutz continued, "There is only one other role that comes to mind that I really had to do a lot of work mentally that challenged me. It was a character that dealt with hopelessness. He had lost all hope and that is such a depressing place to live. It is bad enough for a character, but I know people who have lost all hope. That is why I am so grateful for my faith."

"As an actor we live in an industry of no, but if you don't have anything outside of yourself to believe in, to give you hope when you aren't enough, you will never make it," Kellan expressed with passion. "You can't let it be your identity. When you put on different coats of characters, sometimes it takes a little while to take them off. This role was just a challenge because it is so outside of my normal day to day. I live a very joyful life - 2 kids, happy wife and a happy family."



Stelio Savante

Scott

Creative strength can be found in the characters actors portray. Stelio Savante brings a light side to the character of Scott. It was important to know how an encounter with a script could grow Stelio internally and emotionally. What Remains played a small part in releasing him from past struggles.

He learned to trust.

"Nathan and I have been friends for several years. When I read and deconstructed the script, it felt like a very considered piece of art in writing. I have lived on 4 continents and in parts of the world where faith is not a hobby. It is how you survive. At times in American films that deal with issues of faith, there are characters I can't identify with or understand because they are flawless people. What Remains was a courageous script. There were characters who were nary. They were real people and as a storyteller you want to show the real person. There is an element of trust that



gets established early in the movie between Scott and Maureen played by the wonderful Anne Heche. As the movie progresses, their level of trust increases and that was attractive to me. It was something I could explore because in my own life my parents, specifically father had trust issues with me," said Savante.

"I started out in improv 30 years ago, but I didn't like the way comedy and improv made me feel because I was in my head too much instead of just listening and being. The first scene we shot with my character Scott, Nathan said to me It's okay to give yourself permission to have a little fun. Levity is not easy for me as an

immigrant as a person who has traveled a lot and having a difficult childhood. But the levity I embraced early on with Anne's character was a great learning experience for me because I allowed myself to go somewhere I may have been fearful of. Being able to employ that and sit back and trust it was a wonderful and rich experience," commented Savante.



WHAT REMAINS

Cast

Anne Heche

Maureen

Cress Williams

Marshall

Kellan Lutz

Troy

Juliana DeStefano

Kaitlyn

Stelio Savane

Scott

What Remains is a great inaugural movie of Sharpened Iron Studios. Sean Doherty said he wanted to turn Amarillo into the Hollywood of the High Plains. With God's help, I think he just might do it.



Sharon Miner

Sharon is the director of development and public relations for Martha's Home. She has worked with homeless women and women in recovery for over 20 years. Her professional career includes politics, business and non-profit organizations.



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The 2022 WTAMU Lady Buff Volleyball team WINS the NCAA Division II National Championship

By Dr. Aaron Hunt
WTAMU FCA
Athletic Chaplain



How do you define joy?

Many people have attempted to get their minds, hearts, and lives around the concept of joy. Biblically, joy is found in an abundant harvest, at a wedding, sharing wine with friends and family, and in children. In contrast, human history is not a joy fest. Yet, we can experience joy daily amid trials and adopt a life that focuses on God’s love and eternal promise.

During the 2022 volleyball post season run, we had a chapel service on joy. We offer 10-15 minute “services” to teams before each home game and on the road during the postseason. We talk about gratitude, sacrifice, dedication, and teamwork to name a few. Our female athletic chaplain, Gracen Key, asked the volleyball team to describe the meaning of joy. The coaches and players offered various responses. In the end, Gracen defined joy as a profound appreciation for all of life’s circumstances. In the good times and the bad, we can glean the longitudinal benefit. Athletic competition often teaches the competitors about the ups and downs in life. Swings in games and in a season are inevitable and finding joy throughout the process becomes part of a healthy team’s progress. This team was extremely healthy. They loved one another, they were vulnerable with each other, they fought for each other, and with each other in a healthy conflict resolution way.

In Seattle, in December (which is quite dreary), the NCAA hosted a national championship festival where the fall sport teams competed for their respective championships. Additionally, both of the WTAMU



Defining Joy!

Cross Country teams ran through the snow for the best combined finish in school history. As for the volleyball team, they made a run towards the championship that included a five-set thriller over Wingate, a four-set battle over St. Louis, MO., and the back and forth National Championship over D2 volleyball powerhouse Concordia St. Paul. During the pregame chapel before the championship match we simply had a five minute moment of silence and then talked about our thoughts. The girls said several personally meaningful things. One comment that brought about some laughs was from Camy Jones, opposite hitter, who said, “I keep seeing us wearing those national championship hats.” Camy is pictured below on the front right, in a hat with her team.

Assistant coach, Brooke Alverson, reiterated the earlier theme about joy. She said, “I have such a profound appreciation for today and every day I have had that has brought me to this place.” That’s what it is about, gratitude, for the hard times and sweet times, like when a team comes together and wins a national championship. Go Buffs!

Joy is different from happiness and pleasure, and once you’ve had it, you will trade anything for it.

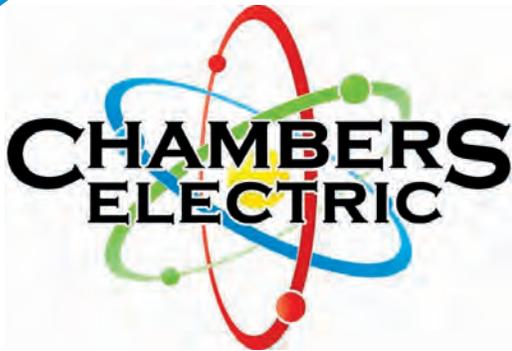
- CS Lewis



Dr. Aaron Hunt

Aaron has been the Fellowship of Christian Athletes Athletic Chaplain at West Texas A&M University since 2016. Before that he was a high school Spanish teacher and coach, a junior high Assistant Principal and an Assistant Professor of Education at WT. He loves spending time with his wife and six children. They enjoy reading, travel,

and a myriad of sport and outdoor activities. May God bless you and keep you and may you seek His face all of your days.



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MAAC

CHILDCARE WITH A PURPOSE

By Cathleen Tyson-Day

When I first met Grand Master Mike Lister, he was wearing his Master dobok "uniform." Looking prestigious, I was taken by his big smile and friendly composure.

Master Lister owns the only martial arts day care in the country. Officially named Martial Arts and Athletic Center. A then 8-year old studying acronyms mentioned that they should call the school "MAAC" for short. It stuck!

Teaching martial arts for 42 years, it all started when Mike was playing football at Tascosa High School in Amarillo. His sister was a prima ballerina at the Lone Star Ballet when she told Mike that they needed strong men to dance in the ballet. Not really thinking it was the route he wanted to take, he did attend and met a new Korean friend. This man introduced Mike to Tae Kwon Do and martial arts, he wanted to learn more. Mike did go on to college, but felt driven to open a martial arts school. The first school opened in 1984.

Classes were held in an expensive building that was eating up their profits. The instructors were teaching martial arts as a PE credit through the schools. They saw the need for an afterschool program to keep the kids busy and out of trouble. There is an added plus to martial arts, they teach respect, discipline,

self-control, non-violent conflict resolution and self-esteem. These are traits not often taught anymore, but important in achieving success in life. It was decided to open a daycare.

Master Lister would drive down Line Avenue and notice a building with a large mural of Jesus surrounded by children. Across the top, it read, "Let the children come to me... Jesus." He dreamed that someday the building would be the home for MAAC.

Master Lister shared, "It's prophetic; it's us." The story tells of a grandfather who was so pleased at how well Master Lister had taught his grandsons through the MAAC program, he wanted to show him a building to expand in. Master Lister followed in a car to check out the building, and yes, it was the same building with the mural. Lister's funds were low, and he knew he couldn't afford to purchase it. This grandfather, Dennis Clouch, offered to carry the note, but wanted him to have "skin in the game," Clouch required a \$10,000 deposit. When you want something bad enough, you can find a way to get the money, and by pulling resources and donations from parents, the deposit was raised. The building became a licensed after school martial arts and child-care center in 2001. MAAC drivers pick up around 400 kids from various schools every afternoon. They feed them snacks, help with home-





work, and learn Tae Kwon Do, Jiu Jitsu, boxing and various others. As the students' progress, the instructors lead them to which one fits them best.

Blessed and Highly Favored

Master Lister quotes this saying, "blessed and highly favored" as he describes the workings of his martial arts schools. He has been teaching so long that 85% of his employees are past students.

The Mini MAAC takes care of children ages 18 months to 4 years. At the north location, the oldest students are 13.

MAAC has been a licensed daycare for almost 21 years. The buildings have gone through some renovation, one at a time, including the mural.

The mural was painted by Deborah Morgan in 1989. The children in the painting were based on children she knew of different ethnicities. While painting the mural, Morgan saw a man pull over in a truck and said that God led him to help her stencil a message above the mural. Morgan knew what that saying should be, **"Let the children come to me. Jesus"** A divine intervention.

Source: Amarillo Globe News, 10/16/2016

For many years, children walked past the mural on their journey to and from school, becoming a staple in the community.

Morgan moved away, and the children in the painting grew up. The paint began to fade and crack.

Morgan moved back in the early 2000's. Coincidentally, Dolores Pence lived across the alley from her at the time. They had gotten to know each other well. Morgan often spoke about feeling the need to touch up that huge mural. Pence offered her help. In 2016 with acrylics and paint brushes in hand, Morgan at 72-years old and Pence took on the project. After the completion, a construction company sprayed a protective coating on the mural at a fraction of the cost.

There is a scripture above the door at MAAC:

"Thank the Lord, my rock, who trained my hands to fight and my fingers to do battle." Psalms 144:1

I asked Master Lister what this scripture meant to him. "Several parents have asked how I can be a Christian and teach fighting like I do." Knowing he was doing what God led him to do, he opened the Bible searching for that answer, and what he read before him was this scripture.

MAAC is an impressive facility teaching respect, self-control, and love of your fellow man. These kids meet new friends and learn valuable life lessons.

Information on how to sign up for daycare or martial arts classes of any age, visit the website. MAAC.com or call 806-322-1080

MAAC locations:

MAAC KIDS

3820 Line Ave.

MAAC KIDS2

2009 N. Marrs St.

MINI MAAC

4220 Wolflin Ave.



Cathleen Tyson-Day

Cathleen began her career in graphic design and broadcast, specializing in campaign event branding/promotion for print and web. The Upbeat Reporter and Upeat & Beyond captured her heart; she's involved in on-air interviews, writing, and designing. Cathleen enjoys singing and sharing time with her husband, Billy Day.



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TRANSFORMATION PARK

A COLLABORATIVE EFFORT TO SOLVE HOMELESSNESS IN OUR CITY



Thirty-seven cents.

By Amy Crowley

That was the ask some 30 years ago.

One day, Cari Roach Good found herself sitting on a bench at Amarillo's Ellwood Park. It was there a man approached her and asked for a mere thirty-seven cents. She didn't have it. Good was simply sitting in the park with a sack lunch, looking for someone with whom to share. Not long before, she'd seen a homeless man sleeping under a tree in that same park and felt the Lord reminding her that "he is my beloved just as you are."

When she inquired of the man in front of her as to why he needed the small amount of change, his response ultimately led to her lifetime of service. He simply needed \$.37 to combine with his change in order to buy some food, and that was all Good needed to hear. She shared the sack lunch and in so doing, her journey of serving the homeless had begun.

In a different moment, another journey was just beginning. Mark Zimmerman was only nine years old when his father died. A devastating loss for any child, this was a particularly difficult time for Zimmerman and his family. Zimmerman's father had been a preacher and did not make much money; once his father died, Zimmerman's mom did the best she could as a single parent to make ends meet. However, times were tough and, more than once, the family came very close to homelessness.

Because of his childhood experiences, Zimmerman would do all he could to "move mountains" for the homeless community. His heart and passion are evident when he says "there are no insignificant people in the kingdom of God."

His journey to serve the homeless has been in the making for a couple of years, and he is eager and ready to jump in with both feet.

Yet elsewhere - in Denver, Colorado, approximately ten years ago - Will Grant found himself in the intensive care unit of a hospital. Because of a drug overdose, his heart had stopped and he was on a ventilator, his life hanging in the balance.

The years of drug and alcohol addiction, as well as homelessness, had taken their toll. Grant fully expected to die in that Colorado hospital. Looking back, he puts it best when he says, "Why would a loving God chase me into the grave?" That's precisely what God did, and Grant's life now reflects God's profound love. It was in that hospital bed where he experienced the very real presence of God.

As such, his journey to serve the homeless was just beginning.

Brought together by God, Cari Roach Good, Mark Zimmerman, and Will Grant are but three spokes in the wheel that are turning the direction of homeless services in Amarillo, with the formation of the innovative and unique Transformation Park.

The general idea behind Transformation Park is to provide cutting-edge, temporary housing to homeless individuals. Funding for this project is a collaborative effort of both public and private partnerships and the faith community. Truth be told, the plans for Transformation Park are really just the tip of the iceberg. As president of the board of directors for Guyon Saunders Resource Center, Cari Roach Good has seen shortcomings in the services needed versus the services provided to Amarillo's homeless community for years. Sadly, Amarillo has the highest homeless population per capita in the state of Texas.

With this in mind, Guyon Saunders Resource Center is beginning construction on a new facility - located at Fifth Avenue and Parker Street - and within 18-24 months,



Will Grant, Cari Roach Good & Mark Zimmerman

the center hopes to relocate to this new location. Likewise, Transformation Park, a separate not-for-profit organization, will be built across the street from the new resource center, with the same construction timeline. Additionally, the new transportation terminal being constructed by the City of Amarillo will be adjacent to Transformation Park, making this location both ideal and important as many individuals experiencing homelessness depend upon the services of public transportation.

Once the building of Transformation Park and the new Guyon Saunders Resource Center have been completed, the two entities will merge into one non-profit organization, operating as Transformation Park.

Because of a very generous gift from Joe and Laura Street, the new resource center will open under the name "Joe and Laura Street Day Center." Mr. Street, who has worked with Guyon Saunders Resource Center for over 20 years says, "Mine and Laura's philanthropy has primarily been to help the homeless in our community. We have always wanted to help, and this is a great chance to help a lot of homeless individuals in our community." The impact the new center will have cannot be denied.

Thanks to another very generous, anonymous donation, the Center will be equipped with a full, state-of-the-art kitchen. This donation also includes enough funding to provide food and supplies for three hot meals a day for clientele of Transformation Park and the Center.

Mark Zimmerman, the new Executive Director for Transformation Park, lights up when describing the ministry's boundless possibilities. Transformation Park will include a cabin community of tiny homes: the design is still in process, but they will be small and sturdy, able to sleep from one to four individuals with provided security. For those with children, family units will be adjacent to the new center in a secure environment. The length of stay in the cabin community will depend upon the individual; so long as forward progress is being made, including no drug use, individuals are welcome to stay.



Joe and Laura Street



Will Grant at Guyon Saunders Resource Center



Continued story from pg 17

Additionally, a "safe space" night shelter will be provided 24/7. This space will accommodate police drop-off when necessary and is a low-barrier emergency shelter for individuals to sleep in a safe and secure environment with accommodation for their personal supplies and pets.

Executive Director for Guyon Saunders Resource Center, Will Grant, and Cari Roach Good, boast about the services to be provided in the forthcoming Joe and Laura Street Day Center: while restrooms will be located at Transformation Park, additional restrooms and shower facilities will be inside the Center, along with a dining area, laundry facilities, and classroom space as well as a family room and play area for children.

Another aspect of the collaborative effort will be the addition of office space for up to 35 City of Amarillo employees and others who serve the homeless population.

The plans here are big and the journey has been long, however, with Good, Zimmerman, and Grant at the helm, dreams are becoming reality. There is no doubt these three, as well as countless others, have been led by Jesus Christ in their quest to serve others.

When asked "why" they serve, Grant sums it up beautifully. He recalls praying about his service to the homeless with some reticence, unsure if he wanted to be near the homeless lifestyle again. In that moment, he felt the Lord say to him, "Where were you when I found you?" He is excited now about the possibility of helping others find the Lord just as he did years ago in a hospital room. He lights up now when talking about another idea that's in the works - Transformation Church. With the help of area churches, Transformation Church will be held at Transformation Park, providing both a meal and the love of Christ to all who enter.

If you, too, hear the Lord saying, "Where were you when I found you?", then reach out and help someone else find Him today by supporting the ministry of Transformation Park.

To volunteer or make a financial or in-kind donation go to: www.guyonsaunders.org or www.mytransformationpark.com



Amy Crowley

Amy resides in Amarillo with her husband, Johnny, and is mom to five girls. She is a freelance writer and is the author of the Facebook page Live BOLDLY. She can be reached by email at: amylcrowley@hotmail.com.

Cindy Rowley has been a licensed pastor for almost 24 years and has served at Cox-Rowley Funeral Home for almost 12 years. Cindy loves visiting with and getting to know individuals and families so that she can ensure their wishes are in place. It is important to her that she be there pastorally for families when they experience the loss of a loved one. Cindy pledges that she and the capable staff at Cox-Rowley Funeral Home will care for those they are blessed to serve, will maintain the highest in moral and ethical standards, and that every funeral service will be a true "celebration of life."



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Octavio Casas, D.C

Clean Sweep for Love By Leah Fort

My husband and I own a property investment business. Consequently, post-tenant clean-up is common. A situation developed at another owner's property for a resident we knew and loved, so we volunteered wholeheartedly to fulfill the need.

The resident's mobility issues necessitated remodeling for greater accessibility. We spent many hours conceptualizing, working on-site, and tackling issues discovered in-process.

The project mandated physically getting into nooks, crannies, and spaces that had not seen the light of day in many years. I imagined the crusty layers could quite possibly be carbon-dated as actual dust accumulation from Noah's ark.

I encountered evidence of rodents, tripped traps, remains of fuzzy gray carcasses, arachnid art—complete with spider mid-center. The dust bunnies hopped to the kneeling, crouching, reaching, and stretching.

That movement also brought awareness that I am neither as young or as in shape as I prefer. Amazingly, as I have ascended the peak of my middle years, and will all-too-soon descend its summit, I wear the same size clothes I have worn most of my adult life. Interestingly, they do not look the same. Let's just say I have increased my sphere of influence.

While I may have exaggerated the plight of this incident, my testimony to life-truths is genuine. New beginnings require a clean sweep of old ways.

This man's way had been self-reliance. Circumstances generated a need for help and he readily accepted our assistance. Settling our focus on the surface that appeared clean and tidy, we mistakenly thought his abilities were greater than the actuality. Therefore, we missed seeing the layers of need prior to performing the remodel. We loved and valued this person

greatly, but needed to sweep away our misguided ideas of his reality.

This experience both affirmed and confirmed the truth about love. Love is the heart's attitude in action. To the church at Corinth, Paul emphasized what Christian love is and that any action not motivated by such love is wasted. (1 Cor. 13:1-8)

Without Christlike love, eloquent words sound like a clanging gong, intelligence and faith are useless, and gifts and offerings are of no gain. Genuine love is patient, kind, protective, trusting, hopeful, and persevering.

God's love is shown to us through Christ and manifested in us by His indwelling Holy Spirit. His love never fails. Possessing such love compels us to carry out tasks otherwise impossible.

Love reconciles us to work with uncomfortable assignments. Love is not about how we feel. Love is about our behavior. Love acts to improve a situation. Love is a call to move in the face of daunting circumstances. Love is not about ourselves and the reward we receive for showing and expressing it. Love is a positive pusher, a dogged driver toward something much bigger than ourselves.

Practicing love in the way of Christ, we can sweep clean the dust from our lives, and embrace the inherent value of each person we encounter.



Leah Fort

Leah Fort is an author, minister, speaker, and radio host of Leah Fort Connects. She serves as District Appointed Interim Pastor and District Women's Ministries Director.



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BELOVED GRACE ABOUNDS

By Karen Benckenstein

Chris Rogers has learned over the years about new beginnings and setting goals. She ran away from an abusive home life at the tender age of 14. After three marriages that ended in divorce, she has found happiness. She had to let go of her daughter for a time only to have a promising relationship with her now. She had long dreamed of finding a fulfilling career and had always enjoyed art. All these experiences have led her to a life as a professional artist living in Canyon, Texas, with her husband and very near her adult daughter.

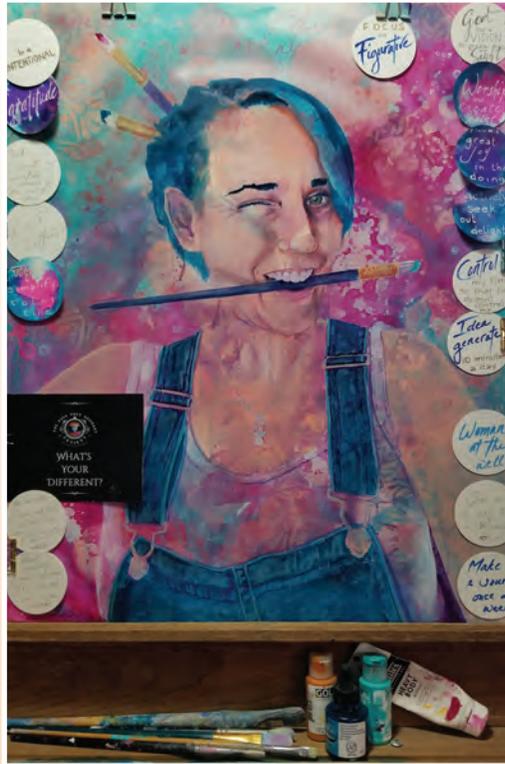
Rogers was raised by a neglectful mother and mostly absent father. Since her father was absent, just trying to provide, and her mother was depressed (possibly even suffering from PTSD), she and her younger sister were often left to fend for themselves. After many struggles, she finally left home at age 14. She was homeless for a time before managing to have her own home. She was in multiple committed relationships including three marriages, including her first marriage at 18 during which her husband tried to kill her. She had a child with her second husband.

As is often the case, abuse became a cycle for Rogers. Her daughter's paternal family was abusive to both mother and child. After divorce and much back and forth, the daughter stopped living with Rogers. The paternal grandmother eventually adopted her as an adult at 18, limiting her independence. This situation also drove Rogers and her daughter further apart, which resulted in Rogers' contemplating suicide. She says that she finally decided to live instead when "God stepped in and had compassion for me. He saved me."

Her relationship with her mother never recovered after such a painful childhood. However, after he was divorced from her mother, Rogers became close to her father again. She moved to Albuquerque to escape her first husband's abuse and to be near her father. His diagnosis with cancer led her to realize she wanted to achieve more in her life, so she went back to school. She received a degree in Advertising Art with an emphasis in Graphic Design. She used the degree to freelance for a bit, but the timing was off; digital technology rendered much of the skills she learned obsolete or inefficient.

She found her way to Canyon, Texas, and began to create art again, eventually settling in with her now-husband, Jim Gilbert. God had brought her through many difficult times, and now she strives to worship Him through her art—no matter the subject.

In her dream-come-true, she opened a gallery in The Sunset Center Gallery for a few years. In 2019 following the death of the Art Center's founder, Ann Crouch, the gallery owners were asked to leave. She struggled and grieved that loss. She wasn't sure what came after that dream. She is "re-learning to dream again." As part of her efforts to reevaluate the direction of her life and career, she took part in a goal setting activity with an online international artist community called the Push Past Ordinary Society (PPOS). As a charter member of PPOS, she has many good things to say about the group. In this particular activity, the leader encouraged the participants to set goals in their self-portrait.



The resulting painting is not only beautiful but also profound. The background is a beautiful layering of colors and shapes through which peeks Rogers' own prayers. She says that, "God has to be the foundation." The focal point of the painting is a playful image of the artist in overalls with a paintbrush gripped between her teeth and a wink. Around the edges of the canvas are clipped various circles with phrases on them. Some are easy to understand to anyone such as "be intentional" while others hold more meaning for the artist such as "On a Wing and a Prayer." A few like "Woman at the Well" and "Focus on

Figurative" have to do with her upcoming paintings that will be on display at Rooster's Coffee & Tea Co. (3440 Bell St #110, Amarillo) in the month of May. Since the gallery at Sunset Center closed, Rogers continues to paint and sell art through her Facebook page, Eclectic Perspective Christian Art Studio.

The painting serves as a reminder and a roadmap forward. Rogers is very involved in her church in Canyon, including as a mentor in a girls' group called Growing in Grace. Both her faith community and artist community allow her to be part of something bigger than herself. While she never wants to stop learning, she has learned that goals can be intimidating. After her gallery closed, she took a few art

classes to refocus and reconnect to that community. Through her recent challenges, she has realized she still needs structure and something to look forward to. She has also been reminded that "it's all for Him."

Rather than confining the goals to only painting, she realized she wants to challenge herself by creating a series of figurative works by the end of April. While she is still assessing whether they will be more realistic or abstract,

she plans to start doing timed drawings 3 times a week, painting small studies at least once a week and working with an accountability partner on PPOS.

Chris Rogers continues to dream and set goals with God in both the foundation and the future. She says, "God gave me the desire to want to create, to want to paint. It's an act of worship. If I'm painting birds or painting people, it's His creation. I'm just His paintbrush."



When Mary Kay Kuhrts approached Chris Rogers to commission a piece for the Upbeat Reporter office, she had something specific in mind. Rogers says that she had received a different image from the Holy Spirit during a church service. She says that the painting represents the Holy Trinity.

The meaning behind the painting is God's desire for Christians to "share His love gently, not aggressively."



Karen Benckenstein

Karen Benckenstein was a nonprofit executive and fundraiser for a decade. She is now a freelance writer in addition to being a wife and mom to 4 teenagers. Karen writes about ways to achieve wellness in mind, body, and spirit.

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A New Creation

What do you associate with springtime?

If you are a gardener, your thoughts turn to planting. Buried in soil prepared properly, seeds soon emerge and create colorful flowerbeds and tasty treats in a fruitful garden. The time for new life unfolds as blossoms adorn trees and winter finally disappears. Yet, the greatest hope celebrated in spring cannot be understood without visiting a tomb. God the Father planned the events leading to the death of His Son before the foundation of the world, as preached by the Apostle Peter. "Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know — this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it." (Acts 2:22-24)

Peter's proclamation affirms that God not only sovereignly controlled the details concerning the death of Jesus, but He also powerfully raised Him from the dead. Why? Because God is perfectly just, sin could not be ignored. His Son, Jesus Christ, became the means by which sin can be forgiven and God can remain holy and just by punishing sin. Being fully man and fully God enabled Jesus to live sinlessly. While He did not deserve to die, He willingly carried out His Father's will, providing the way for those who trust in Him to have new life as well.

The Apostle Paul explains how God accomplishes salvation for His children. "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." (2 Corinthians 5:17-21)

That last verse is absolutely stunning. God made Jesus to be sin. When I am mercifully given new life in Christ, I receive His righteousness. It's the ultimate beginning of something incomparably new.

But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ — by grace you have been saved...

(Ephesians 2:4)

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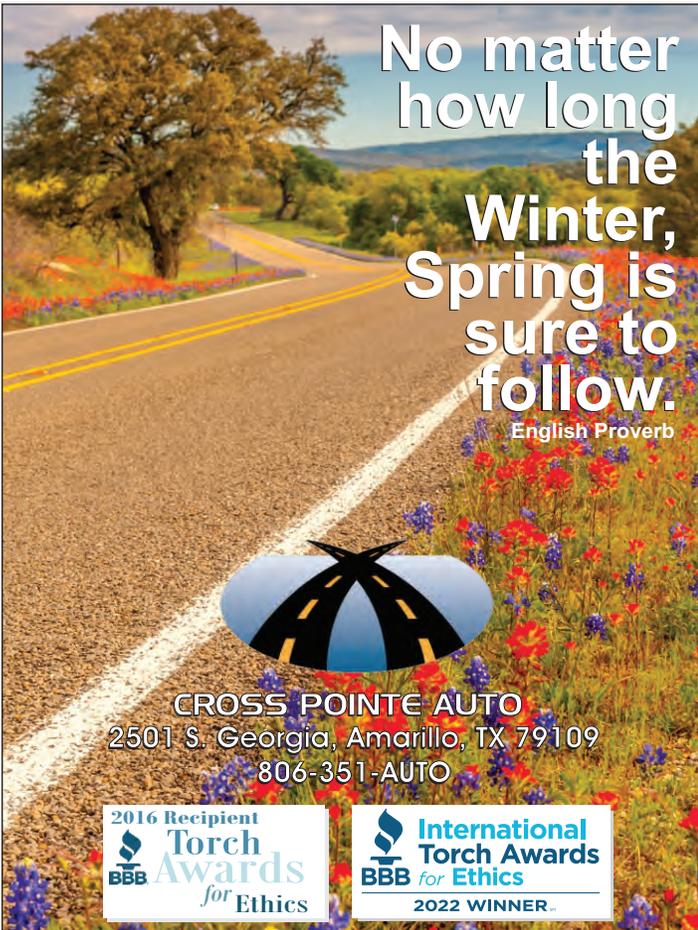
For those who are "in Christ" - who have repented of their sin and believed in what He accomplished through His death, resurrection, and ascension - hope always abounds. Will you believe today?



Tammi Scoggin

Tammi Scoggin, an Amarillo resident for over thirty-two years, enjoys all forms of writing - novels, short stories, poetry, children's books, ladies Bible studies, anecdotes, articles, and even a discipleship manual. She aims to share the gospel of Jesus Christ through all of her communication and encourage others to pursue a personal relationship with Jesus, especially through Bible literacy.

No matter how long the Winter, Spring is sure to follow.
English Proverb




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Andrea's Project

By Mike Haynes

David Elizalde didn't know that an experience he had in 2003 would help him cope with a tragic accident about 16 years later. Or that what happened in 2019 would prompt him to start a nonprofit organization with the goal of ending underage drinking - and drinking while driving by people of all ages.

David and his wife, America Elizalde, lost their 17-year-old daughter, Andrea Elizalde, to an automobile accident on April 21, 2019. It was Easter, and after church the family had gone to Amarillo's Thompson Park for a fun outing. About 6:30 p.m., they moved over to the adjacent Wonderland Park, and Andrea texted her dad a request to "go with some friends." David said OK.

"About 10:20 p.m., we got a call saying that Andrea had died," he recalled later in an online video. "She had been in a violent accident with some friends that we did not know."

Andrea, a member of the Randall High School wrestling team and popular with friends and teachers, was close to graduation and looked forward to college. She wanted to become a physician, her dad said.

A friend, also 17, had been driving Andrea's car, drinking, and at a high rate of speed: He lost control at Hastings Avenue on the Dumas Highway in Amarillo - about a mile from where the Elizalde family had been relaxing at the park.

Andrea died at the scene. A 22-year-old man in the car was hospitalized with life-threatening injuries, and the driver had non-life-threatening injuries. He was arrested in March 2020, charged with intoxicated manslaughter and intoxicated assault.

In September that year, he died at age 19 after being attacked outside an Amarillo bar while out on bail.

David said the young man "never got the opportunity to go

to court and face the punishment" for his daughter's death. "But I have realized that no matter what, we can't bring back the dead. And the second thing is that there's really no justice on Earth."

David, now 50 years old, knows about court cases because he has helped others deal with similar accidents. Two months after his daughter's death, he started Andrea's Project.

Having been President of Amarillo Rotary and otherwise active in the community, David decided to do something in Andrea's name. Because of his family's tragic turn of events, "I figured I had a way to reach out to the community and make a difference," he said.

Andrea's Project takes many forms, including presence at bars and liquor stores to protest over-serving of alcohol and selling to minors, providing college scholarships, and pointing families who have suffered similar losses to legal advice. "When victims and families have been affected by drinking and driving, we reach out and let them know we're here for them, and we've been through it," he said.

"Whenever it happens on a state highway, we put signs up where the victims had the accident, in remembrance. It's been very positive because the families get to tell others in their own way all the time, even if they're not there, that it's not OK to drink and drive and at that place right there, it took somebody's life because of it."

The organization also takes the mangled remains of Andrea's car to schools across the state. "We talk to kids and let them have the opportunity to see what it looks like now," David said. We've spoken to over 12,000 kids with that car being right there so they can see it."



His own accident in 2003 gives David comfort about his daughter.

"I was at Tradewinds Elementary, working on some lights, and I got caught up in some electricity from 14 lights. It stopped my heart and I died for a few minutes, and I went into convulsions," he recalled. "And I was in heaven. I didn't have a body, but as quick as you can close your eyes, you're in heaven. I had a thought, but I didn't have a body. So I was in darkness, heading toward the light, and the light was love - God's love. "And when I was almost right there, going into the light, it was when I got projected back to Earth. And as fast as I had got there, I was back in my body. There was no pain, and that was what was so amazing with God, was that through my death experience, I never felt pain."

Knowing how violent Andrea's death had been, David's past incident reassured him. "I had been there and was close to being on the other side, but God let me know that there's no pain in death. I knew before

my daughter had gone through that traumatic experience that physically, God had taken her away before that happened. I knew that, and I know that.

"I was lying in the ambulance, and I felt guilty, because I had really done nothing in my life to make a difference., At that moment, I thought about my daughter, and I had almost left this life. It was just God saying, 'Hey, you've got to get moving.'"

Two months later, he started David's Quality Electric. Supporting Andrea (a baby at the time) was his motivation. In 2019, it was her death that resulted in Andrea's Project.

After the 2019 tragedy, David said, God let him know that "I walk with you. I feel your pain because I, too, lost my son." And David said watching a video of his daughter's baptism was "a game-changer, knowing that not only had my daughter died, but I knew where she was at."

Andrea's Project has worked with the city of Amarillo in achieving a 2020 social host ordinance to keep minors from drinking alcohol at parties and in making April 2021 "Alcohol Awareness Month."

David is working with state representatives, district attorneys, Potter and Randall counties and the governor's office on Sobriety 24/7, a proposal for daily breath testing of anyone caught drinking and driving. He said a company in the Bryan/College Station area is willing to run the program. And he is seeking a \$450,000 grant from the highway de-

partment to support it. He hopes it will become Texas law.

"My goal is that in two years, we can show that we have changed the culture of Amarillo with this program," he said. "Nothing like this in the state of Texas has ever been passed."

David said God told him that Andrea was taken "because it was her time." He believes that now, it's time to stop the scourge of drinking and driving.

Andrea's Project office:
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Mike Haynes

Mike Haynes taught journalism and mass media at Amarillo College for 25 years and was an adviser of student media at Texas Tech University for seven years. He is co-publisher of Panhandle-Plains Basketball Magazine and writes a Faith column in the Amarillo Globe-News. He and his wife Kathy attend Hillside Christian Church.



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Have you ever hit rock bottom and knew that even if you could look up, you'd never find the light? This was the story for Chantell Hicks-Marler. For Chantell, hope, love, and other tools she would need to survive life were distant fantasies. Her early childhood was filled with trauma that quickly led her to find unhealthy coping mechanisms. Living in a world where she could forget all her cares and block out anything too painful through the use of chemicals was easier. Chantell continued in bondage to this cycle for many years. She did what we as humans tend to do; she coped. Chantell couldn't break the hold addiction had on her any more than she could pretend her life was perfect. But God had other plans.

One day, Chantell's story reached a climax. After losing everything, she went to prison. While in prison, she underwent training, which she was unaware at the time, would be part of what God had already called her for in the future. A life of service and a life with a heart for people. She wanted more for herself, her children, her life, and her heart. She knew that the hurt she was causing her children was something she could no longer accept. She took various classes and learned things that once seemed foreign to her. Before her release, she reached out to several halfway houses. Only one accepted her—Patsy's Place.



Patsy's Place, Chantell's Story

By Sara Alvarado

Patsy's Place is a program of Sharing Hope Ministries and is a Christ-centered transitional home in Amarillo, Texas. The volunteers and staff nurture and mentor women as they struggle to cope with the overwhelming obstacles they face almost immediately upon release from county jail or prison. They welcomed Chantell with open arms and more love than she had

ever known. They gave her help. They shared hope.

Patsy's Place exists to assist at-risk and incarcerated women in changing their stories. Chantell found women who ate, prayed, lived, cried, and grew together. All were overcoming addiction, brokenness, physical needs that had been unmet, and deep unhealed wounds. The women need love above all things. It's at Patsy Place

that this love is found in abundance. The program and volunteers offer faith-based classes, a specific action plan for each woman, and numerous other resources and mentors to ensure success. When faced with life, whether good or bad, prayer is how women are taught to face it. With God at the center of every aspect of life, the potential for success is greater. Chantell is now second in command of Patsy's Place and is adequately equipped from her prior life experiences. Little did

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she know that God would use every ounce of her past difficulty for greater success.

Sharing Hope Ministries also has a group of volunteers who reach out to prisoners. The focus is always on love and never on judgments. The volunteers take time to encourage each woman they correspond with while providing bibles, bible studies, and answering bible study questions. Through the Center for Advancement, a program of Sharing Hope Ministries, success is also available for women on the outside. Here the women can find job help, a professional clothing closet, computer classes, GED classes, and various other opportunities to enable them to become productive members of society and achieve their full potential. The women learn how to lead a Christ-centered and self-sufficient

life through education, empowerment, and encouragement.

If you hit rock bottom, the only place to go is up. What better way to do that than with the sharing of hope and a love that surpasses all understanding, the love of God?



Sara Alvarado

.....
Sara is a freelance writer from Amarillo, Texas. You will typically find her writing fantasy, but she also enjoys writing stories that resonate in the hearts of her readers.

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Book Review

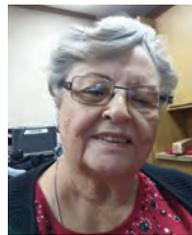
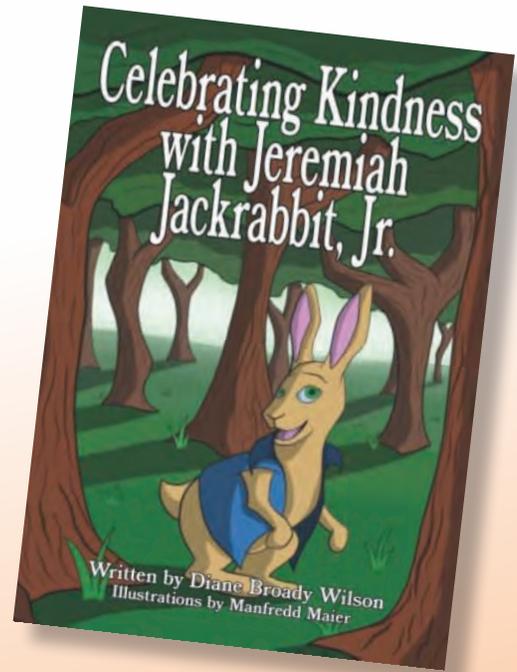
Celebrating Kindness with Jeremiah Jackrabbit, Jr.

By Diana Fielder, MEd., LPC

Do you find it difficult to teach the child in your life about abstract concepts like love or kindness? This delightful children's book personalizes a West Texas jackrabbit and his parents as it shows children how to be kind and empathetic. Jeremiah Jackrabbit, Jr. is an excellent teacher as his story unfolds.

Manfredd Maier's (WTAMU graduate) delightful illustrations may first capture you; they are fun and alluring. Author, Diane Wilson, local retired child and family therapist and active volunteer, uses vivid language that is a unique combination of prose and poetry. While a little "wordy," the book will hold interest for a variety of ages. The plot allows for creativity, and the climax is relatable. Mrs. Wilson sees this book as "my way of giving back" to a world where overt acts of kindness are often lacking. A portion of the book's proceeds go to the local food bank.

It would be easy to combine Jeremiah Jr.'s experience with your personal, shared child-adult kindness project(s). My great grands will be hearing it, for sure. I recommend it for its much-needed message and its entertaining illustrations.



Diana Fielder, MEd., LPC

Diana is a Licensed Professional Counselor, currently retired after 25 years in practice. She attends Saint Paul United Methodist Church and enjoys time with her children and her 19 grand and great grandchildren.

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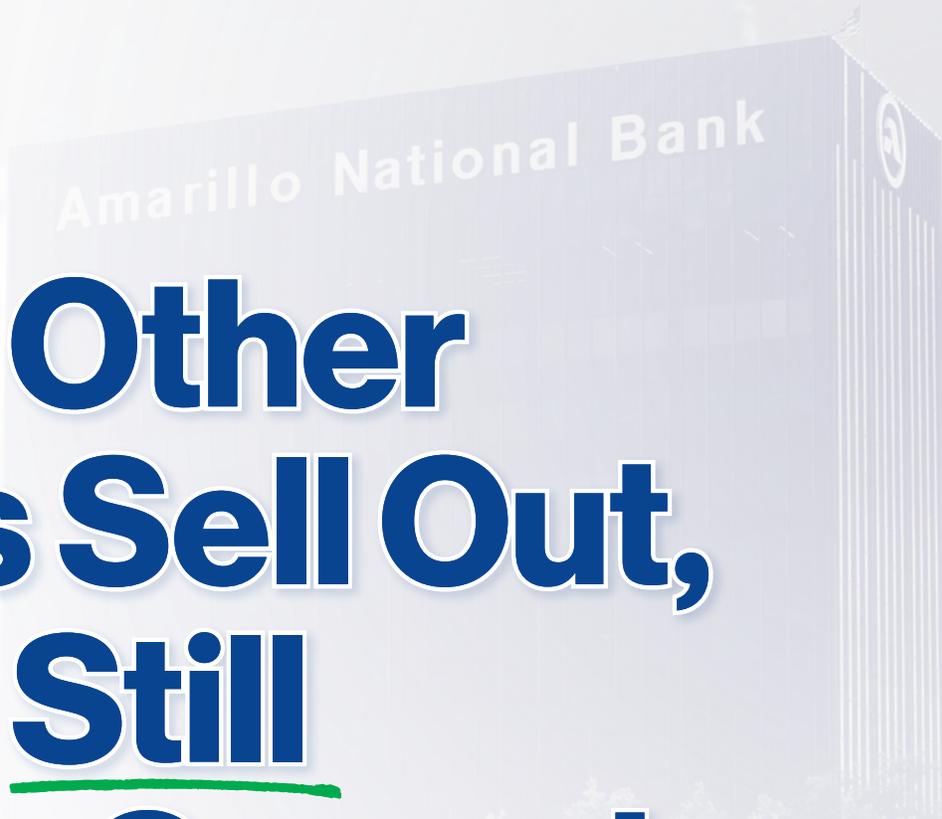
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