

May is Mental Health Awareness Month

By Shelby Shank

Farming and ranching can be demanding and stressful, and that can have an impact on mental health and well-being of farmers, ranchers, farm workers and agricultural professionals.

During the month of May, an additional focus is placed on these challenges for Mental Health Awareness Month.

Studies show farmer and rancher suicide rates are several times higher than the national average.

“There are so many unpredictable experiences in farming, such as natural disasters, financial uncertainty, fluctuating markets, labor shortages and trade disruptions,” Jessica Cabrera, American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF) managing director of Member Engagement, said. “There are so many factors that contribute to extreme stress for farmers and ranchers. And they also often live in a very isolated setting, which can compound the issue.”

But there are resources available to help.

AFBF’s Farm State of Mind campaign builds awareness and reduces stigma surrounding mental health challenges for farmers and ranchers, and to increase access to information, resources and training for farm and ranch communities.

The Farm State of Mind webpage features many resources available to help if you or someone you know is struggling.

Included is a national resource directory that is searchable by state, national, resource type and resource name to get the help you or

someone you know needs.

Other resources available offer helpful tips on how to help someone in emotional pain and how to start the conversation with them.

There also is an anonymous peer-to-peer online community, Togetherall, to empower farmers, ranchers and their families to get and give support.

“This resource offers a space for farm family members, ages 16 and older, a way to express themselves anonymously and to receive and give peer support,” Cabrera said.

Anyone can be an advocate for mental health in rural America.

“The most impactful way to advocate for mental health wellness among farmers and ranchers is to let everyone know it’s okay not to be okay,” Cabrera said. “Just reducing that stigma alone, encouraging those who are struggling to reach out for help and to let them know that that is completely acceptable way to move forward. Empowering people to believe that reaching out for help is a sign of strength, not a sign of weakness.”

There is no definitive sign that a person is having a mental health crisis. However, there are several signs to consider:

- Change in routines or social activities

- Decline in the care of domestic animals

- Increase in illness or other chronic conditions

- Increase in farm accidents

- Decline in appearance of the farmstead

- Decreased interest in activities or events

For more information on stress and mental health resources, visit AFBF’s Farm State of Mind webpage.



Accident! The Coke County Sheriff’s Office, Robert Lee Volunteer Fire Department, and West Coke County EMS responded to a one vehicle accident on Monday afternoon, May 13. The accident happened approximately ten miles south of Robert Lee on Highway 208. The driver of the pickup was ejected and pronounced deceased at the scene.

Visit with Rehabilitated Critters at Wassermann W ranch in Alpine

By Sarah M. Vasquez

When Heidi Wassermann hosted her last radio show in 2007, she announced that she was moving to West Texas and opening her own ranch.

“Don’t know where it’s going to be, but if you go by a place that says ‘Heidi’s Critter Ranch,’ that’s me,” Wassermann said.

Though the name didn’t stick, the idea did. Today, her place outside of Alpine is called

Wassermann W ranch, located 5 miles northwest of town. The ranch offers tours to the general public and is home to donkeys, alpacas, kangaroos, a camel, and more. Each animal has a name and a story that Wassermann affectionately shares with visitors. “We see each one as an individual. We see their personality,” she says.

Wassermann, who is originally from Michigan, and her husband Scott, from San Antonio, were drawn to Alpine after they first visited in 2005. They drove through town on their way to the McDonald

Observatory in Fort Davis and realized that it was the place for them to put down their roots after retirement. “I don’t know if you’ve ever had anything just pull at you,” Wassermann says. “I wanted a donkey so bad.”

There are three different types of donkeys at the Wassermann W ranch. It started with D.D., a white standard donkey, who was pregnant when she arrived in 2010. She gave birth to Pumpkin, who performs in Alpine’s annual live nativity scene and as a tequila donkey at weddings.

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To the Voters of Coke County, Texas

My name is Russell Ash, married to Kathi for 45 years. I am a father of three and a grandfather of 11. I am asking for your vote in my race for the Office of Coke County Attorney.

The election date is Tuesday, May 28. Early voting is May 20 – 24. Your vote is very important and by voting, you have a direct voice in who will serve Coke County for the next four years as your County Attorney.

Why vote for Russell Ash?

► Experience

I have been an attorney for over 30 years. I am licensed to practice before all courts in the Great State of Texas as well as in the United States District Courts in the Northern and Western Districts of Texas.

I am the only candidate who has experience as a prosecutor. I was the Reagan County Attorney for 18 years and served as the County Attorney Pro Tem for Irion County, Texas, for some of that time.

Since 1992, I have represented local governments and local governmental entities such as the cities of Big Lake and Rankin. Additionally, I have performed work for many of you over the years. Your endorsement, and not out of town lawyers, is the only one that matters.

► Availability

If elected, I will have my sole office in the Coke County Courthouse. I will have no office outside of Coke County and will be available throughout the week. My opponent has publicly stated that he “plans” to be in Coke County three days a week.

I will be available 24 hours a day to law enforcement and judicial personnel.

► Local Hiring

If elected, I will hire a full-time secretary who will office in the courthouse. This person will be a resident of Coke County. I believe that local tax dollars should not be paying a county employee who lives and works outside of our County.

You are the people I will proudly serve should you choose to cast your vote for me on the 28th.

Elect Russell Ash – Coke County Attorney

PAINT & SIP PARTY
Wine & Snacks

JUNE 14
6 TO 8 PM

To register please call
325-650-2073 or
theeventcenter1@gmail.com

We are needing payment in
advance for this event

701 Austin St.
Robert Lee

Ages 16 and up

\$50 PER PERSON

May 21, 2024
6:00 - 8:00 PM

The Event Center
701 Austin St.
Robert Lee

Food and Wine Fest

\$20 per person
includes 5 tickets for wine tasting
\$2 each for extra wine tickets

Book your tickets by calling
325-650-2073
theeventcenter1@gmail.com

Ages 21 & Up