

THE COUNTY TAX STATEMENT



Volume 20, Issue 1-July 2020

#BeTheDifference

Best Wishes:



The Honorable Cathy Talcott
Comal County Tax Assessor-Collector
2019-2020 TACA President

2020 Vision
Preparing for the Future

Welcome:



The Honorable Tammy McRae
Montgomery County Tax Assessor-Collector
2020-2021 TACA President

#BeTheDifference
Step Up and Step Out

The County Tax Statement

The County Tax Statement is the official publication of the Tax Assessor-Collectors Association of Texas and is published four times each year for the benefit of its members and interested contributing parties. The purpose of the organization is to promote professional standards, to unify actions for the benefit of its constituents, to be aware and participate in the legislative process, and to provide a vehicle to educate its members in the proper conduct of the constitutional office of the Assessor-Collector of Taxes.

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Dates to Remember

July 4th	Independence Day
July 25th	Certified Appraisal Roll due to Tax Assessor by Appraisal District
August 7th	Tax Rate Calculations for Entities must be Posted on County Website
August 17th	Deadline for Entities to get Tax Ratification Election on Ballot for Nov. 3
September 7th	Labor Day
September 30th	Deadline for most Entities to Adopt a Tax Rate
October 1st	Deadline for Mailing Tax Statements
October 12th	Columbus Day
October 19th	First Day of Early Voting
October 30th	Last Day of Early Voting
October 31st	Halloween

A Letter from the Past President, Cathy Talcott

Greetings, Everyone!

It's been a productive year of FIRSTS at TACA! I would like to thank you all again for your unwavering support during my presidency, which has been my joy and honor. Below I would like to recap some of the highlights that your Board of Directors experienced and accomplished this past year, most of which were firsts for TACA:



Board Retreat, where we generated and completed 5 goals for TACA
New Mission Statement, seen on our website & at the top of our letterhead
New relationship cultivated and strengthened with the Comptroller's Office
New relationship cultivated and nurtured with Motor Vehicle Theft Task Force
Strengthened existing relationship with TxDMV
Became working partners with TxDMV's Technology Department
TACA Legislative Awards presented to legislators for going the extra mile for us
Posted Board Meeting Agendas on the TACA website
Established TACA's first paid position, Education Coordinator, through VG Young Institute of County Government
Requested and received membership input for membership fees, raised by \$25 to fund Education Coordinator position
Cancellation of 86th Annual Conference due to Covid-19
TACA Conference Webinar Classes offered due to Covid-19
TACA website sponsorships offered to vendors due to Covid-19
TACA Annual Business Meeting & Elections postponed until the VG Young Conference in November due to Covid-19
Board members (except for Pres., Pres-Elect & Immediate Past Pres.) remained in their positions until elections at VG Young due to Covid-19
TACA Board Meetings video-conferenced with members' call-in participation

I'd like to wish President Tammy McCrae good fortune in her new position as TACA President, and ask that each of you offer her the same support you have shown me. Thank you again, and I wish you all the best of health! See you at VG Young!

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Cathy Talcott".

Cathy Talcott
Comal County Tax Assessor-Collector



A Letter from Our New President Tammy McRae, PCAC

Montgomery County Tax Assessor-Collector

Hello Friends!

I hope this newsletter finds you and your families safe and healthy!

In spite of COVID stealing our June conference, I had the honor and privilege of being sworn in as your TACA President on June 9, 2020. Commissioner James Noack administered my oath during our commissioner's court. While it didn't come with the "pomp and circumstance" that typically accompanies being sworn in at a conference, I was surrounded by my family, work family, several of my dear

fellow Tax Assessor-Collectors and friends from Linebarger Goggan Blair & Sampson, LLP.

This decade certainly made a grand entrance! 2020 has been a year unlike anything we have ever experienced. In the first six months, we have survived COVID-19, the shortage of toilet paper, murder hornets and Carole Baskin killing her husband (Tiger King). The Saharan dust arrived today and of course hurricane season just started. I'm ready for 2021!

On a more serious note, we have all been forced to change the way we conduct business in our offices and adapt to a new way of thinking. Sneeze guards, facemasks and social distancing seem to be the "new normal" while virtual sessions and zoom have replaced conferences and board meetings. I look forward to working with each of you to continue to lift up Tax Assessor-Collectors throughout the state. We are a diverse group of 254 professionals working together toward common goals....to educate, support, and advance the office of County Tax Assessor-Collector. TACA supports and promotes the idea that all County Tax Assessor-Collectors have the opportunity to act together in order to solve mutual problems as a unified group. It doesn't matter the size of your county; from Loving to Harris and everyone in-between, we all make a difference. That is why I chose this year's theme as "#BeTheDifference!

I encourage you to get involved, Step Up and Step Out and let's make 2021 the best year yet!

Thank you for trusting me to lead this great association. I look forward to seeing you all at the V.G. Young Conference in Waco, November 10-12, 2020. Stay safe!

My best to you all,

Tammy

Tammy McRae, PCAC
Montgomery County Tax Assessor-Collector
President- Tax Assessor-Collector's Association of Texas



Greetings and Hello, Friends.

May God bless us all, as we surely need it. We need His help for the world, our country, our state, our counties and our cities, etc.

The good news is, He is here for any and every one who reaches out to Him.

What a year it's been. What a test of our faith, strength, imagination, resilience, etc.

We all have had our struggles, our challenges, our triumphs and our endurance tested this year.

COVID-19 hit really close to home for my family in May, when my son Barry almost succumbed to the virus. Barry is 38, was fit and healthy, cautious to the extreme that the family laughed to his face and behind his back about how seriously he took sheltering in place. He lives in Ft. Worth.

In late April, Barry's wife let us know that Barry had the virus. He had not been tested, but he had every symptom we were being told there was. On May 8th, Barry was rushed by ambulance to a hospital, discovered he had double pneumonia and was put on life support in a very short amount of time. A doctor told his wife that he was at the point where he would die or turn the corner.

God heard and answered our prayers when He brought Barry back from death's door. Barry wasn't on life support or on the vent for very long at all for someone who nearly died. It was a miracle.

I am so grateful and proud to report that Barry is well, going back to work soon, and his wife and child were spared.

Take nothing for granted. Tell your loved ones you love them. Give up the past resentments that only hurt you. Live your life fully and make your relationship with Our Father as close as you can. He wants you to.

Peace and love,

Billie



Boat Titling & Registration Updates related to COVID-19

Contributed by Julie G. Aronow
Program Manager
Boat Titling, Registration & Marine Licensing

MARINE DEALER LICENSING - BACKLOG

For those not already aware, the Boat Section at Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) headquarters in Austin has been required to shut down for two weeks due to COVID-19 related issues. Phones banks remain operational, handled by staff who are teleworking, but all other services are temporarily on hold.

As a result, some Marine License renewal applications have been delayed. For the next 30 days, if a transaction is presented in your office that is processable in every respect, but BRITS advises the dealer license was not Active on the date of sale, please do not reject the customer's transaction. Instead, please contact your TPWD Field Liaisons at 512-389-4393 for assistance. We will review the license information, including pending applications received in our office, and provide guidance accordingly.

BOAT/OUTBOARD MOTOR TAX PENALTY AND INTEREST

We have received numerous questions related to potential extension periods or waivers for boat/outboard motor tax as a result of COVID-19. TPWD does **not** have the authority to waive or exempt tax penalty or interest due in the event tax was not paid within the timeframe required by law. Tax law and all related tax policy is under the sole authority of the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts (CPA).

The CPA has advised that the Governor's original proclamation was specific to motor vehicles and would **not** apply to boats and outboard motors.

Therefore, all pre-existing tax policies remain in place. TPWD and all participating agents are required by law to collect tax for vessels/boats (115 feet or less in length) and outboard motors purchased in Texas, or brought into Texas, on or after January 1, 2000.

The tax rate is 6.25% of the sales price and is due:

- Within 45 working days from the date of sale or date brought to Texas when purchased on or after September 1, 2019, or
- Within 20 working days from the date of sale or date brought to Texas when purchased prior to September 1, 2019.

Applications filed after the date the tax is due are subject to tax penalties and interest. Applications mailed to TPWD or participating agent offices are considered "filed" when placed in the mail and will be given credit for the postmark date when determining tax due.

NOTE: If they choose, a taxpayer may submit Form 57-200 (<https://comptroller.texas.gov/forms/57-200.pdf>), Texas Claim for Refund of Boat and Boat Motor Tax, **to the CPA** to request a refund of penalty / interest paid.

DEPARTMENTAL OPERATIONAL ADJUSTMENTS/OFFICE CLOSURES

A complete list of operational adjustments, including TPWD Law Enforcement office and other site closures, is available at <https://tpwd.texas.gov/about/coronavirus>.

If you have any questions about any of the information provided by TPWD in this newsletter, or about any other aspects of the Boat Titling & Registration Program, please contact a TPWD Boat Field Liaison at (512) 389-4393 for assistance.



Texas Department of Motor Vehicles

HELPING TEXANS GO. HELPING TEXAS GROW.

Submitted By: Adam Shaivitz, Public
Information Officer



COVID-19 Update

As Texas continues to address issues surrounding the coronavirus pandemic, the department wants to thank the county tax assessor-collectors for their cooperation and patience during these challenging times. The health and safety of the motoring public, employees and stakeholders is of utmost importance while we continue to provide needed services. Please don't hesitate to contact your regional service center manager with any questions or concerns.



Digital License Plate Project

Digital license plates are electronic devices, like tablets that display a vehicle's license plate number, plate design, and registration expiration. The Texas Department of Motor Vehicles (TxDMV) Board adopted administrative rules related to Texas digital license plates on June 11. Adoption of the rules was mandated by Senate Bill 604, enacted by the 86th Legislature, and allows the department to proceed with a Request for Proposal (RFP) procurement for one or more vendors and offer for sale a digital license plate that may be displayed on eligible vehicles. Eligible vehicles include commercial fleet vehicles, vehicles owned by a government entity, and vehicles that are not registered as passenger vehicles.

Before digital license plates are implemented, the vendor's digital license plate will be tested to ensure the electronic display meets or exceeds the readability, legibility, and other standards required for metal license plates. The department's systems will be programmed to allow for digital license plate remarks on the vehicle record, so law enforcement can verify the status of a digital license plate. Communications will be distributed to your offices, law enforcement, and other stakeholder groups with further information before digital license plates may be displayed on vehicles. The program is scheduled to go-live in December 2020.



Statewide webDEALER Adoption

webDEALER is the department's web-based application for processing title applications that is used by motor vehicle dealers and county tax assessor-collectors. Senate Bill (SB) 604, enacted by the 86th Legislature, requires all county tax assessor-collector offices to make webDEALER available to any dealer requesting to use the application by September 1, 2020.

Statewide webDEALER Adoption is the department's project to prepare county tax offices and dealers for this requirement and deploy programming changes to webDEALER. The department finalized onboarding of a vendor to assist with programming changes to accommodate enhancement requests submitted by users and address outstanding defects. These enhancements will provide additional efficiencies for county and dealer users and increase transaction throughput.

The VTR Division continues to work with Information Technology Services Division to gather and document requirements for this programming effort, and both divisions are working with the vendor.

In addition to the programming changes to ensure county tax offices are prepared for this requirement, the department worked with county tax offices to ensure every county has an administrator and access to webDEALER. To assist with this effort, the department developed training for initial webDEALER setup, "Getting Started with webDEALER" and in-depth training, "Using webDEALER" for both county tax offices and dealers. VTR has communicated the available training to stakeholders and posted the training to the TxDMV website. The department's 16 Regional Service Center Managers have reached out to each county tax assessor-collector's office not currently utilizing webDEALER to schedule time to present these trainings on a more personalized level and to facilitate with questions and answers.

While the requirement to provide webDEALER access to dealers who make a request is not effective until September 1, 2020, there is no prohibition against granting authorization prior to this date. The department encourages county tax assessor-collector offices to begin utilizing webDEALER whenever the county is ready.



Assembled Vehicles

House Bill 1755, enacted by the 86th Legislature, requires an owner of an assembled vehicle to title and register the vehicle in accordance with Transportation Code, Chapter 731, and administrative rules. The department adopted 43 Texas Administrative Code, Chapter 217, Subchapter L, which outlines titling procedures for the owner of an assembled vehicle. These rules were effective June 22, 2020, to coincide with the implementation of programming changes with the Registration and Title System (RTS) Release 9.7.

Title Services distributed Registration and Title Bulletin (RTB) #010-20 outlining the changes for the county tax assessor-collector offices. In addition to the RTB updates were made to applicable forms that are available on the TxDMV website. Webinars were held for county tax assessor-collector offices on Tuesday June 16, and the webinar recording is available on the TxDMV website. In addition, multiple training sessions were held for Regional Service Center staff who will be reviewing and approving assembled vehicle applications prior to an owner applying for title at a county tax office.

Title Services also updated the TxDMV website and communicated these changes to the motoring public. Title Services is in the process of rewriting the Assembled and Rebuilt Vehicle Manual to accommodate these changes and has removed the manual from the TxDMV website in the interim.



Regional Service Centers Reopen to In-Person Services

During the month of May, Regional Services and Headquarters personnel were busy preparing for reopening of the department's regional service centers (RSC). Transparent safety barriers were installed, personal protective equipment (PPE) and sanitization supplies were distributed to each RSC, COVID-19 related social distancing floor decals and reminder signs, as well as symptom related warning signs, were installed.

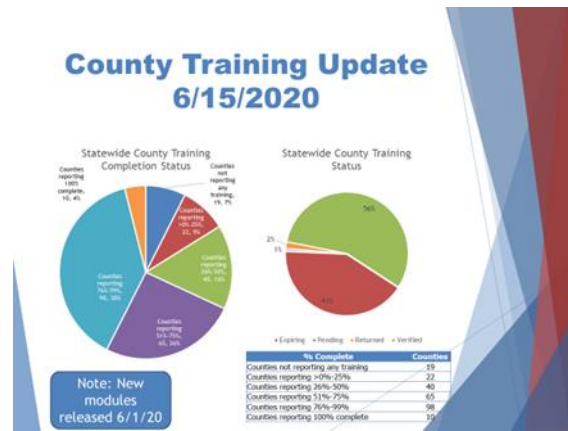
To help ensure customer and employee safety, Regional Services developed a reopening plan that included new and revised twice daily cleaning procedures, proper use of PPE, and new procedures for management of customer flow. All RSC office personnel received training on these procedures prior to offices reopening.

In-person services are now available by appointment, for most transaction types, at all 16 regional service centers.

Customers can schedule same day or next day appointments by going to the TxDMV website or by direct link, www.TXDMV.gov/appointment. International Registration Plan (IRP) transactions, NAFTA permits, motor vehicle dealer transactions, and title service company transactions are still being processed by mail, drop-off, email, fax, and/or phone. Overall, customer reaction to the new procedures and safety precautions has been very positive and appreciative.



Photo: New Plexiglas barriers and social distance markers at the Midland-Odessa RSC



Mandatory County Training Update

Senate Bill 604, enacted by the 86th Legislature, included the requirement to implement a training program on the TxDMV automated Registration and Titling System. Training requirements apply to department employees and contractors, county tax assessor-collector (TAC) employees, and full-service deputies.

The training is provided through the department’s existing online eLearning system. Initial preparations included a comprehensive review of all previously existing training modules to determine which modules required updates and what new modules required development. New and updated modules were initially launched on December 16, 2019, with additional updates and new modules being added as needed.

Regional Services staff worked diligently with county TACs and county staff to synchronize county eLearning user IDs with corresponding RTS IDs, allowing regional service center managers to verify completed training and enable or disable RTS permissions per established procedures.

All training is required to be completed by August 31, and failure to complete required training by this date will result in suspension of associated RTS permissions until training is complete and verified.

When I grow up...

Recently, Grace Everhart, Comanche Tax Assessor-Collector, asked this question of the association, and gave us the opportunity to inject a little fun into our day; both by responding and reading the responses. What a nice respite. Great idea, Grace!



When I Grow Up... By Grace Everhart

“When I grow up, I want to be a Tax Assessor-Collector.” I am almost certain there is not a child in the history of mankind who has spoken those words. But we were all kids once and now we are either Tax Assessor-Collectors or work in Tax Offices – so how’d that happen? I mean seriously, Bob Reeves (Kerr) went as far as telling his Mom he did not want her job - Mrs. Juanita Miller Reeves Maple, Kerr County Tax Assessor-Collector from 1961 to 1976 – funny how life happens.

In June, I sent an email asking everyone in the profession of Tax Assessor Collector what they wanted to be when they grew up. And, guess what! We all had somewhat normal dreams and aspirations in our youth!

Teachers, people who help you solve problems; you’d never have had without them. Sounds about right for Tax A/Cs too, right? There are a lot of folks in our group who wanted to become teachers – Donna Willis (Lynn), Betty Salinas (Lampasas), Kristeen Roe (Brazos), Carol Taylor (Wood), Nikki McDonald (Moore), Kay Middleton (Taylor), Danette Millican (Houston Co.), Rebecca Haney (Dickens). Enthusiastic, inspiring, reliable, supportive, practical, encouraging, innovative and passionate all adjectives used to describe good teachers - sounds like the same descriptions we’d use to describe these ladies.

Moms, more importantly have even known we wanted in our arms. Allison Getz Millican (Houston) and Denise Moms. To describe a good inhumanly tough and perfectly feral.



good Moms; there are many of us that may not to be one – until those little humans were placed (Jefferson), Karen Hood (Midland), Danette Hutter (Chambers) they knew they wanted to be Mom I would say spiritual, gentle, supportive,

Singers, I bet you can guess who – Michelle French (Denton) and Cathy Talcott (Comal); we have been blessed to have them croon a chorus or two for our elite group. I’m not certain how this relates to their current jobs other than they are both full of grace and sing like angels but I know their counties and our association have been blessed to have them as Tax A/Cs.

Tammy McRae (Montgomery) and Teresa Altman (Hall) envisioned being lawyers. Christie Latham (Stephens) wanted to be a detective and Michelle Garcia (Goliad) a Coroner Tech. Google says there are over 1000 words to describe a lawyer; some may have adjectives of your own to add but for Tammy and Teresa I chose 6 – competent, honest, effective, efficient, clever and logical. And for detective add earnest and hunter. Coroner Tech adds inquisitive and curious. All these attributes make for awesome Tax A/Cs. By the way, Tammy also wanted to be a crawfish farm owner – freshwater crustaceans totally relatable to her current profession☺.



Larry Gaddes (Williamson) was a typical boy who wanted to be a fireman. Kevin Kieschnick (Nueces), Patricia Rose (Hudspeth) and Julie McEntire (Sterling) wanted to be pilots and Julie also wanted to be the main gunner shooting coyotes from her Dad's helicopter – which sounds fascinating and wild. Words describing a firefighter and pilots are ambitious, brave, astute, admirable and aggressive. Qualities they possess and make them great Tax A/Cs.

Can you guess from our crowd who wanted to be a football star? Randy Riggs (McLennan). Can you envision it? After to many trips to the doctor, he changed his mind and wanted to be a doctor. Words describing a good doctor are the same words used to describe Randy, confident, empathetic, knowledgeable, unbiased, respectful, honest and forthright. Jennifer Carey (Erath) and Leslie Burks (Polk) wanted to be nurses; I would add caring, kind and no nonsense which if you know Jennifer and Leslie those words describe them to a tee.

Some other fun facts are Monica Foster (Jackson) wanted to be a nun. No adjectives necessary, we all know there is a lot of prayer in our current profession. Dawn Vieth (Archer) wanted to be a librarian; Christina McMurray (Randall), a basketball coach, Sherry Mueck (Milam) originally wanted to be a coach and then because of a good teacher was pointed towards county government. Betty Jo Rooney (Brewster) wanted to be an Army soldier. Shay Luedeke (Bell) had always figured he would carry on the family business but nope, his Dad sent him off to college and he became a computer programmer. Loretta Holley (Atascosa) wanted to be an equipment operator and never, ever work in an office. Lori King (Mills) wanted to marry a cowboy, live on a ranch and be a vet. April Campos (Somervell) and Donna Brice (Real) have worked in county government their entire lives. Karen Lane (Madison) wanted to be Daisy Duke and drive fast cars (I wish I had thought of that!) . Bruce Stidham (Grayson) wanted to be in Foreign Service involved in the nation's diplomacy – what better place than a Tax Office to horn the skills of diplomacy! Anna Rodriguez (Crosby) wanted to be a fashion designer in New York City! Myself, Grace Everhart (Comanche) wanted to be a truck driver to talk on the CB radio and a roller derby queen – because in my mind... I was that good! I can't seem to match that up with any appropriate adjectives so we will move on.

My favorite answer of all came from John Ames (Dallas), he wanted to be a landscape artist. The only reason he did not pursue his dream - the 150-degree summer days in Texas! One day the Tax Assessor called him and said, "Why don't you come work for me in the Tax Office?" His response.... "Who would want to work in the Tax Office?" 27 years later...!

No little kid will ever go to career day and tell the class they want to be a tax assessor-collector. And, I say, "Why not?" Almost everyone who responded to the question loves their job, loves being a public servant and feel they're where they were meant to be. I did not use the adjective crazy but I think it helps if you are a little. All of the adjectives used to describe what we wanted to be still describe what we have become.

Many of you are retiring this year, if that's you, congratulations and may all of your hopes and dreams for your next chapter come true and thank you for the devotion to service to your county and our great state!

2020 TACA Virtual Conference Webinars



Allison Getz, TACA Program Chair,
Jefferson County Tax Assessor-Collector

Serving as Program Chair of TACA is an honor and responsibility that resonates with me. I have always felt that our organization exists to educate and support each other and I am happy to be a part of that structure. Our committee works hard to create a conference that provides those educational opportunities as well as create an atmosphere for networking and having the ability to share experiences and solutions. As COVID-19 reared its ugly head in the spring, we realized that we might need to change the way our conference would be presented to the membership. I had researched how other organizations were providing education to their members and felt that a *virtual conference* would be the best alternative. We are fortunate to have great partners at TAC and VG Young and both were willing to adjust to this platform and give us the tools to make it a reality. We appreciate the speakers who had said originally said yes and then said yes again when the format changed. I felt we were obligated to provide the educational credits needed for our designations and more importantly, the guidance to get us through TNT with all the new guidelines and laws. This information was timely! We could not just cancel and say, “See you next year”. I appreciate Cathy Talcott and Tammy McRae supporting this innovation and I invite the membership to continue giving me feedback for the future. VG Young is scheduled for November of this year and our annual conference will be in Corpus Christi June 6-20, 2021. #bethedifference

TACA 2020 Virtual Conference Webinars, continued

We were all saddened when our annual TACA conference was cancelled. It was a first, to my knowledge. Austin is a beautiful city and many folks put such a lot of work into preparation for the conference. Many of us rely on our conferences to get our annual CEs. Sigh!

Then, Allison Getz got the bright idea to turn our conference into a virtual one, gathered her posse, Cathy Talcott and Tammy McRae, partnered with VG Young and TAC and County Progress; and we get our required courses online....free.....live....and as for TNT....timely. Yay, technology! Yay, forward thinkers! Yay, presenters! Yay, partners!

Attorney firms have also provided TNT webinars. Here are some of the webinars offered that I know about:

TNT, Connie Rose instructor, MVBA – 2 sessions (at least)
Leadership, Mark Warren instructor, TAC – 1 Four-hour session
Special Inventory, Randy Riggs instructor, TACA – 1 session
Ethics, Jim Lambeth instructor, LGBS – 1 session
TNT, Dennis Hart and Blair Riley instructors, LGBS, ACT – 8 sessions
TNT, Debbie Wheeler instructor, PBFCM – 5 sessions coming up

Thank you all, for being there and supporting and educating us when we need it most.



By Billie Page, Editor

Until we meet again.....

Former County TAC Betty Akin passed away Friday January 17. She was the Cochran County Tax Assessor-Collector from October 1,1981-December 31,2000. Please keep her family and friends in your prayers.

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Dear Friends,

My predecessor, mentor and friend former Brazoria County TAC Ray M. Cornett passed away suddenly at age 81. He served as Brazoria Co TAC for 28 years. I had the honor of working for him for 16 of those years. Mr. Cornett was a Past President of TACA and was the recipient of the first ever awarded TACA Distinguished Service Award. He served 12 years on the Board of Tax Professional Examiners, including Chair. A pioneer in the education of property tax professionals in our state, his BTPE Number was #2. He was also part of a TACA legislative team like no other that helped shape the Texas Property Tax Code and worked with TxDOT/DMV in development of RTS. Ray always stood for the taxpayer and what would be in their best interest. He always remembered who his customer was and taught me to remember it as well.

I credit his faith and confidence for any success I have had as a county official and in my career in general. I cannot imagine what path my life would have followed without his mentorship and his friendship.

I can never put into words or measure the value of having known him. RIP

Ro'Vin Garrett, PCC
Brazoria County Tax Assessor-Collector



Ray M. Cornett

Have You Ever....

By Grace Everhart



Who Am I? Featured in December, 2019 Newsletter

Grace Utley, Wharton County Tax Assessor-Collector

Have you ever gone to conference and sat down at a table with someone who is a complete stranger, but by the time you have sat through a half day of training you know it is no coincidence you sat at their table?

Have you ever gotten on the bus to go to dinner and you are sitting in the same proximity of a person who has the whole section of the bus laughing and snorting because of their stories and ad libs? And, you work it so you are on the same bus going back to the hotel because you know your cheeks and your sides will be aching from laughing like you haven't laughed in years. Have you ever...?

We enjoy our conferences because we spend time with the only other people in the state that actually get us – understand the trials, triumphs and tribulations of being a Tax Assessor Collector or valued employee of a Tax Office in the great state of Texas.

I know I am not alone when I say I missed attending our June conference so very much; yes for the training, yes for the break away from the office, but I missed the comradery that is such a huge part of these conferences. I know I am not alone when I say I have met many new friends over the years at conference, some you may not even remember their name but their personality, mannerisms or smile makes you seek them out at the next conference. The one person I would like to highlight is the “Who Am I?” from the last edition of “The County Tax Statement”, Grace Utley.

What I know about Grace is her smile and personality is contagious. Grace is the Wharton County Tax Assessor Collector; she has worked there for nearly 20 years. In her office, they collect property tax and vehicle title and registration transactions. She loves her job and interacting with the public and stated some challenges she experiences in the Tax Office are the many legislative, TXDMV and tax code changes, employee and customer situations we can all relate to, but her stories are funnier.

Grace grew up in the country where she has many fond memories of good country living like raising chickens, turkeys, cows, hogs and gardening and the joy of the entire community coming together and helping each other. Oh, and cotton she picked cotton and she is the

only person I have ever heard say she had fun “picking cotton”. As nine-year-old picking cotton between two older siblings she could lie on the cotton sacks and nap when she wanted. She has fond memories of her parents and siblings and as I read what she wrote about her family and growing up her words made me smile and think her beautiful personality may be somewhat hereditary.

For fun she loves spending time with her family, fishing, playing dominoes, cards and church, specifically the Mt.Scilla Baptist Church where she is an active member. To say she comes from a large family is a slight understatement – 20 kids, 13 girls and 7 boys she was the 13th girl. She is Mom to two wonderful women Tanika and LaMoya.

Lastly, Grace will be retiring at the end of 2020! I know there are many of us who will miss Grace at future conferences and we all wish her the best in the next chapter of her life. We sit by our friends and coworkers at conference, it is what we do but I challenge each one of us at the next conference to sit down at a table with a stranger and introduce yourself and maybe you will meet one more person that brightens your day the way she has brightened so many of ours. Enjoy retirement, Grace Utley, we wish you the very best!

Below is Grace's response to being asked to be the December Who Am I? subject:

I like watching Discovery, National Geographic, HGTV and Hallmark. Alaska the Last Frontier and Naked and Afraid are my favorites. My children always ask Mom why do you like those shows so much and I tell them that I can relate to their lifestyle. I grew up in the country, I talk about my Mom because she was the disciplinarian and my Dad was the Janitor at the Elementary School and the barbecue master on the weekend. We had great times back then and still to this day, we have great times. Family reunion every year the last weekend in July for the past 45 years, consecutively. I schedule my vacation during that time, because once everyone leaves, I need it.

I have two beautiful daughters, Tanika (Ed) of Duncanville and LaMoya (Melvin) of Pearland and three grandchildren. My son in-laws are wonderful and I make sure my daughters realize what a blessing it is to have a good husband.

If I could tell my younger self one thing, I cannot tell you that.

I think this is enough. Don't want to take all your space.

Have a good day

Grace Utley

Wharton County TAC

From the Membership:

Williamson County Tax Office
Judy Kocian, Office Administrator

Williamson County Tax Assessor/Collector's office provided significant assistance during the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Larry Gaddes and Matt Johnson were leaders of the Logistics team to coordinate the research, purchase, distribution of personal protective equipment. They enlisted the help of Tax Specialist, Becca Bruton, Suzanne Smoczyk, Andrew Dyba, and Property Tax Specialist, Beverley Williams. Becca and Suzanne were on the research and accounting side of the project while Andrew and Beverley managed the distribution pod. This wasn't on a small scale, either. Larry and Matt were locating PPEs for all the Williamson County offices as well as hospitals and clinics. The supplies were stored at the tax office initially; however, it grew to a massive scale, which meant moving to a pod for easier distribution.

With supplies of disinfectants such as Clorox wipes unavailable, Larry and Matt had to improvise in producing something similar. They were able to get the cooperation of a local distillery to provide gallons of 80% alcohol to be used to make disposable disinfectant wipes. With their creative juices flowing, Larry and Matt figured out a way to be able to make these wipes for distribution to various offices. Tax office staff members were tasked with purchasing automotive shop towels and gallon Ziploc baggies in massive amounts. An assembly line of four workers rotating on a two-hour schedule set to work making homemade disinfectant wipes. Two workers cut the shop towels in half using a fabric cutter and put them in groups of 25. The next group oversaw dunking the towels in the alcohol provided by the distillery and wringing out the excess alcohol, placing these in the Ziploc baggies. A fair estimation would be that the tax office produced a minimum of 1,000 baggies (25 wipes in a bag).

Pictures speak a thousand words of the requests that were asked of Larry and Matt during a time of confusion and unknown challenges.

Initial storage of PPE supplies at the tax office. As the requests increased, PPE items were transitioned over to the POD.



Just one load of shop towels that was purchased for homemade disinfectant wipes. There was a minimum of three trucks/SUVs with shop towels and sandwich bag purchases.



Our assembly line for homemade disinfectant wipes.



Even our mascot was taking precautions.



From the Membership:

- Necessity is the mother of invention. -Plato -



Delta County Tax Assessor/Collector Ms. Dawn Stewart and her Deputy Renee Booth surviving the COVID-19 by servicing their customers by an impromptu drive through window. This way of service was provided for 13 consecutive weeks.

Note from Editor: Ladies, I applaud your ingenuity and service to your citizens. bp

Just a little fun: Submitted by Teri Garvey Hanks

Teri was doing a little cleaning out when she came across some interesting facts about Texas. Below are a few:

Beaumont to El Paso: 742 miles; Beaumont to Chicago: 770 miles

El Paso is closer to California than to Dallas.

Brazoria County has more species of birds than any other area in North America.

Jalapeno jelly originated in Lake Jackson in 1978.

King Ranch is larger than Rhode Island.

Dr Pepper was invented in Waco in 1885. (There is no period in Dr Pepper)

The first domed stadium in the US was the Astrodome.

There's a New Way to Conduct TACA Board Meetings

Cathy has definitely thought outside the box during her tenure as President. She brought new ideas & positive changes to our association that I hope will carry forward for years to come. Speaking of thinking outside the box, we conducted several board meetings via Zoom. I'd like to share some photos of a recent board meeting. I think we have all had to adapt to new business models.

By Tammy McRae





News from Texas Association of Counties

By Randy Riggs, TAC Board Representative

The Texas Association of Counties held a new board member orientation on January 29-31, 2020 in Austin. Topics presented included the TAC structure, governing documents and board policies including an overview of the budget. Presentations continued regarding the board fiduciary duties and ethics, investment processes and procedures, an operations overview, and the Board of Directors Strategic Plan. Executive Director Susan Redford then presented a design of the culture of the association entitled "The TAC Way." This includes 25 fundamentals that promotes the associations culture. The actual board meeting consists of various reports regarding the operations of the association. Several committees were appointed reflecting a new year under a new president, Comal County Treasurer Renee Couch.

One action item consisted of outsourcing the investment management of the association after years of in-house management.

The next board meeting was held on May 21, 2020 via WebEx. Several of the reports dealt with how the association interacts under the pandemic restrictions. The association will continue its work from home policy until September. This will affect the August Legislative Seminar. The seminar will now be held virtually. Action items included appointment of representatives to the NACo Board of Directors. Appointed were Tarrant County Judge Glen Whitley and Cooke County Judge Jason Brinkley.

News from 2020 VG Young School for County Tax Assessor-Collectors

By Sherry Mueck, Education Sub-Committee – VG Young Program

The 2020 V. G. Young School for County Tax Assessor-Collectors is scheduled for November 10-12, 2020. This year's location will be Waco, Texas! The planning committee will be meeting mid-July. I am honored to be selected to serve as chair of the Education Subcommittee for V. G. Young Program. Everyone on this committee works hard to make this school a success.

From COVID-19 to legislative changes and everything between, 2020 has brought many changes and challenges. We are excited to work with V. G. Young Institute to plan a school that is informative with great educational sessions mixed in with some uplifting speakers and we hope a little fun and relaxation. More details to come. Hope to see all of you in November, be safe!

News from the Property Tax Administration Advisory Board

By Randy Riggs

The first meeting of the Property Tax Administration Advisory Board occurred on February 13, 2020. The meeting consisted of the Comptroller reporting on the board's policy and statutory requirements. Reports included the Comptroller's Property Value Study conducted pursuant to Government Code Sec. 403.302, the Comptroller's review of each appraisal district's governance, taxpayer assistance, standards, procedures and methodology, conducted pursuant to Tax Code Sec. 5.102, and consultation pursuant to Tax Code Sec. 26.04(e-4) concerning the notice of estimated taxes to be imposed on an owner's property by each taxing unit, and rules prescribing the form, format and delivery of the notice. The meeting lasted less than 30 minutes. The next meeting was scheduled for May 12, 2020 and was subsequently canceled.

**Many Thanks
and
Appreciation
for our
Sponsors and
Partners!**