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STAR LOCAL MEDIA

SCHOOL TO START ONLINE ONLY



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As more school districts are moving 2020-21 start dates and switching to online-only instruction, McKinney announced Friday it has made the decision to start the school year completely

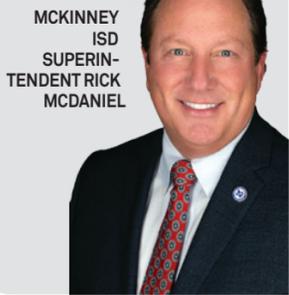
virtual.

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) also on Friday issued further updates to its reopening guidance.

The TEA is allowing temporary limited access to on-campus instruction for the first four weeks of school. After the first four weeks, a school system can continue to limit access to on-campus instruction for an additional four weeks, if needed, with a board-approved waiver request to TEA, a release stated.

In a letter to parents, MISD Superintendent Rick McDaniel an-

"Please know that this decision was not made lightly and that it was made out of concern for the safety and health of all students and staff."



MCKINNEY ISD SUPERINTENDENT RICK MCDANIEL

nounced that the 2020-21 school year will begin in a completely vir-

tual (online) environment for all students for the first three weeks of school, beginning Aug. 13, due to "the rapidly changing situation concerning COVID-19 in Collin and surrounding counties."

The district previously sent a commitment response form to families to choose whether their student would start school in person and online and, according to McDaniel, the results of the form show the majority of families are choosing in-person instruction.

"While we completely respect and appreciate the desire for in-person instruction, we have decided to begin school with virtual instruction until the public health situation improves," McDaniel stated.

District officials hope to begin offering on-campus instruction Sept. 3.

"Please know that this decision was not made lightly and that it was made out of concern for the safety

and health of all students and staff," McDaniel stated.

The district has outlined its instruction plan for virtual protocols, which requires all students to follow the appropriate start times and grade-appropriate procedures for virtual instruction.

Student families who opted for in-person instruction will be served in a virtual learning environment with the same teacher and classmates who would be in their on-campus classroom, McDaniel stated.

Extracurricular activities are still up in the air, as guidance from the University Interscholastic League (UIL) is forthcoming.

The district still asks that parents respond to the commitment form whether they will choose in-person or virtual classes as of Sept. 3. Visit mckinneyisd.net/curriculum-and-instruction/commitment-response-form.

LOCAL IMPACT

MCKINNEY		
ACTIVE CASES: 130 TOTAL: 860		
706	24	
Recovered	Deceased	
COLLIN COUNTY		
ACTIVE CASES: 892 TOTAL: 5,079		
201	4,123	64
Hospitalized	Recovered	Deceased
*As of July 17		

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LOOK INSIDE

Second chances

Cheri Garcia is dedicating her life to helping give people second chances. After all, she got one. Garcia, 33, is founder and CEO of Cornbread Hustle, a Dallas-based staffing agency that connects former convicts with employers. It's the latest career accomplishment for The Colony resident who has seen the highest of highs and the lowest of lows in recent years. But Garcia will tell you those low points helped give her the perspective she needed to make Cornbread Hustle, and ultimately many former felons, successful. Read the full story on page 3A.

County conducts state's first Zoom summary jury trial



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"Can you hear me?"

Jurors who tuned in for the May 18 summary jury trial heard Judge Emily Miskel ask the same two questions as they connected through Zoom.

"What type of device are you using to connect?"

The summary jury trial, a form of alternative dispute resolution, was also the first one in the state to be conducted over Zoom.

"This is the first time this is happening in Texas, and maybe in the country as far as we know," Miskel told jurors.

The virtual summary trial involved going through a jury selection

process and then allowing attorneys to present what their cases would be if presented in a normal trial, civil attorney Amy Stewart said.

Stewart gave a case presentation at the summary jury trial, becoming one of the first trial attorneys to do so over Zoom.

"I was a little bit concerned about doing this via Zoom and being able to connect to the fine people of Collin County through the 'Brady Bunch boxes,' as we call it, on Zoom," she said.

But she said she was pleasantly surprised by the experience and that jurors were attentive. However, the experience for her meant bringing a different kind of interaction to the table.

"What I learned is your skills have to be sharper when you're doing it over Zoom, because the jurors

are watching you like it's a TV show, like it's an episode on Netflix," she said.

While a normal courtroom setting would allow for "pregnant pauses," Stewart said she approached the virtual platform with a sense of needing to keep jurors' attention.

Stewart said she doesn't think the process she experienced would work for a normal civil jury trial because of the number of jurors involved and not being able to have a screen that shows all jurors at once.

"There is the personal eye-to-eye connection and nonverbal cues that



Amy Stewart

any good trial attorney relies upon to make decisions on credibility and things of that sort," she said.

The summary jury trial had originally been pushed to the end of July, Stewart said. She's not sure why her case was chosen for the experimental virtual platform, but she said she is honored to be a part of the process.

"I think we have to start having conversations about how we're going to resolve these overloaded dockets, and so I think the more we talk about this, other people are going to have ideas, and we're going to figure out where we go from here," she said.

Hope for homeless animals



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Inside Mazie's Mission's 4,000-square-foot suite in northeast Carrollton are exam rooms, treatment areas and various other rooms that provide hope for thousands of animals.

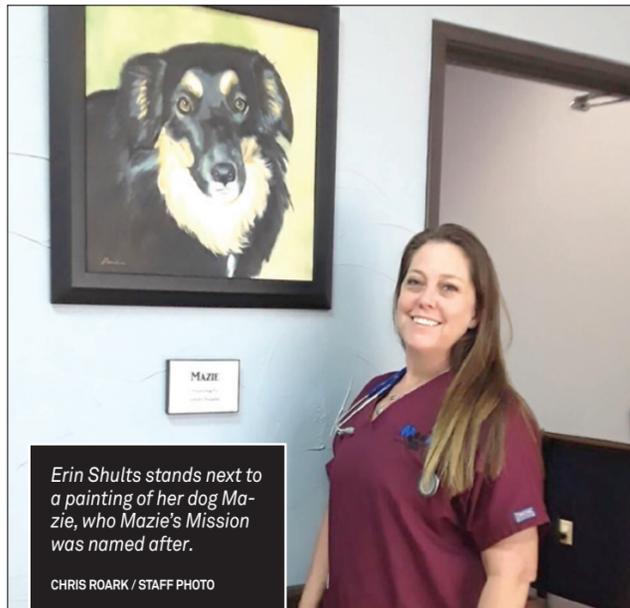
There's also a restroom. Depending on the day that can be just as valuable.

"Every single person in this clinic has gone to the bathroom and cried and just needed a moment to themselves because of something that upset them so much," said Erin Shults, founder of Mazie's Mission.

Named after Shults' first rescue dog, Mazie's Mission is a nonprofit organization that provides low-cost treatment strictly to homeless animals from the rescue or shelter system to help them become adoptable.

Some of these animals often have serious ailments – skin conditions, trauma, orthopedic cases, etc. Some have been hit by a car. Others neglected.

Shults said the job isn't for everyone, but those who can make it past the often horrible conditions



Erin Shults stands next to a painting of her dog Mazie, who Mazie's Mission was named after.

CHRIS ROARK / STAFF PHOTO

animals are in when they arrive know they are making a difference.

Without providing an affordable option for rescue groups, the alternative is often euthanasia.

"When rescuers see (the treatments needed) they see a price tag," said Emily Mayer, lead veterinarian technician. "But we're impacting the number of animals that rescue groups can rescue."

HOW IT BEGAN

Shults said she had been a veterinarian for 10 years before she realized that puppy mills often produce dogs with health issues.

"It never dawned on me why so many of these animals that were coming to me were so ill," Shults said. "They had viruses and parasites and just looked poor."

Shults said a volunteer oppor-

tunity showed her the type of mass breeding that takes place at puppy mills. A turning point for her came in 2009 when she learned of a puppy mill raid in Kaufman in which a woman was arrested for having 546 dogs.

Shults said some of the animals were overbred or inbred.

"A lot of those didn't have arms or jaws because they were so genetically messed up," Shults said.

Shults connected with rescue groups to learn how to help.

"Talking with them I realized one of their biggest obstacles as a rescue is finding affordable, good veterinary care," Shults said.

Originally Shults planned on creating an animal "fortress" with medical care for homeless dogs and cats she rescued.

Shults also considered starting her own practice to treat rescued animals, but she knew the emotional toll and owning a practice could be too much to handle.

"The suicide rate for veterinarians is six times higher than the national average," Shults said. "We deal with compassion fatigue a lot."

So she combined the two ideas, and in 2014 Shults opened Mazie's Mission, a 2,000-square-foot suite

SPORTS ★ PAGE 5A

Awarding the year's best



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