

HELOTES

NEIGHBORS



STARS, STRIPES, AND SERVICE:

POST 309 KEEPS THE
SPIRIT OF '76 ALIVE IN HELOTES

expert contributors



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Dear Neighbors,

As summer reaches its peak this July, so does our community spirit here in Helotes. The longer days and warmer evenings create perfect opportunities to connect with neighbors and celebrate the inspiring individuals who make our town special.

In this month's issue, we're privileged to shine a spotlight on extraordinary local stories that define Helotes such as The Robert F. McDermott American Legion Post 309, a dedicated group of veterans and their families who carry forward a tradition as old as America itself—service to community and country.

You'll also learn about Safety Whys — a copyrighted and franchised Babysitter Training Program for youth ages 11-17 — now celebrating over three decades of success, with ambitious plans to establish a permanent national headquarters in Helotes.

Meredith Keller

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Also in these pages, you'll meet Dalton Blake, an O'Connor High School graduate chasing his baseball dreams, who is now poised to take the next crucial step toward the major leagues. As always, we feature great advice articles from our Expert Contributors.

As July's fireflies illuminate our summer nights, we're reminded that each story we share in Helotes Neighbors adds to the bright constellation of our community's narrative.

Whether you're enjoying this issue poolside, during a neighborhood barbecue celebrating our nation's independence, or in the comfort of your air-conditioned home, remember that your stories and experiences are the heart of this publication, and we love sharing them.

All the best,

Diana Marin

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District 7 Fire Rescue Station 116.....	210-688-0665
Helotes Municipal Court.....	210-695-8877
Helotes Humane Society.....	210-422-6242 or 210-207-4738
Animal Shelter Assistance Program.....	210-688-3343
Northside ISD District Office.....	210-397-8500
Northside ISD Transportation.....	210-398-1550
Northside ISD Emergency Dispatch.....	210-397-5600
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Content Due:	Edition Date:
December 5.....	January
January 5.....	February
February 5.....	March
March 5.....	April
April 5.....	May
May 5.....	June
June 5.....	July
July 5.....	August
August 5.....	September
September 5.....	October
October 5.....	November
November 5.....	December



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EXPERT CONTRIBUTOR

YOUR HOME'S COVERED... RIGHT? WHY TECH ALONE ISN'T ENOUGH

By Noah Pierce – State Farm Agent, San Antonio



We live in a digital world – you can get a mortgage, buy a car, and order dinner from your phone. Insurance has followed suit, with countless apps and 1-800 numbers promising fast quotes and instant coverage.

But here's the thing: speed doesn't equal security.

Market Value ≠ Rebuild Cost

You'd never use Zillow to decide how much lumber it takes to rebuild your home – yet that's exactly what

happens when people choose home insurance based on market value or a quick online quote.

Here's the catch: most online or 1-800 policies aren't built with your actual home in mind. They're built to sell fast.

With construction prices in Texas fluctuating, many homeowners unknowingly carry coverage that's \$50K-\$150K short of what it would cost to rebuild after a major loss. That's because most online tools base coverage on market value – not reconstruction cost.

Your home insurance should cover everything from the slab and wiring to shingles and cabinetry – all at today's prices.

If your policy lacks replacement cost, "pay-to-the-seams" repair terms, or inflation protection, a fast quote might leave you with a slow and painful surprise when it's time to file a claim.

The Power of Tech – With a Human Touch

We believe in digital convenience too. Our office uses the latest tools to make quoting, filing, and servicing your policy as smooth as possible. But we pair that with something the apps can't do: personal, local expertise.

We get to know your property. We know the builders in your neighborhood. We see which homes were impacted during the last hailstorm – and we're here when things go sideways, not just when you click "submit."

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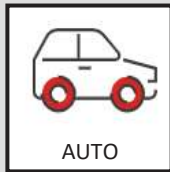
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Turning Babysitters into Leaders: The Safety Whys Mission

Submitted by Diana Marin / Photo courtesy of Barbara Baldwin



After 36 years of empowering young babysitters, Barbara Baldwin's vision for a national resource center in Helotes takes shape

When Barbara Baldwin attended a Texas Emergency Nurses Quarterly Council Meeting in 1989 and learned about a hospital's babysitter training program, she couldn't have imagined it would evolve into a nationwide movement. Today, Safety Whys—a copyrighted and franchised Babysitter Training Program for youth ages 11-17—is celebrating over three decades of success, with ambitious plans to establish a permanent national headquarters in Helotes, Texas.

"'Whys' was spelled as such because if kids know the reason something needs to be done, they will more likely follow through," explains Baldwin, founder and director of the program. This philosophy has guided the organization's mission of "Promoting Responsibly Trained Youth for Helping Kids" for 36 years.

Coordinated with the San Antonio Emergency Nurses Association, Safety Whys delivers comprehensive seven-hour training courses covering seven essential safety topics through engaging role-playing activities. The program exposes

participants to various scenarios, promoting the prevention of potential problems while building confidence and life skills.

The program's impact extends beyond basic childcare training. "We've heard from parents throughout the years about how they see their kids have more confidence after taking the Safety Whys Course," Baldwin shares. Success stories abound, including a 12-year-old who performed a life-saving choking maneuver on a 3-year-old just one day after completing the course.

Now, Baldwin is focused on establishing the Safety Whys Resource Center in Helotes. With help from Paul Owens, the organization has achieved 501(c)(3) status, opening new avenues for growth and community impact. The campaign to fund the \$3 million Resource Center kicked off last year and will serve as both national headquarters and an educational hub where youth can learn and practice injury prevention skills.

"I want to focus on youth being able to carry out injury prevention," Baldwin emphasizes. "The Resource Center will allow us to address additional topics beyond our core curriculum based on student feedback."

Plans for the facility include a mini-library offering resources on

leadership and team building, a welcoming front desk staffed by volunteers, and a dedicated Serenity Room where students can decompress. Each Safety Whys graduate will receive a unique ID based on their initials and course completion date, creating a sense of belonging within the Safety Whys community.

The organization's reach has expanded dramatically in recent years. Between 2014 and 2021, Baldwin took a branded tour coach across 48 states and used a 10-foot slipcover featuring the Safety Whys RV to reach Alaska and Hawaii. "Seven states over seven summers was to plant seeds about our program," Baldwin recalls. During these travels, she connected with Emergency Nurses and Rotary Clubs nationwide, spreading awareness about the program's mission.

Another significant achievement came through Baldwin's three-year campaign to establish National Babysitter's Day. After collecting 2,500 signatures from 45 states, and with assistance from U.S. Congressman Henry Bonilla,

the observance was added to Chase's Calendar of Events in 2002. The first National Babysitter's Day was celebrated on May 10, 2003, and continues to be observed annually on the Saturday before Mother's Day.

As part of the tradition, students design greeting cards for National Babysitter's Day, with Baldwin hoping to feature selected designs for sale in the Resource Center's future gift shop.

Baldwin is currently seeking land in Helotes for the facility, open to financial contributions from community members who might benefit from a tax write-off while supporting this worthy cause.

Safety Whys continues to hold regular classes at Our Lady of Guadalupe Church in Helotes, with the next session scheduled for Saturday, November 8. Pre-registration is required at safetywhys.com.

Through the Safety Whys Resource Center, Baldwin's vision of empowering youth to protect children will have a permanent home, ensuring the program's legacy continues for generations to come.

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STARS, STRIPES, AND SERVICE: POST 309 KEEPS THE SPIRIT OF '76 ALIVE IN HELOTES

Submitted by Diana Marin / Photos by DeeDee of Silver Art Photography, LLC

As Independence Day approaches, the Robert F. McDermott American Legion Post 309 exemplifies the patriotic values that founded our nation



(Left to Right): Don Rios, Jr., Post Commander 25-26; Carlos A. Vela, Adjutant 25-26; John (J.J.) Carreras, Financial Officer 25-26; and Rand M. Smith, Service Officer 25-26.

In the heart of Helotes, Texas, where the Hill Country meets suburban San Antonio, a group of veterans and their families gather monthly to carry forward a tradition as old as America itself—service to community and country. The Robert F. McDermott American Legion Post 309, now in its eighth year, stands as a living testament to the enduring spirit that sparked the first Fourth of July celebration nearly two and a half centuries ago.

Founded by Willis Gray III, who served as the post's Charter Commander, Post 309 has established itself as a cornerstone of the Helotes community. Meeting at the VFW Post 7108 Hall on FM-1560 North every second Thursday at 7 p.m., this family-oriented organization welcomes guests and

embodies the inclusive spirit that makes America great.

"We're more than just a veterans' organization," explains board member Rand Smith. "We're a family that happens to be made up of people who've served their country, and we're committed to serving our community in the same spirit that drove our founding fathers to declare independence—with courage, dedication, and an unwavering belief in doing what's right."

The American Legion, founded by Congress in 1919, represents nearly 2 million members across more than 12,000 posts worldwide, making it the nation's largest and most powerful organization of wartime veterans and their families. Since its inception, the

organization has delivered substantial improvements for veterans, families, and communities nationwide, from ushering in the modern VA system to drafting and driving passage of both the original G.I. Bill and the post-9/11 GI Bill.

Four Pillars of Service

Post 309 organizes its community service around The American Legion's four pillars: Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation, National Security, Americanism, and Children & Youth—each reflecting the patriotic values celebrated every July 4th.

Under Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation, members work directly with the VA on veterans' benefits, support women veterans, assist homeless veterans, and provide volunteer services. They ensure that those who served receive the recognition and care they deserve—a commitment that echoes the Declaration of Independence's promise that all are created equal and deserving of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

Their National Security efforts include disaster preparedness (the post serves as a FEMA emergency site) and blood donor programs, demonstrating the same vigilance for community safety that led colonial militias to stand guard at Lexington and Concord.



The Americanism pillar perhaps most directly connects to Independence Day traditions. Post 309 actively participates in Texas Boys/Girls State and Nation programs, Junior Shooting Sports, Oratorical Competitions, Scouting of America, ROTC programs, and U.S. Flag protection and education. Like the patriots who taught proper respect for the symbols of freedom, today's Legionnaires teach schoolchildren, scouts, and youth organizations about the history of the American Flag and how to properly fold and care for it.

"When we teach young people how to properly fold the flag," Smith shares, "we're not just teaching a skill—we're passing down the



reverence for freedom that every generation must learn anew. That's what July 4th is really about—remembering that liberty isn't automatic; it's something we must actively preserve and protect."

The Children & Youth pillar extends Post 309's reach throughout the year, with special emphasis during holiday seasons. From supporting families in crisis to working with local orphanages, these efforts embody the founding principle that we are all responsible for each other's welfare.

Community Connections

Within the Helotes community specifically, Post 309 maintains a robust presence that would make any colonial town meeting proud. They participate in the annual Cornyval Parade and celebration, serve as the official Color Guard for the City of Helotes, host Memorial Day celebrations at their post, and participate in the solemn "Reading of the Names" at Fort Sam Houston National Cemetery.

The post sponsors the "Wreaths Across America" campaign, supports local ROTC units in their memorial services for 9/11 and Veterans Day, and backs the Helotes Community Band Concert for Veterans Day ceremonies. They also provide speakers for

community groups and operate three flag collection sites for proper flag retirement—at Helotes City Hall, the Lowe's store at Bandera, and the VFW 7108 Hall.

"We are dedicated to the changing needs of our veterans' lives and the Helotes community we serve," said Commander Don Rios.

The American Legion Family

Post 309 is part of the broader American Legion Family, which includes the Sons of The American Legion (founded in 1932 with over 355,000 members), the American Legion Auxiliary (whose membership criteria expanded in 2019 to include spouses rather than just wives), and the American Legion Riders (over 2,000 chapters nationwide who raise millions for scholarships and support military funerals).

This family structure reflects the inclusive nature of American democracy—the same spirit that led the Continental Congress to declare that governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed.

Looking Forward

As Post 309 continues to grow, they welcome new volunteers, particularly those with family members who have served.

The post needs various skills that any nonprofit requires: graphic artists, grant writers, marketers, and web administrators.

"Every person who joins us brings something unique to the table," Smith notes. "That's the beauty of America—we're all different, but we're united by common values and a shared commitment to something bigger than ourselves. That's what the Fourth of July celebrates, and that's what we try to live every day."

As fireworks light up the Texas sky this Independence Day, the members of Post 309 will gather with their families and neighbors, knowing they carry forward the same spirit of service and sacrifice that gave birth to the nation 249 years ago. In Helotes, the spirit of '76 lives on—not in musty history books, but in the daily actions of ordinary Americans doing extraordinary things for their community.

For more information about Post 309, visit their website at post309.com, call (210) 867-4467, or email RandMS@aol.com. Find them on Facebook as "The American Legion Robert F. McDermott Post 309." General membership meetings are held the second Thursday of each month at 7 p.m. at the Helotes VFW Post 7108 Hall, located at 8795 FM-1560 North, Helotes, Texas 78023.

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Robert F. McDermott: Pioneer, Patriot, and Visionary

The Robert F. McDermott American Legion Post 309 bears the name of a man whose life embodied the American dream of service, innovation, and community leadership—making him a fitting namesake for an organization dedicated to continuing his legacy of excellence.

Robert Francis McDermott (July 31, 1920 – August 28, 2006) earned his place in history as both a war hero and a transformative leader in education and business. Often called the “Father of Modern Military Education,” McDermott’s contributions to his country began early and never ceased.

After graduating from Boston Latin School and Norwich University, McDermott graduated from the United States Military Academy in 1943. As a P-38 pilot during World War II, he flew 61 combat missions before serving as an operations officer of a P-51 Fighter-bomber group in the European Theater and later as a staff officer at the Pentagon.

Following the war, McDermott earned his MBA from Harvard Business School in 1950

and later received a Doctor of Laws degree from St. Louis University. But his most revolutionary work came when President Eisenhower appointed him as the first permanent professor of the United States Air Force Academy in 1957, and as the first permanent Dean of the Faculty in 1959. His promotion to brigadier general made him the youngest general or flag officer on active duty at that time.

As dean, McDermott revolutionized military education by introducing the “whole person” concept in selecting cadets—considering moral and leadership attributes alongside physical and mental qualifications. He also pioneered curriculum enrichment programs and introduced about 30 academic majors to the Academy, bringing unprecedented flexibility to military education.

In 1968, McDermott retired from the Air Force to become CEO of USAA, where he led the company’s growth from the 16th to the 5th largest insurer of private automobiles in the nation and the nation’s 4th largest homeowner insurer.

McDermott’s commitment to San Antonio rivaled his military and business achievements. He chaired the Greater San Antonio Chamber of Commerce in 1974, founded the Economic Development Foundation in 1975, and later established the Texas Research and Technology

Foundation, which developed the Texas Research Park. In the mid-1990s, he chaired an investor group that purchased the San Antonio Spurs for \$85 million.

His legacy lives on through numerous honors: an elementary school and Clinical Science Building at UT Health Science Center bear his name, as does a section of Interstate 10 running through San Antonio. Academic chairs in his honor exist at both the Air Force Academy and West Point, and the Air Force Academy library carries his name.

McDermott received numerous accolades including induction into the Texas Business Hall of Fame (1987), American National Business Hall of Fame (1989), and the Insurance Hall of Fame (1996). He received Harvard Business School’s highest honor, the Alumni Achievement Award, in 1998.

General McDermott died on August 28, 2006, in San Antonio at age 86, and was interred at Fort Sam Houston National Cemetery. His life exemplified the values that Post 309 strives to uphold: service before self, innovation in the face of challenge, and unwavering commitment to community—principles as relevant today as they were when America first declared its independence.



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HELOTES HOMEOWNERS: 4 Outdoor Mistakes That Cost You Time, Money, and Peace of Mind

By Roxana Nazario, Benitez Irrigation & Landscape



Helotes homes are known for their beauty and charm—but even the most well-kept properties can face outdoor issues that quietly create stress and extra expense. Most of the time, the problem isn't neglect—it's that the foundation wasn't set up to last.

Here are four common mistakes we see—and what you can do to avoid them:

1 Ignoring Your Irrigation System

Outdated or poorly zoned systems waste water and miss key areas. If you're noticing dry patches or rising water bills, a system check-up can go a long way. Smart controllers and rain sensors help conserve water while keeping your yard healthy—even when you're away.

2 Skipping Soil Prep for Sod

Laying sod without leveling or improving the soil leads to weak roots and early die-off—especially in Helotes' rocky ground. Quality prep work makes the difference between grass that just looks good for a month... and a lawn that thrives for years.

3 Overlooking Drainage

Pooling water, soft spots, or runoff near the house are signs of drainage issues. Left untreated, this can lead to erosion, washed-out beds, or foundation damage. Simple solutions like French drains or grading corrections can protect your entire property.

4 Rushing Rock and Mulch Installations

Aesthetic features like beds and pathways need proper edging, weed barriers, and slope control to hold up through heavy rain and foot traffic. Without it, materials shift, weeds creep in, and maintenance becomes a regular chore.

Your Home Should Work for You

Outdoor spaces should add joy—not more tasks—to your life. A little intention on the front end prevents recurring problems later. Whether you're planning a project or just want peace of mind that your systems are working properly, reliable help is nearby.

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MAKING A SPLASH: *Your Guide to the Perfect Hill Country Pool Party*

Submitted by Diana Marin

In the heart of Texas Hill Country, where Helotes meets San Antonio's sprawling embrace, summer pool parties aren't just gatherings—they're celebrations of community, culture, and the art of beating the relentless South Texas heat. Creating the perfect aquatic fiesta requires more than just filling the pool and cranking up the AC. With the right planning, your backyard oasis can become the season's most talked-about event.

Setting the Lone Star Scene

Transform your pool area into a Texas-sized paradise that honors local charm. String papel picado alongside twinkling lights to create a fiesta atmosphere. Scatter colorful pool floats—Fiesta-colored donuts or classic flamingos—throughout the water. Arrange seating areas where guests can escape the Texas sun between dips.

Music should capture the area's eclectic spirit. Start with Tejano classics and transition to country favorites that will give guests that Floore's Country Store feel, then wind down with contemporary jazz or soft rock as the Hill Country sunset paints the sky. Consider investing in quality outdoor speakers — they're essential for competing with the evening chorus of cicadas.

Culinary Essentials with Corazón

Pool party food in Helotes means embracing the flavors that define South Texas. Fire up the grill for carne asada, fajita tacos, and elote (corn on the cob). Set up a build-your-own taco bar with fresh pico de gallo,



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guacamole made with Hass avocados from HEB or a local farmer's market, and salsas ranging from mild to "I-dare-you" hot. Cool guests down with aguas frescas in flavors like horchata, watermelon, and traditional Jamaica hibiscus.

The secret weapon of successful Hill Country pool party desserts? Cheesecake with a Texas twist. Unlike tres leches cake that can get soggy poolside, cheesecake maintains its creamy perfection even in 100-degree heat.

Prepare individual dulce de leche cheesecake cups in mason jars—they're portable, Instagram-worthy, and capture that beloved caramel flavor Texans crave. Top it off

with fresh peaches from Fredericksburg or a drizzle of local honey for a sophisticated touch that celebrates regional ingredients. The rich, cool dessert provides perfect relief after a day of swimming under the relentless Texas sun.

Safety and Comfort, Texas Style

Designate clear wet and dry zones with colorful Mexican tiles to prevent accidents. Stock multiple sunscreen stations—SPF 50 minimum is non-negotiable in this climate. Create ample shade with market umbrellas or a pergola decorated with Mexican paper flowers. Keep industrial-sized coolers filled with ice-cold water, Big Red sodas, and Topo Chico for proper hydration.

Consider your guest mix carefully, blending family with friends from the neighborhood. Always have a designated pool watcher when children are present — safety never takes a siesta.

The Final Fiesta Touch

Transform your gathering into an unforgettable experience through authentic Hill Country hospitality. Provide koozies featuring local landmarks, have extra towels on hand and serve your signature drink in mason jars—perhaps a prickly pear margarita or sweet tea spiked with local Dripping Springs vodka.

As fireflies begin their nightly dance and the party winds down, your guests should leave feeling like family, already planning their contribution to your next gathering. With thoughtful planning, local flavors, and that perfect slice of dulce de leche cheesecake, your pool party will become the Hill Country standard by which all summer fiestas are measured.



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EXPERT CONTRIBUTOR

Summer Reading: Your Child's Weapon Against Learning Loss

By Michelle Spoonemore, Ph.D.

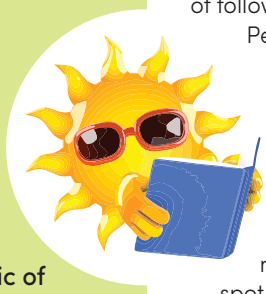
Summer break doesn't have to mean putting learning on pause. While children are busy making memories at the pool and perfecting their sidewalk chalk art, their brains can stay sharp and ready for fall—all through the simple magic of summer reading.

THE SUMMER SLIDE IS REAL (BUT BEATABLE!)

Research consistently shows that students can lose 20-30% of their reading gains during summer break. That's equivalent to losing two to three months of learning! But here's the encouraging news: kids who read just four to six books over summer vacation actually return to school ahead of where they left off. It's not about cramming, it's about consistency.

For children with dyslexia and other learning differences, summer can be especially crucial for maintaining reading momentum. These students often work twice as hard during the school year, so summer strategies need to be both supportive and sustainable.

The secret is meeting kids where their interests live. Consider themed reading adventures. Planning a camping trip? Read books about outdoor survival and nature. Does your child obsess over dinosaurs? Graphic novels about paleontologists might be the spark that ignites their interest in reading. Sports fanatic? Biographies of athletes or sports-themed fiction can



hook reluctant readers faster than you can say "home run." Summer reading doesn't live in a vacuum. Comics, magazines, recipes, travel brochures, and even video game guides all count.

Don't overlook audiobooks. Listening to stories builds vocabulary, comprehension, and that crucial skill of following complex narratives.

Perfect for car rides, quiet time, or even as background during art projects.

PRACTICAL TIPS THAT WORK

Create cozy reading nooks. A special reading spot—whether it's a blanket fort, a hammock, or just a pile of pillows—signals that reading time is special time.

Read together, not just alone. Family reading time removes the isolation factor. Everyone grabs a book, and you read quietly in the same space. Children see reading as a family value, not a chore.

Celebrate effort over accuracy. For struggling readers, the act of engaging with text is the victory. Focus on comprehension and enjoyment rather than perfect pronunciation or speed. If they can read it with 95% accuracy and understand what's happening, it's perfect. Too easy is better than too hard during summer.

Make it social. Book clubs aren't just for adults. Arrange reading playdates where kids discuss their

books, or start a family book club with age-appropriate titles everyone can enjoy.

Font matters. Look for books printed in dyslexia-friendly fonts like OpenDyslexic or Lexie Readable, or consider e-readers where font size and spacing can be adjusted. Many students find sans-serif fonts much easier to process.

Embrace technology allies. Text-to-speech software, reading apps with highlighting features, and voice recording tools level the playing field. Programs like Learning Ally or Bookshare provide accessible versions of popular books.

Embrace shorter bursts of reading, more frequently. Instead of 30-minute reading sessions, try 10-15 minutes multiple times per day. This reduces fatigue while maintaining consistent practice.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Summer reading isn't about maintaining academic rigor—it's about nurturing a lifelong love of stories and learning. When children associate reading with pleasure rather than pressure, they develop into the kind of readers who choose books over screens, who see reading as a reward rather than a requirement.

Summer reading opens doors to new adventures while helping your child return to school in the fall feeling confident and ready to learn. This summer, give your child the gift of reading freedom. The academic benefits are just the bonus.



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Independence Day Celebration & Fireworks
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6pm / Free
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FRI., JULY 4, 11, 18, 25
Helotes Lions Club Charitable Bingo
@Helotes Lions Club
Held every Friday.
7-10pm; Doors open 5:30pm / Cash and check only
heloteslionsclub.com

SAT., JULY 5 & 19
Penny Paws Mobile Vaccination Clinic
@Helotes Humane Society
Held on the first and third Saturday of the month.
9am-4pm / Prices vary
pennypaws.com

SUN., JULY 6 & 20
Dine & Dance
@Floore's Country Store
A Helotes tradition! Held on the first and third Sunday of every month and special

holiday weekends. Seating is limited; first come, first served. Music and free dance lessons at 3pm are indoors.
3-8pm / Free
liveatfloores.com

THURS., JULY 17
Bike Night Presented by Javelina Harley-Davidson with Free Live Music
@Floore's Country Store
Held every third Thursday of the month. Enjoy live music, giveaways, merch booth, cold beer and great food! All bikes are welcome, parking on outdoor patio.
6:30-9:30pm / Free
liveatfloores.com

SAT., JULY 19
The Taste
@Josabi's
Family friendly event features food, musicians, drinks, and a canned food drive!
4pm / Free
josabis.com

SAT., JULY 19
Cars and Coffee
@First Baptist Church of Helotes
Held every third Saturday of the month. Bring your classic, muscle, tuner, VIP, bike, or trike and enjoy the morning with like-minded gear heads.
8-10am / Free
fbchelotes.org

SUN., JULY 20
Pet Wellness & Vaccination
@Helotes City Hall
11am-3pm / Prices vary
helotes-tx.gov

THURS., JULY 31
Blood Drive
@Helotes Council Chambers
11am-3pm / Prices vary
helotes-tx.gov

At the time this magazine went to print, all event details were accurate to the best of our knowledge, but please check event websites or call ahead for the most current information as some events may have been postponed or cancelled.



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DIAMOND DREAMS: O'CONNOR GRADUATE DALTON BLAKE TAKES AIM AT DIVISION I BASEBALL

Submitted by Diana Marin / Photos by Linda Guarino

As the final chapter of his high school career comes to an end, Sandra Day O'Connor High School senior Dalton Blake is reflecting on a journey that began when he was just four years old. For the past 14 years, the 18-year-old has been chasing his baseball dreams, and now he's poised to take the next crucial step toward the major leagues.

Blake, who graduated this summer, has been a cornerstone of the O'Connor Panthers and Lobos baseball program throughout his high school tenure. His dedication to the sport runs deep, with aspirations that reach far beyond the Helotes diamond where he's made his mark.

"My personal goals in baseball include throwing 90 MPH, getting picked up by a division 1 program and making it to the Major leagues," Blake explains, his eyes focused on a future that many young athletes only dream of achieving.



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This fall, Blake will continue his baseball career at Brookhaven Junior College in Dallas, Texas, where he plans to develop his skills further while pursuing his ultimate goal of playing Division I baseball. The junior college route is a strategic choice that could provide the perfect steppingstone for his collegiate ambitions.

A LOVE AFFAIR WITH COMPLEXITY

What sets Blake apart from many of his peers is his deep appreciation for baseball's intricate nature. While some players are drawn to the sport's physical demands or competitive spirit, Blake finds himself captivated by something more cerebral.

"What I love about baseball is the complexity of the game," he says. "There are so many moving parts and there's always a play to be made somewhere on the field and somewhere to be."

This understanding of baseball's chess-like qualities has undoubtedly contributed to his success on the field. However, like many athletes, Blake has faced his share of mental challenges, particularly at the plate.

"My biggest challenge is I overthink a lot when I am struggling at the plate," he admits. "When I am struggling with hitting, I try to slow everything down and relax myself and just stay confident."

Throughout his baseball journey, Blake has absorbed valuable lessons that extend far beyond the diamond.

One piece of advice, in particular, has shaped his approach to the game and life.

"The best advice I was ever given was to always put in the extra work even when no one is watching and I would have a chance," Blake reflects, showcasing the work ethic that has propelled him through 14 years of competitive baseball.

This philosophy is evident in his meticulous pregame preparation. Blake's ritual is both comprehensive and purposeful, reflecting his serious approach to the game.

"I listen to country music on the way to the game, then roll out my body and stretch really well," Blake says describing his routine. "Next it's bands and plyo balls then I will run a little bit to get my legs warmed up. Then I throw on the field and lastly I will throw a couple pitches in the bullpen to make sure I have command for all my pitches."

BEYOND THE BASELINE

When he's not perfecting his craft on the baseball field, Blake enjoys the outdoors and values quality time with loved ones. "When I'm not on the field I like to fish, hunt and be around family and friends," he said, revealing the balance that keeps him grounded despite his ambitious goals.

Perhaps most significantly, Blake's years as a team player have taught him lessons about selflessness and collective responsibility that will serve him well both on and off the field.

"Being part of a team has taught me to not be selfish because at the end of the day you need each and every individual on the field to do their job," Blake explains. "You are playing not for yourself but for the 8 other guys on the field beside you."

LOOKING AHEAD

As Blake prepares to leave O'Connor High School behind and embark on the next phase of his baseball journey, he carries with him not only years of experience but also deep gratitude for those who have supported his dreams.

"I would like to thank everyone who has supported me and guided me through my 14 years of baseball," Blake says, acknowledging the community that has helped shape him into the player and person he is today.

With his combination of dedication, baseball intelligence, and team-first mentality, Dalton Blake represents the best of what high school athletics can produce. As he heads to Dallas this fall, the O'Connor community will be watching and cheering as he continues his pursuit of baseball excellence.

The diamond dreams that began in Helotes 14 years ago are far from over – they're just getting started.







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