The Comal County Veterans Treatment Court, established in 2016, celebrated the graduation of its first two defendants in January, followed by a third later in the spring.

County Court-at-Law No. 2 Judge Charles Stephens, who oversees the court, paid tribute to the men's willingness to do the hard work required to complete the program in the Jan. 23 ceremony.

"Even though we work in an adversarial process, we work with these veterans to get them through," he said. "I'm going to bring them through the program kicking and screaming if I have to."

The program provides an alternative way through the court system for veterans accused of misdemeanor crimes – either as a way to defer adjudication or as a condition of probation after conviction. It offers professional counseling, volunteer mentorship from fellow veterans, and other services for men and women who struggle to cope with life after the trauma of military service.

"When I first came to this court, I was going through a hard time," said Jason Vela, the program's first graduate and a former Marine who fought in Iraq. "With the help of the court, I was able to get through it. Without the help of this court, I don't know how I'd be doing."

More Info
comalcountytx.com/VTC.htm
The Comal County Office of Public Health has vaccines available for teens who need them before starting their next year of school.

All adolescents and teens should receive the following vaccines, said Gwen Mills, Comal County director of public health:

- Meningococcal vaccine is recommended at age 11 or 12, with a booster at age 16.
- Tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis (Tdap) vaccine is recommended at age 11 or 12, or for any teens who have not received it.
- Human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine is recommended at age 11 or 12, with a second dose six to 12 months later. For children age 15 or older, a three-dose regimen is necessary over six months.
- Influenza vaccine is recommended annually.

“Parents or guardians should make sure their children’s vaccinations are up to date as they enter middle school, high school or college,” Mills said. “Rather than scrambling at the last minute, we want parents and guardians to be aware we have these vaccines available now.”

The Office of Public Health typically sees increased traffic over the summer as parents and guardians get ready to send kids back to school and bring their vaccinations up to date.

“Vaccinating your children in the spring or early summer is a great way to keep them healthy and avoid the crowds that we experience before school starts,” Mills said.

The office, 1297 Church Hill Drive in New Braunfels, accepts cash, CHIP, Medicaid, Medicare Traditional Part B and Blue Cross Blue Shield. Call 830-221-1150 for cost information and to set up an appointment.

Beat the crowds, get vaccines now!

Historic sites moving toward National Register listing

History may be in the past, but three historical properties in Comal County are moving forward nevertheless – on their way to potential listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

The Comal County Historical Commission, whose members are appointed by Commissioners Court, received a $10,000 grant from the Texas Historical Commission in April to do the work necessary to apply for listing for two properties – while a third area of the county could be listed as soon as this summer.

Comal County was one of just 10 entities – and the only county – to receive grant money from the THC this year. The money will help prepare National Register applications for the two properties:

- The Arnold-Rauch-Brandt homestead, an 1850 structure northwest of New Braunfels, near SH 46, owned by the New Braunfels Conservation Society, and
- Anhalt Halle, the 1879 dance hall near Spring Branch, owned by the Germania Farmer Verein.

In addition, the Fischer Historic District, which includes a general store, bowling alley and several homes, has been approved for listing in the register, and is expected to be listed this summer, said Karen Boyd, chair of the Comal County Historical Commission.

“Comal County has a rich and unique history,” she said, “and we are grateful to the Texas Historical Commission for helping us to preserve it.”

The Comal County Historical Commission is appointed each year by the Commissioners Court.

National Register

- Maintained by the National Park Service
- Created by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966
- More than 90,000 listed properties
- Listing is first step toward fed. preservation grants
- 15 sites in Comal County (13 in New Braunfels, 2 near Garden Ridge)
- 2 historic districts (Fischer in process, Gruene)
The new Comal County Jail, funding for which voters approved in November 2015, has been making progress, with Commissioners Court hiring an architect, project manager and construction manager over the past year.

Now, with designs getting closer to completion, that work is about to move to center stage, with new preliminary renderings released and groundbreaking likely this fall.

The new, 589-bed jail and subsequent renovation of the existing Walter Fellers Law Enforcement Center are key parts of adjusting to Comal County’s rapid growth. The county currently houses about 60 inmates in Burnet County because the current jail cannot hold them.

Voters approved issuing $76 million in bonds to pay for the project; the Commissioners Court issued the first set of bonds in February.

A new Ben E. Keith Co. food-distribution center broke ground in April, beginning the process of moving from San Antonio to Selma.

The center comes to Comal County after the February approval of a tax-incentive agreement in which the company pledged to employ at least 537 people and invest at least $70 million into the new center, which along with a warehouse and other offices will total 620,000 square feet on an 89-acre lot near Lookout Road in the southwestern part of the county.

In return, the county will refund 70 percent of the property’s tax revenue for three years, 55 percent in the next three years and 30 percent in the final two.

The Ben E. Keith Co., which distributes food and alcohol nationwide, was founded in Fort Worth in 1906; it now serves 14 states and employs more than 4,000 people.
Get in a car in Boston and drive down Interstate 95. Don’t stop until you get to Wilmington, N.C. At that point you will have driven the equivalent of every road overseen by Comal County’s Road Department.

In addition to about 1,545 public roads totaling 815 miles (other entities take care of state highways and city roads), county road crews maintain five crossings over the Guadalupe River, nine Canyon Lake boat ramps, about 3,700 acres of public right-of-way and more than 48,000 road signs.

Unlike many counties, where commissioners maintain four separate road precincts, Comal County has a unit system — one department takes care of all road needs based on the overall priorities of the county.

The department, which is part of the County Engineer’s Office, employs more than 80 people under Road Superintendent Gene Szakacsy. It has crews for patching roads, drainage, vegetation, road maintenance and traffic control, as well as a shop to maintain all county-owned vehicles.

The Engineer’s Office, under County Engineer Tom Hornseth, also includes rural recycling, county parks, subdivision permits, GIS mapping, and environmental enforcement. In all, more than 100 people work for the Engineer’s Office.

To report a pothole or other road- or drainage-maintenance concern, call the Road Department at 830-608-2090.