



MCLENNAN
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

2025 News Media Report 7/23-8/21

Note: This media report does not include all coverage related to general event pickups or athletics. Additionally, this does not include rurals and Waco Trib information on Continuing Education opportunities.

1 Total Mention

Mentions 1 Audience 9,782 Publicity USD \$161

Aug 15, 2025 12:25 PM EDT

Source KCEN HD Market Temple, TX Type Digital News Category Local



The Vanek triplets excel at **McLennan Community College**, proving local schools can foster STEM dreams. WACO, Texas — Three siblings from Crawford are proving that staying close to home doesn't limit academic achievement, as Mason, Brady and Grace Vanek prepare to launch their STEM careers after their own

NOTE: This report contains copyrighted material and may be used for internal review, analysis or research only. Any editing, reproduction, or publication is prohibited. Please visit our website for full terms of use. For complete coverage, please login to your Critical Mention account. Estimated audience data provided by Nielsen. Estimated publicity value data provided by Nielsen and SQAD.

Visit us at

www.CriticalMention.com

MCC trustees seek to maintain tax rate

Carl Hoover Aug 8, 2025 0

McLennan Community College trustees aim to keep the district's tax rate unchanged, but rising property values mean taxpayers will still pay more.

The MCC board unanimously agreed Aug. 4 to keep the current tax rate of 13.2 cents per \$100 of property valuation, with administrators making cuts to a proposed \$75.5 million budget to align with the rate.

The rate, coupled with an increase in the district's certified property values, would mean a tax increase of \$19.01 annually for the owner of an average home in the community college district, valued at \$237,677 with exemptions.

The rate is 3 cents higher than the no-new-revenue rate calculated at 12.9 cents per \$100, and would bring in an additional \$1.74 million in revenue for the college. The no-new-revenue rate would collect about the same amount of revenue as last year from properties already on the tax rolls.

The district's assessed property valuation for 2025 was \$32.1 billion, an increase of 4.6% from last year, and the average value of an owner-occupied home rose 6.5% to \$237,677 with exemptions.

Enrollment numbers

MCC President Johnette McKown and Vice President of Finance and Administration Mark Harmsen told the board of trustees at its Aug. 4 budget workshop that an encouraging uptick in student enrollment for the fall, currently at 6,769 students before the start of classes Aug. 25, led them to budget an additional \$1.6 million in revenue from tuition and fees.

The proposed budget also projected \$14.2 million in state appropriations, an increase of \$898,687 from last year.

Harmsen told trustees the major pressures on this year's budget are an 8% increase in health care costs, higher sports expenditures due in part to adding volleyball, and technology expenses.

Mental health

District 4 Trustee Ricky Turman expressed concern about a student engagement report that indicated 77 students had asked for counseling or mental health support, but failed to get it before the last semester's end. Chad Eggleston, vice president for instruction and student engagement, said some support was available through the college's telehealth services, but students did not opt to use it.

Turman asked for the administration to see if an additional full- or part-time counselor would help expand that support and, if so, if that cost could be factored into the 3% raise budgeted for faculty and staff.

Both board president Earl Stinnett Sr. and Harmsen urged the board to keep 3% raises in the proposed budget in addition to the \$53.1 million earmarked for salaries and benefits.

District 7 Trustee Dennis Clark cautioned that too much budget cutting could affect the college's work in educating and training the new employees needed for the county's growing economy. He said taxpayers would recognize the board's work to stay with the current tax rate rather than raise it.

Board members voted 6-0, with Trustee Liz Palacios absent, to recommend maintaining the current tax rate.

A public hearing and final vote to set the tax rate will come at the board's Aug. 26 meeting.



The Ann Harder Show Johnette McKown President MCC Ashley Cruseturner Norman Northern Aaron Konzelman

<https://www.youtube.com/live/rbLHuqdc2Y?si=zFulOpQ6vAg3jiJk>



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?si=huYz7YwofZnmzSd&v=P4k7Yfmeam4&feature=youtu.be>

Dream Big, Start Local

By Gretchen Eichenberg



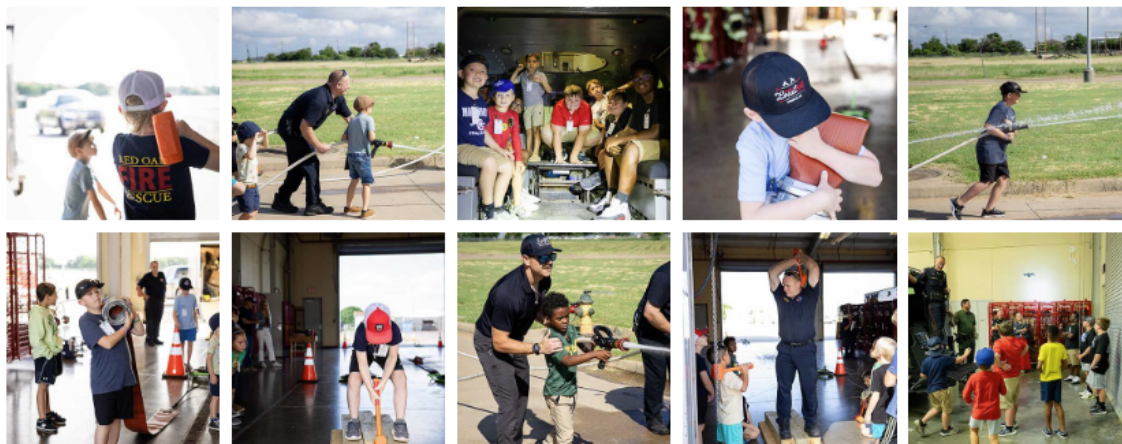
MCC's new Kids College Summer Academies brings career-oriented classes

Fipping on the siren of a squad car. Handling a powerful fire hose. Administering lifesaving procedures. Showing compassion and care for animals. Kids who dream of protecting others and saving lives experienced these and many other real-world activities at McLennan Community College Kids College Career Academies during the months of June and July.

“We wanted to introduce kids to career fields in a fun and hands-on way,” said Jasmine Kirk, coordinator of community programs at MCC. “We wanted them to see everything, to use the equipment, talk to experts in the field. That was a big part of why I reached out to the career academies that we have in place here for MCC students — and we took that a step further by bringing in outside sources.”

Led by professionals from MCC programs and local agencies, kids explored career paths in firefighting, law enforcement, veterinary technology and community health, Kirk said. The one-day camps were held at MCC’s main campus, the Emergency Services Education Center and Highlander Ranch.

Campers didn’t just learn about these careers — they lived them, Kirk added. Each academy included hands-on lessons with real training equipment used by MCC students working toward professional certification. Kids learned about safety, tools and vehicles, daily job responsibilities and the impact each role plays in serving the community. They also got valuable insight into what it takes to enter these fields, from education to career pathways.



“The Kids College Career Academies were created to give local kids the chance to explore career paths, connect with real industry leaders, discover the exciting programs at MCC — and most importantly, have fun while dreaming big about their future,” Kirk said. “Waco SWAT helped with the law enforcement academy and Waco Fire helped with the fire academy. They let them see their trucks and see their safety equipment and ask a million questions and have discussions about how to get into that field.”

Kirk added that one of her goals was to make the camps enriching and aligned with MCC's mission to educate students, improve lives and enrich our community. The camps were offered to kids ages 5-12 and were specially-designed as small groups of 10-15 kids where everyone could get up close and personal — totally immersed — during the session.

Mike Ward of Waco enrolled his grandsons in the fire academy that took place in June.

"I think firefighters are probably some of the finest citizens that we have out there," Ward said. "They put so much on the line. They serve and sacrifice so much. I've got some friends, very good friends, who are firefighters. And I think the ethos of the firefighter is the type of thing that I want to have instilled in my kids and my grandkids. It was just a great way to expose them to that type of thing."

Ward said his grandsons got to fire the water cannons, that they learned all about the fireman's gear and how they put it on and what it's for — plus all the different tools. They even got to operate the jaws of life.

"The instructors were just outstanding in the way that they presented their profession, but also in handling the kids," Ward said. "They were able to, even for those that were very timid or shy, engage the kids and get them involved. It was pretty cool to see."

That's exactly the kind of experience Stephen Cook, director of the MCC Fire Fighter's Academy and 46-year veteran of fire services, was hoping to create for the kids. He and Larry Denman of the Waco Fire Department made sure that campers did a deep dive.

"Larry runs this awesome little course for them, based on the actual obstacle course that guys run when they're doing their physical agility test for the fire department," Cook said. "He let them use a forestry hose that is lighter weight and won't pick them up and throw them around like a regular fire hose would. And he had a few downsized rescue dummies for them to drag. They just had a blast."

Kids even got to climb on a truck and try out the deck gun that sits on top of a fire engine.

"That shoots a thousand gallons a minute, and it shoots it about 70-80 feet through the air," Cook said. "So, all the kids get to come up and pull the handle and operate the deck gun."

Besides all the fun, helping kids possibly discover an interest in becoming a firefighter is one of Cook's goals.

"Something that's huge for us is bringing in young people that possibly haven't considered firefighting as a career," Cook said. "It's one of those jobs that if you're meant to do it, you're going to have a hard time doing anything else. I want to make sure that everybody knows, if they are interested, this is a career option. For me, when I got into it, I hadn't really thought about being a firefighter and I kind of fell into it. When I got into it, I realized wow, this is the coolest job ever. We've got a cooler job than Batman."

Kids interested in healthcare got an up-close look at the many different faces of healthcare professionals, from nurses to doctors to emergency service professionals who are caring for people and saving lives every day.

Allison Halbert, an instructor for the MCC Healthcare Academy, and associate Sandy Butler introduced kids to both the basics and also the specifics of medical care.

"We went through your basic listening to your heart and your lung sounds to looking at some of the tools that they use, and they may see these when they go for checkups to the doctor," Halbert said. "They learned what they are, how to use them, they all got to play with them a little bit and check them out."

The kids practiced using blood pressure monitors by attaching them to pool noodles that simulated an arm.

"They all got a big kick out of that," Halbert said. "Then we switched gears a little bit and went into some of the more hands-on stuff. We actually teach CPR over here, so they all got to learn hands-only CPR and got to practice with that. They had a blast with that. I think they would have done that for three hours in itself."

Halbert said she could see that some of the kids took a real interest.

"It was really neat to see some of them take it a little bit more seriously," she said. "Some of them, especially whose parents are in healthcare field, knew some things but not all the things. So, it was neat seeing them do that, to see that spark of interest."

Kids who attended the Law Enforcement Academy learned all about the role of the police in keeping the community safe.

"We talked to the kids about safety — things like stranger danger, what to do if they see drugs or a gun at school and the importance of saying something if they see something," Chief Clayton Williams said. "We also showed them some of the gear we use and talked about what it takes to become a police officer."

But he said that more than anything, the law enforcement academy experience is a way for police to build trust with youth.

"It's important for kids to feel comfortable around police officers and know we're here to help," he said.

A veterinary clinic also took place in July, offering kids a chance to see the important role of vets and vet technicians in caring for the community's animals and pets.

To learn more about the academies that will be on deck next summer, visit mccandyou.com or call 254-299-8888.

Tags: [AROUND WACO](#) | [COMMUNITY ISSUE](#)
