

THE HILLTOP

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WORLD CHAMPS TIMES TWO

WC RODEO LEGACY REACHES NEW
HEIGHTS WITH WNFR WORLD CHAMPIONS

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

What an amazing year we have had at Weatherford College! We have enjoyed record breaking philanthropy, opened beautiful new facilities, added new academic and athletic programs, and most importantly, our students are succeeding at unprecedented levels. Thank you for all that you do to support both our students and our noble institution.

The Weatherford College rodeo program has a long history of distinguished success. Led by former pro rodeo roper Johnny Emmons, the WC rodeo team has made appearances in the College Nationals Final Rodeo (CNFR) in Casper, Wyoming every year since 2005. A total of 64 students have qualified for the CNFR over the last 17 years, and we are having yet another great year in rodeo. This edition of The Hilltop details how two WC alumni recently won world championships in rodeo. Go COYOTES!

The continued success of WC would not occur without the support of our alumni and community stakeholders. Our 2022 alumni honorees are highlighted in the pages that follow. Thank you for the role that each of you play in the success of our students.

Another major highlight of this edition of The Hilltop is the story on the grand opening of our beautiful new Emerging Technologies and Workforce Building. This beautiful new \$30 million, 70,000 square foot facility is an accelerator of opportunity and an engine of economic development. Generations of students will realize the American Dream as a direct result of the educational opportunities that this transformational facility will provide.

I hope that you enjoy reading about a small sampling of the many amazing things that are happening at Weatherford College. The greatest days of our community do not lie in our distinguished past. Rather, our greatest days lie in the immediate future... and the future is ours!



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COVER STORY



WORLD CHAMPS TIMES TWO

WC RODEO LEGACY REACHES NEW HEIGHTS WITH WNFR WORLD CHAMPIONS

by Rick Mauch

Already renowned in the world of college rodeo, Weatherford College can now boast of being the home of world champions on the professional circuit.

In December, Jordon Peterson Briggs and Sawyer Gilbert made history as the first two WC alumni to win world pro rodeo championships. They each brought the top prize in their respective events at the Wrangler National Finals Rodeo in Las Vegas, Briggs in barrel racing and Gilbert in breakaway roping. The combination of their WNFR results and overall season standings placed both of the former Coyotes in the category of world champions.

“This championship was my dream before it was even possible to achieve,” Gilbert said. “I have worked my whole life for that buckle, and it has created me into who I am today. It’s the biggest title that breakaway ropers get to compete for.”

Gilbert, from Buffalo, South Dakota, led the WC women’s team to its first Southwest Region championship in 2021, making them the first Lady Coyotes squad to qualify as a whole for the College National Finals Rodeo. She also posted victories at the Cheyenne Frontier Days and Pendleton Roundup rodeos earlier this season, helping her earn more than \$70,000.

“Winning the world is a dream come true and has opened a lot of doors for me,” Briggs said. “My horse Rollo gets all the credit. He is amazing and made me the competitor I had to be.”

Along with the WNFR title, Briggs captured the world championship in barrel racing in the Women’s Professional Rodeo Association. She finished the season with \$296,000 in winnings.

Briggs, who rodeoed for WC in 2007-08, was competing in her second WNFR. Like Gilbert, she qualified almost immediately after her time with the Lady Coyotes, competing in the 2009 WNFR.

“I won a round and placed in four others,” she recalled. “I sold that horse about six months later and have been training Futurity horses since - until Rollo came into my life. I couldn’t sell him, so I knew I had to rodeo again.”

Briggs’ WC team narrowly missed being the first to qualify as a whole for the CNFR, finishing third in the region by about 40 points.

Briggs grew up in Elbert, Colorado and is the daughter of multi-time WPRA champion Kristi Peterson. She lived south of Waco for the past 20 years before she moved to Tolar recently with her husband and young daughter.

continues with Rodeo on page 15.



PRESIDENTS HALL

Weatherford College unveiled its new Presidents Hall, a display of portraits of the 20 individuals who have served as college president over the institution's history, this past fall during the grand opening of the Nan and Bob Kingsley Building.

Local descendants of David S. Switzer, WC's first college president, (pictured left) gathered to help dedicate the portraits.

Among them was Doug Dowd, Switzer's great-great-great-grandson, who now serves on the WC Board of Trustees.

President Tod Allen Farmer, whose portrait hangs at the end of the chronological series, said the Dowd/Switzer connection is another example of the college's unique heritage.

"Weatherford College is very fortunate to have a trustee whose family lineage

extends all the way back to the inaugural president of Weatherford College. Trustee Dowd and his family obviously care very deeply about this noble institution and the success of her students."

Since the building opened, former WC President J.C. Nichols (pictured, right) and the family of former presidents William Bryan McDaniel & Dr. Jim Boyd have paid a visits to the collection of portraits.

FRIENDS WE'LL MISS

Wayne Davee, 97, of Weatherford, passed away November 12.

Pauline Jewel Duvall Free, 84, of Millsap, passed away October 8.

Bud Graber, 95, of Weatherford, passed away January 1.

Colonel Robert W. Hill (US Army Retired), 93, of Fort Worth, passed away October 18.

Edna "Jewel" Kinser, 86, of Weatherford, passed away January 13.

Carolyn Kay Nicholson, 74, of Weatherford, passed away September 16.

Benny Pitchford, 92, of Weatherford, passed away December 6. Class of 1949.

Norma Plowman, 86, of Weatherford, passed away March 24. Class of 1956

Jerry Reynolds, 87, of Weatherford, passed away January 26.

Ricky Lane Strickland, 67, of Hypoluxo, FL, passed away February 4. Class of 1975.

JoAnn Turk, of Weatherford, passed away November 20. Class of 1961.

Aubrey Dean Vaughan, 68, of Weatherford, passed away October 22.

Winnie Lenora Nix Warren, 93, of Weatherford, passed away March 19.

WC RECOGNIZES OUTSTANDING ALUMNI AT ANNUAL LUNCHEON

Weatherford College recognized Donna Dickinson as its Alumna of the Year along with Distinguished Alumni Award honorees Dr. Arleen Atkins and Raymond Pritchard at the 2022 Alumni Awards Luncheon held in April in the new Emerging Technologies and Workforce Building.

Dickinson, a 1980 graduate of Weatherford High School, attended WC before beginning her now 39-year career at the Jerry Durant Auto Group.

“There are some people that make this world a better place, and this year’s Alumna of the Year is one of those people,” said Tammy Gazzola, Weatherford Chamber of Commerce president. “Donna Dickinson is a pillar in our community.”

Dickinson has served on the Weatherford ISD Education Foundation Board since 2009, is past president of the Weatherford Chamber of Commerce Board, received the Athena Award from the Weatherford Chamber in 2018 and was a Distinguished Alumna for Weatherford ISD in 2015.

She established a new WC Foundation scholarship fund this past fall in honor of her mother and served on the steering committee for the WC Bell Ringers’ Ball in 2019.

“There is no way to measure the impact that Donna has made through the various committees and boards that she has served on,” Gazzola said. “Weatherford College is a better place because of her.”

As a member of the Project Opportunity Foundation Board that provides significant scholarships funds to many WISD first-generation graduates at WC, Dickinson said, “When you see that, and you know you can make that dream happen—you make it happen.”

“To see the students in our community to have all this now that I didn’t have growing up, it’s wonderful,” she said. “Weatherford College has something for every student. ... And that’s what we’re all about—being a community college.”



WC Dean of Health and Human Sciences Kathy Boswell introduced Atkins, who holds bachelor’s and master’s degrees from Tarleton State University, is a Licensed Professional Counselor Supervisor and earned a Doctoral Degree in Higher Education from Texas A&M University-Commerce.

“She has always been passionate about education,” Boswell said. “Dr. Atkins has always been an excellent educator, mentor, leader, friend, counselor and role model to her students and staff.”

Atkins worked as a county extension agent in Mineral Wells until starting her family and wanting a more flexible schedule. “That’s when Wetherford College came to the rescue and met my needs,” she said.

After attending a real estate program at WC in 1980 she was offered a part-time job at the college as director of the Continuing Education Department. What she thought would be a temporary position became a 39-year career.

“Attending Wetherford College is more than just attending the hours, it’s about building relationships,” Atkins said. “You would be surprised the students that hold bachelor’s or master’s degrees and come back to Weatherford College for job skills.

Weatherford College fills a lot of needs for a lot of students.”

Pritchard, a 1973 graduate of WC, is another champion of the opportunities provided at the college. He was hired by the Weatherford Police Department before he was old enough to buy a gun and checked parking meters. Following police academy training he worked patrol, became a detective and worked his way up the ranks to deputy chief.

“He was always at the police department encouraging the officers, me included, to go to Weatherford College to get an associate degree,” said Ben Whiteman, former Parker County sheriff.

During his career, Pritchard served on several committees including the Parker County Committee on Aging, Salvation Army, AIDS Resources of Rural Texas and the Parker County Transportation Advisory Board.

“When I think back to Weatherford College, it’s not of the good times at sporting events and after-hours activities, but of the instructors I had and the friends I made,” Pritchard said. “This group of people helped me lay a foundation that was strong enough to support me throughout my career. I was blessed to attend Weatherford College, and I’ll always be thankful.”

WC EXPANDING PARTNERSHIPS WITH ADDITIONAL ARTICULATION AGREEMENTS



Weatherford College is expanding partnerships with Texas universities with the addition of several new articulation agreements.

Since January, President Tod Allen Farmer has signed master's degree articulation agreements with Texas A&M-Commerce and Tarleton State University and bachelor's degree articulations with Midwestern State University and DeVry University.

The agreement with TAMUC on Feb. 21 was the first master's degree articulation agreement ever signed by WC, and it will provide a pathway for WC graduates of the Bachelor of Applied Arts and Sciences in Organizational Leadership to transition to the Master of Science in Management at TAMUC.

Qualified students will receive guaranteed admission to A&M-Commerce through their TransferPride program. The agreement ensures WC students can easily transfer credits, and A&M-Commerce students may transfer coursework back to WC to complete the requirements for an associate's degree.

There are also scholarship opportunities available up to \$500 per semester for four semesters for qualified WC students.

"This agreement with our partners at TAMUC creates a seamless pathway for our current and future BAAS-Organizational Leadership students, providing an exciting opportunity to build on their accomplishments at Weatherford College, earn a master's degree from a high-quality graduate program and ultimately broaden their career horizons," said Dr. Philip Mathew, director of WC's BAAS in Organizational Leadership program.

In a similar vein, the second master's articulation signed on March 8 is also for students in the BAAS-Organizational Leadership program to enter master's degree programs at Tarleton.

"For us to send some of our best and brightest to Tarleton bodes extremely well for our region," Farmer said. "Many of the industry titans in our area are both WC and Tarleton graduates."

Eligible graduates will qualify for fast-tracked admission in the Master of Science in Management, Master of Business Administration and the Master of Human Resource Management degrees.

These students will also have their application fees waived and have access to financial aid incentives up to \$1,500 per academic year.

"Weatherford College matters to us," said Tarleton President James Hurley. "Helping students in our own backyard is the right thing to do."

In January, Farmer met with Midwestern State University Interim President James N. Johnston to sign an articulation agreement for the Bachelor of Applied Arts and Sciences in Early Childhood Education and Teaching. The agreement allows students who begin the BAAS at WC to transfer and complete their degree at MSU should they choose. This degree prepares students for several early childhood fields including teacher's aide, counselor and tutor.

The most recent agreement with DeVry, the Transfer Advantage60 Program, allows qualifying WC students to receive 60 credit hours in various DeVry bachelor's degree programs including business administration and technical management.

WC students who earn their associate's degree before transferring to DeVry will automatically be considered for the Future Ready Transfer Scholarship of up to \$7,168.

A TREASURED PORTRAIT RETURNS TO WEATHERFORD



CHANDOR PAINTING TRAVELS FROM ATTIC TO TYLER TO OATMEAL TO WC

Oatmeal, Texas might be the last place you'd expect to find a painting from one of the world's most famous portrait artists. But that's what Brent Baker found when the family of Lella Stepken Austin invited him to the Hill Country to retrieve a treasured family heirloom that now hangs at Weatherford College.

Douglas Chandor (1897-1953) was one of the preeminent portrait artists of the mid-20th century, having painted Queen Elizabeth II, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Herbert Hoover, Winston Churchill other notables. But he also enjoyed painting non-celebrities, and when he saw a photograph of Jennie Ferguson playing cards on a wooden lap board, he asked the Weatherford resident if she would allow him to paint her in that very pose.

"Grandmommie thought this was very silly, someone wanting to paint her portrait," Austin said in a narrative she wrote years ago about the painting. "In the early summer of 1934, the sittings began. Each day Ina Chandor (the artist's wife) would come for my grandmother and with the lap board and chair, take her to the studio where she would sit while Chandor made his sketches."

Eventually other portraits took precedence, Ferguson became ill and the painting was never completed. Some twenty years later, Austin decided she wanted to purchase the portrait of her grandmother.

"On several occasions I contacted Mrs. Chandor after the death of her husband in 1953 and was told she would have the painting brought down from the attic at a later date. This was never accomplished and the dream of owning the portrait began to fade."

Having moved to Tyler some years prior, Austin made one last effort to at least see the

continues with Chandor on page 12.

WEATHERFORD COLLEGE AROUND CAMPUS



1. Cris Villegas from the American Conservation Coalition provided WC with a greenhouse to protect the college's saplings this winter. Faculty and staff pitched in to build the structure before the campus closed for the winter break. The trees are part of the college's ROOTS (Resources Open Opportunities to Students) initiative to increase awareness of student resources on campus and how being well-rooted can lead to growth throughout your life.

2 a & b. WC honored 40 of the finest teachers from across the region at the annual Jack Harvey Academy of Exemplary Teachers celebration on Feb. 11. This year's keynote speaker was Ryan Murphey, the 2017 Teacher of the Year from the Nashville School of Arts and a Grammy-nominated music producer, songwriter, guitarist and vocalist. He is also the son of singer-songwriter Michael Martin Murphey who attended the event and sang an original song with his son at the conclusion of the program.

3. WC celebrated the life of the late Pat Cook by renaming its annual math contest in the honor of its founder, a longtime WC math instructor. Cook's family was on hand as the college also named him a faculty member emeritus.

4. WC piano student Chaeun Lee won the second-place prize at the 2022 Charleston International Winter Music Competition in March.

5. WC theatre students brought the farce "Chemical Imbalance: A Jekyll and Hyde Play" to the Alkek stage in April.

6. Dr. Deborah Jogie Cregger (6a.), WC's director of student resources, received the Staff Member of the Year award and Nina Maniotis (6b.), Phlebotomy Program director, was honored as Faculty Member of the Year at the Employee Awards Dinner in December.



7. Dr. Dianne Ainsworth took her honor students in her British Literature class to visit the TCU library’s special collections in March to see how books were published in the 19th century -- as monthly periodicals, not as entire novels. Meaning, the work of Charles Dickens was released over the course of 12 to 18 months until the story was complete, giving the public time to read a piece and discuss the characters much like we do now with TV shows.

8. Hollywood filmmaker and music supervisor Jamella Adisa was the guest artist for Weatherford College’s spring songwriter showcase “Time and Compassion” in March.

9. Students from Weatherford ISD’s Austin Elementary School enjoyed the day at a WC baseball game at Roger Williams Ballpark in March.

10. Dr. Scott Tarnowiecky, WC history and social sciences professor, presented a program to the Rotary Club of Weatherford about the attack on Pearl Harbor on the 80th anniversary of the day that “will live in infamy.”

11. Cadets from the WC Law Enforcement Academy volunteered to stuff eggs for a Hudson Oaks community Easter egg hunt in April.



GRAND OPENINGS



WEATHERFORD COLLEGE CELEBRATED THE GRAND OPENING OF TWO FACILITIES IN THE SPAN OF FIVE MONTHS

In December, the community gathered to celebrate WC's acquisition of the Nan and Bob Kingsley Building. Thanks to a generous donation/purchase agreement with Nan Kingsley, the building now houses WC's President's Office, offices for Institutional Advancement and the WC Foundation, and developing studio spaces for Mass Communications and Audio Engineering. The facility will also house "The Coyote," a community radio station heard on 88.5 and 102.5 FM.

In April, the college community celebrated the grand opening of the new Emerging Technologies and Workforce Building. The three-story, 70,000 square-foot building now houses a number of existing and new workforce programs, including Robotics, Welding, HVAC, Cosmetology, Cybersecurity, Corporate College and others. A significant portion of the building's \$29.5 million cost is being offset by a lease from Workforce Solutions for North Central Texas, the first such arrangement for the nearly 25-year-old agency.

GRABER INDUCTED TO NJCAA FOUNDATION HALL OF FAME



Former Weatherford College women's basketball coach Betty Jo Crumm Graber was announced as part of the National Junior College Athletic Association Foundation Hall of Fame class of 2022 in February. She is one of five new inductees.

"Designed to tell the story of the NJCAA, the NJCAA Hall of Fame seeks to honor individuals who have paved the way for opportunities at the two-year level – athletically, professionally, and those who have been pioneers throughout the history of the association," according to the NJCAA.

Graber pioneered the creation of the women's division of the NJCAA and the NJCAA Women's Basketball Coaches Association, and her career is decorated with honors and awards. She was a team manager for the 1984 Olympic Basketball Team that won gold.

MAY HIRED AS FIRST WC HEAD VOLLEYBALL COACH

With the addition of volleyball to begin in the fall of 2022, WC has hired its first head volleyball coach.

Kailee May comes to WC from the University of Texas at Arlington, where she spent four seasons as an assistant coach. Her success there included developing multiple All-Sun Belt Conference players, two Defensive Players of the Year, helping lead the Lady Mavericks to two top-three finishes in the Sun Belt Conference Tournament, a victory over a nationally ranked top-25 opponent in 2020, and a National Invitational Volleyball Championship quarterfinals appearance in 2019.

"I am excited to take the reins of my own program, and I believe my experiences at UTA have prepared me for exactly this position," she said. "I am grateful for the opportunity and trust Bob (McKinley, athletic director) and the rest of the athletics staff have put in me to be the first to lead this program."

On the job since January, May has been recruiting players, filling out the schedule and otherwise preparing for the first volleyball season in school history.

Before UTA, May was an assistant at Stephen F. Austin where she helped lead the team to a Southland Conference championship. Prior to that she was the head coach at All Saints Episcopal School, where she led the team to two Texas Association of Private and Parochial Schools State Tournament appearances and a runner-up finish.



She has also been involved in the competitive USAV club volleyball world in DFW. In seven years of being a head coach of various club teams, five of her squads finished top 10 in the country at the USAV Girls Junior National Championships, including one third-place finish.

"One of the things that really hit home with me is how she can fit in and be a part of our team. She genuinely cares about kids," said McKinley. "No matter what level you coach, you have to show how much you care about them."

CLASS NOTES

Rocco Davidson ('15) and his wife, Mercedes Villanueva welcomed a new baby girl in November. Sophia was born Nov. 26 at a healthy 7 lbs., 3 oz.

Sean Eddy ('14) was selected by his peers at the Weatherford Police Department as the Legion's Law Enforcement Officer of the Year.

Keith Loftis, WC Distinguished Alumnus, was nominated for a Grammy Award. Loftis was the principal saxophonist on "Generations" by The

Baylor Project, which was nominated for Best Jazz Vocal Album.

Elizabeth Mederos ('20), WC Brad Tibbitts Faculty Scholarship Recipient, graduated Summa Cum Laude with a Bachelor of Social Work degree from the University of Texas at Arlington and was promoted to outpatient counselor at Recovery Resource Council in Fort Worth.

Paul Tumlin was promoted to sergeant at the Weatherford Police Department.

Casson Rasmussen ('19) of No. 7 Ottawa University earned the KCAC Softball Pitcher of the Week honor in February. Rasmussen was selected for her performances from Feb. 14-20 by a vote of conference sports information directors.

Jolonda Sillemmon ('13) is Weatherford College's new document processing specialist, enrollment management.

Bryan Southard, 21-year DeSoto Fire veteran, has been appointed as the city's new Fire Chief.

WC FOUNDATION NEWS

The Weatherford College Foundation continues to celebrate the generosity of its donors and the establishment of these new scholarship endowments.



CHANDOR *from page 7.*

portrait while on a visit to Weatherford. No one in her family had laid eyes on the painting. She was turned away at that time due to Mrs. Chandor being ill. But a few months later, she received a call that Mrs. Chandor was no better and medical costs were mounting. The family had decided to sell some of the artist's paintings.

"The following Saturday we went to Weatherford and my first glimpse of the portrait was as if Grandmommie had returned to life," Austin said. "The portrait had been stored in the attic all these years through Texas heat and cold. Needless to say, the painting was in terrible condition, the paint was cracked and popping off all over—except for the face and hands. They were in perfect condition."

Mrs. Chandor agreed to sell the painting to Mrs. Austin for \$750, and the buyer was allowed to pay in installments over time. She made payments from 1964 to 1977 and finally owned the work of art.

Austin had the painting restored in Tyler, and it remained in the family for more than 40 years.

Fast-forward to 2021, when Lella's son, Jim Austin, called Baker in his Weatherford College office. Lella's daughter, Melinda, had passed away, and the family decided the painting would be best in the hands of Lella's alma mater—she attended WC in the 1940s.

Baker traveled to meet Melinda's husband, David Neighbor, in Oatmeal, where the painting inauspiciously hung in the family's farm house. David even gave Baker the very lap board featured in the painting as well as the original bill of sale from 1964.

The portrait now hangs in the Conference Room of the Nan and Bob Kingsley Building, next to the President's Office.

Douglas and Ina Chandor are buried in Weatherford's Old Greenwood Cemetery. Coincidentally, Jennie Ferguson is buried in the adjoining lot.

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When Briggs competed at WC, the late Mike Brown was the head rodeo coach. As his assistant, current head coach Johnny Emmons worked with both champions. He said he saw the potential for this in both of them.

“Jordon grew up rodeoing with my daughter, so I have known her since she was a little girl. She has always been a very talented barrel racer and horsewoman,” Emmons noted.

“I knew Sawyer was special the first time I saw her rope, it was her sophomore year in high school and she qualified for the final round of The American. The more I watched her rope the more I thought to myself, ‘She is absolutely one of the best breakaway ropers I have seen.’ It was pretty amazing the year she had last year, winning some of the most prestigious rodeos in the country.”

Likewise, both champions had high praise for the WC program, saying it helped lay the foundation for their success today.

“Competing at WC taught me how to travel and make decisions on my own, learn to take responsibility for yourself and your horses. It also taught me that if you don’t put in the work you don’t deserve to win,” Briggs said.

“I want to thank Mike Brown and Johnny Emmons for believing in me and inviting me to Weatherford College. I learned a lot of

life lessons there and they took great care of us. I had a blast there and met a lot of lifetime friends. I loved going to college with a bunch of rodeo kids that had the same background of growing up like I did.”

Gilbert added, “Getting the opportunity to compete at the CNFR and college rodeo at WC let me learn important skills, life lessons and above all opened the door to a whole new group of people and contacts that I would have never met.”

Emmons detailed that nine other members from WC’s program have qualified for the Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association National Finals Rodeo over the years. Also, no less than a dozen or so sons and daughters of PRCA world champs and NFR qualifiers have come to compete for WC.

“It makes us feel good to know that top rodeo families believe in our program enough to send their kids here,” he said.

In all, WC has had 16 WNFR qualifiers dating back to 1978 with tie down roper Dan Webb.

And Emmons believes the world champion duo have much more success ahead of them.

“Those girls can be successful at the professional level as long as they pursue it. Jordon has already had many successful years in the Barrel Horse Futurity, along with breeding and training. It’s just a matter if she wants to rodeo hard enough to keep making the NFR and shooting for those world titles,” he said. “Sawyer is very young and talented, and the same thing, she could do it for as long as she wants to.”

Judging from their recent comments, both have the desire to compete for championships.

“Horses like Rollo do not last forever. I plan to take nothing for granted, enjoy every run I get to make on him,” Briggs said.

“As I look ahead, I set higher goals for myself. The opportunities for breakaway ropers are only getting bigger and brighter,” Gilbert said. “I look forward to being part of the cutting edge of this sport.”

GILCHRIST AUTOMOTIVE MAKES DONATION TO WC’S NEW MASS COMMUNICATION PROGRAM



Charlie Gilchrist and Gilchrist Automotive made a \$100,000 gift to the Weatherford College Foundation in December. The gift will be earmarked to purchase equipment for WC’s new Mass Communications program in the Nan and Bob Kingsley Building. Charlie Gilchrist is a former member of the WC Foundation Board of Directors and a longstanding donor and supporter of the college. Pictured with Gilchrist in the Southwest Ford showroom in Hudson Oaks is WC President Tod Allen Farmer.

Weatherford College Foundation



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