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EDITOR'S PICK

El Camino de los Tejas National Trail Association hosts annual meeting in Alto

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Members of the El Camino de los Tejas National Trail Association board view artwork by Claude McCredlin during a reception



Members of the El Camino de los Tejas National Trail Association met in Alto Friday for their annual meeting.

Board members were treated to a reception Thursday evening, hosted by the Cherokee County Historical Commission. The commission offered light refreshments and an opportunity to view numerous artworks by Claude McCrocklin, a man whose journey as a painter began with a care package from the Red Cross he received when he was a World War II prisoner of war. The package contained a water color paint kit. Many of his watercolor paintings of the Caddo people and their way of life were on display for viewing.

The annual meeting takes place somewhere along the trail, which stretches from Natchitoches, Louisiana to the Mexico border.

Jayanna Davis, Alto resident and an association board member, said Executive Director Steven Gonzales had asked her if the 2026 meeting could be hosted in Cherokee County.

“My part of the trail is from Cherokee County to Louisiana, the eastern part of the trail,” she said. “We all represent a different part of the trail.”

The board meeting, closed to the public, was to recap the previous year’s projects, provide information about upcoming projects and financial reports. The organization then hosted a series of speakers at A. Frank Smith Methodist Church, in Alto. This event was open to the public

One of this year’s speakers was Deborah Burkett, speaking on “Women Along the El Camino Real, 1700s to 1800s.”

Other topics included how El Camino Real was a network of travel and trade routes used by the Caddo long before the Spanish assigned it a name and native and introduced plants found along El Camino Real. Representatives from Mission Tejas, Mission Dolores State Historical Site, Texas Historical Commission and National Park Service also spoke.



Members of the El Camino de los Tejas National Trail Association board include, from left, Jesse Trevino, Tom Byrd, Executive Director Steven Gonzales, Jayann Davis, John Kisalus, Joyce Conner, Miguel Fernandez Mazarambroz and Bob Ward.

Michelle Dillon/Jacksonville Progress

“They are honoring Senator Nichols with the appreciation award,” Davis added. “He helped get funding this year, through the legislature, for the trail.”

The day concluded with general membership business.

Davis explained why she believes it's important to preserve and promote El Camino Real de los Tejas.

“Before Texas was even thought of as Texas, native Americans traveled that trail for 1,000 years. Caddo lived on that trail and it was a thoroughfare for trade. It's a very big part of Texas independence, because people who went to the Alamo went down that trail. The trail is historic in so many ways,” Davis said. “I just think it needs to be preserved and recognized.”

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