

HIGHLANDS

CROSBY

# Star Courier

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THURSDAY, MARCH 24, 2022

P.O. DRAWER 405, HIGHLANDS, TEXAS 77562

## IN THE STARS

### EVENTS

#### SAT. APR. 2 Crosby Methodist Church SWING INTO SPRING

Crosby United Methodist Church will host a Spring Festival. 10am to 3pm. Everyone welcome.

- Easter Egg Hunt
- Rummage Sale

Apr. 1 and 2 8am-2pm

- Kids games, train ride, bounce house
- Vendors, sweet shop, concessions
- Silent Auction
- Plant Sale
- BBQ cook-off & lunch (presale only)
- Dessert contest

1334 Runneburg Rd, Crosby  
Info 281-328-2616

#### SAT. APR. 9 Crosby Community Center Easter Egg Hunt

Crosby Advisory Council is hosting a Hippy Hop Easter Egg Hunt at the Crosby Community Center. 9am to 11am, 409 Hare Road, Crosby. Free and open to all. Also crafts, tattoos, games, and refreshments. Take pictures with the Easter Bunny.

EGG HUNT TIMES:  
9:30 children 0-3  
10am children 3-6  
10:30 children 7-10

### BIRTHDAYS

Mar 19–Yvonne Browder  
Isabell Daniels  
Annie Marie Herron  
Chris Scott  
Jett Sherwood  
Julie Fallin  
Charlotte Jackson  
Mar 20–Josh Kimberlin  
Mar 21–Crystal Burton  
Kathy Townsend  
Mar 22–Craig Gross  
Lisa Strouhal  
Laura White  
Mar 23–Jackie Thompson  
Charolotte Wotipka  
Mar 24–Lindsey Bell  
John Townsend  
Mary Helen James  
Mar 25–Tara Barron  
Mike O’Conner  
Mar 27–Emma Johnson  
Mar 28–Zachery Abbott  
Rebecca Erikson  
Edgar Wotipka  
Mar 30–Derek Geffs  
Rachel Schultz  
Cheryl Sue Zarsky  
B.J. Amberger  
John C. Zaprada  
Mar 31–Amy Brewer  
Lottie Velma Dunaway

### ANNIVERSARIES

March 31–William & Susan O’Neal  
Apr 1–Doug & Jackie Adams

## HIGHLANDS/LYNCHBURG CHAMBER

# Chamber considers H/L Plan, and Management District

By Gilbert Hoffman

HIGHLANDS — The Chamber luncheon last week included a presentation, and discussion, of the Highlands/Lynchburg plan that Pct. 2 has commissioned, and also a discussion about whether the Highlands area should have a Management District to help implement the many facets and suggestions in the H/L Plan.

Chamber Director Jessica Woods led the discussion, with the help of

Chamber Board chair Randy Casey. A small group of chamber members also participated, with their opinions and experiences. The plan was presented with slides, prepared by the consultants. These are Goodman Group, and Clark-Condon, as well as staff from Pct. 2. In her presentation, Woods made the point that the Chamber has not taken a position for or against the plan, and that it was still under discussion by all parties including the public.



Chamber Director Jessica Woods presented details of the Highlands/Lynchburg Plan, and a Management District proposal, to the Chamber luncheon meeting.

The H/L Plan has been worked on for about 9 months, with presentations to the public, surveys and study groups and feedback incorporated. It is due to conclude in April. Through community engagement, outreach, and surveying, the issues and concerns identified by the community have been translated into three main objectives for the community plan:

*Continued. See Highlands Plan, page 7*

## Crosby ISD settles Fraud charges with SEC

### SEC Charges Texas School District and its Former CFO with Fraud in \$20 Million Bond Sale

Washington, D.C.— March 16, 2022 - The Securities and Exchange Commission today charged Crosby Independent School District (Crosby ISD) and its former Chief Financial Officer, Carla Merka, with misleading investors in the sale of \$20 million of municipal bonds in order to pay its outstanding construction liabilities and fund new capital projects.

The SEC also charged Crosby’s auditor, Shelby Lackey, with improper professional conduct in connection with the audit of the school district’s 2017 fiscal year financial statements.

The SEC’s complaint alleges that Crosby ISD, which serves approximately 6,400 students outside of

Houston, failed to report \$11.7 million in payroll and construction liabilities and falsely reported having \$5.4 million in general fund reserves in its audited 2017 fiscal year financial statements.

According to the complaint, Crosby ISD and Merka, who was responsible for Crosby ISD’s accounting and was the primary contact during the bond financing process, were aware that the financial statements significantly underreported the payroll and construction liabilities. Crosby ISD and Merka knowingly included the false and misleading financial statements in the offering documents used to raise \$20 million through the sale of municipal bonds in January 2018.

In August of 2018, seven months after the offering, Crosby ISD disclosed that it was experiencing significant financial is-

suues, including that it had a negative general fund balance. The following month, ratings agencies downgraded Crosby ISD’s bonds.

Lackey, who audited Crosby ISD’s financial statements, authorized the issuance of the fiscal year 2017 audit report. Lackey was charged by the SEC with failure to perform critical audit procedures necessary to verify the accuracy of Crosby’s payroll and construction liabilities. She also violated Generally Accepted Auditing Standards (GAAS) by failing to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence to support the audit opinion, failing to properly supervise the audit, and by failing to exercise professional judgment and maintain professional skepticism.

“The SEC is committed

*Continued. See Crosby ISD settles, page 5*

### STATEMENT FROM CROSBY ISD:

Crosby Independent School District (the ‘District’) has entered into a settlement agreement with the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (the ‘SEC’), resolving an investigation into disclosures made in connection with the District’s fiscal year 2017 audited financial statements and its January 2018 bond offering. Under the terms of the settlement, which took into account the extensive remedial acts and efforts already voluntarily undertaken by the District as well as the District’s cooperation with the investigation, no fine or other penalty has been imposed against the District.

The District has already implemented improvements and changes in its processes and procedures to ensure it provides accurate disclosures and information to the public. The District acknowledges the SEC for its professionalism throughout the investigative process. This settlement resolves the investigation and all outstanding SEC claims related to the District, and represents a positive step in the District’s ongoing efforts to continuously evaluate and improve its fiscal health and stewardship of public funds. According to Superintendent Paula Patterson: “Crosby ISD is glad to resolve this SEC investigation of a prior administration’s actions, and the current Board and Administration are committed to being good stewards of our community’s tax dollars for the benefit of our community’s children.”

## WOMEN’S HISTORY MONTH

### Texas’ First Woman Governor: M. A. W. “MA” Ferguson

Part of a Women’s History Month Series -

By Allan Jamail

Miriam Amanda Wallace “Ma” Ferguson (June 13, 1875 – June 25, 1961) was an American politician who served two non-consecutive terms as the governor of Texas: from 1925 to 1927, and from 1933 to 1935. She was the first female governor of Texas, and one of the first two women to be governor of any U.S. state, along with Nellie Tayloe Ross.

Ferguson was born Miriam Amanda Wallace in Bell County, Texas. She studied at Salado College and Baylor Female College. When she was 24, she married James Edward Ferguson, a lawyer, at her father’s farm near Belton in Bell County, Texas.

Her nickname, “Ma”, came from her initials, “M. A.”, and the fact that her husband was known as “Pa” Ferguson. They had two daughters: Ouida Wallace Ferguson, and Dorrace Watt Ferguson.

After her husband’s im-



Miriam Amanda Wallace “Ma” Ferguson (June 13, 1875 – June 25, 1961) was an American politician who served two non-consecutive terms as the governor of Texas.

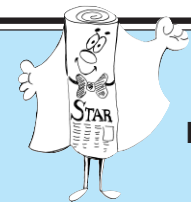
peachment and conviction, Ma Ferguson ran in the primary for the Democratic nomination for governor and was successful, openly supported by her husband, whom she said she would consult for advice. She was elected to office in the 1924 general election.

During her campaign, she made it clear she was a puppet candidate for her husband, saying voters would get “two governors for the price of one”. Her speeches at rallies consisted of introducing him and letting him take the plat-

form. A common campaign slogan was, “Me for Ma, and I Ain’t Got a Durned Thing Against Pa.” Patricia Bernstein of the Houston Chronicle stated “There was never a question in anyone’s mind as to who was really running things when Ma was governor.”

After her victory in the Democratic primary, Ferguson defeated George C. Butte, a prominent lawyer and University of Texas

CONTINUED. SEE MA FERGUSON, PAGE 6



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# GOOSE CREEK NEWS

## GCM Student Sets Record for Math Competition

By: Kristyn Hunt Cathey, Director of Communications

Goose Creek Memorial High School's Mu Alpha Theta chapter, led by sponsor Byoung Kang, is setting records this school year. GCM student, Swayam Gupta, placed in the top 2.5% of over 300,000 students across the nation who competed in the American Mathematics Competition earlier this school year. GCCISD has not had a student qualify for this elite



competition since 2016. His ranking qualified him for the 2022 American Invitational Mathematics exam. He took the three-hour math test on February 8<sup>th</sup> in an attempt to qualify for the USA Math Olympiad; which is one of

the highest levels of math competition in the United States. The results will be released in mid-March.

Mu Alpha Theta High School and Junior College Mathematics Club was founded in 1957 at the University of Oklahoma. Per their website, "the organization is dedicated to promoting scholarship in mathematics and establishing math as an integral part of high school and junior college education."

## SCTHS Car Show Cruises to Success

The Stuart Career Technical High School annual car show took place on March 19<sup>th</sup>. The car show was postponed for two years due to the pandemic, but this year's event more than made up for it. Baytown car lovers competed for the top car show categories such as Best of Show, Best Hotrod, Best Import and more.



Auto Tech instructor, Jim Ornelas, was proud of his students and thankful for the support of the community. "Everything went well. It was a success," he said. "We had nearly 30 students volunteer and I truly believe they got something out of it. The drivers were very impressed."



The car show was a SCTHS family affair. The event was a collaborative effort between the Auto Technology and Collision Repair and Refinishing departments. The Culinary Arts team, led by Chef Kylie Sobczak, fed the guests a feast of hot-dogs, hamburgers and drinks. In total, 11 trophies were given distributed.

By Kristyn Hunt Cathey

## Boogie On Down with the Goose Creek Education Foundation

The Goose Creek Education Foundation invites the public to "boogie down" to the 2022 All-Star Gala featuring KC & The Sunshine Band on May 13<sup>th</sup> at 8 p.m. at 713 Music Hall, located in downtown Houston.

The All-Star Gala brings together community leaders to benefit the Foundation while raising money through sponsorships, ticket sales and raffle ticket sales. The gala was on a two-year hiatus due to the pandemic, but the Foundation is ready to get back to its core mission of enhancing education for the district; especially to the students educated in the district's Title 1 campuses.

The robust sponsorship packages range from \$1,000 to \$25,000 ,with many exclusive perks for top level sponsors and a wide range of advertising opportunities at the venue and within the district. A limited number of individual tickets will be sold ranging from \$40 to \$180, with a 25 percent discount for Get on the Bus participants (with a limit of two tickets per employee). GOTB participants are district employees that donate to the Foundation through payroll deductions.

"Wear your upscale disco attire and get ready to dance the night away with KC & The Sunshine Band in this breathtaking venue designed with excellent views from every location in the house," said Erika Foster, the Foundation's Executive Director. "We anticipate that tickets and sponsorships will sell out quickly."

Since its inception in 2009, the Education Foundation has awarded \$1.4 million in innovative teaching grants to Goose Creek CISD educators and recognized 180 teachers nominated by their students for making a difference in their lives at the annual Students Choice Awards.

For sponsorship information, visit [www.linktr.ee/gccisdfo](http://www.linktr.ee/gccisdfo) or email Erika Foster at [erika.foster@gccisd.net](mailto:erika.foster@gccisd.net).

By: Erika Foster, GCCISD Education Foundation Executive Director

## Blargles Live to Swim Another Day



By: Kristyn Hunt Cathey, Director of Communications

The Blarglefish Robotics team took part in a competition at Channelview High School on March 12<sup>th</sup>. Out of the 32 teams in attendance, the GCCISD team ranked in the top 10 with seventh place. The Blarglefish were named the Alliance Captain for Team 5 (out of eight teams), which also allowed the team to earn a spot in the top eight seed in the quarterfinals and earn ranking points. Though the team was eliminated in the round two quarterfinals, they did win the Jack Kamen Imagery Award.

The Lee Blargles will have another opportunity to compete at San Jacinto College (central campus) March 25-26<sup>th</sup>.

Team members include: Antony McLaughlin, Aiden Juarez, Jacquelyn Sosa, Michell Hernandez, Godwin Benny, Jonathan Bosnich, Christina Buenrostro, Ciera Cartwright, Leeland Dionne, Kaleb Pearson, Axel Galindo Martinez, Allison Jannise, Diego Loreda, Max Murray, Alejandro Negrete, Corban Richards, Victor Ruiz Jr. and Blake Sistos.

The district will open its doors to their state-of-the-art Robotics Center facility in August 2022.

NOW AT TWO LOCATIONS:

CROSBY: 15110 FM 2100 Suite 9, Crosby, TX 77532 281-426-3670

HIGHLANDS: 112 Denny St., Highlands TX 77562 281-426-3670

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Thank you all for your continued support! I am amazed & beyond grateful for each and every order, comment, page share, referral & all the love!

--Missy Norton

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## SWING INTO SPRING!

### Festival

at Crosby United Methodist Church

April 2, 2022

10am to 3pm

*Everyone is welcome!!*

- Rummage Sale Apr 1 & 2 8am-2pm
- Kids games, train ride & Bounce Houses
- Vendors
- Sweet shop
- Silent auction- bidding ends at 2:30
- Concessions
- Plant sale
- BBQ pork cook-off and plate lunch – presold tickets only, contact church office
- Dessert contest
- Kids Easter Egg Hunt

1334 Runneburg Rd Crosby

For more info: 281-328-2616



# Barbers Hill Dayton Press

Serving Mont Belvieu, Dayton, Baytown and surrounding communities since 1995

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THURSDAY, MARCH 24, 2022

MONT BELVIEU, TEXAS 77580

## ON THE HILL

### Baytown Habitat for Humanity Fundraiser

#### TREE SALE

Thursday, March 24- 11am to 6pm  
Friday, March 25-11am to 6pm  
Saturday, March 26- 8am to 1pm

Oaks - Live, Laurel, Willow, Overcup, Shumard Red, Nuttall Red, Southern Red, Chinquapin, Swamp Chestnut; Other Hardwoods - Sweetgum, Green Ash, Sycamore, River Birch, Water Tupelo, American Elm, Sugarberry; Shrubs - American Beautyberry, Buttonbush, Wax Myrtle

All Trees \$10  
Assortment Available While Supplies Last  
Pre-Sales Offered With Payment in Full  
Sale & Pick Up at St. John the Evangelist Catholic Church 800 W. Baker Rd.  
Back parking lot at the basketball pavilion.  
For information contact Baytown Habitat for Humanity at 281-427-0866 or [info@baytownhabitat.org](mailto:info@baytownhabitat.org)

Fundraiser made possible through the generous tree donation by Tree Life Farms, 3703 Fig Orchard Rd. Highlands TX 77562

### History Heals Luncheon

Chambers County is excited to partner with the History Heals Foundation (HHF) to host the First Annual History Heals Luncheon on March 29, 2022 at the White Memorial Park Community Building.

This event will serve as the Kick Off of several months of promotional and fundraising events leading up to HHF hosting The Wall That Heals in October 2022. More information regarding The Wall will be provided at the luncheon.

The luncheon is dedicated to honoring Vietnam Veterans and fallen soldiers and will focus on remembering the Vietnam War and it's lasting impact on Chambers County.

Sponsors are needed. If you would like to support this endeavor, please contact Samantha Humphrey at [shumphrey@chamberstx.gov](mailto:shumphrey@chamberstx.gov).

## New City Manager for Mont Belvieu

MONT BELVIEU – Brian Winningham has been selected as the new city manager for the City of Mont Belvieu. Winningham was one of three finalists resulting from a six-month long nationwide search conducted by Strategic Government Resources (SGR) and the Mont Belvieu City Council; he was chosen for the position after final interviews that were held on February 18 and 19.

“We are excited to add Mr. Winningham’s experiences and vision to our city. We feel he is the right person to lead our staff during this time of unprecedented growth in Mont Belvieu,” said Mayor Nick Dixon.

Winningham’s contract with the City of Mont Belvieu was approved by the City Council during their regular meeting on Monday, February 28; his first day

with the City of Mont Belvieu will be Monday, April 11.

About Brian Winningham  
Brian Winningham has over five years of federal and local government experience and more than 20 years of military experience and currently serves as the City Administrator for the City of Dickinson, North Dakota. Previous experience includes:

\*Tribal Administrator, Chief Executive for the Tule River Tribe of California (2018-2020)

\*Military Fellow, Office of Congressman Brian J. Mast (2017-2018)



\*Chief, Office of the Secretary of Defense for Policy, Special Operations Pentagon (2016-2017)

\*United States Army  
\*Battalion Commander (2014-2016)

\*Executive Officer, Special Operations Command (2011-2014)

\*Operations Officer, Joint Special Operations Command (2004-2011)

\*Company Commander (1998-2004)

\*Infantry Officer Platoon Leader (1994-1998)

Brian holds a master’s degree in Administration, National Security/Strategic Studies from the US Naval War College, a bachelor’s degree in Philosophy/Theology from Point Loma Nazarene University and is a graduate of the U.S. Army Logistics Management College with certifications in Fis-

cal Strategy and Execution Budget, and Federal Contract Law. He is also a graduate of the US Army Command and General Staff College.

The City of Mont Belvieu has been without a permanent city manager since Nathan Watkins resigned from the position in August of 2021. At that time, Assistant City Manager Scott Swigert was named Interim City Manager and will continue to serve in that role until Winningham assumes the position in April. “The Council and I are very thankful to Scott for the leadership and stability he has provided to our staff during this transition. We are grateful that he will continue to serve our community as assistant city manager,” stated Mayor Nick Dixon.

## Animal Shelter Volunteers Wanted

Love animals? Enjoy serving your community? Ready to make a difference in the lives of shelter pets? If you are a Barber’s Hill High School student or an adult (18+ and not enrolled at Barber’s Hill High School), our volunteer program is just the one for you! We are looking for individuals who have a passion and love for animals to offer their time at our animal shelter.

#### BEFORE YOU CAN VOLUNTEER YOU MUST:

\*Be a current Barber’s Hill High School Student or Adult (18+ and not enrolled at Barber’s Hill High School)

\*Complete the volunteer application and submit it to [mbas@montbelvieu.net](mailto:mbas@montbelvieu.net)



or drop it off in person at Mont Belvieu Animal Shelter.

\*Adult volunteers must consent to a background check screening.

If you have any questions, please call us at 281-576-2417 or email us at [mbas@montbelvieu.net](mailto:mbas@montbelvieu.net).

#### WHAT IMPACT DOES VOLUNTEERING HAVE?

Volunteering at the

animal shelter makes a big difference in the lives of shelter animals! Whether you are cleaning kennels, exercising animals, or assisting with adoption events, you are helping ensure that the animals in our shelter are receiving the best care possible during their stay with us.

#### WHAT ACTIVITIES DO VOLUN-

#### TEERS PARTICIPATE IN?

As a volunteer, you can participate in several different volunteering assignments. Each volunteer activity requires a different level of training and supervision. All volunteers begin their volunteering journey in the areas of kennel cleaning and pet exercise/socialization and may move on to per-

form other assignments with experience and training.

#### RESPONSIBILITIES INCLUDE BUT ARE NOT LIMITED TO:

Kennel cleaning  
Animal exercise/socialization  
Grooming  
Assisting with off-site adoption events  
Animal transportation

### Upcoming COVID-19 Vaccination PODS and Clinics



By Chambers County Public Health

#### McLeod Park – 10717 Langston Dr

Friday, February 18, 2022 9am-12pm  
Friday, February 25, 2022 9am-12pm

#### Mont Belvieu – 10616 Eagle Drive

Wednesday, March 02, 2022 7:30am-3:00pm  
Wednesday, March 09, 2022 7:30am-3:00pm

Tuesday, March 15, 2022 7:30am-3:00pm  
Wednesday, March 23, 2022 8:00am-3:30pm

Tuesday, March 29, 2022 7:30am-3:00pm

#### Winnie – 203 East Broadway

Thursday, March 03, 2022 7:30am-3:00pm  
Thursday, March 17, 2022 7:30am-3:00pm

Thursday, March 31, 2022 7:30am-3:00pm

#### Anahuac – 102 Airport Rd.

Friday, March 11, 2022 8:00am-3:30pm  
Friday, March 25, 2022 7:30am-3:00pm

Sign up at: [bit.ly/chamberscovaccines](https://bit.ly/chamberscovaccines)  
For assistance call: 409-267-2731



### Baytown Youth Fair Youth Rodeo

April 3, 2022  
2 pm

ATTENTION: Open to All Texas Youth in 3<sup>rd</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> Grade

Events: Calf ribbon pulling, calf roping, trailer loading, and calf branding. (No horses – ropes will be provided)

#### PRIZES IN EACH EVENT

Calf Scramble: Will be held during the youth rodeo and only open to Baytown Youth Fair Exhibitors for the 2023 Fair.

Check in: 1-1:45; Rodeo begins @ 2 pm

Contestants may only compete on ONE team.

Entry Fees: \$50.00 Per Team

Payment: Venmo @ BaytownYouthFair; comment Youth Rodeo or Pay at the time of sign-up

Walkups are welcomed

Please include: (1) Entry form & (4) Releases of Liability notarized for EACH contestant and payment

Waiver & release of liability is found at [baytownyouthfair.org](https://baytownyouthfair.org)  
Notary will be available the day of the event with proper ID - \$4 each

QUESTIONS: Ashley Schrader @ (832) 262-8407

Rodeo will be held at the Baytown Fairgrounds  
7900 N Main  
Baytown, TX 77521






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OPINION PAGE

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**OPINION**  
By U.S. Congressman  
**KEVIN BRADY**



## American Dollars Will No Longer Fund Russia's War Machine

Calls for passage of bipartisan bill suspending normal trade relations with Russia and Belarus

Ways and Means Republican Leader Rep. Kevin Brady (R-TX) spoke on the floor for passage of the “Suspending Normal Trade Relations with Russia and Belarus Act.”

Madame Speaker,

Yesterday, President Zelensky made a passionate plea to the United States and all free nations: to stand with the brave people of Ukraine against Putin's deadly ambitions and heartbreaking genocide.

After showing gut-wrenching footage of Ukrainian cities torn apart by missiles and machine guns, he said: ‘To be the leader of the world means to be the leader of peace.’

Today, Madame Speaker, we have the opportunity to lead, and I thank Chairman Neal for his great leadership and work on this bipartisan provision.

After bipartisan public pressure from lawmakers in Congress – in both parties – President Biden announced his support for suspending Russia's special trade status, and we are taking that action with today's bill.

I was proud to have helped lead this bipartisan effort of the House Ways and Means and Senate Finance committees.

Both parties in Congress came together quickly, working in good faith on a bipartisan, bicameral agreement to immediately ban purchases of Russian energy and suspend our trading relationship with Russia and Belarus.

We don't take these steps lightly, but Russia's aggression requires this approach.

Russia will no longer enjoy the same special trade status with America as the country it is invading, so that it will no longer be able to sell Made-in-Russia products into the United States at lower tariffs.

Combined with the energy import ban Congress passed last week – which targets 60 percent of what Russia sells us – this provision targets the remaining 40 percent, hurting Russia's economy and cutting off funding for its war effort.

Said another way: American dollars will no longer fund Russia's war machine.

This is another step in the right direction and includes further incentives for Russia to end its aggression.

This bill includes tough conditions to be met for restoring Russia's trade status, including Russian action to end hostilities, protecting the freedom and sovereignty of Ukraine, and ensuring the end of Russia's aggression.

The same tough conditions apply if the President seeks to end the energy import ban, and I plan to work with colleagues in the Senate to achieve that.

Going forward, we must continue to work closely with our allies to increase pressure on Russia and ensure this is an effective, global effort.

Neighboring Canada has also taken serious action to do both of these, and other nations have announced their intentions to do the same.

Unfortunately, the Administration's executive orders and the bill we're voting on today both fail to soften the impact of the oil ban by replacing Russian oil with Made-in-America energy.

We've seen the highest year over year increase on wholesale prices ever recorded. Nearly half of the price increases in goods come from the rise in the price of gasoline over the past year.

Nothing in this bill creates access to more American-made energy on or off-shore.

Nor does it approve American pipelines that could easily replace Russian oil with U.S. and Canadian energy. Or accelerate approval for delayed permits for American export facilities to help the world wean themselves from the grip of dirty Russian energy.

There is still yet more Congress can do. I would like to see Congress sanction Russian energy companies so they can't continue to profit and fuel their war machine.

It's also time for Congress to unleash America's own ability to be energy independent, to replace Russian oil with American sources, and use our energy strengths to wean the world from Russian energy.

Finally, I want to make it clear to my colleagues this bipartisan, bicameral agreement applies only to the suspension of normal trade relations with Russia.

I do not support the inclusion of the Democrat's Foreign Affairs Committee's Global Magnitsky Act in this bill, which includes changes to the original statute that I believe is unnecessarily vague and could lead to future abuses.

I understand this expanded language may have been included in a temporary executive order by the previous administration to address human rights, but I don't believe it is warranted in a permanent extension of this law.

I am confident there are Senators who share my concerns, and I strongly urge them to remove that provision for future vetting.



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**STATE CAPITAL HIGHLIGHTS**  
By Gary Borders



## Task Force to Address Teacher Shortages

### TASK FORCE TO ADDRESS TEACHER SHORTAGES

At the behest of Gov. Greg Abbott, a task force has been created by the Texas Education Agency to address staffing shortages facing the state's public schools.

“Teachers play a critical role in the development and long-term success of our students,” Abbott said. “This task force should work diligently to ensure that best practices and resources for recruitment and retention are provided to districts to ensure the learning environment of Texas students is not interrupted by the absence of a qualified teacher.”

The Teacher Vacancy Task Force is intended to ensure Texas schools are equipped to deal with these challenges, relying heavily on the input of current and former teachers. More than two dozen superintendents, administrators and teachers have been appointed to the task force.

The state has long endured a shortage of certified teachers that has been exacerbated by the pandemic. A survey of more than 900 teachers last year by the Charles Butt Foundation revealed 68% of those surveyed were seriously considering leaving the profession.

### DROUGHT CONDITIONS STABLE IN FEBRUARY

Precipitation in February was close to normal, but Andrew Weinberg with the Texas Water Development Board predicts the entire state will be in drought conditions by the end of spring.

According to the U.S. Drought Monitor, only a few counties in Texas, mainly in far south Texas and along the Gulf Coast, are not considered to be in drought conditions.

The most severe drought is occurring in the Texas Panhandle, through the Great Plains and into the Big Bend area.

### PANEL REVIEWS ROLLING PINES WILDFIRE

An independent panel



reviewing a prescribed fire that got out of control at Bastrop State Park recommends requiring more personnel present and smaller burns at the park.

The Rolling Pines wildfire in January involved nearly 800 acres and forced about 150 households to temporarily evacuate. No private property damage was reported. The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department two days later formed the panel to investigate why the fire got out of control.

The panel also recommended that bulldozers be required to be on site during prescribed burns, which are intended to lessen the risk of large-scale fires such as the Bastrop County Complex Fire in 2011, which destroyed nearly 1,700 homes and scorched almost 35,000 acres.

Members of the panel included fire experts from across the United States.

### KAUFMAN WOMAN ARRESTED FOR TIMBER THEFT

A Kaufman woman has been arrested for timber theft in Hopkins County, according to the Texas A&M Forest Service.

Frances Charline Cole, 51, was charged with hiring a logging company to harvest timber on 42 acres on which she had entered into a real estate agreement but never actually bought.

A timber deed filed with the county clerk indicates she was paid \$8,000 for the timber. However, the

logger returned to cut the tract and discovered she had backed out of buying the land.

“Essentially, the logger paid her for timber that wasn't hers, that she had no rights to sell,” said Jonathon Keller, Texas A&M Forest Service Law Enforcement Investigator.

### NINE ACCUSED OF SEX TRAFFICKING AT CENTER

Nine employees at a Bastrop County facility that cares for young victims of sex trafficking have been accused of trafficking those same girls, according to the Austin American-Statesman.

One employee of the state-contracted Refuge Ranch has been arrested on an undisclosed charge and more arrests are anticipated, according to Tara Olah, a director with the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services.

The facility employed more than three dozen employees to provide 24-7 care for the girls. According to Olah, DFPS received multiple phone calls in January to the statewide intake hotline that “alleged sexual and physical abuse, sexual exploitation, neglectful supervision and medical neglect” at Refuge Ranch, according to the Statesman.

“This is appalling and is a disregard of these children,” U.S. District Judge Janis Jack, who presided at a hearing Thursday evening, told state staff, including Family and Protective Services Commissioner Jaime Masters and contract monitors. “And we had to wait for eight calls to come in before we took already trafficked children out of this situation. This is a system that remains broken.”

Jack pointed out it took almost six weeks and several phone calls before the girls were removed from the facility. The Texas Rangers have been called in to investigate.

Refuge Ranch opened in 2018 on 50 acres in Bastrop County and is designed to house girls ages 11 to 19. The state ordered the shelter to close on Friday.

### NEW COVID-19 CASES RISE, BUT DEATHS, HOSPITALIZATIONS DROP

The number of new COVID-19 cases in the past week in Texas rose to 31,965, up about 5,000 compared to the previous week, according to the Coronavirus Resource Center at Johns Hopkins University. However, the number of new deaths reported dropped to 678, down about a third from the previous week.

The number of lab-confirmed COVID-19 hospitalizations in Texas dropped to 2,008, down 29% from the previous week, according to the Texas Department of State Health Services.

☆

**THE POSTSCRIPT**  
By  
**Carrie Classon**

## Super Bonito

“Maybe I'm a little old for this dress?” I suggested tentatively as I made my way to the mirror in the little shop.

I was in the artisans' market in San Miguel de Allende, Mexico, where they sell everything imaginable—and quite a few things I had never imagined. I was wearing a dress that had been hanging on a rack outside a tiny shop in the market. It was in my favorite colors.

I've been collecting “my” colors, various shades of blue and green. It started with the bracelets. I bought a turquoise one for a few pesos and then I found another one that matched. Then another. Then another. None of them has cost more than a couple of dollars and, at this writing, I have eight bracelets around my wrist. Maybe it's a bit too much. But I get happy every time I look at my wrist, so maybe it isn't.

My husband, Peter, and I are now settled into a little apartment for the month. It is certainly not fancy. I look at the photos of friends staying in vacation resorts and they probably wouldn't think much of our lifestyle here. I am sitting at a little desk made of Formica that looks out on a sunny brick wall covered with smiling ceramic suns. I have sunflowers on my desk. Peter is keeping me supplied with coffee (as he always does) and I am writing (as I always am). I think that is why we like it here so much—we are living very much as we always do, just in a different place.

And I also think it is why I am constantly buzzing through the artisan market, dipping into little shops along the way, looking for my colors. I'm like a bird feathering her nest. I bring back woven napkins and potholders and a bright blue apron with yellow flowers embroidered on the front. Peter is a regular at the chicken roasting shop where dozens of chickens turn on a rotisserie. When he takes too long fumbling with his pesos, the woman who roasts the chickens grabs the money out of his hand, takes what she needs, and returns the burn to him. She is not about to ward her chickens waiting for Peter.

Today is our seventh anniversary and we are celebrating it in the best way possible—by living our life the way we do every other day. Peter is going for his hike in the botanical garden. I am writing and drinking coffee. Later, we will go out for lunch at a rooftop restaurant. The view is wonderful and the weather is fine and, from our vantage point, we can see a cactus that has somehow managed to take root right on the dome of the church roof across the street. The cactus must be nearly 6 feet tall. It is amazing.

I plan to wear my new dress to lunch.



“Maybe I'm a little old for this dress?” I said to the shopkeeper, who I knew would say “no.”

“No!” she said on cue.

“Bonito!” said a customer, unprompted, as I looked skeptically at the rather skimpy blue and green dress in the mirror.

“Super bonito!” the shopkeeper agreed. That is when I decided I would buy the dress. I've had pretty dresses before, but never one that was “super bonito.”

Our anniversary today will be another ordinary day that will be perfect because it is not special. It will be perfect because it will be more of the same. It will be super bonito. Till next time, Carrie

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# Hire Houston Youth Program Application extended to April 8

HOUSTON - Mayor Sylvester Turner joined City officials and business leaders to kick off his signature program, Hire Houston Youth, which provides paid summer jobs and internships to youth, age 16 – 24, at the City of Houston and in the public, private, and philanthropic sectors.

“Employment plays a pivotal role in reducing gender, ethnic, racial, and other social inequalities,” said Mayor Sylvester Turner. “Therefore, providing meaningful employment experiences for our youth is in the best interest of all, including young people, their communities, and Houston as a whole.”

Originally, the deadline for students to apply to participate was Friday, March 11. However, in light of Spring Break schedules, the Mayor announced at the press conference that the application period had been extended until April 8.

In 2021, with the economy on the rebound from the COVID-19 public health emergency, Hire Houston Youth offered over 9,500 opportunities. This year, Mayor Sylvester Turner set a goal

of offering 12,000 job and internship opportunities, with a stretch goal of 15,000.

Recently, Houston was one of just five cities across the nation awarded a \$150,000 grant by the National League of Cities that will be used for the Hire Houston Youth initiative. In addition to the monetary award, Houston will receive specialized assistance from the National League of Cities staff and other national experts to advance the city’s efforts to expand STEM career pathways for marginalized young people.

Through Hire Houston Youth and the awarded funds, the City of Houston has an opportunity to address long-standing inequities by creating pathways from residents to resilient, living wage trajectory jobs. This initiative also aligns with the Mayor’s One Safe Houston campaign that seeks to reduce

Employers can sign up, and youth can apply for jobs by visiting <http://www.hirehoustonyouth.org>. The application deadline is April 8. For more information, please visit our website or contact our team at [hirehoustonyouth@houstontx.gov](mailto:hirehoustonyouth@houstontx.gov).

# Crosby ISD settles Fraud Charges,

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

to holding bad actors in municipal securities offerings accountable for their misconduct and will continue to provide protections for investors,” stated David Peavler, Regional Director of the SEC’s Fort Worth Regional Office.

“Crosby and Merka misled municipal bond investors regarding the truth of Crosby’s financial health, and Shelby Lackey’s deficient auditing practices further exposed investors to harm,” said LeeAnn G. Gaunt, Chief of the Division of Enforcement’s Public Finance Abuse Unit.

Crosby ISD agreed to settle the SEC’s charges by consenting, without admitting or denying any findings, to the entry of an order finding that it violated the antifraud provisions.

The SEC’s complaint against Merka, filed in U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Texas, charges her with violating the antifraud provisions of the securities laws. Without admitting or denying the allegations in the complaint, Merka agreed to pay a \$30,000 penalty and not participate in any future municipal securities offerings. The settlement is subject to court approval.

Lackey agreed to settle the SEC’s action, without admitting or denying any of the findings, by agreeing to be suspended from appearing or practicing before the SEC as an accountant with the right to apply for reinstatement after 3 years. Lackey also agreed to not serve as the engagement manager, engagement partner, or engagement quality control reviewer in connection with any audit expected to be posted in the MSRB’s Electronic Municipal Market Access system until reinstated by the SEC.

Sarah S. Mallett of the SEC’s Fort Worth Regional Office and Creighton Papier of the Public Finance Abuse Unit conducted the investigation under the supervision of Jim Etri, Eric Werner, and LeeAnn Gaunt. Matthew Gulde provided trial assistance under B. David Fraser’s supervision. The SEC acknowledges the assistance of the Harris County District Attorney’s Office.

# Women’s History MA Ferguson,

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

dean who emerged as the strongest Republican gubernatorial nominee in Texas since Reconstruction. Due to the widespread corruption of her husband’s term, resulting in his impeachment, thousands of voters crossed party lines in the general election to vote for the Republican candidate. Republicans usually took between 11,000 and 30,000 votes for governor, but Butte won nearly 300,000 votes, many of them from women and suffragists. It was still primarily a Democratic state, and Ferguson received 422,563 votes (58.9 percent) to Butte’s 294,920 (41.1 percent). Butte had been supported in the general election by former governor William P. Hobby, who had succeeded James Ferguson in 1917 and won a full term in 1918.

In 1924, Ma Ferguson became the first elected female chief executive of Texas. She was the second female state governor in the United States, and the first to be elected in a general election. Nellie Tayloe Ross had been sworn in as governor of Wyoming to finish the unexpired term of her late husband two weeks before Ferguson’s inauguration, though Ross and Ferguson won their respective elections on the same day. Ferguson’s campaign manager was Homer T. Brannon of Fort Worth, Texas.

In 1926, state attorney general Dan Moody, who had investigated her husband for embezzlement and recovered \$1 million for Texas citizens, ran against her in a run-off election. He defeated her to become the next and then-youngest governor of Texas. Suffragist activism provided a major contribution to her defeat, as these women rallied behind Moody and campaigned for him.


Ferguson ran again in 1932. She narrowly won the Democratic nomination over incumbent Ross S. Sterling, then soundly defeated Republican Orville Bullington in the general election, 521,395 (61.6 percent) to 322,589 (38.1 percent). It was a year of Democratic successes as Franklin D. Roosevelt was elected as President of the United States. Bullington was a cousin of the first wife of John G. Tower, future U.S. Senator from Texas. He fared more strongly than most Texas Republican candidates did in that

period, but did not match Butte’s 1924 showing against Ferguson.

Ferguson’s second term as governor was less controversial than her first. It was rumored that state highway contracts went only to companies that advertised in the Fergusons’ newspaper, the Ferguson Forum. A House committee investigated the rumors, but no charges were ever filed. Ferguson issued almost 4,000 pardons during her two nonconsecutive terms in office, many of them to free persons who had been convicted of violating prohibition laws.

Except for an unsuccessful bid to replace Governor W. Lee “Pappy” O’Daniel in 1940, the Fergusons remained retired from political life after 1935. In the 1940 campaign, Ma Ferguson trailed O’Daniel’s principal rival, Ernest O. Thompson of Amarillo, who was Texas Railroad Commissioner.

Her husband, James, died of a stroke in 1944. Miriam Ferguson died from congestive heart failure in 1961 at the age of 86. She was buried in the Texas State Cemetery in Austin.



THE ILLUSTRATED BIBLE

...If a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her; for her hair is given to her for a covering. 20

1 CORINTHIANS 11:15

“Francoise” by Pablo Picasso (1946)

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## BIBLE TRIVIA

- by Wilson Casey —
1. Is the book of Nebuchadnezzar in the Old or New Testament or neither?
  2. In which book’s 34th chapter does the Lord tell Moses to tear down all pagan altars? Genesis, Exodus, Judges, Ruth
  3. How many books of the Bible (KJV) begin with the letter “G”? 1, 2, 3,
  4. From 1 Kings 9, who built the walls of Jerusalem? David, Solomon, Belshazzar, Nimrod
  5. What angel appeared to Mary and Zacharias? Haniel, Paschar, Sofiel, Gabriel
  6. From Genesis 4, who invented tents? Cain, Jabal, Abel, Adam

ANSWERS: 1) Neither; 2) Exodus; 3) 2 (Galatians, Genesis); 4) Solomon; 5) Gabriel; 6) Jabal “Test Your Bible Knowledge,” a book with 1,206 multiple-choice questions by columnist Wilson Casey, is available in stores and online.

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# Highlands/Lynchburg Plan, and Management District,

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

— Connectivity, related to community services, with parks, transportation included

— Community Growth, with emphasis on economic development and social and civic initiatives

— Improved Public Safety, including social services for the needy population

The H/L Plan made specific recommendations:

— Foster Economic Growth and Development with several initiatives

— Create a Civic Core District

— Reinvest in Stratford Library as a catalyst for other goals

— Partner with Workforce Solutions

— Expand Community Events

— Expand Drug Awareness Outreach

— Improve the Homeless Outreach program

— Increase Police Patrols, with contract deputies or private security, or both

— Improve Traffic Safety, both pedestrian and vehicle

— Expand Public Transportation

— Add sidewalks and street lights

— Provide safe paths to schools

— Create a Lynchburg Loop for outdoor recreation

— Create Community Enhancements with signage, landscaping, etc.

— Emphasize Environmental issues and remediation, such as the Superfund site, and air pollution

— Park improvements and connectivity

— Improve amenities at Highlands Reservoir

— Create new wetlands parks

To implement the elements of the Plan, the Precinct has suggested a

Management District structure would generate additional revenue and provide services above what the County could provide. They would provide additional revenue, through Ad Valorem or property taxes, on Commercial and Industrial properties only. Woods said the study showed a tax base of about \$92 million, and with an assessment of \$.10 per \$100,000 the first year revenue would be about \$100,000 to \$150,000. The proposed district would run from Barrett Station to Lynchburg Ferry.

**CREATION OF MANAGEMENT DISTRICT**

**Purpose:**

- Provide an entity focused on improving the local community

**Recommendation:**

- Creation of Management District to:
  - Provide safety & security
  - Fund increased patrolling & law enforcement
  - Address nuisance issues
  - Attract small businesses
  - Leverage grants and funding for several areas of need such as parks projects and roadway projects
  - Provide a sustainable funding mechanism for the community
  - Provide public health and neighborhood services
  - Incentivize business location and types
  - Create a forum for culture and community, be an advocate

**WHAT IS A MANAGEMENT DISTRICT?**

- Management Districts typically exist to provide supplemental services (over and above City and County services) in the ar-

AREA	MANAGEMENT DISTRICT	CHAMBER OF COMMERCE	WATER DISTRICT/ MUD
APPLY/RECEIVE FEDERAL GRANTS	YES	NO	SOME
SAFETY/SECURITY	YES	NO	NO
LIGHTING	YES	NO	SOME
INFRASTRUCTURE	YES	NO	SOME
PUBLIC REALM MAINTENANCE	YES	SOME	NO
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	YES	YES	NO

eas of infrastructure, safety, security, litter abatement, etc.

- They are a means to allow property owners to work together to supplement City and/or County services
- They can work with partners (City, County, State) to amplify and leverage benefits
- Management Districts are created by special law (state legislature) then go through a local petition process
- Considered a political subdivision of the state so they are eligible for grants and loans and can issue bonds to fund projects and initiatives
- They typically levy an assessment or a tax on commercial property to pay for services

- Management Districts are different than a Municipal Utility District (MUD) and a Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone (TIRZ)
- Each district sets its own priorities based on community needs
- Powers can include: economic development, business recruitment, promotion of health and sanitation, public safety, traffic control, recreation and cultural enhancement, construction/maintenance of public infrastructure, lighting, signage, drainage, solid waste, water, sewer, power, parks, historic areas, works of art, parking facilities, public transportation, and others

**GOVERNANCE & OPERATIONS**

- The activity is gov-

erned by a service and assessment plan which is created, revised, and adopted typically every ten to twenty years

- Governed by a Board of Directors who are appointed; authorizing legislation can prescribe the appointment process (i.e., concurrence by County, City, or other process, etc.)
- Size of board and involvement of the board can vary (hands off versus hands on leadership, similar to municipal City Council or Mayoral dynamics)
- Management Districts can be dissolved at any time by a majority vote of the board or a petition of property owners

**WHY WE RECOMMEND A DISTRICT?**

- Highlands / Lynchburg areas are unincorporated without any municipal or local government entity
- Local concerns such as safety, security, aesthetics, quality of life exist which

can best be addressed by local voices and local solutions

- Management Districts generally take time to become well-established, funded, and effective “The best time to plant a tree is twenty years ago, the second best time is now.”
- Management Districts can leverage, work with, and strengthen existing organizations such as the Chambers of Commerce
- This district can champion and oversee several of the recommendations mentioned, achieving action and implementation

**REVENUE PROJECTIONS**

- Management Districts provide a level of sustained and consistent funding for needs; funding likely to grow over time
- The numbers are based on the appraised value of the properties. There are 3 tax “rates” that are shown in the table below. Annual cost to commercial property owners per \$1 million ranges from \$1,000 to \$1,400
- The revenue projections shown below are typically coupled with funds received from grants or partnerships with County Precincts to increase funds for improvements or projects

**FOLLOW UP COMMENTS & QUESTIONS**

**Website Portal:**

**HighlandsLynchburg Plan.com**

Email the Consultant Team: Email or call the Precinct Team:

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	HIGHLANDS	LYNCHBURG	
COMMERCIAL	\$ 73,870,000	\$ 5,020,000	
INDUSTRIAL	\$18,510,000	\$11,840,000	
TOTAL	\$ 92,380,000	\$16,860,000	
	\$ .10	\$ 92,380	\$ 16,860
	\$ .12	\$ 110,856	\$ 20,232
	\$ .14	\$ 129,332	\$ 23,604

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	\$ 109,240
	\$ 131,088
	\$ 152,936

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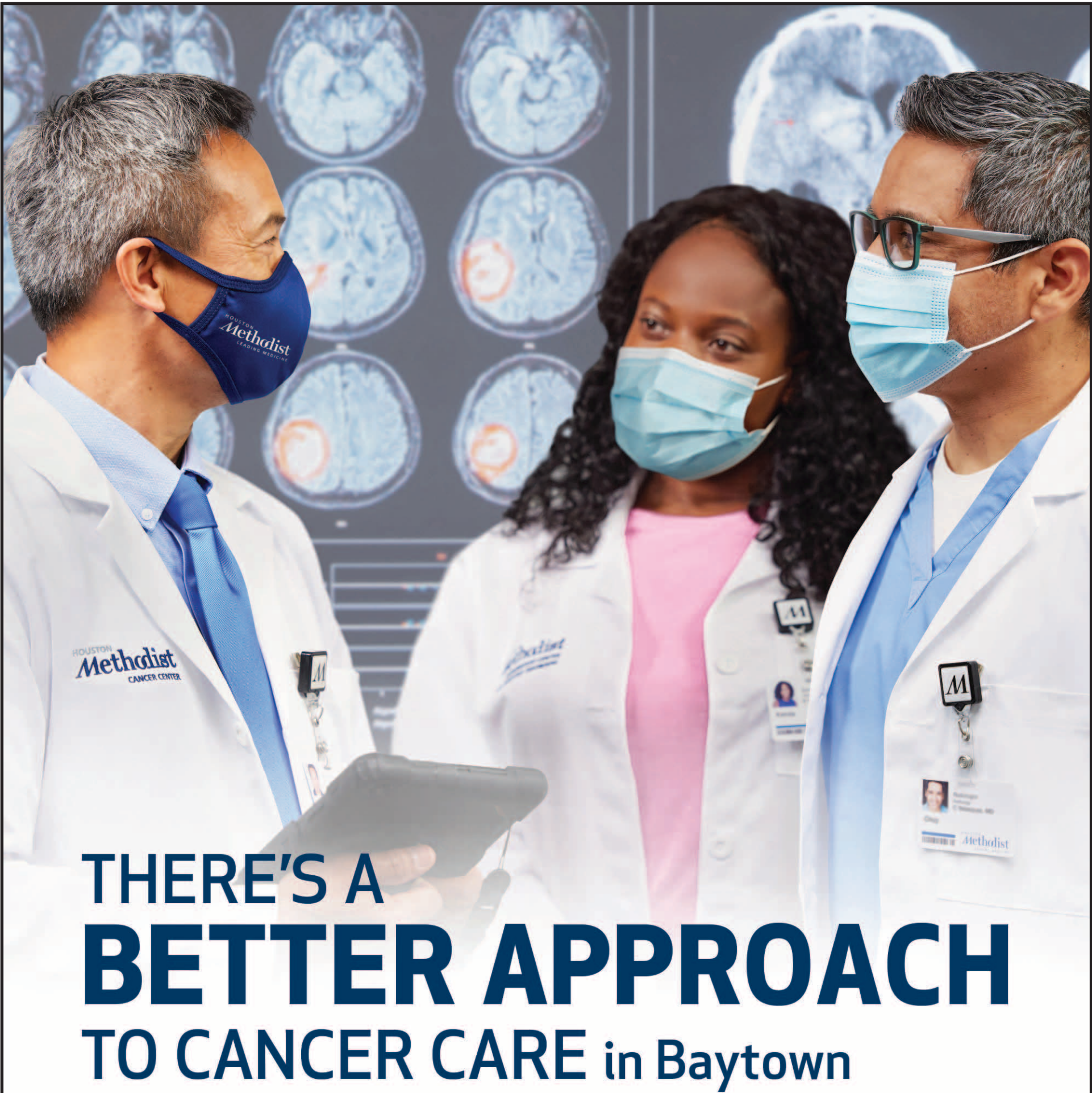
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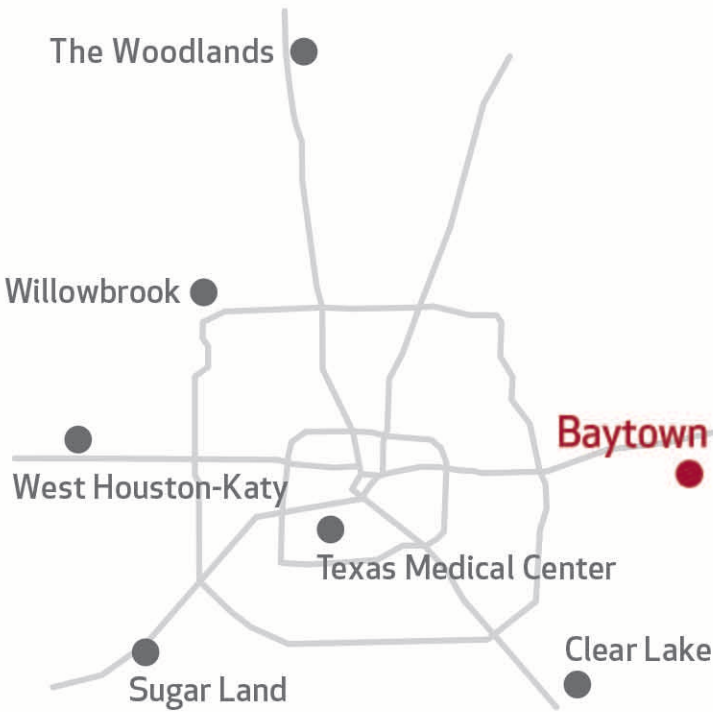




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