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Crawfish Season now open...

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THURSDAY, JANUARY 19, 2023

P.O. DRAWER 405, HIGHLANDS, TEXAS 77562

IN THE **STARS**

EVENTS

JAN. 19, THUR. Crosby Chamber New Year Luncheon



GUEST SPEAKER: CONGRESSMAN DAN CRENSHAW

Monthly Luncheon

Come Network. Socialize and Help Us Welcome in the New Year!

Join us for our January Monthly Member Luncheon! The luncheon will take place on Thursday, January 19th at Stonebridge in Newport, located at 16401 Country Club Dr in Newport, Crosby 77532. Lunch will begin at 11:30am and the price of the luncheon is \$20.00.

Please RSVP by January 17th. You can call 281-328-6984 email chamber@crosbyhuffmancc.org to register also.

Body in River Identified

Authorities from the Harris County Institute of Forensic Science (Coroner's office) have said they identified the unclothed body floating in the San Jacinto River as Te-vion Bass, a 23 year-old young man from Channelview.

He was on the Autism spectrum, as well as living with bipolar disorder and paranoid schizophrenia.

He had been off his medication since mid November, was wandering aimlessly while his family searched for him.

His body was found in the river near 2410 Shorewick Drive in Highlands.

Rotary Chili Feast set for February 4th

Highlands Rotary Club will hold their 48th Annual Chili Feast, Raffle and Auction on Saturday, Feb. 4th at the social hall of St. Jude's Catholic Church, 808 S. Main Street, Highlands.

Tickets are available from all Rotary Club members, local businesses, or by calling 832-483-3505. Only 700 tickets are sold, increasing your odds of winning one of 16 valuable prizes. Included with your raffle ticket are two delicious chili dinners.

Top prize in the raffle is your choice of a 2023 Chevy Trailblazer, or a 2023 Equinox SUV from Turner Chevrolet.

RodeoHouston 2023 performers announced; Tickets on Sale now

2023 RODEO HOUSTON ENTERTAINER LINEUP

Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo officials released the entertainment lineup for the 2023 Rodeo season, scheduled for Feb. 28 - March 19. The lineup features a mix of genres, including Country, EDM, Hip-Hop, Norteño, Pop, Rock, and Christian. Many of the artists will make their RODEO-HOUSTON® debut in

"We are thrilled to welcome back so many talented artists including some fan favorites such as Houston rap legend, Bun B who will be taking the stage alongside some additional iconic southern performers," said Chris Boleman, Rodeo President and CEO.

Continued. See RodeoHouston, Page 7



Crawfish season opens this week!

CROSBY - The much anticipated opening of the Crawfish season has arrived, and Crosby's outstanding Crawfish restaurant, Crawfish Shack on FM2100, will start serving drive-thru customers on Wednesday, January 18th, from 4 to 9 pm, weekends 12 to 9 pm.

According to owner Dan Meaux, he had to delay the season opener slightly, due to the condition of the crawfish crop this year. He



Dan Meaux, owner of Crawfish Shack in Crosby, will open the Drive-thru on Wednesday, Jan. 18 and the Dine-in on Feb. 15th.

said that a hard freeze in this part of the county, including the crawfish farms in Louisiana, kept the crop small and limited in quan-

"We had a hard freeze during Christmas that slowed things down," crawfish specialist with LSU AgCenter Mark Shirley said. "Crawfish ponds in southwest Louisiana still have a lot of crawfish. A lot of the crawfish are kind of small, but they're grow-

Shirley said while the mudbugs may be smaller now, they'll continue to grow. But the cost this year may be higher.

Meaux said he has had to raise his prices, from \$7.95/lb last year to \$8.95

Are you looking forward to Crawfish? Meaux said "There's probably as much crawfish eaten in Houston as in Lafayette per person. I mean it's huge here."

88th Legislature convenes in Austin

The Texas Legislative session has begun. Here are 6 things to watch. Lawmakers will debate over the state budget, school issues, border security and property taxes, among other issues.

BY JAMES BARRAGÁN **AND PATRICK SVITEK** JAN. 10, 2023 **Texas Tribune**

Lawmakers returned to Austin last week for their biennial assembly to pass new laws and decide how to spend the state's money for the next

Republicans maintained their nearly 30-year dominance over Texas politics in last November's midterm elections, growing their majorities in both legislative chambers and keeping their grasp on every statewide



State Representative Briscoe Cain, representing Texas District 128, is sworn in at the Capitol last Tuesday, with the help of his family as seen above.

elected office. That means Texans can expect the Legislature to continue to swing conservative on both fiscal and social matters.

Just how conservative they go will be the main question, as the battle between far-right, socially conservative Republicans and business-oriented GOP legislators, who have tried to move away from fights over social issues, continues within the party.

Democrats, who have been in the minority in both chambers of the Legislature for 20 vears, will have limited tools to fend off Republican advances and will have to choose their battles wisely.

With a record-breaking budget surplus, lawmakers will be putting out their hands for funding for their pet projects across the state, and top leaders will no longer have the ready excuse of limited means. But with rising costs due to inflation, lawmakers will also have to factor in how much more they'll have to spend in the state budget to cover infrastructure and staffing costs that keep the state running.

Texas has seen major challenges since the last time lawmakers assembled in Austin in late 2021: a school shooting at an elementary school in Uvalde, higher inflation hitting Texans in their pocketbooks, a record number of migrants attempting to cross the state's southern border, the outlawing of abortion following a U.S. Supreme Court decision and parents who have grown increasingly agitated about what public schools are teaching their children about gender, sex and race.

With major issues at play in the Capitol, here are six things to watch as Texas' 88th legislative session kicks off. **HOW TO SPEND THE BUDGET SURPLUS**

The biggest topic of conversation heading into today is how to spend the state's \$32.7 billion budget surplus, and everyone — including top legislative leadership — is chomping at the bit over how to use that cash.

Texas lawmakers will have \$188.2 billion available for the next budget after record-breaking revenue

The surplus, or one-time money that was left over from the previous budget cycle, is historic in its enormousness.

Continued. See 88th Legislature, page 5

RACHEL'S DINER

Southern Cooking Buffet -- Coming Soon 14280 FM 2100 (Across from Walmart) 281-462-7349





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GOOSE CREEK CISD NEWS

Goose Creek CISD Honors School Board

January is School Board Recognition Month, and Goose Creek CISD is celebrating its trustees for their dedication and commitment to the district and its students.

The theme of this year's School Board Recognition Month is Forward, Together, which highlights the collaboration among school leadership, teachers, and parents on behalf of students.

"I am proud to recognize our school board members for their hard work in helping to make our district successful," Superintendent Dr. Randal O'Brien said. "We appreciate the hard work and time these generous volunteers devote to attending meetings, workshops, conferences and events; staying current with district projects and progress; reviewing and updating policies, as well as representing the district's stakeholders."

To recognize the board, all 32 Goose Creek CISD schools designed posters, which decorate the walls in the boardroom, depicting the theme. Goose Creek CISD's board was selected as a 2022 Honor School Board as part of the 2022 Texas Association of School Administrators School Board Awards, and a plaque with a resolution, a lapel pin, mouse pad, portfolio, pen and station bearing the Honor Board logo were presented to trust-

ees at the Jan. 9 meeting. A proclamation in the



Goose Creek CISD Honors School Board

board's honor from the City of Baytown and a certificate of appreciation from Precinct 2 Commissioner Adrian Garcia's office were presented. The librarian from each school selected a book in honor of the Goose Creek CISD school board. Dinner provided by Chef Tina Andrade and the Stuart Career Tech High School Culinary Arts students was a highlight of the celebration.

Dan Troxell, executive director of the Texas Association of School Boards, applauded the efforts of trustees in providing leadership and good governance so that school districts can focus on educating the 5.4 million public schoolchildren in their care.

"Texas school boards are critical to the success of students and the future of Texas," Troxell said. "Boards lead their districts in the right direction, providing oversight, setting goals, overseeing the budget, and selecting and evaluating the superintendent. These volunteers serve for the betterment of their local schools and communities."

Some of the recent construction projects supported by the board include the Sheila C. Liles Early Learning Academy, Jessie Lee Pumphrey Elementary, San Jacinto Elementary and the GCCISD Robotics Center. Examples of honors received are IM-PACT Early College High School's 2021 College Success Award-Gold, Stephen F. Austin Elementary and Robert E. Lee High School's selection as Apple Distinguished Schools and the Trusted Learning Environment Seal for Cyber-

Serving as president, Richard Clem from District 4 was elected in May 2017. Tiffany Guy, District 6, elected in May 2019, serves as vice president. Serving as secretary, Howard Sampson, District 1, was appointed to the board in 2009 and has continued to serve on the board. Helen Berrott-Tims, District 5, joined the board in May 2021 and serves as assistant secretary. Board members Shae Cottar, District 7, elected in May 2019; Mercedes Renteria III, District 2, elected in May 2021; and Jessica Woods, District 3, elected in May 2015, round out the list of distinguished board members.

Goose Creek CISD thanks these board members, proudly known as a 2022 Honor School Board, for their service to the district and its students, staff and parents.

Goose Creek CISD has 65 AP Scholars. Congratulations!





Students Received FFA Lone Star degrees! Congratulations to all.



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THURSDAY, JANUARY 19, 2023

MONT BELVIEU, TEXAS 77580

ON THE HILL

Autumn Walker of Mont Belvieu Named to Lasell University Dean's List

NEWTON, MA (01/09/ 2023) - Autumn Walker, a Lasell University student from Mont Belvieu (77523), was named to the Dean's List for their academic performance in the fall 2022 semester.

To be named to the Dean's List, Lasell students must complete at least 12 credits as a fulltime student and achieve a semester GPA of 3.5 or higher.

For more information contact: Samantha Mocle, assistant director of communications, at (617) 243-2386, or smocle@lasell.edu

16-year-old Lee High School Athlete killed in Shooting at Bavtown Apartment Complex

BAYTOWN, Texas (KTRK) -Family and friends are mourning the loss of a 16-year-old Goose Creek CISD studentathlete who was shot and killed in front of his home Tuesday

Baytown police said they were called to the Park at Sorrento Apartments in the 3400 block of Shady Hill Drive at 9:15 p.m. First responders tried performing life-saving measures on the teen, but the victim was pronounced dead at the scene, according to police spokes-

woman Ana Fernandez. The victim's parents identified him as Shane Hamilton. They said he was a basketball and football player at Robert E. Lee High School and had just celebrated his 16th birthday on Friday.

Police Chief John Stringer said, "It is a tragedy anytime a young life is cut short, especially under violent circumstances. The Baytown Police Department has been very clear that anyone who will visit violence on residents and visitors of Bavtown will be identified, arrested and brought to justice."

Police have not yet released information about possible suspects or motive.

Anyone with information about the crime is encouraged to contact Baytown police at 281-422-8371. Tips can be made anonymously to Baytown Crime Stoppers at 281-427-TIPS. Crime Stoppers tips may be eligible for a cash reward.

the following statement:

Goose Creek CISD issued "Goose Creek CISD is saddened by the death of one of our Robert E. Lee High School students. The incident occurred off campus last night, January 10, 2023. We are actively trying to gain accurate information, and an investigation by the Baytown Police Department is ongoing. It is difficult for everyone to understand and deal with such a tragedy, so we will have grief counselors available today and in the future for our students and staff. Our hearts go out to the family during this difficult time.'

Houston Methodist Baytown Volunteers are Important Part of Health Care Team

They are often the first person you see when you walk through Houston Methodist Baytown Hospital doors. They help visitors find their way around the hospital and provide support in various departments. They are the volunteers and they are an essential part of the health care team at Houston Methodist Baytown Hospi-

The hospital's volunteer program is a diverse group comprised of individuals from various backgrounds, ages, and experiences, all working together to create a helpful and healing environment.

Claudette Barnett retired from Shell in 2010 and started volunteering at the front desk of Houston Methodist Baytown in

"When I retired, I knew



Photo - Left to Right - Volutneers Dahlia Meza, Amy Palacios, Receptionist Ann Sewell, Administrative **Director Laurie Terry & Volunteer Claudette Barnett**

I didn't want to sit at home. I took a month and prayed about it. I came to the hospital, and from the first day I knew this is where I belonged," said Barnett.

20-year-old Amy Palacios started as a volunteer to get some exposure to a potential career.

"I want to get into nurs-

ing school and thought it would be a good opportunity to give back and start working with patients," said Palacios.

Dahlia Meza volunteers with the spiritual care team, she works with patients who have been admitted to the hospital.

"I get to go from room to room and help comfort patients in need. I listen to patients who feel like sharing their experiences," said Meza.

Volunteer opportunities are based on the current needs of the hospital's various departments and on the volunteer's experience and time commitment. Assignments could include service at the hospital's front desk, in various waiting rooms, or in other departments as needed.

"These volunteers are incredibly important to the hospital," said Administrative Director Laurie Terry. "They are the first people that patients and visitors interact with, so our volunteers set the

tone for the visit."

Before the pandemic, Houston Methodist Baytown had nearly 100 volunteers that logged more than 11,000 hours. In 2022, there were only 38 volunteers. "During the pandemic, we couldn't have volunteers in the hospital, so now that things have moderated, we are looking forward to rebuilding the team," said Terry.

Volunteers must be 16 years old and agree to work a minimum of three hours a week. Terry says volunteers are asked for a six-month commitment. However, the hospital will be offering a shorter summer opportunity, but those interested need to reach out by the end of February.

For more information or to apply to become a volunteer at Houston Methodist Baytown Hospital, contact Laurie Terry at 281.420.8459 or email laterry@houstonmethodist.org.

Mont Belvieu City Council Approves License Plate Reader

MONT BELVIEU, Texas - The city council for the fast-growing community in west Chambers County voted 6-0 Monday night to purchase 21 license plate readers for its police department.

The devices make a visual and digital record of cars entering and exiting the city of 7,500 via one of the many highways and byways passing through

The cameras feed those license plate numbers into a computer system that sounds an alarm to police when the plates match a



database of stolen cars or those belonging to people with outstanding criminal warrants.

"Statistically speaking,

Mont Belvieu has a very low crime rate, particularly violent crime," Police Chief Jimmy Ellison said. "My task is to keep it that way. Any tool we can utilize to make that happen, we will look at.

Council voted to do the LPR deal with Flock Safety Inc.'s Plate Reader System as part of its consent agenda.

Mayor Nick Dixon had barely begun calling the agenda item for discussion and consideration before council member Mike Pomykal quickly announced "so moved," making a motion to spend \$52,500 for the cameras and an additional \$13,500 implementation fee for the first year of use. Council member Jabo Leonard seconded Pomykal's motion.

In a Nov. 2022 story by TV station KVUE about more and more Austinarea cities employing license plate readers, a rural police chief called the cameras "a force multiplier" when it comes to recovering stolen cars and identifying wanted vehicles.

Mont Belvieu PD has 27 full-time employees, Ellison said, who cover an area of 17 square miles. He said the cameras would be used primarily to cover both ends of all roads in and out of the city limits "and other high traffic areas, closer to high crime

The contract with Flock Safety includes an opt-out after one year.

"If there's no value in the cameras, then we just stop the lease," Leonard

Houston Methodist Hospital Baytown

Strains and Sprains: When to see a Doctor

What do exercise, moving furniture or stepping down from a curb have in common? The risk of an injury. Even routine movements can cause orthopedic injuries. Now that many people are working on those new year's resolutions to get into shape, it is important to know what to do after an injury so you can get on the road to recovery faster.

Should you walk it off? Try to schedule an appointment with your doctor tomorrow? Visit an urgent care or ER? Each year, millions of Americans ask these questions after an orthopedic injury.

"The biggest question people ask after an orthopedic injury is - do I need to see a doctor — which is quickly followed by where to go for medical care?" said Dr. Michael Hopson, an orthopedic surgeon at Houston Methodist Orthopedics & Sports Medicine at Baytown, and team physician for the Houston Astros, Rice University and Barbers Hill High School.

Luckily, most minor strains and sprains can be treated at home. But when it comes to broken bones, and muscle, tendon or ligament tears, a trip to the emergency room or urgent care center is necessary to ensure the injury heals properly.

FIVE STEPS TO TAKE AFTER AN INJU-

No matter where the injury occurs — either at home or out and about pushing through the pain is not recommended. Moving an injured limb or body part could lead to even more damage and longer recovery time. "Pain is a signal that our body needs to rest," Hopson said. "Rushing the healing process can make things worse."

After an injury, take the following actions:

1. Get off your feet and rest the injured area to reduce the risk of further damage.

2. Immediately apply an ice pack to reduce swelling and inflammation. Limit icing to 20 minutes to protect skin from frostbite. Repeat hourly as needed.

3. Elevate the injured area to reduce accumulated fluid.

4. Protect the injured area and limit movement with a cast, brace or crutches, if needed.



Dr. Michael Hopson

5. Evaluate the injury for signs that it might be serious enough to warrant a trip to the doctor.

HOW TO TELL IF AN **INJURY** NEEDS TREATMENT

Not sure if the injury is serious enough to need medical care? One of the biggest indicators of a serious injury is if the injured area can support your weight. "Knee, hip and ankle injuries that cause you to walk with a limp require medical attention," Hopson said. "If you can't bear weight on it, use crutches and see a doctor right away. X-rays and evaluation can help determine the extent of the in-

jury." When it comes to upper extremities like shoulders, elbows and wrists, inabili-

ty to raise or move your arm or weakness are signs to seek emergency care.

Another area of concern is bruising and swelling around the joint. Most of the time, minor swelling doesn't require an emergency visit, but you should be evaluated by a doctor soon. But rapid swelling combined with one or more of the warning signs below means you should seek care immediately to rule out fractures or other serious injuries.

Signs you need immediate medical attention after an injury include:

Deformity of the limb or bone breaking through the

Inability to bear weight Intense or persistent

Rapid joint swelling Swelling that prevents movement in fingers or toes.

Weakness when moving

a limb or muscle "If you have any doubts, it's a good idea to get checked out by an orthopedic specialist or sports medicine doctor," Hopson added. By seeking treatment quickly, you can avoid risking further damage whether it's a muscle strain, broken bone, dislo-

cation or injured tendon. TREATMENT AND

RECOVERY TIME In most cases, time and rest is all you need to recover. Your doctor may recommend physical therapy. In severe cases, surgery may be required to repair the damage. This is often true with torn muscles or ligaments.

Recovery time can vary - ranging from days to several weeks or months depending on the location and severity of the injury. Age, overall health and other factors can also make a difference. Your doctor can tell you when you can expect to get back to full strength.

Need Same-Day Orthopedic Care?

Houston Methodist Orthopedic Injury Clinic at Baytown offers same-day appointments with an orthopedic specialist. When you need immediate orthopedic care, our knowledgeable doctors and staff can quickly evaluate and treat your injury to get you back to daily activities. To schedule an appointment. visit houstonmethodist.org/ osm-injury-baytown or call 281.427.7400.

★ OPINION PAGE ★



Remembering Sandy Hook

December 14 is the 10-Year Remembrance of the tragic school shooting that took place at Sandy Hook Elementary School. Sadly, 20 innocent elementary school students and 6 brave teachers were taken from their families by a senseless act of gun violence that day.

No family should ever experience the pain of losing a loved one to gun violence. A decade later, my House colleagues and I remain committed to ending this epidemic.

That's why this Congress we passed the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act – which President Biden signed into law this summer.

This will save lives because it delivers:

- 750 million for states to create laws that keep guns out of the hands of people who are a danger to themselves and/or to others.
- enhanced background checks for people under age 21.
- more than \$2.3 billion for school safety programs, mental health support for students, and improved learning conditions.
- \$250 million in community-based violence prevention programs.
- better protection for victims of domestic violence by stopping convicted abusers from purchasing firearms.

This is the most significant gun violence reduction effort in the last 30 years. But we must do more to protect families and children.

That's why today, on the 10-Year Remembrance of the Sandy Hook Shooting, I'm continuing to fight for gun control legislation in Congress.

I won't stop until we are all safe from preventable gun violence. That's my promise to all my constituents.



Running... the easy way

Doc was just getting up to leave the philosophy counter as Herb walked in. Herb was grinning and flexing muscles and had the look of eagles in his eyes. We stared.

"Herb," said Doc. "You know, you can overdo a good thing."

"Why Doc ... whatever do you mean?"

"I realize that getting more exercise is your resolution for the new year, but a man your age ... you need to pace yourself a little, that's all. Don't try to get in shape all at once."

"Why Doc, I've never felt better in my life. Hey, you were so right to get me on this exercise kick. I've been meaning to thank you. It's just what I've been needing. What would you think about my playing some football in the spring? I mean, it's just touch football, but I miss the ol' razz-matazz, you know?"

Doc shook his head sadly and walked out. Herb started laughing and sat down with us and flipped his cup over for his morning eye opener.

"What was that all about, Herb?" Dud asked.

"A little joke I'm playing on Doc, that's all," Herb said. "You remember how Doc has been on my case to get more exercise and slim down some? Well, there was only one way to shut him up, so I started running. I bought a sweat suit and started running. I run past his house each morning. Then, about an hour later, I run past his house the other direction, huffing and puffing and looking at my watch."

"An hour? You run for an hour each morning?"

"Of course not," Herb said, laughing. "I run past Doc's house then walk the block to the library. An hour later, I run past Doc's house and then walk two blocks home."

We stared at him.

"What?" he said. "You know Doc's going to worry about me one way or the other. I just thought I'd change it up a bit."

Brought to you by Saddle Up: A Cowboy Guide to Writing by Slim Randles. Now available as a Kindle book on Amazon.com.



STATE CAPITAL HIGHLIGHTS By Gary Borders



Texas Speaker open to resortstyle Casinos in the state

House Speaker Dade Phelan, R-Beaumont, told The Dallas Morning News and other media outlets that he is open to bringing resort-style casinos to Texas. But don't expect to find slot machines in 7-Eleven stores if casino gambling is legalized.

"What I don't want to see is to walk into every convenience store and see 15 slot machines," Phelan said. "I want to see destination-style casinos that are high quality and that create jobs and that improve the lifestyle of those communities."

The gambling industry is preparing for another strong push to bring gaming to one of the few major markets that doesn't allow it. But other state leaders seem more hesitant, including Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick, who said in December that he "doesn't see any movement on it."

Gov. Greg Abbott has softened his once-strong opposition to legalized gambling, echoing Phelan's support for casinos that also feature golf courses, luxury hotels and other amenities.

The Morning News report said the Dallas-Fort Worth area would be a top location because of its strong convention and tourism industry, as well as access to major airports.

HOUSE RULES ALLOW DEMOCRATS TO CHAIR COMMITTEES

New House rules adopted in the first week of the legislative session allow the appointment of Democrats to chair certain committees, despite being in the minority in that chamber. The Texas Standard reported that was a victory for Phelan, who defied Republicans wanting to ban Democrats from holding chair positions.

In Phelan's first speech after being reelected speaker, he talked about the importance of both parties working together.

"After watching Congress attempt to function last week, I cannot imagine why some want Texans to be like D.C.," Phelan said, referring to the



protracted battle over electing a U.S. Speaker of the House.

Another provision is aimed at stopping legislators from skipping sessions to break quorum by levying fines every day they are absent without leave. During the 2021 session, House Democrats left Texas for 38 days in an ultimately unsuccessful attempt to block passage of a slate of voting restrictions.

WILDFIRE DANGER RETURNS TO STATE

A series of dry cold fronts sweeping through the next this week bring the potential of increased wildfire risk to parts of the state, according to the Texas A&M Forest Service. On Jan. 11, the service responded to five requests for assistance on wildfires that burned more than 740 acres across the state. The largest of these was the Cellers Hill Fire in Throckmorton County.

As of Sunday, the only active blaze was the 23-acre Grub Hill Fire in Wise County, which was 90% contained.Currently, 69 counties are under burn bans.

PRISONERS LAUNCH HUNGER STRIKES OVER SOLITARY CONFINEMENT

A large-scale hunger strike protesting the state's solitary confinement practices began last Tuesday, with about 300 people in Texas prisons reportedly participating, according to the Texas Standard. The prisoners are protesting the state's practice of placing inmates in solitary indefinitely.

Michele Deitch, director of the Prison and Jail Innovation Lab at the University of Texas at Austin, said prisoners have gone on hunger strikes to push the Texas Department of Criminal Justice to meet months-long demands for change. Besides ending indefinite solitary confinement, also called restrictive housing, the prisoners want to move to a behavioral-based system rather than a status-based system. Under the latter, prisoners can be placed in solitary simply by being labeled a gang member, not necessarily for breaking any rules.

"I do believe that it is something that the agency should take a very hard look at, whether there are ways that they could be approaching this issue that are both safe and more appropriate," Deitch told the Standard.

FROM LA NIÑA TO EL NIÑO? POSSIBLY

The 2022 drought didn't turn out to be as severe as that of 2011, but it still caused widespread economic damage to crops and livestock, as well as shrinking water-supply reservoirs. As the state heads into 2023, Dr. Mark Wentzel, hydrologist with the Texas Water Development Board, is among forecasters predicting an end to the conditions that resulted in reduced rainfall and warmer temperatures for the last few years.

"The National Weather Service is expecting that La Niña will dissipate, and then, possibly by the summer to next fall, we might actually be in El Niño conditions, the opposite to La Niña. And those conditions (could) actually bring Texas a wetter and cooler winter than is normal," Wentzel wrote.

The most severe drought now is centered in the Texas Hill Country, in Kendall and surrounding counties, and in the extreme northern boundary of the Texas Panhandle. Drought conditions have ended in East and Southeast Texas.

Wentzel wrote he expects "some easing" of drought conditions this spring.

WILDLIFE VACCINE BAIT AIRDROP UNDERWAY

The Texas Department of State Health Services has renewed its battle against rabies along the Texas border by airdropping vaccine bait from planes leaving Edinburg, Del Rio and Alpine.

"Our goal is to vaccinate wildlife, with target species being coyotes and gray foxes, along the border to maintain herd immunity and to keep past variants from being reintroduced or new variants from entering Texas," said Dr. Susan Rollo, director of the Oral Rabies Vaccination Program. "We will be delivering vaccine baits to 18 counties this year."

About 814,000 oral rabies vaccine baits will be dropped in the 29th year of the program.



Imperfections

I almost threw away my old lace napkins.

They have rust stains on them. In order to cover the stains, I threw them in a pot of green dye and boiled them. The dye was not a success. The napkins all came out in slightly varying shades of green, and the rust stains—while less noticeable—were still there. I used them once and was self-conscious the whole time.

"People are going to think I didn't wash the napkins!" I worried. But I washed them again, ironed them and kept them anyway.

Then, over the holidays, I had the whole family over. I eyed the old green napkins.

They have what appears to be handmade lace around the edges and a crocheted medallion in one corner. They are a generous size and made of good, sturdy cotton. They are serviceable napkins in every way except for the small spots that appear on almost every one of them.

"Not one person in 10 can see those spots!" my husband, Peter, says when I tell him I'm thinking of throwing out the old napkins.

(There are 12 napkins so, even if Peter is right, that still means one person might notice and think, "Did she wash these napkins?")

But I used them anyway. I don't think anyone noticed. Then I washed them again and looked at them before I ironed them. The stains were just as noticeable. The shades of green are no more uniform.

And I realized I kind of liked them.

I have no idea where these napkins came from. I found them when I was cleaning out my barn, preparing to sell my old farmhouse years ago. They are not family heirlooms. I have to assume I picked them up at a garage sale somewhere. I probably didn't look at them closely until I got home, saw the rust stains on them and tucked them away—unsure from the very beginning whether or not I should keep them.

I wonder who made them. It was a lot of work. I wonder where the rust stains came from. That must have been disappointing for whoever owned them. I'm guessing it happened many years ago. And here I am, still using them. And I do like them.

Things don't have to be perfect. That's what I'm finally coming to accept.

My own inability to reach perfection was an ongoing source of frustration for decades until I reconciled myself to the fact that I was, in fact, good enough. Good enough was a laudable goal. And these napkins, while they would never be featured on any magazine cover, are good enough—more than adequate, in fact—for the celebrations I host, which will also not be perfect, but hopefully good enough for everyone in attendance.

It is nice to use something that is old and loved and imperfect.

I look at these napkins and imagine the life they must have had when they were new. Likely they were a wedding present to somebody a very long time ago. They were used for festive gatherings I cannot imagine by people I never knew and maybe just a little of that history is left, maybe a little of that laughter remains, somewhere in their imperfections.

I ironed the old napkins. I folded them. I put them in the drawer for another use at another celebration with different people—of whom, perhaps, one in 10 might wonder about the rust stains, now camouflaged with green dye.

They still have a purpose—imperfect as they are. And I take inspiration from that.

ake inspiration from th Till next time,Carrie

Photos and other news can be found at CarrieClasson.com.



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88th Legislature convenes in Austin

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

But not all of it is up for grabs. A share of it is reserved for highway funds, and some of it will flow into the state's rainy day fund, also called the Economic Stabilization Fund.

Gov. Greg Abbott promised during his campaign to deliver "the largest property tax cut in the history of the state." He said he wanted to use half of the budget surplus to deliver on that promise. But Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick, another property tax relief hawk, has introduced a note of caution, warning the Legislature could not spend half of the surplus without busting its self-imposed spending cap. (The Legislature can vote to spend beyond the cap.)

Patrick, whose railing against property taxes swept him into the Senate in 2007, has said he is committed to cutting property taxes but wants to move cautiously to ensure the state has enough money left over in its rainy day fund for emergency spending and for other state priorities.

In the House, Speaker Dade Phelan, R-Beaumont, has suggested allocating some of the surplus to one-time infrastructure spending. That plan carries the advantage of not having to reproduce that spending in the budget every two years, like with property tax relief, which is a recurring state cost.

Lawmakers will also have to weigh additional costs to running the state. Because of inflation, the costs for state services will be more expensive, and state employees will be lagging behind without a cost-of-living adjustment in their salaries. "PARENTAL RIGHTS"

Republican leaders and lawmakers have targeted "parental rights" at the center of their agendas this session. They want to give parents more say in their children's education, whether it be the school they attend or the books they read.

How exactly that goal manifests itself in the session remains to be seen. Abbott campaigned for reelection on a "parental bill of rights" that, among other things, seeks to increase the transparency of school curricula and crack down on what he's called "pornographic" materials in books available to schoolchildren. In some ways, it is a continuation of GOP efforts from 2021 that led to restrictions on how teachers talk about race and gender in classrooms in an effort to ban critical race theory from being taught in schools.

A more divisive concept inside the GOP could be the revival of an effort for school vouchers, or redirecting tax dollars to let parents take their kids out of public schools and send them to other kinds of schools. Abbott voiced his clearest support yet for the idea during his campaign, but it has historically run into opposition from rural Republicans in the House.

Patrick, who oversees the Senate and has considerable power over legislation, has long supported the concept. In a podcast interview posted Sunday, he said he sees it as part of this session's focus on "parental freedom."

"Those who oppose school choice, [they say], 'Oh, vouchers are terrible!' No, parents deserve the freedom to decide where their kids go to school," Patrick said.

LGBTQ ISSUES AND WOMEN'S HEALTH

Social conservatives are also attempting to crack down on LGBTQ rights this session. Around three dozen bills targeting LGBTQ people had been filed as of last week.

These bills vary from putting restrictions on drag shows to restricting gender-affirming care for transgender children and even criminalizing it. Such care is recommended by major medical associations to treat gender dysphoria, but socially conservative legislators have decried gender-affirming care as "genital mutilation" and "child abuse."

Still, major leaders like Abbott have supported the push by conservatives to launch child-abuse investigations of parents who provide such care to their children.

Backlash against drag shows has also grown, with far-right groups targeting the shows and accusing performers of "grooming children" — a trope that has historically been used against LGBTQ people.

Lawmakers will also have to figure out how to tackle access to abortion in the state after the procedure was outlawed in Texas law following the U.S. Supreme Court's reversal of the landmark Roe v. Wade abortion case last summer.

Before the November elections, some Republican candidates and lawmakers had expressed an openness to creating exceptions to the state's abortion ban in cases of rape or incest. But after Republicans maintained their dominance in state politics on Election Day, Smith said he does not see a political motivation for GOP leaders to revisit the issue.

BORDER SECURITY

Last session, the Legislature allocated a record \$3 billion toward border security efforts, including Abbott's highly touted border mission, Operation Lone Star, which has sent thousands of state troopers and National Guard service members to the Texas-Mexico border. Some of that money has also been used to build a border wall, the first in the country funded by state coffers.

But with a record number of migrants trying to cross into the country — U.S. Customs and Border Protection recorded 2.4 million attempts to cross the U.S.-Mexico border in 2022 — the funding could not keep up with the large number of resources sent to slow the crossing of migrants.

State lawmakers had to transfer another \$1 billion to keep Abbott's border mission going through 2022, often taking money from underfunded state agencies like the Texas Department of Criminal Justice and the Texas Juvenile Justice Department. More money — ranging from hundreds of millions of dollars to another billion — is expected from the state to continue the effort until the end of the fiscal year in August, DeLuna Castro said.

Still, the number of migrants crossing the southwest border has remained stubbornly high, and state lawmakers will have to decide whether they want to continue spending multiple billions of dollars on an effort that has failed to produce a resounding success

"People say, 'Well, they're still crossing.' Yes, they're still crossing because of President Biden," Patrick said at a news conference unveiling his legislative priorities. "Without our DPS, without our National Guard, without the state doing what we're doing, the situation would be far worse ... so we have to keep that up until we get a new president in the White House who hopefully will make border security No. 1 in 2024.

But there could also be other ramifications and questions lawmakers will attempt to respond to legislatively. As Abbott ramped up the mission to deploy 10,000 service members to the border in the fall of 2021, troops began complaining about poor living conditions, a lack of pay and no sense of mission. The mission has also seen the deaths of 10 troops tied to Operation Lone Star, including five suspected suicides and the death of Bishop Evans, a servicemember who died in the Rio

Grande while trying to rescue drowning migrants. The migrants survived.

THE "BIG THREE" DYNAMIC

Sessions always hinge on the relationship among the Big Three — the governor, the lieutenant governor and the House speaker. This time around, there is ample cause for tension from the outset of the session.

The two chamber leaders do not like one another, especially after the marathon of sessions in 2021. Patrick repeatedly criticized Phelan's management of the House after Democrats broke quorum over the GOP's priority elections bill. And then Patrick wielded his clout with former President Donald Trump to try to gin up primary opposition to Phelan, who ultimately ran unopposed.

Phelan, speaking at the Texas Tribune Festival in Austin in September, added it had "been a while" since he talked to Patrick.

Abbott and Patrick are also a duo to watch. Like Phelan, Abbott saw Patrick meddle in his primary and took note. And more recently, they are especially at odds when it comes to the fallout from the 2021 power grid collapse.

After Abbott declared later that year that lawmakers had done all they needed to do to fix the grid, Patrick campaigned on improving the grid and has named it a top priority for this session. He wants to build more natural gas capacity, a topic on which Abbott has been silent. Patrick has sought to downplay any leadership tensions on the issue. The grid is "fixed for now, but we need to fix it forever," Patrick told Spectrum News in December.

DEMOCRATIC STRATEGY

Democrats are returning to the Legislature with very similar numbers — 64 members in the House and 12 in the Senate. But in the House, they have a new caucus chair, Rep. Trey Martinez Fischer of San Antonio, who is known as more sharp-elbowed than his predecessor, Rep. Chris Turner of Grand Prairie.

"Trey is a much different leader," Rep. Ron Reynolds of Missouri City, chair of the Texas Legislative Black Caucus, said in a recent interview. "I anticipate there'll be a more aggressive nature when combating Republicans on the issues."

House Democrats already showed a new willingness to fight in 2021 when they broke quorum for weeks in protest of new voting restrictions. Martinez Fischer has not ruled out doing that again as a last resort for trying to derail Republican legislation.

Democrats in the House are also watching to see how much of a seat at the table they get as Phelan faces pressure to do away with committee chairs from the minority party, a long-time tradition. Phelan is highly unlikely to give in, as he has defended the practice as one that sets the Legislature apart from the gridlock in Washington. But he could take other steps to reduce Democratic influence in the House.

House Republicans have a new leader, too. On Monday, their caucus elected a new chair, Rep. Craig Goldman of Fort Worth, previously the treasurer of the caucus. The chair during the 2021 sessions, Rep. Jim Murphy of Houston, did not seek reelection to the House.

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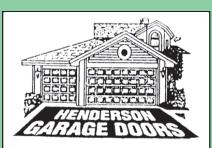




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Teen charged after fatally shooting 19 yr. old friend



MARISSA DIKEMAN, VICTIM

HARRIS COUNTY, Texas – A teen is facing manslaughter charges after he allegedly shot a 19-year-old woman at her home early Friday in east Harris County, while taking down Christmas decorations at her home

Cayman Wilson, 17, was charged with manslaughter in the death of 19-year-old Marissa Dikeman. Family members identify 19-year-old victim shot,

According to Harris County Sheriff's Office deputies, the shooting happened in the 4400 block of Sherri Lane in the Crosby area.

Deputies said Wilson, and another 17-year-old were assisting Dikeman with taking down Christmas decorations at her home.

At some point, investigators said Wilson was "manipulating a weapon" and fired a gunshot, striking Dikeman.

Paramedics were called to the scene and pronounced Dikeman dead.

Authorities believe the weapon belonged to one of Dikeman's roommates, but neither were home at the time of the shooting.

Both 17-year-old co-workers were detained by deputies for questioning.

Deputies say they are diving deep into what happened.

Wilson went through court last week and his bond was set at \$50,000. His next court appearance will be on Jan. 3.

RodeoHouston 2023 performers announced; Tickets on Sale now

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

"The level of talent we have in this lineup will get the fans excited, including Texas' own Parker McCollum, who is helping us kick off this 2023, star lineup on Opening Day."

Individual RODEOHOUSTON tickets will go on sale to the public Thursday, Jan. 12. For the first time, they will be sold in two waves, 10 a.m. and 2 p.m., at rodeohouston.com. Ticket prices start at \$25, plus a \$4 convenience fee.

STAR ENTERTAINMENT

The following entertainers will perform on the RODEOHOUSTON stage in NRG Stadium, Feb. 28 -March 19

Tuesday, Feb.28 – Opening Day, presented by Texas Capital Bank Parker McCollum Wednesday, March 1 – Armed Forces Appreciation Day, presented by Crown Royal **Brooks**

Thursday, March 2 Lauren Daigle

Friday, March 3 – Black Heritage Day, presented by Kroger Bun B's Southern Takeover

Saturday, March 4 Walker Hayes Sunday, March 5 Zac Brown Band

Monday, March 6 - First Responders Day, presented by BP America Jason Aldean Tuesday, March 7 New Kids on The Block

Wednesday, March 8 - Community Day, presented by TC Energy Jon Pardi

Thursday, March 9 Ashley McBryde Friday, March 10 The Chainsmokers

Saturday, March 11 Turnpike Troubadours Sunday, March 12 – Go Tejano Day, presented by Fiesta Mart La Fiera de Ojinaga Monday, March 13 Cody Jinks

Tuesday, March 14 Machine Gun Kelly Kenny Chesney Wednesday, March 15 Thursday, March 16 Chris Stapleton Friday, March 17 Cody Johnson Saturday, March 18 Brad Paisley

Sunday, March 19 – RODEOHOUSTON Finals Luke Bryan

INDIVIDUAL RODEO TICKETS

- Tickets will go on sale at rodeohouston.com Thursday, Jan. 12, 2023, in two waves, 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. • Wave 1 tickets for Feb. 28 – March 9, performances.
- Wave 2 tickets for March 10 19, performances.(The Online Waiting Rooms will open at 9:30 a.m. for Wave 1 and 1:30 p.m. for Wave 2. Customers in the Waiting Room will be randomly selected to enter the store to purchase tickets at 10 a.m. and 2
 - A place in the Waiting Room does not guarantee tickets.
 - Ticket prices start at \$25, plus a \$4 convenience fee.
 - Individual Rodeo tickets can be purchased online at rodeohouston.com.
- All tickets will be delivered electronically via AXS Mobile ID Delivery; please allow 48 hours for delivery.
- To access your purchased tickets, download the AXS mobile app and login with the email used to purchase tickets.

The Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo promotes agriculture by hosting an annual, family-friendly experience that educates and entertains the public, supports Texas youth, showcases Western heritage and provides year-round educational support within the community. Since its beginning in 1932, the Rodeo has committed more than \$575 million to the youth of Texas and education. The 2023 Rodeo is scheduled for Feb. 28 - March 19. The 2023 World's Championship Bar-B-Que Contest, presented by Cotton Holdings, is scheduled for Feb. 23 – 25. For more information, visit rodeohouston.com and connect with #RODEOHOUSTON online via Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube for all the latest news.

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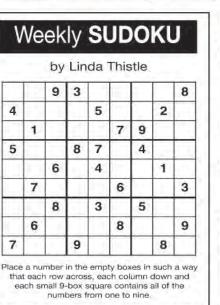
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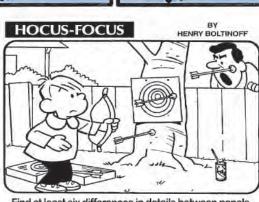


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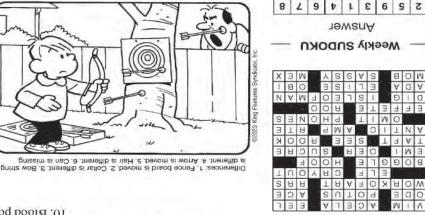
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4 Amtrak express Sushi fish 12 Praise in verse 13 VIP on Air

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27 Actor Stephen 51 Oft-tattooed 29 Memory word method 52 Jurist Fortas 30 Stretches (out) 53 Kibosh 32 Marathoner's

Rodriguez

I. GEOGRAPHY: What is the second-longest river in North America? 2. MOVIES: Which 1973 movie advertised itself as a place "where nothing can possibly go

wrong"? 3. GAMES: Which party game claims that it

can "tie you up in knots"? 4. U.S. PRESIDENTS: Which president was

the first to appoint an African American as a member of his Cabinet? 5. HISTORY: When was the Warsaw Pact

between the Soviet Union and seven Eastern Bloc countries signed? 6. TELEVISION: Which TV game show often

uses the phrase "Survey says ... 7. ANIMAL KINGDOM: What is a female peacock called? 8. FOOD & DRINK: How many meals do Hob-

bits eat in a day, according to the movies? 9. ADVERTISING: Which product used a manicurist named Madge in its advertisements? 10. MEDICAL: What is a common name for

the condition called septicemia? © 2022 King Features Synd., Inc.

10. Blood poisoning. 6. "Family Feud."; 7. A peahen.; 8. Seven.; 9. Palmolive dishwashing liquid.; 1. The Mississippi.; 2. "Westworld."; 3. Twister; 4. Lyndon Johnson.; 5. 1955.; Trivia Test Answerst

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