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HIGHLANDS

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THURSDAY, JANUARY 11, 2024

P.O. DRAWER 446, HIGHLANDS, TEXAS 77562

IN THE STARS

EVENTS

Public Health Watch

Environmental Meeting Jan. 12

Public Health Watch has done a deep investigation into environmental hazards in Channelview and along the San Jacinto River, including long-term exposure to benzene, a known carcinogen.

The group will present the results of its investigation and ask a panel of experts to talk about solutions.

The meeting will be held:

Friday, January 12 from 5:30 PM - 7:30 PM

At the Flukinger Community Center

16003 Lorenzo St, Channelview, TX 77530

5:30 Doors and refreshments

6:00 Panel discussion

6:30 Community Q&A

Highlands Chamber

Luncheon Jan. 11

Members and the public are invited to the monthly luncheon of the Highlands/Lynchburg Chamber of Commerce on Thursday, Jan. 11th at noon at the Highlands/San Jacinto Community Center.

Members will be able to vote on candidates for the board. Program will be the Bay Area Homeless shelter.

Constable offers Life Saving Training Jan. 18th

By David Taylor Managing Editor

With the start of the new year, Pct. 3 Constable Sherman Eagleton's office is providing citizens training with the skills that could save their life if they find themselves in an active shooter event. The training is typically taught at schools, but also relates to citizens and businesses that are also becoming targets in these types of events.

"We also come out to churches and make these same presentations," said Sgt. Craig Berry, patrol sergeant and training coordinator for Pct. 3 Constable's office. Tragically, churches have also been the scenes of active shooter events, including one in Huffman re-

Continued. See CONSTABLE OFFERS LIFE SAVING, Page 6

Highlands community dependent on successful chamber of commerce

Effort currently underway to Revitalize organization

By David Taylor Managing Editor

With the turn of the calendar, new leadership will take over for the struggling Highlands-Lynchburg Chamber of Commerce. The challenges for the chamber have been many over the last few years, but a well-attended November and December meeting gives hope that the organization will survive and thrive.

Incoming president Jim Wadzinski believes with certainty the organization will continue to lead the community and provide necessary services.

"I'm thinking that the Highlands-Lynchburg area has an even more crucial need for a chamber than most places," Wadzinski said.

He pointed to the fact that the community is situated in an unincorporated area of the county absent municipal leader-



Incoming Chamber President Jim Wadzinski spoke to the luncheon attendees on the significance of their participation in the chamber of commerce in Highlands. At Chamber Luncheon this week, January 11, members will vote for new board members and officers, and hear plans for the new year.

ship to address needs.

"Where do you go?" Wadzinski asked.

At their first board meeting of the year last Wednesday, Wadzinski said Wallisville Road was a topic of conversation.

"We were informed that some of the pavement in front of the Chinquapin Preparatory School at 2615 East Wallisville Road, in Highlands had collapsed," the new chamber president said. "That's a real issue with that

roadway."

It was brought up with county officials and early Thursday morning, Wadzinski said they had been informed that Precinct Two engineering was approving plans, and a crew was ready to go to work on the roadway since it was a dangerous situation.

"That's a perfect example of what an active chamber can do," he said. "In a community, like Highlands in an unincorporated area where there's no city office to call, it becomes a little muddy in terms of who do we contact, especially now that they've redistricted Precinct Two and Precinct Three."

Establishing those relationships and knowing who to call to get action, Wadzinski said, is a vital piece of the puzzle for a chamber in a small or unincorporated community such as Highlands-Lynchburg.

"That's why we need an active, vibrant chamber and it's our intention to re-

activate this chamber and return it back to the point where we can once again be the 'go-to' for the community," he explained.

Wadzinski also promised that many of the previous events that used to be hosted by the chamber will return.

"In February, we will host our gala and asking the community for Terry Davis Award nominees, we'll revitalize our monthly luncheons, and continue featuring students of the month from Highlands Junior, Highlands Elementary, and BP Hopper," he said.

Wadzinski said they also hoped to continue the Partners In Education program as well.

"We need the business community to rejoin and support what we're doing," he asked.

"We can't do any of this without the businesses to support us. We need to

Continued. See HIGHLANDS CHAMBER, Page 2

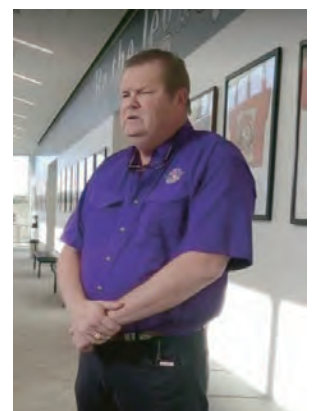
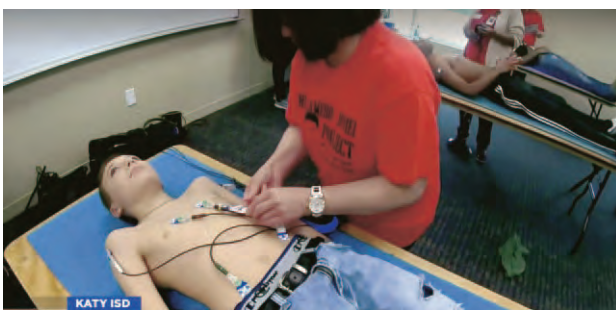
Katy ISD will start heart screenings with help from Crosby's Cody Foundation and KPRC

KATY, Texas - For more than a decade, KPRC 2 and Bill Spencer have partnered with the Cody Stephens Foundation to offer life-saving heart screenings that are free of charge.

Now, the Katy Independent School District is launching a new program with the foundation's help to test student-athletes and staff for hidden heart defects.

The foundation is providing the district with the machines. Spencer says the screenings are critical to help save lives.

The Cody Stephens Go



ABOVE: Scott Stephens at Katy ISD LEFT: Student athletes in the process of testing for heart defects at several locations. The Cody Foundation has assisted school districts to implement the screening program.

Big or Go Home Memorial Foundation was founded by Scott Stephens in memory of his beloved son, Cody Stephens, who died from an undetected heart condition just weeks before graduation from Crosby High School.

Under the new program announced by Katy ISD today, the district will begin testing all student athletes in middle and high school, who want to be tested, for hidden heart defects, a normal school

Continued. See CODY FOUNDATION HEART SCREENINGS, Page 6

WHITMIRE INAUGURATED AS HOUSTON'S 63RD MAYOR

A Personal Account of the Event By Allan Jamail

Houston, TX. - January 2, 2024 - At 9:30 am in the Gus S. Wortham Theater Center/Alice and George Brown Theater, North Channel Star writer Allan Jamail lined up next to the media representatives of all the major news organization to bring the NC Star readers his photos along with his account of his friend Houston's Mayor John Whitmire's Inauguration.

The program partici

Continued. See WHITMIRE, Page 2



John Harris Whitmire, Houston's 63rd Mayor gives his Inaugural Address at the Wortham Center. (Photo by Allan Jamail)



Mayor Whitmire takes the Oath of Office with his hand resting on two Bibles held by his daughters Whitney Whitmire Jenkins (left) and Sarah Whitmire. The oath was given by Judge Victor Trevino III. (Photo by Allan Jamail)

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Whitmire Mayoral Inaugural,

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1



Mayor John Whitmire with his daughters on each side of him listening to the song You'll Never Walk Alone at his Inauguration Ceremony. L - R: Sarah Whitmire, Mayor Whitmire, Whitney Whitmire Jenkins and Judge Victor Trevino III. (Photo by Allan Jamail)

pants were: Khambrel Marshall, The Master of Ceremonies (Channel two retired), The Houston Symphony (Conductor Gonzalo Farias, Houston Police and Fire Department Joint Honor Guard, Presentation of Colors, Dylan Zhong (Pledge of Allegiance), Ailyn Perez (Principal Artist), Houston Grand Opera, the National Anthem, Reverend Michael Gott, Inaugural Blessing, Kenneth Gayle, Tenor and Reverend Michael Gott, Soloist, You'll Never Walk Alone (song), Mary Griffin and Shaun Smith, Soloists, Up Where We Belong (song) and Finale Song, La Charreada, Eduardo Trevino and Mariachi Nueco Imperio.

The Honorable Victor Trevino III, Harris County Precinct 6, Place 1 gave Mayor Whitmire and City Controller Christopher George Hollins their Oath of Office. Mayor Whitmire then gave the Oath of Office to the City Council.

I want to begin by giving a big shout out to Sue Davis, Whitmire's Communication Director. Davis kept Jamail and all the other media photographers and writers well informed for the past thirteen months of all of Whitmire's campaign activities including election results and up to today's inauguration. She's been an asset to the NC Star and others in the news media. Sue played a major role with her skills in the communications field to help then Senator John Whitmire go to now Mayor John Whitmire.

The NC Star and I covered all of Whitmire's mayoral candidacy events, his announcement on November 29, 2022, and then his winning as top vote getter in Houston's mayor's election first contest on November 7, 2023 which put him in a runoff against second place finisher Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee. And then his being elected as Houston's 63rd mayor on December 9, 2023 and now today's inauguration. JW as his friends call him is 74 and the oldest person to be elected mayor in at least 100 years.

Whitmire was actually officially sworn in as mayor in a private ceremony in the mayor's office at 12:01 a.m. Monday, on New Year's Day as required by the city's charter. Immediately afterwards Houston Police Chief Troy Finner took him on a ride in the city so he could see first-hand some of the issues officers face. Today's swearing in ceremony is for the public to be able to witness it.

Today after the inauguration Mayor Whitmire had his first City Council meeting at 11 a.m. At 2 p.m., Whitmire met and greeted Houstonians in the first-floor rotunda at City Hall, which is something he announced he'd do after he won the runoff election. He said, "As your mayor I'll have an open-door policy so citizens can come visit me and let me hear their concerns. My first day as their Mayor I'll personally open the door for citizens to come into their city hall."

Mayor Whitmire praised the city's public work's personnel, police and firemen and others. He was critical of some conditions in the city; he said he'll give more attention to them than some other administrations have in order for citizens to be able to see a cleaner healthier city. He said you can walk outside the building here and see homeless

people and he wants to correct this situation as much as possible.

Public safety again he stated was his top priority. He said we can make improvements in all areas of the city but if the public is not safe then all other improvements don't mean anything. His tough stance on crime comes from when he was much younger when his wife, kids and himself was robbed at gunpoint after they pulled into their home's driveway one night. He said he thought the gunman was going to murder him. "At the time all I could think of was how could I protect and save my wife and kids."

"We've got some serious issues with public safety. We need additional officers," Whitmire said. He went on to speak about his commitment to holding violent offenders accountable, saying he'll push for new laws if that's what it takes.

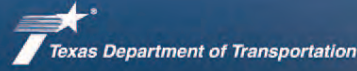
As a senator, Whitmire stopped those on death row from getting anything they wanted as their last meal. He was angered by convicted murderer Lawrence Russell Brewer's refusal to eat the expensive last meal he ordered prior to his September 21, 2011, execution. Whitmire said that this was Brewer's attempt to "make a mockery out of the process." The senator contacted the Texas Department of Criminal Justice and asked the agency to end the practice of last meal requests or he would get the State Legislature to pass a bill doing so. The agency replied that last meal requests were accommodated "within reason" from food available in the prison kitchen, but it agreed to end the practice immediately at Whitmire's insistence.

His position on air conditioning in prisons is tough. In 2021, Whitmire stirred controversy by responding to questions about the lack of air conditioning in prisons by saying: "You know, we can talk about this all day, it's not gonna change. The prisons are hot. They're uncomfortable. And the real solution is, don't commit a crime and you stay at home and be cool. We're not gonna air condition them. One, we don't want to. Number two, we couldn't afford it if we wanted to."

Whitmire was born August 13, 1949 in Hillsboro, Texas, north of Waco, to James Madison Whitmire, the Hill County clerk, and the former Ruth Marie Harris, a nurse. His parents divorced when he was seven years old, and the family moved several times, facing difficult financial circumstances.

In his early teenage years, he moved to North Houston and attended Waltrip High School. Whitmire attended college at the University of Houston to study political science while paying for his education by working for the Texas State Welfare Department, where he interviewed food stamp recipients for compliance.

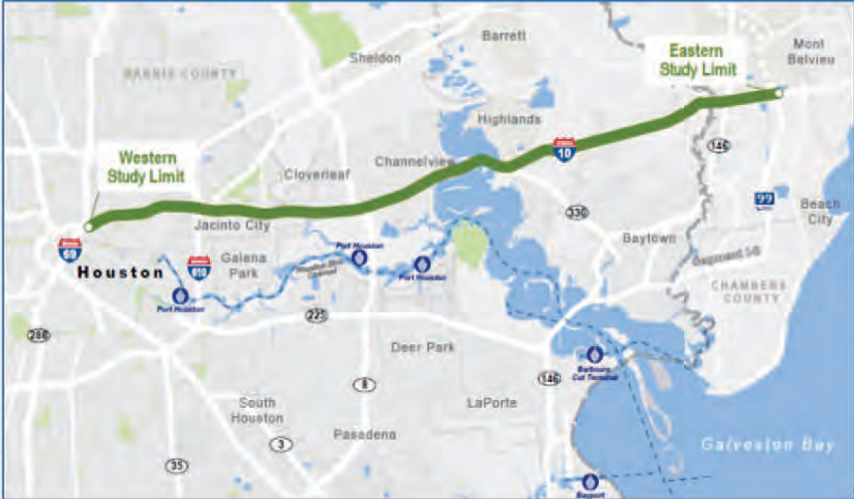
Whitmire is a member of the Democratic Party, and he was elected to the Texas House of Representatives in January of 1973 and served until January 1983. In 1983, he won the Senate District 15 seat, and recently resigned effectively December 31, 2023 after his election as Mayor of Houston.



YOU'RE INVITED!

I-10 East PEL Study Public Meeting

The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) is engaging the community in a study to identify current and future transportation needs along I-10 East from I-69/US 59 to SH 99 (Grand Parkway). TxDOT is hosting a virtual public meeting with in-person options in multiple locations to share project information and receive input from the community.



In-Person Open Houses are from 5 - 7 p.m.


Tuesday, Jan. 23, 2024 Houston Food Bank Conference Center 535 Portwall St. Houston, TX 77029	Wednesday, Jan. 24, 2024 Barbers Hill ISD Leadership Support Center 9600 Eagle Drive Mont Belvieu, TX 77523
Tuesday, Jan. 30, 2024 North Channel Branch Library 15741 Wallisville Rd. Houston, TX 77049	Wednesday, Jan. 31, 2024 Lee College PAC 805 W. Texas Ave. Baytown, TX 77520

The public meetings will be conducted in English and Spanish. If you need interpretation or translation services or you are a person with a disability who requires an accommodation to attend and participate in the public meetings, please contact Gabriel Adame, at (713) 802-5199 or Gabriel.Adame@txdot.gov no later than 4 p.m., Thursday, Jan. 18, 2024. Please be aware that advance notice is required as some services and accommodations may require time for the project team to arrange.

www.txdot.gov

View the Virtual Public Meeting and take the online survey beginning Tuesday, Jan. 23, 2024 at 5 p.m.: www.txdot.gov/projects/hearings-meetings.html

Or scan the QR code



Questions? Please contact:
 (713) 802-5837 | Stephan.Gage@txdot.gov

As provided for by 23 CFR 450.212, 23 CFR 450.318 and Appendix A to 23 CFR Part 450, the results of this Planning and Environment Linkage Study may be incorporated into or used as part of the review of this project under the National Environmental Policy Act, which will be carried out by TxDOT pursuant to 23 USC 327 and a Memorandum of Understanding dated December 9, 2019, and executed by FHWA and TxDOT.

Highlands Chamber,

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

maintain an office and that includes phone lines, power, website, and much more," he said.

Reba Rachall has agreed to take on the position at the chamber to work in the office.

"We have her for a couple of years," he said, "and once we put all the pieces back together again, then we'll start looking at what we need to do going for-

ward. Right now, we just need to get the pieces put back together," he said.

Wadzinski said the chamber luncheons are open to the public and he hoped folks would come and see for themselves the benefits of networking with other business leaders in the community.

"Right now, financial support, which comes primarily from membership

fees and sponsorship of our events, is critical to our longevity and long-term success," he said.

Businesses have an opportunity to reach out to the chamber with their upcoming gala and golf tournament.

To learn more about the chamber, visit their Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/highlandslynchburgchamber/>

Katy ISD starts heart screenings,

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

sports exam just can't identify.

The district will also give these in-depth heart screenings to all staff and teachers who wish to have one.

The idea is to find hidden heart defects that go undetected and can kill you without warning.

Through this program,

which will begin in the spring of 2024, the district will test teachers, staff and student athletes using the electrocardiogram machine, a device that can detect what is actually going on inside a persons heart and can detect abnormalities that can kill.

As for our next free heart screening, The Cody

Stephens Foundation and KPRC2 will be offering the next free teen heart screen on January 20th in Missouri City at the Missouri City Recreation Center and Tennis Courts on January 20th.

For more information on the program, go to <https://www.codystephensfoundation.org/>.

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More support for Cody Foundation:



Scott P Stephens
 October 29 at 7:44 AM

Thank you PriorityTrust Credit Union for hosting a golf tournament with us as the beneficiary. Your \$4,000 donation will keep us screen young hearts in 2024!



Barbers Hill Press

Dayton

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THURSDAY, JANUARY 11, 2024

MONT BELVIEU, TEXAS 77580

ON THE HILL

Friends of The Jones Library Book Sale

The Friends of the Jones Public Library will be hosting a BOOK SALE inside the library from January 22nd - 27th. Stop by throughout the week to find some great deals on gently used and previously loved books! The friends are clearing inventory to make room for the 2024 donations so the deals will be abundant! All proceeds go directly back into the library.

Jones Public Library
801 S Cleveland St Ste A
Dayton TX 77535

The mission of the Jones Public Library is to enhance the scholarly pursuit of knowledge, to foster intellectual curiosity, to promote life-long learning, and cultural programs. Social development improves and enriches the lives of our users through information, education, and recreation. The Library values the citizens of Dayton Texas and responds to their needs by providing clean and inviting space, well-organized and up-to-date collections, friendly professional service, and well-trained staff who are committed to the Library vision. "A thriving Library that is an integral part of the lives within our community"

TXDOT I-10 East Public Meetings Jan. 23-31

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WEDNESDAY, JAN. 24
Lee College PAC
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Baytown, TX 77520

TUESDAY, JAN. 30
North Channel Branch Library
15741 Wallisville Rd.
Houston, TX 77049

WEDNESDAY, JAN. 31
Barbers Hill ISD
Leadership Support Center
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Mont Belvieu, TX 77523

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www.txdot.gov/projects/hearings-meetings.html
Or scan the QR code
Questions? Please contact:
(713) 802-5837 |
Stephan.Gage@txdot.gov

"Star Bazaar: Celebrated 45th Annual Event with Festive Performance and a Variety of Vendors"

The Ross S. Sterling Stars celebrate their 45th annual Star Bazaar! Over 70 vendors set up booths, offering everything from handmade soaps to deliciously spicy jelly jams. To top it off, students put on some festive performances to entertain the community.



Community members enjoying the vendor booths.



Library Media Specialist Ashley Cavazos shopping until she drops.



Sterling Stars Director Lori Alexander introducing the Stephen F. Austin Honor Choir.



Sterling Sapphires Kelece Winchester & Genevie Reid dancing to a holiday-themed pom routine



Sterling Star Hallie Baker waiting to showcase her dance moves.

THOUGHTS FROM HILLSIDE CHURCH

By Dr. Mark Trice



What He Said

Everyone seems to get excited at the end of December. Regardless of what type of year they've experienced, most people look to the new year with hope that it will be better than the current one. Midnight on December 31st is approached with anticipation, celebration and, in all likelihood, the making of a few resolutions. So, what did you see when you looked around on January 1?

Everything looked pretty much the same, didn't it? The weather didn't change as if a switch had been flipped. The trees and your surroundings were pretty much exactly like they'd been twenty-four hours earlier. If you're one who gets paid on the 1st, your checkbook might have

looked a little healthier, but that's probably it. After all the celebration of the night before, little looked different.

But what you didn't see is what mattered. Having passed the winter solstice, things were already moving towards spring, and you knew it. You believed in what was coming in the natural world even though you lacked evidence. You

understood that things were already changing even though you couldn't see the changes. The same holds true for the spiritual world when God sets things in motion.

It's tempting to wonder about God when you're looking at your present circumstances, but never doubt that He is on the job, working out His plan for your life. No, that plan may

not come about in the way you had envisioned but, if you submit to His will, it's inevitable that you'll see it happen. We have His promise in Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV) "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." And, as Numbers 23:19 assures us, "God is not human, that he should

lie, not a human being, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?"

So, no matter what it looks like, and believe me I can see the turmoil in the world we're living in, trust that God's got it all under control and His will is what will ultimately be done. This is true for the world in general, and if you'll follow the advice in Proverbs 3:5-6 ("Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.") it will be true for you personally.

You have His Word on it!
www.myhillsidefamily.com
@myhillsidefamily

Sam Houston Center to Close for Renovations, Jan. 22-29

Liberty, TX – The Sam Houston Regional Library and Research Center has announced that it will be closed to the public Jan. 22 – 29, 2024, as the facilities undergo renovations. The Center is scheduled to reopen at 8:00 a.m. on Tuesday, Jan. 30.

Limited renovations will be made to the Center's main building, including cabinet and flooring installation, painting and upgrades to the break room and hallways. Patrons are encouraged to browse the Sam Houston



Center's online resources, including its website, www.tsl.texas.gov/shc, which includes descriptive guides of local some government, manuscript and photograph collections, as well as information about the historic buildings located on its campus. Digitized collections are available to search, view,

and download 24/7 via the Texas Digital Archive: tsl.access.preservica.com/tda/sam-houston-center/

The Sam Houston Center is a component of the Texas State Library and Archives Commission and serves as the official regional historical resource depository for the 10 Southeast Texas counties

of Chambers, Hardin, Jasper, Jefferson, Liberty, Newton, Orange, Polk, San Jacinto and Tyler. The Center's primary mission is to collect, preserve and provide access to historically significant state and local government records and publications of the designated region and secondarily to serve as a library of Texana and genealogical resources.

The Texas State Library and Archives Commission provides Texans access to the information needed to be informed, productive

citizens by preserving the archival record of Texas; enhancing the service capacity of public, academic and school libraries; assisting public agencies in the maintenance of their records; and meeting the reading needs of Texans with disabilities. For more information, visit www.tsl.texas.gov.

Alana Inman
Manager, Sam Houston Regional Library and Research Center
ainman@tsl.texas.gov
936-336-8821

Goose Creek Memorial (GCM) Welding Department

Congratulations to Goose Creek Memorial (GCM) High School Welding Department. Francisco Delgado, Logan Hurd, Eduardo Reyna, and Hector Martinez participated in the Texas High School Welding Certification Event at Lee College in October, where Delgado and Martinez finished in the top ten out

of 55 students in the level 4 using the GTAW process. In the same month, seniors in welding were also taken to the Construction Careers Expo at the Pasadena Municipal Fairgrounds. During the event, Daniel Maya emerged as the first-place winner in the virtual welding competition.



Level 4 Participants at the Texas High School Welding Certification Event: Francisco Delgado, Logan Hurd, Eduardo Reyna, and Hector Martinez



Daniel Maya received a DeWALT Bluetooth speaker for winning first place in the virtual welding competition at the Construction Careers Expo

OPINION PAGE

OPINION

Harris County Judge Lina Hidalgo



Seeking a Better Life is Not a Crime

On December 18th, Governor Greg Abbott signed Senate Bill (SB) 4 into law. SB 4 makes unauthorized entry into Texas a state crime and authorizes state and local law enforcement officials to arrest individuals deemed to be in violation of the law.

Our community – and our nation – needs immigrants. In Texas, we have 1.6 million undocumented immigrants who have built lives here in the U.S., have families here, and pay \$2.6 billion in federal taxes every year.

SB 4 will make our communities less safe. Once the law goes into effect on March 5, immigrants who are victims of crime will feel like they can't call the police because the police are now in charge of enforcing immigration law.

Not to mention that our jail system is already at the breaking point. Even if only 1% of Harris County's current undocumented population were to be detained in the county jail system, it would cost the County \$500,000 a day.

Earlier this month, I led other Texan County Judges in writing a letter to the Biden Administration requesting that the federal government take action to prevent this law from taking effect.

We will continue to push back against the damage this will do to our security, our economy, and all of the undocumented residents of Harris County that are here to build a life.

Playing with people's lives just to make a political point is very cynical and it shows what our state leaders are really interested in with this law.

Sincerely, Lina Hidalgo

Sylvia R. Garcia CONGRESSWOMAN | TX-29

Reflecting on January 6th: A message from Congresswoman Garcia

Today we mark the somber anniversary of January 6th, a trying day for our democracy that will be forever etched in history.

This day serves as a reminder of the challenges we face as a nation in preserving the principles that define us.

On January 6th, 2021, we faced a grave threat that shook our nation to its core. I find myself reflecting as not only a member of Congress but as someone who experienced these events firsthand.

On this solemn occasion, let us remember the strength that we have gained from our shared commitment to the values of unity, resilience, and a firm belief in a better future.

May this day serve as a reminder that despite differences, we are all bound by our allegiance to our great country.



THE POSTSCRIPT By Carrie Classon

Year End Ambitions

It's the time of year when I look back and see where I've been and wonder where I'm going.

On the shortest days of the year, I like to do a little recalibration. I take a look at what I had hoped to do and ways in which I want to change my thinking.

This year is somewhere between the two.

Part of becoming older and a bit more at peace with myself is looking at the new year a little differently. Instead of a series of challenges to overcome and changes to enact, I look at the new year with a renewed sense of wonder.

"I'm changing lipsticks," I tell my friend, Cheri. She does not seem to register that this is a major life event.

"I only do this once every 10 years or so," I add, so she understands the enormity of the choice.

"I had Thanksgiving dinner with a woman whose lipstick stayed on for the entire meal," I explained. "I want to be like her."

I got the sense Cheri did not think this end-of-year ambition was worthy of her attention. I decided not to tell her about my other goal: to polish off all the dangerously old Christmas cookies.

But I have a few other ideas for the new year as well.

I just got word that an old friend of mine has a ruthless form of cancer. We have not been in touch for years, but he was a good friend in high school, and the prognosis is not good.

And so, the biggest change I would like to make in the new year is to stop behaving as if I have all the time in the world.

Today would be a good day to write to my old friend and tell him I have nothing but wonderful memories of him.

On the shortest days of the year, it's good to be reminded that my time is short as well. It's a good time to do the things that matter and the things that bring me joy.

Till next time, Carrie

STATE CAPITAL HIGHLIGHTS

By Gary Borders



Spate of New Laws Effective Jan. 1

After the Texas Legislature spent much of 2023 in session, a bevy of new laws go into effect on New Year's Day, though some have been delayed by lawsuits challenging their constitutionality.

The Austin American-Statesman reported on SB 17, a new law that institutes a ban on programs and policies "designed or implemented in reference to race, color, or ethnicity" at Texas public universities or colleges.

Another law taking effect in 2024 doubles the state franchise tax exemption, with up to \$2.47 million of a company's annual taxable revenue being exempt.

Another measure that passed with bipartisan support creates a diversion program for juveniles accused of low-level offenses. Local governments now will be able to turn to rehabilitation services, job training, and alcohol and drug awareness programs as alternatives to more punitive measures.

Not all laws passed by lawmakers will take effect on Jan. 1 because of lawsuits filed after their passage. As The Dallas Morning News noted, a bill that prohibits sexually explicit performances in front of minors — and was targeted toward drag shows in particular — was declared unconstitutional by a federal judge.

U.S. District Judge David Hittner ruled the ban violated performers' free speech rights under the First Amendment. That decision is being appealed.

Another law that would regulate what books children can read in schools is still in effect. An initial ruling that it was unconstitutional was appealed to the 5th Circuit, which has yet to issue a ruling.



STATE CAPITAL HIGHLIGHTS By Gary Borders

Another law that would regulate what books children can read in schools is still in effect. An initial ruling that it was unconstitutional was appealed to the 5th Circuit, which has yet to issue a ruling.

The Texas Medical Board remains silent on how to interpret the state's abortion laws, The Texas Tribune reported, despite a call from the Texas Supreme Court to offer more guidance to doctors on how to interpret the laws.

This came after the high court rejected a Texas woman's bid to terminate a non-viable pregnancy that she maintained threatened both her health and ability to have future children.

"While the judiciary cannot compel executive branch entities to do their part, it is obvious that the legal process works more smoothly when they do," the justices wrote. In response, Dr. Sherif Zaafran, board chair, said the Texas Medical Board is not likely to do so while other court cases were proceeding.

"It wouldn't be appropriate for us to start making any kind of movement or decisions while all that is out there still being adjudicated," Zaafran told the Tribune.

PAXTON MUST TESTIFY IN WHISTLEBLOWER TRIAL A state district judge

ruled last week that Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton must testify in a whistleblower case that led to his impeachment and subsequent acquittal. That case revolves around Paxton's dealings with developer Nate Paul, who is under federal indictment for wire fraud, The News reported.

Four top deputies were fired after reporting Paxton's dealings with Paul to the FBI. A \$3.3 million settlement with the whistleblowers fell apart when the Legislature refused to fund it. The former deputies claimed, among other allegations, that Paxton "created a legal opinion to prevent the foreclosure sales of several of Paul's properties."

Paxton's attorneys are appealing the judge's ruling. The whistleblower case is more than three years old. Paxton remains under federal investigation and faces trial in early 2024 for a nearly nine-year-old state securities fraud indictment.

RRC INSPECTORS OUT CHECKING NATURAL GAS FACILITIES

Inspectors for the Texas Railroad Commission were out in force in December, conducting weatherization inspections at hundreds of critical natural gas facilities across the state to ensure adequate gas supply this winter.

The RRC said inspectors have checked 99% of the facilities that directly connect to electric generating plants — including gas processing plants, underground storage facilities and pipelines.

"The commission will continue to inspect these facilities multiple times during the winter season," Wei Wang, executive director, said. "In total, we expect to conduct more than 5,600 inspections of critical gas facilities on the electric supply chain map."

Another important factor is the amount of natural gas stored in underground facilities that would be available if the state is hit with another severe winter storm, such as Winter Storm Uri in 2021, or the ice storm last February. The amount stored is up 6% from the same time last year and is the highest winter level seen in the past six years.

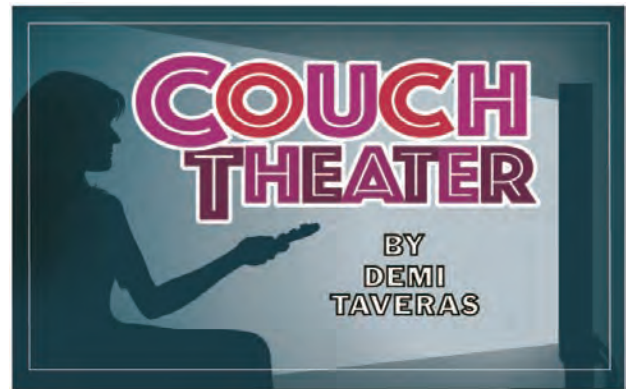
UNCLAIMED POT OF MONEY GROWS TO \$9 BILLION

Texas has almost \$9 billion in "unclaimed property," according to kut.org. This includes funds from paychecks, refunds, deposits and dormant bank accounts. If the money hasn't been claimed after a few years, the asset holder, such as a bank, must send the funds to the Texas Comptroller.

The amount that gets returned to the rightful owner is only a fraction of the amount sent to the office. For example, in fiscal year 2023, the state collected \$1.1 billion but only returned about a third of that amount, or \$340 million.

Folks can find out whether the state is holding money that belongs to them by going to ClaimItTexas.gov.

Advertisement for Star Courier newspaper, including contact information for the Barbers Hill, Dayton, and North Channel editions, and listing the staff members.



Jake Johnson, left, and Anna Kendrick star in "Self Reliance."

"Self Reliance"

"SELF RELIANCE" (R) — In his directorial debut, Jake Johnson ("New Girl") plays Tommy, a single network manager, who gets approached by Andy Samberg to star in a dark-web reality show with a prize of \$1 million. The premise of the show is simple: For 30 days, Tommy must avoid a group of hunters who will try to kill him. His only saving grace is that the hunters can only attack when he's alone. So, to survive, this lone wolf must find someone to shadow him. After a handful of people find excuses not to shadow him, Tommy finally encounters another player in the reality show, named Mady (Anna Kendrick), and the two strangers team up to effectively avoid getting murdered. This comedy thriller releases Jan. 12 (Hulu)

"THE HUNGER GAMES: THE BALLAD OF SONGBIRDS AND SNAKES" (PG-13) — In 2020, author Suzanne Collins released a prequel to her megahit series, "The Hunger Games," and it was quickly adapted to the big screen to join the other four films in the franchise. Starring Tom Blyth in his breakout role as a young Coriolanus Snow and Rachel Zegler ("West Side Story") as Lucy Gray Baird, the prequel is set 64 years before the events of "The Hunger Games." It focuses on Coriolanus' beginnings as an Academy student and how he was chosen to be Lucy Gray's mentor for the 10th Hunger Games. Clever and dangerously ambitious, Coriolanus knows that he can seize this opportunity to gain great power, but first, he needs to ensure that his songbird District 12 men-

tee gets out of the arena alive. Out now to rent. (Amazon Prime Video)

"TED" (TV-MA) — Based on the feature films created by Seth MacFarlane ("Family Guy"), this prequel series takes viewers back to Massachusetts in 1993 to tell the origin story of the foul-mouthed teddy bear that everyone came to know and love in the first two films. In his early life, Ted lives with the family of his 16-year-old best friend, John (Max Burkholder), previously portrayed by Mark Wahlberg. After being pressured by the family to get an education along with John, Ted enters the terrifying realm of high school and attempts to find hilarity in all the awkward teenage milestones that come with it. The full series, consisting of eight episodes, premieres Jan. 11. (Peacock)

"LIFT" (PG-13) — A heist group consisting of six key players faces a choice between getting charged for identity fraud, money laundering and more or taking a deal offered by a government agent. This score would be their biggest yet — half a billion in gold — but the catch is that the gold is locked away in a safe on a plane. The only chance to stop the gold from reaching the terrorist who's desperate to get his hands on it is to steal it mid-flight. Kevin Hart leads this action-packed film, which also stars Gugu Mbatha-Raw ("Loki"), Jean Reno ("Leon: The Professional"), Sam Worthington ("Avatar") and more. Don't miss out on its premiere on Jan. 12. (Netflix)
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ENTERTAINMENT

Amber Waves



Weekly SUDOKU

by Linda Thistle

9				2	7			6
	4		8					1
		7		3				5
		6			5		4	
1				4				3
8	2		6			1		
6				5			3	
			2		7			9
	7			6	1			8

Place a number in the empty boxes in such a way that each row across, each column down and each small 9-box square contains all of the numbers from one to nine.

DIFFICULTY THIS WEEK: ♦♦♦

♦ Moderate ♦♦ Challenging
♦♦♦ HOO BOY!

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HOCUS-FOCUS

BY HENRY BOLTINOFF

Find at least six differences in details between panels.

Differences: 1. Light is moved. 2. Nose is smaller. 3. Buttons are added. 4. Bricks are lower. 5. Headlight is missing. 6. Shirt is different.

January 8, 2024 Posting Date

King Crossword

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
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47										45
49										46
							50			51

ACROSS

- Muscat's land
- Droid
- Romeo
- Squid dish
- Crowd noise
- Earring shape, often
- Rock's Moetley —
- Little louse
- Great —
- Spiral
- Cannon of film
- Sofa brand
- Cake mixes
- Links org.
- Los —, California
- Satisfied sigh
- "Say something!"
- "Alfred" composer
- Flower part
- Run-down
- Sudden bursts
- Aachen article
- Dog's bowlful
- Fly at a low altitude
- Grate
- Points of view
- Pro votes
- Bit of butter

DOWN

- Calendar abbr.
- Actress West
- Pie — mode
- Land created by C.S. Lewis
- Lisa's brother
- Spanish gold
- Apex
- Esoteric
- Chicago's Mayor
- Lightfoot
- Mythic man-goat
- War god
- 1509, to Cato
- Back muscles, for short
- Trendy
- Heart charts
- Bound
- Fact
- Pastry store
- Scarce
- Hourglass fill
- Portal
- "Psst!"
- Prevents, legally
- Virgil epic
- Billboard
- Poet Teasdale
- Theater production
- Church section
- Work on proofs
- Clean air org.
- polloi
- Single
- Calif. clock setting

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Trivia test

by Fifi Rodriguez

- GEOGRAPHY:** The Darien Gap separates which two countries?
- GENERAL KNOWLEDGE:** What is Three Kings Day also known as?
- MOVIES:** What's the name of the supervillain character in the animated film "Despicable Me"?
- LITERATURE:** Who is the author of "The Kite Runner"?
- TELEVISION:** What is the name of the motorcycle-riding greaser in the sitcom "Happy Days"?
- U.S. PRESIDENTS:** Which musical instrument does former President Bill Clinton play?
- GAMES:** In the game Battleship, how many ships does each player have at the beginning?
- MUSIC:** Which famous rock singer was born with the name Farrokh Bulsara?
- HISTORY:** What was the name of the first U.S. Space Shuttle?
- U.S. STATES:** Which state is home to the Mammoth cave system, believed to be the longest in the world?

Answers

- Panama and Colombia.
- Epiphany.
- Guitar.
- Khaled Hosseini.
- Fonzle.
- Saxophone.
- Five.
- Freddie Mercury.
- Columbia.
- Kentucky.
- U.S. States: Which state is home to the Mammoth cave system, believed to be the longest in the world?

King Crossword

Solution time: 22 mins.

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Constable Safety Training,

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

cently. On Jan. 18 from 5 to 7 p.m. at the San Jacinto Community Center, 604 Highland Woods Dr., Berry will offer the training and take questions during the session.

The C.R.A.S.E. training, or Civilian Response to Active Shooter Events, involves steps that could save the life of civilians in the event of an active shooter.

"When we teach our law enforcement, we train them to go towards the gunfire to stop the threat,"

Berry said.

He pointed out that a threat doesn't have to always be a gun.

"It could be a knife or a bomb. Literally anything," he said. "We teach how to recognize what's going on and how to react to it," he said.

The older adage of run, hide, fight has changed and now law enforcement is using a different method taught at the nationally recognized Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response training center on the campus of Texas

State University.

"The new acronym is avoid, deny, and defend," Berry said.

The reason he said is when there's a gunshot, response is to take off and run, however, not knowing where to run, a citizen is likely to run into the middle of the active scene.

"Instead, we want them to stop and assess and avoid the situation by going away from the threat," he emphasized.

Previously, the wisdom was to hide, but Berry pointed out that in several instances, the shooters walked around, found them hiding, and shot them.

"Instead, we're teaching

deny—deny them access to you," he said by shutting doors, blocking them, turning off lights, or just deny the situation.

Berry said the last letter in the acronym is defend.

"While you're denying them access or avoiding the situation, make a plan to defend yourself. Do you have a weapon laying around? Is there something you can use to strike with? How will you grab a gun?" he said.

Berry should know. He's been teaching ALERRT active shooting training to law enforcement with the sheriff's office since 2007. He began teaching C.R.A.S.E. when it came

out in 2010.

Precinct Three resource officers are already teaching the training to teachers in their districts.

"It's a sit down, lecture type of class with no hands-on type training. It's mostly about knowledge," he said.

Berry encouraged attendees to bring paper and pen or pencil to make notes, but more importantly, an open mind.

"I stress muscle memory and role play," he said. "You have to activate your mind so that when you hear a gunshot, you react immediately."

Berry said it's always good to know how to react in the event someone ap-

proaches.

"If they role play in their mind how they're going to react in the event a particular scenario occurs, the less of a chance their brain won't freeze up," he said.

The class is approximately an hour and a half to two hours with a question-and-answer period.

The session is in the main room of the San Jacinto Community Center in Highlands.

Another session is planned in Crosby at the park on Hare Road at 9 a.m.

There's also a session planned at the Barrett Station park on Magnolia at 10:30 a.m.

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Notice of Public Sale pursuant to Chapter 59 of Texas property code to satisfy a landlord's lien. Sale to be held for **Foley Road Boat Camper & Mini-Storage** at 1432 Foley Rd, Crosby, TX 77532 on storage-treasures.com starting, 1/18/2024 at 9:00am CST and ending on, 1/25/2024 at 5:00pm CST. \$100 Cleanup deposit is required. The Seller reserves the right to withdraw the property at any time before the sale. Property includes the contents of spaces of the following tenant and is primarily household items.

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Notice is hereby given pursuant to Chapter 59 of the Texas Property Code that CROSBY BOAT, RV & MINI STORAGE, located at 15118A FM 2100, Crosby Texas 77532, will hold an online sale from January 22nd to January 29th until 10:00 o'clock a.m., at the following link <http://wbauctioncrosby.hibid.com/auktion/current> to sell for cash only the contents of Unit I-17, Jason Terry in order to satisfy a Landlord's Lien. The property to be sold is Medical Equipment, Toys, Games, Small Electronics and etc.... #2-2t

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*More details about the study will be provided by the study team.

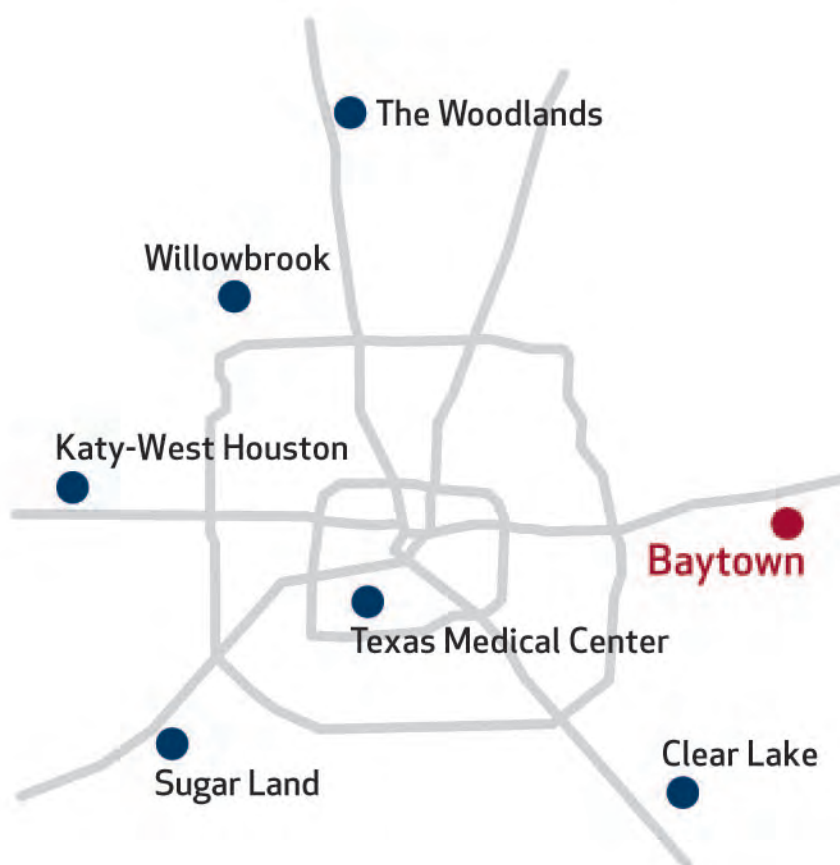




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