#### HIGHLANDS



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#### **Coming in February: BUSINESS & INDUSTRY** SPECIAL EDITION

Featuring **your** Story and Ad in the STAR-COURIER and the **NORTH CHANNEL STAR. See** details on Page 5. Contact us at 713-266-3444 to be part of this Special Edition.

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THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 2024

P.O. DRAWER 446, HIGHLANDS, TEXAS 77562

## STARS

## Crowds turn out for Chili Feast



#### Highlands **Chamber Gala** Feb. 15th

our Feb. 14 issue.

Details on Page 5.

The Highlands/Lynchburg Chamber of Commerce will hold a 2024 SWEETHEART GALA on February 15th, at Monument Inn.

Starting at 6:45pm, the event will include Awards, Silent Auction, and Dinner.

Sponsors include Community Toyota, State Farm Randy Casey, Kostka Auto, Goose Creek CISD, and Sterling-White FH.

For Tickets or Sponsorship, contact the Chamber at highlandslynchburg chamber@outlook.com, or 281-513-7267.

#### Crosby Chamber Gala Feb. 22nd

The Crosby/Huffman Chamber of Commerce will hold its Annual Awards Banquet on Thursday, February 22nd from 6:30-8:30 at Stonebridge at Newport, 16401 Country Club Drive, Crosby. Reservations and

Sponsorships, contact chamber@crosbyhuffmancc.org,

You are asked to nominate Best Business, non-profit, volunteer, citizen and ambassador. Vote https:// www.surveymonkey.com/r/

## Car Raffle won by **Jack Adcox**

Photos and Story by Rotarian Gilbert Hoffman

 $HIGHLANDS-The\ 49th$ Annual Chili Feast finished Saturday with signs of success, after facing threatening weather overnight, and slow ticket sales until the last minute. But in the end, the Highlands Rotarians could look for another successful year. They plan to use the money raised for scholarships and other important community projects.

Starting the morning, the club had 245 tickets to sell out of a total of 700, but sales at the door, and from the crowd in the room, brought about almost a complete sellout, according to Chili Feast chairman GayLynn Milliorn. The club expects to net over \$60,000 for their projects.

The clubs 20 members

are known throughout the Houston Rotary community for their imaginative and successful fundraising. The club's reputation is "Best Little Club in District 5890."

Club members worked together for several months to prepare for the event. On Saturday, they had the help of Interact clubs from  $\operatorname{GCM}$ High School, and Chinquapin School, as well as Highlands Horizons and Pilot Anchor Club members.

Several hundred people attended, enjoying the Chili cooked by a team headed by Johnny Gaeke, who is faithful to the traditional recipe of Chester Stasney. Live and Silent Auctions were part of the event, with 16 total prizes in the raffle.

Club president Denise Smith thanked the community for their support. SEE MORE PHOTOS ON PAGE 6



WINNERS: Jack and Irene Adcox with their new Turner Chevy TRAX SUV, first prize at the Chili Feast.



Visiting Rotarians supporting the Highlands club included Bill Palko from North Shore, and Heather Rimato, the District 5890 Governor.



The Live Auction included several beautiful Quilts made by Rotarian Connie Russell. MORE PHOTOS ON PAGE 6

## Community Meeting Feb. 10: Examining Crosby's Future

Historical Society presents 'Future of Crosby' program

By David Taylor Managing Editor

CROSBY – A community meeting to explore the unprecedented growth in Crosby is planned for this Saturday, Feb. 10 at 2pm by the Crosby Historical Society.

It would be hard for nay-

sayers to deny the growth occurring in Crosby. After all, it's been predicted, warned about, and shown on paper to most residents but it's no longer in the future. It's here now and the Crosby Historical Society hopes to present documented facts that demonstrate only the second or third major growth spurt to change the town.

"Every year, the Histor-



Jody Fuchs, Historical Society

ical Society presents four programs for the public," said Jody Fuchs, vice chairman of the Crosby Historical Society and one of the presenters at the program.

Fuchs has assembled a team of four, including himself, Crosby ISD Superintendent Paula Patterson, Crosby Municipal Utility District President Steve Schreiber, and Alliance Properties Realtor, Broker, and Owner Velma Ellison.

The series of meetings have been ongoing for more than 40 years, prior to the origin of the coming museum.

"The Coming historical growth in Crosby seemed like a topic of interest," he

Continued. See CROSBY'S FUTURE,

## Highlands Chamber elects new Board, officers; Gala



HIGHLANDS-LYNCHBURG CHAMBER OF COMMERCE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The Highlands-Lynchburg Chamber of Commerce introduces the newly elected members of our Board of Directors from the January 11 election: Tonya Kostka, Kathlyn Singleton, Sherry Lee, Ana Clark, Randy Casey, Bella Dion, Jim Wadzinski, Gretchen Knowles and Ziomara Andrade.

We invite our entire community to connect with us

on Facebook and email us at highlandslynchburg <u>chamber@outlook.com</u> to learn more about these esteemed business leaders.

Save the date for our highly anticipated 2024 Sweetheart Gala on Thursday, February 15 at the Monument Inn. This glamorous event promises an evening of delicious food, silent auction and network-

Please RSVP by February 8th if you know you'll be joining us for this special night. Sponsorship opportunities are also available.

We hope you'll be part of the magic! Please reach out with any questions about the Gala or how to get more involved with the Chamber.

--Chamber submittal

#### SUPER BOWL LVIII

### 49ers, Chiefs meet in rematch for Lombardi Trophy: A KC win would put Mahomes in select QB company

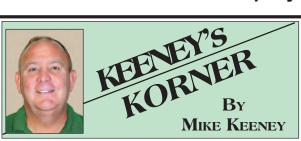
The ultimate game of the 2023 season takes place in Las Vegas on Sunday February 11 when the defending Super Bowl champs the Kansas City Chiefs (14-6) take on the San Francisco 49ers (14-5) in Super Bowl LVIII (58).

The Chiefs will be looking for their second straight Lombard Trophy (they defeated Philadelphia 38-35 on a last-second field goal a year ago) and the fourth in team history, while the 49ers will be looking for their sixth Super Bowl win, which would tie them with Pittsburgh and New England as the only three NFL franchises with six Lombardi Trophies.

SF and Dallas currently have five SB titles each.

You can bet the 49er faithful would like nothing more than to stick it to Jerry Jones' team psyche and win No. 6.

Before we take a look at the game and some of the historical aspects of it, I'd be remiss if I didn't mention the amazing job first-year Houston Texas head coach DeMeco Ryans and rookie quarterback C.J. Stroud did for



the hometown team this season.

Ryans, the former defensive coordinator of the 49ers, took a 3win team and led them to 11 wins, the AFC South title and a dominating (45-14) win over Cleveland in the Wild Card round of the NFL playoffs. The Texans season ending on a disappointing note when they dropped a 34-10 decision to Baltimore in the AFC Division round. Stroud, the No. 2 overall pick in the 2023 NFL draft, had one of the best seasons a rookie quarterback has ever had in league history by throwing for 4,108 yards and 23 TDs (he missed two games in December after sustaining a concussion Dec. 10 against the Jets) and should be the Offensive Rookie of the Year when the NFL announces it awards winners on Feb. 8 on CBS and Ryans should be Coach of the Year. If he isn't, they should retire the award

The future is indeed bright for the Texans, but fans should be aware that by winning their division, Houston will play a much tougher schedule in 2024 (they will have to play fellow division winners Kansas City, Buffalo, and Baltimore just for starters). They could also lose some players to free agency, but with their success and a dynamic head coach, other free agents might want to give Houston a serious look. The Texans need another

Continued. See KEENEY'S KORNER, Page 7

#### **RACHEL'S DINER** Southern Cooking Buffet -- NOW OPEN

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## **GOOSE CREEK CISD NEWS**

## **Read Aloud Day**



Carrie Pryor Newman: Harper Hotchkiss (Kinder) reads to fifth graders Lindsey Petrone and Anna Morton

By Norma Martinez

Students around Goose Creek CISD celebrated World Read Aloud Day on February 1. World Read Aloud Day was first launched in 2019 and is a day dedicated to reading. Communities are encouraged to use the power of stories to increase social bonding and empathy as listeners relate to characters in stories. This day is also used to promote diverse voices and opinions.

Students from Ms. Leday's fifth-grade class and Ms. Jordan's kindergarten class at Banuelos Elementary forged a special connection by coming together to celebrate and read aloud to each other. Throughout the school year, these two classes engage in collaborative reading sessions. At the beginning of the school year, the fifth graders take

the initiative by reading to the younger students. As the spring season arrives, kindergarteners also take part in reading aloud, creating a shared reading experience.

One of the most universal ways of bonding involves some form of storytelling. Goose Creek CISD invites all community members to read aloud and share their stories with others

## GCCISD Names HAABE District Teachers of the Year



Alamo Elem, Minerva Donan



**Banuelos Elem, Kimberly Hotchkiss** 

by Norma Martinez

Congratulations to Minerva Donan, Elementary Bilingual at Alamo, Kimberly Hotchkiss, Elementary ESL at Banuelos, and Dr. Lindsey Antonini, Secondary ESL at IMPACT, for being selected by the Goose Creek CISD Bilingual/ESL department as the Houston Area Association for Bilingual Education (HAABE) teachers of the year. The purpose of HAABE is to demonstrate unity and cohesiveness in the promotion of Bilingual Education. These teachers have proven effective in serving and supporting the education of linguistically and culturally diverse students, while promoting the content, procedures, and philosophy of bilingual-multicultural education in the Houston Area. The selected district teachers of the year will advance to the citywide competition and will be honored at the annual HAABE Teacher of the Year Banquet on April 27, 2024. As exemplary educators for our Emergent Bilingual students, we are thrilled that they will be representing GCCISD at the HAABE regionwide competition.



IMPACT, Dr. Lindsey Antonini

## GCCISD Ignites Black History Month



Sterling Steppers Jayla Vaughn, Aaleyah Wright, and Kianna Massicot perform their Step routine for the Sterling HS Black History Month Program (Photo by Carrie Pryor-Newman)

By Norma Martinez

Students at Ross S. Sterling High School kicked off Black History Month on February 2, with a special program at the beginning of the school day. This year's theme, "African Americans and the Arts," examines the significant impact that African Americans have made in visual and performing arts, literature, fashion, folklore, language, film, music, architecture, culinary arts, and various other forms of cultural expression.

To align with the month's theme, the pro-

gram featured a choir performance by the Sterling Show Choir, a recitation of an excerpt from Amanda Gorman's inaugural poem in 2021 by Nathan Malonson, and an engaging routine by the Sterling Steppers, accompanied by an explanation of Step.

an explanation of Step.
Schools in Goose Creek
CISD have embraced the
tradition of educating and
celebrating Black history,
offering presentations,
projects, and exhibits honoring the great lives and
culture of African Americans. Dr. Randal O'Brien
urges the community, "As
we enter Black History

Month, we celebrate the rich tapestry of contributions that Black individuals have made throughout history. Our commitment to nurturing an inclusive and equitable learning environment remains steadfast. This month serves as an opportunity for reflection, education, and appreciation of the diverse perspectives that shape our district. Let us honor the achievements, resilience, and cultural richness of our Black community, and continue working together towards a more just and brighter

future for all citizens."

## 100 Days Smarter



Larissa Richards and her second-grade class dressed like 100-year-olds.(Photos by Carrie Pryor-Newman)



Jordan Pulido, Kindergartner, working on a cereal string as he counts to 100 while his teacher Maria Fuentes looks on.

By Norma Martinez

Goose Creek CISD students have been in school for 100 days and for that, they are 100 Days Smarter! February 5 marked the 100<sup>th</sup> day of school for the district and campuses found fun ways to celebrate the occasion.

At Alamo Elementary, second grade students were invited to dress up like '100-year-olds.' Kindergarteners at Lamar Elementary counted to 100 and made cereal jewelry. Students at Banuelos Elementary were asked to bring 100 of something in different ways, like in collections or on t-shirts and posters.

Celebrating 100 days of school marks a significant milestone, filled with countless moments of growth and learning. As students embark on the second half of the academic year, the excitement builds, fueled by the anticipation of completing the year with even more achievements, memories, and success stories.



Nancy Solis shows off her 100-day project. One hundred things on her shirt.

## Alamo Elementary's Lizzet Austin Receives National Honor



Photo by Carrie Pryor-Newman: Ms. Lizzet Austin works with students in her fourth-grade math and science class.

Goose Creek CISD is proud to announce Lizzet Austin, fourth grade teacher at Alamo Elementary as the Progress Learning Educator of the Year. This national recognition is awarded to teachers that exemplify the four core values at Progress Learning: Learning, Diversity, Professionalism, and Unity.

11402 Eagle Dr.



# **Barbers Hill**

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

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**THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 2024** 

**MONT BELVIEU, TEXAS 77580** 

## ON THE HILL

### Friends of The Library Meeting Feb. 20

"Please join the Friends of the Library group for the Chambers County Library System!

We are in need of an executive board, including a president, treasurer, and secre-

Join us for an informational meeting at the Chambers County Library in Anahuac on February 20th from 6-7 pm."

#### Mont Belvieu 2024 Events Calendar

Spring Sprint

Saturday, March 23, 2024 8:00 a.m. | City Park This event is a family 5K run/walk and kids fun run. The 5K course starts and ends at Mont Belvieu City Park. Run on City streets and sidewalks; finishing the last mile on the gravel trail around the City Park. Visit our Spring Sprint page for info & registration.

Saturday, March 30th, 2024 | City Park, Little

League Soccer Fields

You don't want to miss all the EGG-citement at Mont Belvieu's yearly Easter Egg Hunt. This event is held at the soccer fields at City Park on Eagle Drive and begins at 10:00 am. The event is broken into three age groups: 1-4-year-olds, 5-7-year-olds, and 8-10year-olds. That way, everyone is sure to have fun and get a lot of eggs! Children must be accompanied by an adult and they must bring their own baskets. After the event, families can stay for refreshments and kids can have their pictures made with the Easter Bunny.

#### **Patriots Day** Celebration

Monday, April 1st, 2024 | 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. | City

Celebrate our local heroes at the Annual Patriots Day Celebration in collaboration with the Chambers County Veterans Association! Join us for a day filled with military appreciation, thrilling activities, and heartfelt recognition of our service members in and around Chambers County.

Enjoy games and giveaways for all ages, explore military vehicles at the touch-a-truck exhibit, get up close with local emergency response vehicles from Mont Belvieu Police & Fire Departments, and experience the excitement when a helicopter touches down at the stage field. You have your marching orders! See you at the park on April 1st!

Movies Under the Stars Lights, camera... action! The Mont Belvieu Parks and Recreation Department brings the best of Hollywood to City Park with our family-friendly outdoor film series. All of the shows are free and begin at dusk. Bring your own chairs and blankets; refreshments are available on site. Coolers are permitted but alcohol is not permitted in the park.

## Lee College Awarded \$750,000 for Innovative Pathway Program for Incarcerated Students

2024 - The Lee College Foundation has received a \$750,000 grant from the **Greater Texas Foundation** and Trellis Foundation to launch a new program to help incarcerated students complete their college degrees and certificates once they are released from pris-

The "Pathways from Prison to Postsecondary Education" project offers individuals leaving the justice system a chance to pursue educational opportunities at the college's Baytown campus that will lead to living-wage jobs.

"This trailblazing program builds on the success of our Huntsville Center which has been educating incarcerated students for nearly 60 years," said Dr. Lynda Villanueva, Lee College president.

With 1,200 students at nine Texas Department of Criminal Justice units, the

BAYTOWN, TX, Jan. 25, Lee College Huntsville Center is the largest prison education program in the state and the second largest in the country.

> "The data is clear about the positive results of offering higher education opportunities for incarcerated students," said Trellis Foundation's Executive Director Kristin Boyer. "Ensuring that support continues through the completion of a degree or credential is the ultimate goal. We're excited to support the important collaboration between Lee College Huntsville Center and the Lucile Plane State Jail to expand these resources in the Gulf Coast region."

> "Pathways from Prison to Postsecondary Education" will encompass a range of educational opportunities and support tailored to the unique needs of incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals. Program components in

clude:

\*Expanding access for students at Plane State Jail to receive stackable credentials which will be transferrable to Lee College's Baytown campus after release. Enrollment at Plane State is 161 – the highest since 2020 when the Huntsville Center began offering technical programming with logistics and horticulture, as well as an associate of applied science degree in business management.

\*Placing a new reentry specialist at the Baytown campus who will provide holistic support services and case management for program participants.

\*Providing formerly incarcerated program participants critical wraparound services that will be delivered through the Lee College Foundation and Student Resource and Advocacy Center. They include housing, childcare,

mental and physical health care and transportation.

"We know access to higher education degrees and certifications disrupts the cycle of generational poverty for many of our students. Lee College and the Lee College Foundation are committed to serving all students with quality educational opportunities that meet their unique needs as learners," said Selah Tacconi, executive director, Lee College Foundation and chief advancement officer. "The ability to earn a living wage after being released from incarceration is often the key to avoiding recidivism for our formerly incarcerated students. We are committed to forging the partnerships necessary to continue our educational programs behind the prison walls in Texas."

And this strategy is paying off. According to the National Institute of Justice, nearly 44% of formerly incarcerated individuals released return before the first year out of prison. In Texas, the three-year recidivism rate is just over 20%, among the lowest in the country. At Lee College, the most recent data says 94% of Huntsville Center's prison education program students obtain employment and avoid recidivism after reentering society.

"Justice-impacted individuals are critically underserved in higher education," said Sue Mc-Millin, president and CEO, Greater Texas Foundation. "Our mission is to ensure all Texas students, regardless of background, have access to, and succeed in, postsecondary education. Lee College has been a pioneer in providing higher education in Texas prisons for decades. We are so pleased to support them as they expand their reach at their

Baytown campus."

## West Chambers County Pilot Club 2024 GALA Fundraiser March 23

West Chambers County Pilot Club, Inc. will hold its annual fundraising Gala on Saturday, March 23, 2024 from 6:00 P.M.-10:00 P.M., at Barbers Hill High School, Mont Belvieu TX. The theme of this year's Gala is "Safari on the

For more information contact W.C.C.P.C. at P.O. Box 1032. Mont Belvieu, TX 77580, Email wccpilotclub@gmail.com or Linda Gilmore at rayegil2@yahoo.com or to purchase tickets contact any West Chambers County Pilot Club member or call Treasurer Diana Jackson – 505-220-7499.

Dinner tickets are \$15.00 each donation.

Drawing for a Queen blue/ white quilt, tickets are \$ 5.00 each or 5 tickets for \$20.00

Drawing tickets are 1 ticket for \$10.00 each. These items twill be on the ticket: First ticket drawn gets first choice of the items, Second ticket drawn get next choice of the items and Third ticket drawn get the last item.

PI Prime Starter Bundle Solo Stove Pizza Oven,

52 Quart Ultra-light 'Rtic wheeled Hard Cooler, Patriot Hello Dr. portable wood pellet Electric grill and smoker.



Steve Wavro and West Chambers County Pilot Club Secretary Linda Gilmore



Scrollsaw artist Steve Wavro donate this Intarsia wood Chimpanzee plaque for the "Safari on the Hill Gala" live auction, this Chimpanzee is comprised of 67 individual pieces of Alder, Ebony, and Poplar woods.



(Pictured I-r) Liliana Rendon, and Rebecca Kashif with WCCPC Secretary Linda Gilmore "Safari on the Hill" Gala Copper Sponsor Crystal Allen



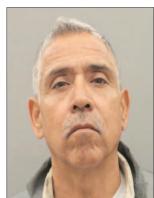
## Baytown Man Sentenced to 50 Years in Prison for Molesting Three Girls

A 62-year-old Baytown man was sentenced to 50 years in prison for molesting three girls, one in 1982 and two others beginning in 1998, Harris County District Attorney Kim Ogg announced.

"Law enforcement and our prosecutors worked hard to untangle and uncover all of the evil acts committed by this man and get justice for these girls who are now women." Ogg said. "Hopefully, this man will never again be alone in the same room with a child and can never hurt anyone again."

Jose Luis Pena was convicted by a jury last week of aggravated sexual assault of a child under the age of 14. Jurors first heard that he molested one girl once and another girl several times over three years beginning in 1998.

After the girls grew up, they alerted the Houston Police Department to the



Jose Luis Pena 62-year-old

assaults, which began an investigation. The investigation

showed that Pena also molested an 8-year-old when he was about 19 in 1982.

After he was convicted, Pena opted to be punished by the judge, who handed down a 50-year sentence.

The four-day trial was prosecuted by Assistant District Attorneys Wesley Stafford and Andrew Sanchez, who are both assigned to the DA's Crimes

Against Children Division.

"This case shows that it's never too late to say what happened," Stafford said. "These women have grown up, were able to tell their story and testify against their abuser. Through their strength and love for each other, they were able to get the justice they deserve."

Pena will have to serve at least half of the prison sentence before he will be eligible for parole.





#### OPINION PAGE $\bigstar$



## Houston METRO's Purple Line: A Case Study of the Insanity of Building Light Rail

In 2015, Houston Metro opened its Purple Line (aka Southeast Line). The Purple Line is a light rail facility that snakes 6.5 miles from downtown by Texas Southern and the University of Houston, ultimately terminating at Palm Center on Griggs Road.

When Metro first proposed this line in 2008, it estimated that the cost would be \$591 million and the line would carry 28,750 weekday riders. As of September 2020, the project had cost taxpayers \$787 million and is projected to ultimately cost \$822 million, 39% higher than projected. That equates to a cost of just over \$126 million per mile. The line's actual weekday ridership last month was 5,230, less than 20% of what Metro originally projected. As a result, Metro spent about \$150,000 per daily rider to build the Purple Line.

How did Metro get it so wrong?

We happen to know a lot about this particular project because it was partially funded by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), which required Metro to file an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) with the Houston Galveston Area Council (HGAC). Also, the FTA included the Purple Line in an analysis it did of about thirty transit projects, known as a Projected versus Actual Study, in 2020. Here is what those records show.

This project was originally conceived as part of the Metro Solutions program that Metro put before the voters in 2003. By 2008, Metro had completed its original analysis and came up with a proposed route, which in transit vernacular is called the "Local Preferred Alternative" (LPA).

The EIS filed with HGAC included a chapter on how the Purple Line would impact transportation in the area where it would be built, including a projection of ridership. Below is the table from that chapter which showed Metro's average daily ridership projection for the Purple Line at 28,750.

By the time Metro got around to applying for FTA funding for the Purple Line in 2011, it had quietly dropped its daily ridership projection to 17,200.

While transit ridership projections are notorious for their exaggeration, Metro's ridership projection on the Purple Line was so egregious that it drew special attention from the FTA in its 2020 study. The report notes that Metro's Purple Line projection was the worst of the thirty projects it reviewed. This is a chart that the FTA included in its final report showing what an outlier Metro's projection was.

Because of this, the FTA asked Metro for an explanation of how the projection could possibly be so far off. Specifically, the FTA asked to review the models that Houston Metro used to

However, by that time Metro had lost access to the software and the data used to make the original projection. So, instead of providing the FTA with the detailed modeling data it asked for, Metro sent an email to the FTA in which it speculated that the earlier projection models had relied on the assumption that all of the light rail lines included in the Metro Solution program (including the Richmond/Westpark and to each airport) would have been completed and feeding passengers onto the Purple

The FTA skeptically responded, "It leaves us still pondering how changes in the transit network - by themselves - could triple the forecast of Purple Line ridership compared to the . . . the actual outcome." Its skepticism was well founded because there was nothing in the 2008 EIS referencing the other light rail lines, other than the Main Street (Red) Line which had been in place since 2003. I think it is fair to conclude that the original projection was badly flawed, and Metro created this explanation after the fact as an excuse

Metro also admitted in the correspondence with the FTA, that it had run a new projection in 2013 that showed average daily ridership would only be about 6,500. Metro pressed the FTA that the 6,500 projection should be used in its study and not the earlier projections of 17,000 or 28,000. The FTA responded, "While METRO and the FTA no doubt wish that those revised assumptions had been used in the forecast in play at the time of the FFGA decision, we cannot substitute the revised forecast for the forecast actually provided to FTA at the time of the FFGA."

The significance here is that the FFGA is the point in time when the FTA had committed to financially supporting the project. If Metro submitted a projection of 6,500 daily riders, the FTA would almost certainly have never approved funding the line. Of course, Houston taxpayers were never told that the original projection of 28,500 riders per day had been reduced by nearly 80%.

Last year, the total trips on the Purple Line were just under 1.2 million. In 2016, Metro estimated that the operating cost of the Purple Line was just under \$13 million. Of course, that is undoubtedly higher today. So, the Purple is costing Houston taxpayers something like \$12 per ride in operating costs.

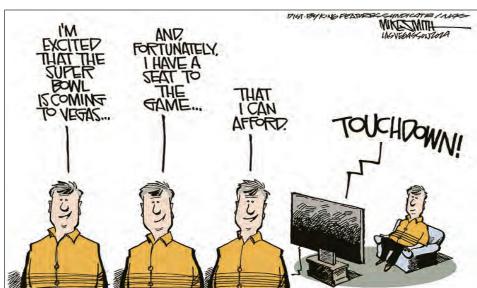
However, that does not include the capital cost of building the line. If you assume that the capital cost of \$822 million is, say 5%; that would add another \$41 million of annual cost, or an additional \$32 per ride. So, the actual ongoing cost of the operations and the opportunity cost of the capital is about \$44 per ride. And that is before you even think about trying to recover the capital investment.

Keep in mind that any trip on this line is, at a maximum, 6.5 miles. A ride sharing trip would cost a small fraction of what taxpayers are paying to provide this service to Metro's riders. By the way, according to a Metro study, the average speed is 14 miles per hour, and it takes about 30 minutes to travel from one end of the 6.5-mile line to the other.

In 2019, Houston voters approved the Metro Next plan, in which Metro incredibly included an additional 16 miles of light rail. Of course, Metro did not share with the public its abysmal record on the Purple Line; or the Green Line which is equally horrible and I will be writing more about soon.

Based on inflation since the Purple Line was completed, that additional 16 miles of light rail would cost something close to \$200 million per mile. If dropping another \$3.2 billion on light rail in Houston is not the definition of insanity, I cannot image

EDITOR'S NOTE: Reader comments on this or any article are welcome.



## STATE CAPITAL HIGHLIGHTS **By Gary Borders**

## Standoff at Border Continues between State, Feds

A standoff at an Eagle Pass park continues as the Department of Homeland Security has sent a second letter to Gov. Greg Abbott demanding access to the Rio Grande park that is now under state control. Abbott contends the state has the right to defend itself from what he called "record-smashing levels of illegal immigration," The Dallas Morning News reported. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled last week that the Border Patrol can resume cutting or removing razor wire that the state installed to deter migrants. Citing that ruling, DHS sent a second letter demanding the state give Border Patrol agents "full access to the Shelby Park area currently obstructed by Texas."A DPS spokesman said the state is installing more razor wire along the riverbank. U.S. Rep. Joaquin Castro, D-San Antonio, has urged President Joe Biden to federalize the Texas National Guard if the state defies the Supreme Court ruling.

#### JUDGE REJECTS PAXTON'S **MOTION TO BLOCK DEPOSITION**

A Travis County judge again blocked a motion by Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton to stop a deposition in a wrongful termination lawsuit brought by former top aides in his office, the Austin American-Statesman reported. The deposition is scheduled for Feb. 1. The four aides went to the FBI to complain about the embattled attorney general's actions in helping developer Nate Paul. The aides were subsequently fired and filed suit in 2020. Earlier in January, Paxton tried to end the matter by saving he would no longer contest the facts of the case and accept whatever judgment the court handed down, though he continued to deny any wrongdoing. He condemned the judge's latest ruling, saying Travis County Judge Jan Soifer was "recklessly disregarding legal precedent, abusing the litigation system, and displaying shocking bias."Before Paxton filed his latest motion attempting to avoid testifying, both the state 3rd Court of Appeals and the



By Gary Borders his earlier appeals. Meanwhile, four months after the Senate voted to acquit Paxton in his impeachment trial, which stemmed from an investigation into a proposed settlement of the whistleblower lawsuit, a senator that voted to acquit is accusing Paxton of possibly misleading the Senate during that trial. He urged the Senate to consider reopening the Paxton's impeachment.State Sen. Drew Springer, R-Muenster, said Paxton's decision not to contest the facts of the whistleblower lawsuit point to his culpability. Paxton "cannot admit guilt while claiming innocence," Springer wrote in a post on X. Springer had previous announced plans to retire from the Senate.

#### STATE DELAYS VOTE ON PROPOSED LAND SWAP WITH

**SPACEX** Heat from conservation groups prompted Texas Parks and Wildlife commissioners to delay a proposed land swap with SpaceX. The proposal would have given the space exploration company 43 acres of Boca Chica State Park land in exchange for 477 acres near the Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge, The News reported. Groups, including the Sierra Club and Save RGV, urged commissioners to delay the vote to allow the public more time to examine the proposal, which will be revisited in March.Environmental groups sued the Federal Aviation Administration last year over its approval of the expansion of billionaire Elon Musk's SpaceX's rocket-launch operations. The suit was filed after the company's Starship exploded during a launch and hurled debris thousands of feet into the air. They have also expressed concern for possible loss of wildlife and habitat since the launch site is within miles of the state park and wildlife refuge.

#### **RECORD NUMBER OF TEXANS ENROLL IN ACA**

More Texans than ever have signed up for health care coverage under the Affordable Care Act for 2024, according to federal health data released last week and reported by the Texas Tribune. The number of Texans in ACA programs, which offer inexpensive or free health care coverage, rose 37% to nearly 3.5 million – or 1 in 9 residents.National enrollment is at record highs as well, with more than 16.3 million people signed up for plans under ACA. That is double the number of Americans signing up for ACA plans since it was launched in 2014."The clear takeaway is that Texans want coverage that is affordable and comprehensive, and when you make sure they have that — and it's easy to know about, and it's easy to get signed up — they sign up in droves," said Stacey Pogue, a care health policy analyst.Texas continues to lead the nation in the number of uninsured residents, with nearly 5 million Texans living without health insurance coverage. That's nearly double the national average.

#### **DSHS LAUNCHES NEW TOOLS** TO TRACK RESPIRATORY

**VIRUSES** The Texas Department of State Health Services has created a respiratory virus dashboard that shows trends in the three major respiratory illnesses most likely to cause seillnesses, hospitalizations, and deaths -COVID-19, influenza and RSV. "Those data points demonstrate the diseases' most severe effects on people, communities and the health care system," said DSHS Commissioner Jennifer Shuford. "The dashboard provides a near real-time look at conditions, so people can make informed decisions on precautions for themselves and their families, and health care professionals can make recommendations to their patients."The site can be ac-S s e at healthdata.dshs.texas.gov/ Home.

#### FORMER PUC DIRECTOR IS **NOW CHAIRMAN**

The former executive director of the Public Utility Commission was sworn in last week as chairman of the commission. Thomas Gleeson, who has worked at the PUC for 15 years, most recently as the agency's executive director, was appointed to the commission by Abbott in mid-January. "As a long-time employee of the PUCT, I'm deeply familiar with the duties and responsibilities of the agency. Even more importantly, as a husband, dad, and ratepayer, I know how the decisions we make here impact the daily lives and finances of Texas families," Gleeson said.



### Enough

My husband, Peter, and I are headed out to Mexico again, and before we do, I thought it was a good time of year to check in with some folks I care about, to see how 2024 had been treating them so far.

First, I had dinner with my oldest friend, Andrew. He told me about his mother, who lives alone and has been feeling her 92 years. Her activities are becoming more limited, and she may move into a smaller place. She's figuring out what she is still able to do, and how much is enough.

Andrew prepares taxes, and so this is about the last chance I would get to see him in three months, even if I were not leaving for Mexico. He will be working long hours, making most of the money he makes in the year in a short time, and still caring for his mom.

"Take care of yourself!" I say because Andrew is single, and I worry he won't get enough rest. I worry he will eat poorly.

"I do!" he insists. I don't know if this is true. But I hope he gets enough food and sleep and sunshine during this season of cold and gray and taxes.

Then I had lunch with Dane, the cousin who is closest in age to me. This is quite a distinction, because I have 36 cousins. Dane is good about calling me up when he is nearby so we can have lunch. He didn't have a lot of news. Work was going as well as could be expected. He'd had two flat tires hauling a trailer across the country. Dane's sister had successfully nagged him into scheduling a physical and making a will.

"You need to have regular physicals!" I told him.

"I know. I've got one scheduled."

I did not ask how long it had been since his last one. "I'm getting my teeth

cleaned, too," he added, as

if he read my thoughts. I was glad to hear he was taking care of himself (with his sister's urging). Then Dane said something unex-

"I realized the other day how unimportant money is to me."

This was a surprising thing for him to say. Dane works hard for his money. He gets up before the sun and does a lot of hard labor and drives a trailer in adverse weather. He's a guy who paid off his mortgage early, doesn't buy new furniture and doesn't take a lot of vacations.

"Oh?"

pected.

"I found a \$20 bill on the sidewalk. I picked it up, and it was wrapped around two \$100 bills."

"Wow. Any idea where it came from?"

"No idea. I kept it, but I felt bad. Someone was missing a lot of money and I just felt bad there was no way of getting it back to them."

Like me, he was getting older. Like me, he had a pretty good life. "It's good to have enough, isn't it?" I said.

I looked at my cousin.

Dane nodded. Dane is happy with what he has, and he has enough.

Peter and I are leaving for Mexico soon. We'll be staying in our little one-bedroom apartment, and I'll be writing at my little green Formica desk. It's not the fanciest place. It's nowhere near as nice as the homes of most of our friends. But every night our landlord, Jorge, will greet us and the colorful suns hanging from the walls around us will smile at us and we will know we have everything we need. We have more than enough.

Till next time, Carrie

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#### SUPER BOWL LVIII

### 49ers, Chiefs meet in rematch for Lombardi Trophy: A KC win would put Mahomes in select QB company

weapon at wide receiver to help out Stroud and need to improve the running game.

Now it's up to the front office to get Ryans and Stroud the help they need to go even further in 2024, and maybe, just maybe, put them in the same position the Chiefs and 49ers are

Speaking of this year's Super Bowl, it has the makings of another classic. These two teams met four years ago in Super Bowl 54 in Miami. The 49ers carried a 10-point lead into the fourth quarter, but KC QB Patrick Mahomes lead the Chiefs to 21 points, enroute to a 31-20 win, giving Mahomes and head coach Andy Reid their first championship. The Chiefs are definitely the class of the NFL, having played in six straight AFC title games and four of the last five Super Bowls. They kind of remind me of a certain baseball team that calls Minute Maid Park home!

Last year, the dynamic duo won their second title as Harrison Butker kicked the game-winning field goal with just seconds left to defeat a game Eagles team, 38-

Should Mahomes win on Sunday in the City of Lost Wages, he would become just the fifth quarterback in NFL history to win three or more Lombardi Trophies. Tom Brady leads the way with 7, Joe Montana and Terry Bradshaw have four each and Troy Aikman

The Chiefs are also looking to become just the sixth NFL franchise to win back-to-back titles. Green Bay won SB I and II, Miami won back-to-back in SB VII and VIII, while Pittsburgh did it twice with wins in SB IX and X and XIII and XIV and Denver did it in SB XXXII and XXXIII. Dallas was the last team to win back-toback titles when Jimmy Johnson's Cowboys dominated SBs XXVII and XXVIII.

This will be KC's sixth Super Bowl (they played in the first one in 1967, in 1970, 2020, 2021 and 2023), while SF will be making its eighth appearance (1982, 1985, 1989, 1990, 1995, 2013 and

Both teams took different



routes to get to Vegas. The Chiefs struggled during the regular season as the offense sputtered and Mahomes lacked a go-to receiver. Even reliable tight end Travis Kelce (93 receptions, 984 yards, 5 TDs) was not his usual dependable self, but he and his QB have come alive in the playoffs.

Mahomes (4,183 yards, 27 TDS/14 interceptions during regular season) and Kelce have been on a roll in their first three playoff games. Mahomes has completed 70-103 (68%) passes for 718 yards, with four TDs and no interceptions, while Kelce has grabbed 23 passes for 262 yards and 3 TDs. While Mahomes struggled to find a dependable wide receiver during the regular season, he seems to be clicking with rookie wideout Rashee Rice (79 receptions, 938 yards, 7 TDs in regular season) as Rice has latched on to 20 passes for 223 yards and one TD in the postseason. Having a second goto guy has been a huge boost to Mahomes and the KC offense.

The Chiefs also have a solid running game led by second-year man Isiah Pacheco (935 yards, 7 TDs in regular season as the former seventh-round draft choice has picked up 254 yards on 63 carries (4 yards a carry) with three TDs.

Many figured the Chiefs would be finished when they lost the home field advantage to Baltimore and had to play backto-back playoff games on the road for the first time in Mahomes' career, KC accepted the challenge with a 27-24 win at Buffalo and a 17-10 win at Baltimore in the AFC title game.

While the offense appears to have found itself, the defense has carried this team for much of the

season and continues to be the strength heading into the Big One on Sunday. KC's defense has allowed 41 points (13 points per game) in its first three playoff games. The Chiefs defense collected 57 sacks during the regular season, along with eight interceptions. SF will need to slow down edge rusher George Karlafis (10.5 sacks in regular season) and big and quick defensive tackle Chris Jones (10.5 sacks in regular season) if it hopes to have a chance on

While Mahomes is connecting with new weapons, SF QB Brock Purdy has a plethora of talent to turn to on offense. Purdy (4,280 yards, 31 TDs in regular season) has struggled a bit in the 49ers first two playoff games, but he rallied them for home wins over the Packers (24-21) and led SF from a 24-7 deficit in the NFC title game to a 34-31 win over Detroit by leading the 49ers to 27 second-half points. This will be Purdy's (43-70 519 yards, 2 TDs/ 1 interception in the playoffs) first big test, and how well he handles the pressure will be a key factor if the 49ers are to win the game.

The 49ers have perhaps the best offensive weapon between the two teams with running back Christian McCaffrey (1,459 rushing yards, 14 TDS/67 receptions, 564 yards, 7 TDs in the regular season. McCaffrey has rushed for an additional 188 yards and 4 TDs in the playoffs. The KC defense must slow him down if it hopes to win its second straight SB title.

Purdy also has three solid options in the passing game in wide receivers Deebo Samuel (60 receptions, 892 yards, 7 TDs in regular season), Brandon Aiyuk (75 receptions, 1,342 yards, 7 TDs) and tight end George Kittle

(65 receptions, 1,020 yards, 6 TDs). In the playoffs, Samuel was injured early in the Green Bay game but returned for the NFC title game and has grabbed 10 passes for 113 yards, while Aiyuk has 6 catches for 100 yards and 1 TD. Kittle also has 6 catches for 108 yards and a TD in the playoffs.

The Chiefs front seven must first slow McCaffrey, which is a tall task. Don't be surprised if head coach Kyle Shanahan (whose father Mike won back-toback Super Bowls with Denver) has Purdy come out throwing it all over the place to help calm him down and keep the  $\dot{K}C$  defense on its toes. If the 49ers can be successful early with the passing game, that will make McCaffrey all the more dangerous as the game progresses.

The 49ers defense has some issues in the secondary, but its front seven can rush the passer as well at Nick Bosa (10.5 sacks) and Co. recorded 46 sacks and picked off 21 passes this season.

Mahomes, though, is such a cool customer who can move around in the pocket to avoid pressure. The KC offensive line is a veteran bunch and takes pride in keeping Mahomes upright.

SF linebackers Fred Warner and Drew Greenlaw have the speed and quickness to keep up with Kelce. I would expect them to be tasked with keeping tabs on the tight end with the famous girlfriend (I won't mention her name) all afternoon.

This game should be competitive and could be high scoring since it will be played on a fast turf indoors at Vegas' Allegiant Stadium. I expect another nailbiter, just like last year's game.

Purdy has proven he can shake off a bad start and be there when his team needs him the most, but it's tough to bet against Mahomes and Reid. All they've heard all year is that their time at the top has come to an end, but all they've done is keep proving the critics wrong.

Look for Mahomes and Kelce to be the key players down the stretch, as Mahomes leads the Chiefs to their second straight Super Bowl win and third in the last five years. It's been an amazing ride, and it's not done yet. My pick, Kansas City 33, San Francisco 31

## SALUTE TO BUSINESS & INDUSTRY EDITION



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## 49th Chili Feast 2024 Photo Album

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1 -- PHOTOS BY ROTARIAN GILBERT HOFFMAN



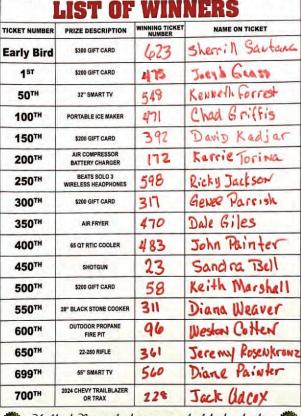
Chili Feast Chairman GayLynn Milliorn, and President Denise Smith.



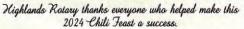
Rotarians Sheila McDonald, Deana Weaver, and Larry White tabulate the Raffle Tickets and post them on the Wall.



Live Auction item: Quilt by Connie Russell with an ASTROS theme.



Highlands Rotary Chili Feast RAFFLE 2024





Live Auction item: Quilt by Connie Russell with a Love Texas theme.

Hundreds spent last Saturday enjoying Rotary's famous Chili, and renewing friendships with community friends and Rotarians.



Auctioneer Mark Tauber takes bids on these Valentine themed items in the



A unique commemorative GBOGH Cody Foundation Belt Buckle was auctioned to a lucky bidder by Auctioneer Mark Tauber.

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#### Notice is hereby given that Original Letters

Testamentary for Docket No. 521627; Estate of JOHN WILLIAM GARBS Deceased; In Probate Court No. 2 of Harris County, Texas, were issued on FEBRUARY 2, 2024 to.

#### **SANDRA GARBS**

The residence address of the administrator is in Harris County, Texas. The mailing address is:

> c/o Weston Cotten 1500 E. Wallisville Road Highlands, TX 77562

All persons having claims against this Estate which is currently being administered are required to present them within the time and in the manner prescribed by law.

Dated this FEBRUARY 5, 2024

by WESTON COTTEN Attorney for the Estate



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## Harris County Pets offers Low-Cost Spay and Neuter Events

Events will offer spay and neuter surgeries for \$25 per pet!

HOUSTON - Harris County Pets Resource Center (HCP), the open-admission animal shelter for unincorporated Harris County, will offer five low-cost spay and neuter events in February in observance of Spay and Neuter Awareness Month and Responsible Pet Owners Month. These events aim to promote responsible pet ownership and address the ongoing pet overpopulation issue.

"Spaying and neutering your pet is one of the most important things you can do as a responsible pet owner," said Corey Steele, the Veterinary Public Health Division Director for Harris County Public Health (HCPH), which operates HCP. "Harris County continues to face a high stray animal population. Spaying and neutering your pet addresses these challenges head-on. By preventing unwanted litter, we also minimize the risk of stray animals contributing to spreading disease and posing potential threats to public safety. These events make it easier and more affordable for pet owners in our community to spay or neuter their pets.

Each event will provide spay and neuter surgeries for \$25 each for a total of 35 owned pets in unincorporated Harris County (outside the City of Houston). Licensed veterinarians conduct the surger-

#### Pet owners must:

- Call (281) 999-3191 to schedule an appointment. (Walk-ins will not be accepted.)
- · Show proof of residency in unincorporated Harris County (e.g., driver's license or any other valid ID indicating the current address)

The Harris County Pets Resource Center, located at 612 Canino Road in Houston, will host all events on the dates below:

- Tuesday, Feb 6
- Saturday, Feb. 10 Saturday, Feb. 17
- Tuesday, Feb 20
- Saturday, Feb. 24

For more information about the spay

and neuter events or other HCP programs, please visit CountyPets.com or call (281) 999-3191.

#### BENEFITS OF SPAYING AND **NEUTERING**

In observance of Spay and Neuter Awareness Month and Responsible Pet Owners Month, HCP and HCPH encourage pet owners to make the responsible choice of spaying or neutering their furry companions. This simple, safe procedure offers numerous benefits for pets and our community.

#### **Benefits for Your Pet:**

- Improved health: Spaying and neutering can significantly reduce the risk of certain cancers and infections in dogs and cats.
- Longer lifespan: According to the Humane Society of the United States, studies show that spayed and neutered pets live longer, healthier lives.
- Reduced behavioral issues: Spaying and neutering can help to calm aggressive behavior, make pets more trainable, and reduce the urge to roam.

#### **Benefits for Our Community:**

- Reduced pet overpopulation: Unwanted litters contribute to the overcrowding of animal shelters, leading to euthanasia. Spaying or neutering helps to prevent this heartbreaking reality.
- Fewer stray animals: Stray animals can pose health risks to the community and often face harsh lives on the streets. Spaying or neutering helps to keep pets in loving homes and reduce the number of strays.
- Lower costs: Controlling the pet population reduces the burden on animal shelters and rescues, leading to lower costs for taxpayer-funded animal control services.

Harris County Pets understands that cost can be a barrier for some pet owners. If you cannot sign up your pet for any of the spay and neuter events in February, you can visit CountyPets.com for a list of low-cost spay and neuter services offered by various organizations across the county. Also, follow HCP on Facebook and Instagram to learn about future events.

## Crosby's Future meeting,

**CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1** 

said.

Fuchs claims it's one of only a handful of changes that have occurred over the year.

"From 1860 to now, this would probably be the second or third most historic change in the community," he said.

Fuchs said just looking at land prices in the Crosby community have tripled in value. He estimated about half a dozen of those large land parcels that have already been sold were formerly grass farms.

"People fleeing Houston looking for small town living are still considering Crosby and Huffman as two of the last bastions left in Harris County," he said.

He attributed the growth to Houston residents moving out, an influx from out of states like California, and many other states.

"This will change what people view of Crosby as a farm town. We're still surrounded by numerous grass farms, but those, too,

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We can meet your

will disappear over the next 10 years," he predict-

He said most homes currently being built are relatively small costing between \$250,000 to \$350,000 which is still considered a lot of money, but on the lower end of new homes. According to Fuchs, the homes are also being built into densely packed subdivisions.

"It's not going to be a (master-planned) Kingwood but with 30 developers on the horizon, it will be a lot of homes and fast," he said.

Most of the current land proposals are estimated to be between 500-1,000 homes but Fuchs said when the big grass farms sell, those could bring as many as 5,000 homes into a development.

"You're looking near Eastgate, the Murff properties, Waltons, and Walker properties could add close to another 5,000 homes," he said.

One of the newest par-

cels purchased recently is for the Crosby Islamic Center at 19455 Ramsey Road. According to their website, the Sunni Mosque is a nonjami mosque, meaning it does not hold the typical Friday congregational prayer. Services are in English making it accessible to a wide range of people in the community.

They have not returned calls to the Star-Courier for more information. There is only a small house on the property that's visible currently and no development of the property at the beginning of January.

Fuchs promised much more information will be presented by himself, the superintendent on the future of the district, Crosby MUD and the increase in new taps, and Velma Ellison on the real estate landscape.

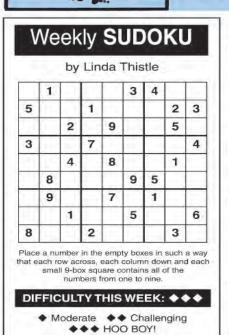
The meeting is Saturday, February 10 at 2 p.m. at the Crosby Brethren Church, inside the church gymnasium at 5202 First Street in Crosby.

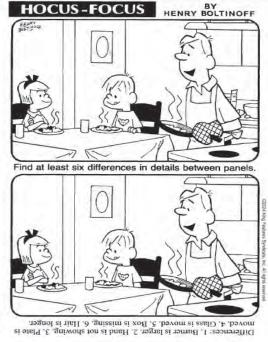


#### All proceeds from the book sale benefit the Library and support the Summer

ENTERTAINMENT

### Amber Waves by Dave T. Phipps THE TRICK IS TO LAY OUT ALL MY INGREDIENTS AND SUPPLIES AHEAD OF TIME. ONE BLENDER - CHECK PAIR OF GOGGLES-CHECK GLOVES AND APRON-CHECK MOM, I'M GOING TO MAKE YOU MY FAMOUS FRUIT I REALLY SHOULD ADD A LID TO MY LIST. AND COOKIE SMOOTHIE. BUD BLAKE VALENTINE BLAKE LOOK WHAT HUGO GAVE by Jeff Pickering The Spats I SHOULD BE WEARING SCUBA GEAR... I'M IN DEEP.





### February 5, 2024 Posting Date King Crossword

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26 Little home wreckers?

27 Amassed 29 Diarist Anais Closet invader 30 "Life of Pi"

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Answer Weekly SUDOKU

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Solution time: 22 mins.

ANSWERS — King Crossword —



test by Fifi Rodriguez 1. MOVIES: Which movie has the tagline, "May the odds be ever in your favor"?

Baffin Island? 3. AD SLOGANS: Which company's slogan is, "You're in good hands"?

4. LANGUAGE: What is a common saying for the Latin phrase "lapsus linguae"?

5. MUSIC: What country was home to reggae singer Bob Marley?

6. ANIMAL KINGDOM: What is an example of a macropod?

7. TELEVISION: Gordon, Percy, James, Toby and Emily are characters on which children's show?

8. MATH: What is 1/60 of a degree? 9. LITERATURE: Who wrote the book series 'The Chronicles of Namia''?

ACRONYMS: What does the acronym SPF stand for?

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9. C.S. Lewis.; 10. Sun Protection Factor. 5. Jamaica.; 6. Kangaroo.; 7. "Thomas the Tank Engine."; 8. A minute.; 1, "The Hunger Games."; 2. Canada.; 3. Allstate.; 4. A slip of the tongue.; Trivia Test Answerst



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