HIGHLANDS



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VOL. 71, NO. 9 - \$1.00

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THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 29, 2024

P.O. DRAWER 446, HIGHLANDS, TEXAS 77562

STARS

Trail Riders on their way to RodeoHouston

Northeastern Trail Ride brings a bit of history to Crosby

EVENTS

Judge Bate's **Teen Summit** March 1

Free Event for Students 6th-12th grades. Conversations on issues that affect

Sat. March 1 from 10am to 2pm, Goose Creek Memorial High School. Speakers, Vendors, Free Lunch, Door Prizes. Questions, 713-274-0900.

Crosby Library Book Sale March 1-2

Friends of the Crosby Library will hold their Spring Book Sale on: Friday, March 1 - 1pm -

Saturday, March 2 - 10am

****Take advantage of these specials*** Regular size Romance paperbacks - 4-\$1.00 Amish/Christian hardbacks - 2-\$1.00. *** Paperbacks = \$.50 Hardback = \$1.00Children books priced as marked.

All proceeds from the Book Sale benefit the library and support the Summer Reading programs. Questions - call the

Library - 832-927-7790.

Coffee with the Commissioner March 2

The public is invited to have an informal talk and coffee with Pct. 2 Commissioner Adrian Garcia. March 2 from 10am to 11:30am at El Toro restaurant in Baytown.

By David Taylor Managing Editor

For a few hours in Crosby, the modern was mixed with old as tradition continued for the 32nd year when the Northeastern Trail Rider's Association trail ride rode through Crosby last Wednesday. Established in 1982, the association ride continues in the face of dwindling numbers, but Trail Boss Anthony Bruno is hellbent on preserving their history.

The riders' trek on Wednesday was 18 arduous miles, navigating around construction on US 90 in Liberty.

"We do it like we're working," Bruno said.



The wagon train was decorated with the US and Texas flags and decked out in preparation for the Saturday Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo parade. The wagons typically carry food and water supplies for the trail riders.

"We'll ride for a couple of hours, take a restroom break, then another two hours and then lunch. Then we mount up again for another two-hour ride, and then a bathroom and water break, then head on to our overnight camp," the trail boss said.

The trail riders started out in Cheeks, Texas, just southwest of Beaumont. and traveled to Devers on their first leg of the trip to spend the night. On Monday, the riders mounted up and headed to Rivon's Arena in Raywood for their overnight stay. Tuesday found the third leg of the trip ending at Bar-N-

Continued. See TRAIL RIDERS, Page 7 with RODEOHOUSTON ACTS

Crosby ISD leaps into March: Achievements and Plans!

Hello East Harris County and Crosby ISD families,

We're leaping into March! Our families are finalizing Spring Break plans. Our teachers are preparing lesson plans for the month. We're energized for the start of spring. Before you know it, we'll be celebrating the Crosby High School Class of 2024.

Let's jump right in. Conratulations to the Crosby Middle School theater students. The budding actors, actresses, directors, and stagehands won big at the first ever Lake Houston Area Middle School One Act Play contest. The CMS players took home a 1stplace trophy and awards for Best Technical Crew, Best Actor, and Best Actress! Fantastic



Paula Patterson **Crosby Superintendent**

Crosby Middle School and Crosby High School partnered to host a "Find Your Future" Expo for current eighth grade students. The incoming freshmen and their parents had the opportunity to talk one-on-one with our CTE (Career and Technical Education) coordinator, teachers, and counselors. They discussed graduation requirements, our 22 courses of study, various career pathways, and exciting electives. Last year, more than half of Crosby High School seniors graduated with an associate's degree or industry certification. That's a statistic worth bragging about!

Let's give a shoutout to Mr. Carlos Grace, who works with vocational students at Crosby Middle School. Mr. Grace won a \$1000 check as part of the "Houston Loves Teachers" campaign. Mr. Grace was surprised at the donation from the Harris County -Houston Sports Authority and Precinct 3 Commissioner Tom Ramsey's office. He earned it for having perfect attendance during the fall



Crosby High School senior and baseball player, Colby Chapman, gives a high five to a younger student during the baseball team's "Special Friends" game this month.

semester. The group also presented a check to Principal Lozano worth \$4000 to be used to benefit Crosby Middle School students and

Judge, Sheriff join "Hat Toss"

We want to celebrate the Crosby High School Continued. See CROSBY SUPERINTENDENT, Page 7

Connie Russell receives Community Builder award

HIGHLANDS - Sampson Lodge #231 awarded the Community Builders Award to Rotarian Connie Russell.

Connie Russell received the Community Builders Award from the Sampson Masonic Lodge #231. The Community Builders Award is awarded to outstanding non-Masons who have distinguished themselves through their service to the community.

RIGHT: Connie Russell, center, receives her Community Builders Award from the Sampson Masonic Lodge #231 in Highlands, TX. L to R, Master Robert Roundtree, Connie Russell, and Past Master Wayne Bethard.

See ADDITIONAL PHOTO on



Kicks Off Rodeo Season and a **New Tradition**

Harris County, TX, February 22, 2024, Harris County, TX, February 22, 2024, Judge Hidalgo along with County officials welcomed the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo to NRG Stadium by tossing the hat over to Rodeo officials during Harris County's First Ever "Hat Toss Day." This new tradition signals the start of the iconic event here in Houston and Harris County and an unofficial kick-off to Rodeo season.



Harris County Sheriff Ed Gonzalez, Mascot HOWDY, Judge Lina Hidalgo, and Rodeo Chairman Pat Mann Phillips at HAT TOSS day.

Judge Hidalgo, Rodeo Chairman Pat Mann Phillips and Harris County Sheriff Ed Gonzalez also made history by becoming the first Harris County riders of the rodeo's newest

Carnival ride, the Joker

"I am so excited to kick off a new tradition for ro-

Continued. See JUDGE HIDALGO AT THE RODEO, Page 7



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FREE COMMUNITY SHRED DAY AND PET FOOD DRIVE

SATURDAY, MARCH 2ND, 2024 | 9:00 A.M. - 1:00 P.M. ATASCOCITA BRANCH. 6903 ATASCOCITA ROAD | ATASCOCITA, TX 77346



Crosby ISD Marches on: Celebrating Achievements,

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Girls' Varsity Basketball Team for going toe-totoe against Randle in the second round of the playoffs. Although the game didn't go the way we wanted, the girls' team made it deeper into the playoffs this year than last year. That's progress! We can't wait to see what next year's squad does under Head Coach Melynda McGregor. The Crosby High School softball and baseball teams are also preparing to enter district play. You may not know this, but our softball and baseball players are heavily involved with younger students in the district all year long. Whether it's reading to elementary students, helping students in need shop for free Christmas presents, or hosting a "Special Friends" game, our student-athletes are living out our "Portrait of the Graduate" by putting kindness into action and being service-minded.

We are so proud of our many Crosby High School alumni, especially those who return to share their life experiences with our students. This semester, Class of 2014 graduate, Austin Walter, visited with football players at the high school. Austin made it all the way to the NFL! He's currently a running back with the Las Vegas Raiders. Austin is a great



Mr. Carlos Grace from Crosby Middle School won \$1000 for perfect attendance during the fall semester. Crosby Middle School also received a donation for \$4000 from the "Houston Loves Teachers" campaign, Harris County -Houston Sports Authority, and Commissioner Tom Ramsey's office.



Crosby Middle School theater students won first place at the Lake Houston Area Middle School One Act Play Contest.



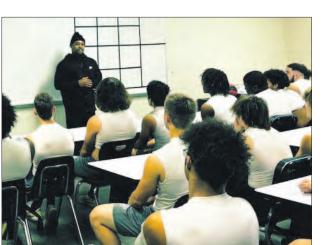
Crosby Middle School theater students also won Best Technical Crew, Best Actor, and Best Actress at the Lake Houston Area Middle School One Act Play



The second meeting of the Crosby ISD Crime Reduction Task Force, featuring Sheriff Ed Gonzalez, members of his staff, and members of Constable Sherman Eagleton's staff and Commissioner Tom Ramsey's office.



Major John Nanny, head of the Harris County Sheriff's Office East Patrol, updates Superintendent Patterson on latest anti-crime initiatives and homeless outreach as Sheriff Gonzalez listens.



Current NFL player and Crosby High School graduate, Austin Walter, visits with current students at CHS. Austin and his twin brother, Aston, are proud members of the Class of 2014 and continue to give back to their hometown school and district.

example to our kids. Austin, his twin brother Aston, and their mother, Dian Buckhalter-Walter, regularly give back to the district. Aston is currently an Offensive Assistant at the University of Tennessee. During their rising careers, the Walter brothers have never forgotten where they came from. We thank them for showing our current students just how far you can go.

I wanted to share kudos with Sheriff Ed Gonzalez, Constable Sherman Eagleton, and Commissioner Tom Ramsey for supporting our efforts to keep our communities safer. As you know, Crosby and Barrett Station are unincorporated areas of Harris County, so both of our communities function without municipalities. Crosby ISD takes ownership of the fact that the school district plays a key role in connecting community and law enforcement partners. We've created a Crosby ISD Crime Reduction Task Force that meets once a month to talk about hot spots, homeless outreach, current crime trends, and preventative policing. Soon, we'll host community forums for all homeowners, business owners, faith community leaders, and families to attend. I'm really looking forward to seeing the progress we make with our law enforcement partners.

The spring is a busy time, and I appreciate all the sacrifices parents, families, coaches, and teachers make to ensure our students are making the grade and being involved in as many extracurricular activities as they can be. I hope your family has a chance to take a breather during Spring Break, which runs from March 11th through the 15th. Classes resume on March 18th for the final two months of the school year!

We are Moving Forward! Go Coogs!

'Paperwork' error sidelines Crosby boys basketball from playoffs

By David Taylor Managing Editor

After a third place (9-5) finish in district this year, the Crosby Cougar boys basketball team was slated to play Friendswood in the first round of the state 5A playoffs but was disqualified Saturday because of a paperwork failure, according to the district and the University Interscholastic League in Austin.

"Crosby Boys Basketball was disqualified from the Conference 5A playoffs by the local UIL District Executive Committee due to ineligible player participation," said UIL spokesperson Julia Zachary.

The disqualification was announced on Saturday, Feb. 17 after the school was reportedly turned in for not completing a two-page Previous Athletic Participation Form required for any student who transfers into a new school. The student isn't allowed to play and is ineligible for participation until the form has been completed by the student, parent, and administrator at the new high school.

Once that information has been secured online, it is sent to the former school for comple-

"There are six basic questions that have to be answered by the former district," said Lee Martinez, chairman of the District Executive Committee who oversees District 17-5A.

The questions are "Was there any conflict or dissatisfaction between the student, his/her parents, and the athletic/academic supervisors at the school? —Was this student recruited to attend another school or was any undue influence exerted upon this student or family to change schools? —Did this student quit an athletic activity or program while enrolled in your school? If yes, attach

explanation to DEC. -Was this student ever suspended or removed from your school athletic program? If yes, attach explanation to DEC. -Would the student be prohibited from participation in athletics had they not changed schools? If yes, attach explanation to DEC. —Based on your knowledge of the student and their circumstances, is this student changing schools for athletic purposes? If yes, attach explanation to DEC."

The form is then signed by the former superintendent or designated administrator and the name of the former principal or coach. That form is then sent to the District Executive Committee chairman for re-

"Unfortunately, Crosby High School Boys' Basketball will not have the opportunity to compete in the playoffs this season. While certifying playoff eligibility, we were made aware of failures to report necessary eligibility paperwork to the UIL and therefore deemed ineligible," said Coach Joe Willis, Crosby ISD Athletic Direc-

"Once we were made aware, we made every attempt to correct the error but were denied. We take full responsibility for the failure of our systems to identify the mistake in time for district certification to take

place," he said. With the disqualification of Crosby, the playoff picture changes with Nederland moving up to the third place slot and Goose Creek Memorial into

fourth place. The playoff picture now has Port Arthur Memorial vs. La Porte, Galveston Ball vs. Goose Creek Memorial, Friendswood vs. Nederland, and Barbers Hill vs. Manvel.

Crosby now finishes the season with a 6-8 record in district.



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Barbers Hill * Dayton

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

VOL. 29, NO. 9

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THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 29, 2024

MONT BELVIEU, TEXAS 77580

ON THE HILL

Mont Belvieu 2024 Calendar of **Events**

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 & registra-

Easter Egg Hunt 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: 1-4year-olds, 5-7-yearolds, and 8-10-year-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 bas-

Patriots Day Celebration

kets. After the event, families can stay for

refreshments and kids

can have their pictures

made with the Easter

Bunny.

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

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-atruck 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

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.

District Judge Cain rules Barbers Hill ISD's Dress Code Policy does not violate CROWN Act

CHAMBER COUNTY -Judge Chap Cain last week determined that Barbers Hill ISD has not violated Texas' CROWN Act after the district repeatedly suspended a Black student for the length of his dreadlocks.

Darryl George, an 18-yearold Black student at Barbers Hill High School east of Houston, has been repeatedly suspended for his dreadlocks. George's family and legal team say his hair is protected under the CROWN Act, which prohibits race-based hair discrimination against students and employers, while the school district claims George has been in violation of the district's grooming policy due to the length of his hair, not the style.

The CROWN Act, which was passed last year by Texas lawmakers, states that school districts cannot discriminate against those with hairstyles "commonly or historically associated with race" and specifically outlines protections for "braids, locks, and twists." However, lingering questions over whether the law pertains to the district's hair-length policy were at the center of



Darryl George with Mother

Thursday's bench trial.

The trial comes months after Barbers Hill ISD filed a lawsuit asking a district judge to weigh in.

According to the district's student handbook, a male student's hair cannot "be gathered or worn in a style that would allow the hair to extend below the top of a t-shirt collar, below the eyebrows, or below the ear lobes when let down." George has refused to cut his hair but has worn it up in a style that doesn't go past his neck, eyebrows or earlobes.

During Thursday's hearing, Allie Booker, a Houstonbased attorney representing the George family, argued that the district's policy wasn't gender-neutral and discriminated against hairstyles like dreadlocks which, by nature, "have to be long in order to braid it and to lock it," according to Booker.

State Rep. Ron Reynolds, a Houston-area Democrat who co-authored the CROWN Act, took the stand during Thursday's trial and told Judge Chap B. Cain III that the law was written on the assumption that the specified hairstyles would be protected "regardless of whatever the length was."

However, attorney Sara Leon, representing Barbers Hill ISD, argued that the Texas Legislature's intent wasn't mentioned in the law itself.

"We agree that no Barbers Hill student should suffer from any discrimination," Leon said. "The Barbers Hill policy is race-neutral."

Ultimately, Judge Cain sided with Barbers Hill ISD, declaring that the school district's dress code doesn't violate the CROWN Act, which he said could've been written to include hair-length exemptions for students with dreadlocks. Upon hearing Cain's ruling, George and his mother were visibly distraught and left shortly after.

Before the hearing, George expressed the overwhelming frustration and isolation he felt as he continued to be punished for his hairstyle.

"It's put a lot of emotions on me - Anger, sadness," George said. "Throughout all these years, throughout all the fighting for the Black history that we've already done, we still have to do this again and again and again. It's ridiculous."

As of now, the district's punishment of George is free to continue. However, after the hearing, attorney Allie Booker said she planned to appeal the ruling and push for a federal injunction against the school district.

Rep. Reynolds added that he intended to create a new version of the CROWN Act that included protections for hair length during next year's legislative session.

This comes as a federal lawsuit, filed by George's mother back in September, continues to move through the court system. The lawsuit asks Texas Gov. Greg Abbott and Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton to enforce the CROWN Act on behalf of her son. She also filed a complaint against Barbers Hill ISD with the Texas Education Agency (TEA), alleging the school district has harassed and mistreated her son over his hair. An investigation into those allegations remains open, according to a spokesperson for the TEA.

In January, Greg Poole, the superintendent of Barbers Hill ISD, defended the district's position in a full-page ad in the Houston Chronicle, saying the district's policy is legal and teaches students to conform as a sacrifice benefiting every-

-Reporting by Houston

Chambers County Residents look at I-10 Proposals, asked to comment

By David Taylor Managing Editor

The Texas Department of Transportation hosted a public meeting at the North Channel Library last week for the I-10 East Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) Study, an early step in the development of transportation for the east side of I-10 stretching from I-69 in downtown to SH-99 or the Grand Parkway in Chambers County. The 30-mile corridor connects with four major regional roadways including I-69. Loop 610. Beltway 8. and Spur 330. Contributing to much of the heavy truck traffic is the Port of Houston with their constant flow of freight.

TxDOT officials say they're considering a project along that corridor.

"We're looking at studies and what it could possibly look like," said TxDOT spokesperson Bambi Hall.

"We've developed the universal alternatives, meaning all the scenarios that could possibly happen in construction. It will be a lot of money. We must get through this particular part of the process before we're able to identify funding for the project," she said.

Work on the project isn't new. It began in 2017 with stakeholder and public meetings until it was sidelined by the COVID-19 pandemic. The project was placed on hold for three years allowing TxDOT to focus on projects already funded for construction.

"When it comes to the planning and environmental linkages process, we have to get a full picture of what all of the projects could entail. That includes what congestion may look like, to address reliability, and address crash rates," Hall

TxDOT is projecting traffic volumes along I-10 East to increase by an average of 68 percent by 2045. Eastsiders are already feeling some of that in-





Bryce Pate, an engineer and consultant with Reynolds, Smith, and Hills engineering firm, left, is answering questions while Brian from the Sheldon area looks on.

crease with the increased devel-

opment in Channelview, Bay-

town, and Mont Belvieu.

According to 2022 TxDOT num-

bers, Segment 1 currently

boasts 159,000 vehicles per day

and eis expected to rise to

265,000 by 2045. In Segment 3,

where most of it is near Chan-

nelview and the Beltway, the

current 112,000 will nearly dou-

ble to 216,000 in the same time

consultant with Reynolds,

Smith, and Hills engineering

firm is conducting the

study."This project will likely be

broken up into five segments.

Each segment has different

characteristics, so we have to

find out which segment needs

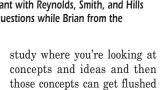
ager with TxDOT, said at this

point this was a high level of

Stephen Gage, project man-

what done to it," he said.

Bryce Pate, an engineer and



out in actual projects. "Then those projects will be put in the pipeline to get fund-He pointed out that the bridge at the San Jacinto River

is a separate project that will be addressed sooner than later. Brian from Sheldon was cu-

rious when he saw a flyer and attended the meeting. "It's interesting to see what

they want to do to the roadway," he said. "I came because I wanted to see what exactly was going on."

He said he came with no agenda other than to give his feedback.

"This is one of those times when customers who use the freeway get to share their feedback. For me, the biggest bot-



their opinions, including filling out a survey offered by the Texas Department of Transportation.

tleneck I endure is the San Jacinto River bridge," he said. He said he hoped they would widen the freeway there and make a higher bridge to accommodate boat and barge traffic.

From Anahuac to Baytown across the San Jacinto River into Channelview and into downtown, Market Street was the main spur for farmers to transport their crops into the downtown Market Street Square to sell their products. But in 1957, that dynamic changed with the construction of Interstate 10.

For Galena Park ISD, it also became the dividing line for a new North Shore High School constructed in 1962 with students in grades 10-11 the first year. Ninth graders were still a part of the junior high school at

that time. The new construction brought with it tremendous development along the I-10 corridor and some 65 years later, the aging interstate needs a makeover to handle the current congestion and the coming increase with the development of the northeast quadrant of the coun-

While this round of public meetings is done, there is still time to watch the presentation and comment.

To still comment, Google the I-10 PEL Study. Hall encouraged residents to watch the virtual meeting online to see for themselves what was presented at the in-person meetings.

"They can go to HYPER-"http:// www.txdot.gov"www.txdot.gov and look under projects. There they'll see a listing and can scroll for the item or type it into the search box," she said.



★ OPINION PAGE ★



Debating Relative Degrees of Senility

Last week in a press conference, President Biden confused Mexico with Gaza and said he had recently spoken to François Mitterrand, who has not been the president of France since 1995 and died in 1996. On the same day, former President Trump said in a speech to the National Rifle association that he saw a migrant shoplifting a refrigerator. It is truly frightening to watch both Biden's press conference and Trump's speech and think that one of them will likely be our president for the next four years.

On Sunday, I was on a television panel discussing the two incidents with a Biden supporter and Trump supporter arguing over which gaffe was worse. Is this really what our country has come to – debating which of the leading candidates for the nominations of the Democratic and Republican parties is less senile?

The American people have certainly not missed the awful choice they are likely to face in November. Polling has consistently shown 60%-75% do not want to see a Biden-Trump rematch. The polling also shows that a majority of those who plan to vote for one of the candidates are primarily motivated by wanting to vote against the other guy.

As of now, Biden is clearly coming out on the short end of the cognitive stick in voters' minds. But he is much more in the public's view now because of the various international hot spots and his inexplicable border policy. Such events always put the spotlight on whomever is president. As the campaign heats up, the public's attention will become more focused on Trump. And there are a couple of things we know about Trump. He cannot stop talking and he cannot stay on script. So, there is no telling what will come out of his mouth between now and November.

I think we should be wary of relying too much on the polling at this time to predict what will happen in November. One can imagine all kinds of events between now and the election that could sway the independents who will decide this race. And at ages 81 and 77, there is the distinct possibility that either could suffer an acute health crisis between now and the election, especially when you consider the enormous pressure and stress of a presidential campaign. I believe the election could go either way.

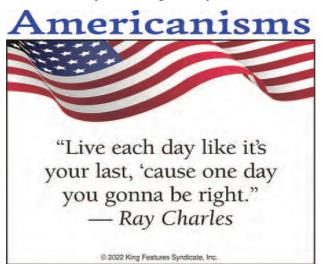
Regardless of the outcome in November, the dysfunction of the two-party system will never have been on a grander display than in this trainwreck of an election. Defending the two-party system after it has forced this dreadful Hobson's choice on us won't be easy.

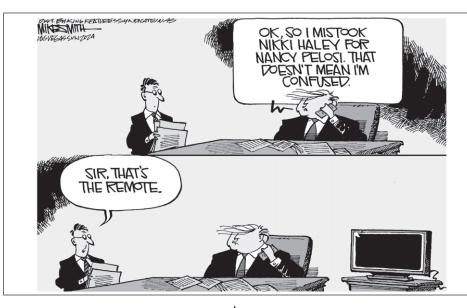
In his 2020 book, The Storm before the Calm, George Friedman predicted that after a tumultuous decade, there will be a historic reset of the American political landscape in 2028. His prediction is predicated to a large degree on the collapse of traditional institutional authority and credibility, including our two moribund political parties.

Most Americans are not actively engaged in politics. They are too busy making a living, caring for their families, coaching youth sports, attending their place of worship, and the myriad other activities that make up their daily lives to pay a lot of attention to the nonsense that passes for civic discourse today. So far, they have been content to suffer the growing dysfunction of our government at all levels, as is indicated by the fact that a third of Americans do not bother to vote, even in presidential elections. Many who do, mostly go to vote, with little enthusiasm, for the least objectionable alternatives on the ballot.

But as Theodore Roosevelt once observed, "The American people are slow to wrath, but when their wrath is once kindled it burns like a consuming flame." I think that moment is coming, and perhaps as George Friedman predicts, it will come in the next election cycle. It may be a wild ride, but I agree that there will be calm on the other side of the building storm.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Opinions expressed here are not necessarily that of this newspaper or its staff. YOUR OPINION is welcome. Send a letter for possible publication to Grafikpress Newspapers, 5906 Star Lane, Houston TX 77057 or an email to GRAFIKSTAR@aol.com. Please limit your words to about 200. Letters will be subject to editing. Thank you.





STATE CAPITAL HIGHLIGHTS By Gary Borders

Federal Judge Appears Skeptical of New Border Law

A federal judge is expected to rule quickly on the constitutionality of a Texas law about to go into effect that institutes new state penalties for illegal border crossings. During a hearing last week, U.S. District Judge David Ezra said he had concerns that other states would follow Texas' lead in creating their own immigration laws – a power given exclusively to the federal government under the U.S. Constitution.

The Austin American-Statesman reported the U.S. Justice Department sued the state over the law set to go into effect next month. It would allow any law enforcement official in the state to arrest someone here illegally, with mandatory sentences of between six months and 20 years.

An attorney with the Texas attorney general's office argued the state's immigration law should be seen as necessary because of increased illegal immigration. Ezra questioned the ramifications of Texas setting a precedent for other states to reject federal authority and create their own immigration laws.

"I will try to get my decision out as quickly as I possibly can," he said, noting that however he rules, it will be appealed.

PAXTON, CORNYN TRADE BARBS OVER AID BILL

U.S. Sen. John Cornyn and Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton escalated their feud last week, after Cornyn backed a \$95 billion aid package to Ukraine, Israel and Taiwan, The Dallas Morning News reported. Paxton on social media blasted Cornyn, with the senator responding that the embattled attorney general should mind his own business – specifically his pending secu-

rities fraud trial.

"Unbelievable that
@JohnCornyn would stay up
all night to defend other countries borders, but not America,"
Paxton posted on X, formerly
Twitter.

Cornyn quickly responded.

"Ken, your criminal defense lawyers are calling to suggest you spend less time pushing Russian propaganda and more time defending longstanding felony charges against you in

HIGHLANDS

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Entered as Periodicals Class at Highlands Post Office, Highlands, TX 77562. Under the Act of Congress of March 3, 1879. Published 50 weeks per year, on Thursday, by Grafikpress Corp., 5906 Star Lane, Houston, TX 77057. Opinions in this paper are those of the authors, and not necessarily this newspaper's. Any erroneous statement which may appear

will be corrected when brought to the attention of the publisher. Liability for errors is limited to the reprinting of the corrected version. Submissions are encouraged, in person, by mail, by Fax, or by email, to grafikstar@aol.com.

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ad address changes to Star-Courier, P. O. Box 405, Highlands, TX 77562

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Houston, as well as ongoing federal grand jury proceedings in San Antonio that will probably result in further criminal charges," he wrote on X.

By Gary Borders

PAINFULLY SLOW ROLLOUT OF BROADBAND FEARED

Texas is due to receive \$3.3 billion in federal funds for expanding broadband internet, but internet providers in rural areas are worried the money won't be used efficiently to improve high-speed connections for the 7 million residents now lacking that resource.

The Texas Tribune reported a relatively new state office is trying to build a staff to oversee the work, noting earlier federal funding programs have seen limited success because many companies underestimated the costs to install broadband in sparsely populated areas.

"We want to make sure that there's a responsible allocation of these dollars," said Rusty Moore, COO of Big Bend Telephone Company in Alpine. "We've been very vocal about where the challenges are."

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act signed by President Joe Biden in 2021 provides \$42.5 billion nationwide for broadband access and aims to connect 2.5 million households in Texas. Texas received the largest portion of the funds and created the Broadband Development Office to manage disbursement of its share.

DEMOCRATS PROPOSE BILL TO CONNECT TEXAS TO NATIONAL GRIDS

Two Democratic members of the U.S. House of Representatives plan to introduce legislation that would require the

CROSBY

.Gilbert Hoffman

Julieta Paita

Electric Reliability Council of Texas to connect to major electric grids outside of Texas, the Houston Chronicle reported.. The measure, sponsored by Rep. Greg Casar, D-Texas, and Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, D-N.Y., said Texans would save money, avoid blackouts, and help fight the climate crisis since Texas leads the nation in clean energy production.

"Over 10 million Texans needlessly lost power, hundreds of people died, and there were these mass power outages that we all knew could have been avoided," Casar said in a news conference last week, referring to the February 2021 winter storm.

Nearly all of Texas is served by the state's stand-alone grid system, except for parts of East Texas, El Paso and the upper Panhandle.

NONMEDICAL VACCINE EXEMPTIONS AT RECORD LEVELS

Vaccine exemptions for non-medical reasons hit record levels among Texas schoolchildren last year, the Chronicle reported, with 3.24% of Texas kindergarteners receiving an exemption "for reasons of conscience," according to the Texas Department of State Health Services. That's almost double the rate from 10 years ago.

The exemptions are part of the "post-pandemic momentum behind anti-vaccine messaging," the story said. A number of bills were filed during the 2023 legislative session to restrict education regarding vaccines and access to vaccines. House Bill 44 was signed into law and took effect last September. It threatens to withhold Medicaid funding for physicians who refuse to offer vaccine exemptions for pa-

"I'm looking at the unintended consequences that law-makers aren't necessarily thinking about because they want to get their win and move on," said Rekha Lakshmanan, chief strategy officer at The Immunization Partnership. "But then, all of us Texans are left holding the bag."

COMPUTERS NOW SCORING STAAR ESSAYS

Written responses on the state's performance exam will most likely be scored by a computer, The News reported. The Texas Education Agency rolled out a new model for evaluating student answers on the State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STARR) in December, saying three-quarters of written responses are graded by an "automated scoring engine."

The automated scoring engine is "programmed by humans, overseen by humans, and is analyzed at the end by humans," said Jose Rios, director of the student assessment division for TEA, told The News.

TEA officials said the new test format, which includes essays at every grade level, would require four to five times the number of human scorers and cost up to \$20 million more. Under the new format, only one in four student essays will be scored by a human.



A New Life for Felix



Last night was surprisingly calm, all things considered.

I told my husband, Peter, that he should not plan to get a good night's sleep. I told him this because Peter has never had a cat, and yesterday, we adopted one.

I have had several cats over the years, but my last cat, Lucy, died just a few months before I met Peter, 10 years ago. Peter has had dogs all his life and knows nothing about cats (which means every cat who has ever met him finds him fascinating).

So we decided we would adopt a Mexican cat and take it to and from Mexico with us. Last Saturday, we had our first visit with Felix.

Felix is an adolescent. He was a stray cat, so we don't know exactly how old he is, but the kind ladies who rescued him are guessing he is about 5 months old. Marsala and her sister, Elena, and Elena's daughter, Daniela, brought him over to visit. I thought, right then and there, Felix was a very well-behaved kitty. I expected him to be wild and scared in a new house. But he stretched out on the sofa and looked as if he might go to sleep.

"What a mellow kitty!" I told hem. "He is very relaxed," Elena

said.

So after we had all the supplies we needed, they brought Felix to live with us. I could tell Daniela, who is 13 and wants to be a veterinarian, was a little sad.

"Will you miss him?" I asked. Daniela nodded. But I showed her the new litter box and the carrier we bought to bring Felix back with us to the U.S., and his fluffy little bed and the two matching bowls I'd bought for him at the market. Daniela seemed to approve, and she left her little charge with us for his

He fell fast asleep—until the middle of the night.

first night.

"What was that?" Peter asked. Peter sleeps with earplugs when we are in Mexico, but the noise outside our bedroom woke him. I went to investigate. It appeared there had been some small-scale vandalism in the night. The garbage can had been mysteriously overturned and bits of crumbled bread were all over the floor.

"Oh, Felix!" I said.

Felix came running to me and bumped his head against me. Then he circled around me as I cleaned up breadcrumbs, purring all the while.

We fell back to sleep. A little later in the night, we heard meowing. It got louder and louder.

Marcela and Elena rescue dogs and cats from the streets. At last count, they were caring for 11 dogs and three cats, so their house must be very lively. When Felix woke, there was no one in the room but him. I imagine it must have been a surprise, waking up all alone.

"Felix!" I called. "We're in here!" Felix came running. He jumped up on the bed, discovered the two gringos under the covers and started purring again.

So far, Felix seems to be happy in his new home. He has discovered that Peter keeps all sorts of interesting things on his bedside table that can be knocked off and played with in the middle of the night. He has discovered how easily the garbage can be tipped over and how much fun can be had with the contents. And he has discovered the two sleepy people in bed who—if things get too scary—can be relied upon to scratch his chin.

I think Felix is liking his new

Till next time. Carrie





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*Online information will be added the week of Feb. 27-30

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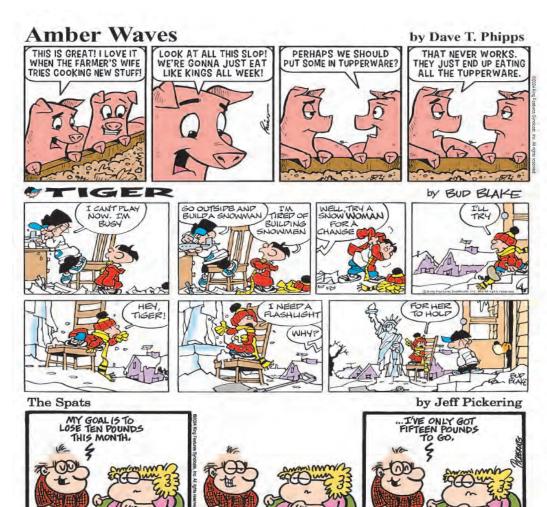
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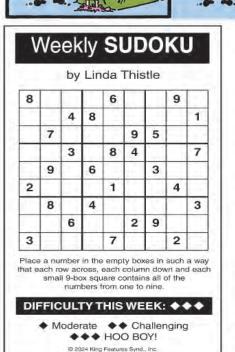
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Rodriguez 1. LITERATURE: In the children's book, what is Doctor Dolittle's special talent? 2. ART: Who painted the work titled "Starry monly used to make pickles?

3. FOOD & DRINK: Which vegetable is com-4. MUSIC: What is pop singer Taylor Swift's

favorite number?

5. MEDICAL: What is a common name for

6. BUSINESS: When was the Chia Pet invent-

7. U.S. PRESIDENTS: Who was the first

American to win a Nobel Prize? 8. HISTORY: The Aztec civilization emerged

in which modern-day country?

9. TELEVISION: Who played the character Michael Scott on TV's "The Office"? 10. GEOGRAPHY: The volcano Mount Vesu-

vius overlooks which modern-day Italian city? @ 2024 King Features Synd., Inc.

Peace Prize.; 8. Mexico.; 9. Steve Carell.; 10. Naples. 5. Tears or crying.; 6. 1977 (Chia Guy).; 7. Theodore Roosevelt, the Nobel 1. He can talk with animals.; 2. Vincent van Gogh.; 3. Cucumbers.; 4. 13.; Trivia Test Answerst



HIGHLANDS ROTARY **CLUB NEWS**



Rotarian Connie Russell receives Sampson Lodge #231 Community Builder Award



CONNIE RUSSELL, center, poses with her Community Builder Award. Others in the picture are Rotary Club members and Sampson Lodge officials. Past Recipients of the Community Builder Award include the Rotary Club of Highlands, Rotarian Sheila McDonald, and Rotarian Gilbert Hoffman.

Rodeo at Rotary

Houston Livestock Show & Rodeo speaker Don Nichols brought his guitar to the Highlands Rotary Club luncheon last week. He gave a talk on the benefits to the community from the RODEOHOUSTON



by Tony Rizzo

HOLLYWOOD — It's not a good sign when multiple cast members of a movie appear on every talk show to promote their film. "Argylle" stars Henry Cavill, Bryce Dallas Howard, Bryan Cranston and Ariana DeBose hit them all - morning and night. One reason may be because the \$200 million film has received mixed reviews from 33% of the top critics on Rotten Tomatoes, and its success or failure may determine the fate of the next two films in the spy trilogy.

In 2015, Cavill starred in a film version of the hit spy TV series "The Man From U.N.C.L.E.," with Armie Hammer and Alicia Vikander (who won an Oscar the following year for "The Danish Girl"). The film cost \$75 million and only grossed \$110 million. Many have hoped Cavill would be the next James Bond, but he probably won't be considered anymore now that he's done "Argylle" and Guy Ritchie's next two films an untitled action film that has already been completed and "The Ministry of Ungentlemanly Warfare," with Alex Pettyfer, Henry Golding, Cary Elwes and "Reacher's" Alan Ritchson.

In 2022, Ariana DeBose won an Oscar as Anita in Steven Spielberg's "West Side Story," a role that also won Rita Moreno her Oscar. It was originally created on Broadway by the late, great Chita Rivera, who passed away on Jan. 30. DeBose, proving to be multitalented, has completed two more films: the superhero epic "Kraven the Hunter" due Aug. 30, opposite Aaron Taylor-Johnson and Russell Crowe, and her first top-billed film — the supernatural-horror film "House of Spoils," in which she plays a

Amazon MGM Studios will release "I Am: Celine Dion," which follows the singing superstar from her diagnosis with Stiff Person Syndrome through the first year of her journey trying to live an open, authentic life despite her illness. Our prayers and thoughts are with you, Celine Dion.



Ariana DeBose ("West Side Story")

"Dune" was divided into two films, with "Dune: Part Two" scheduled to drop on March 1. The second part stars Timothee Chalamet, Zendaya, Austin Butler and Florence Pugh. "Dune: Part One" cost \$165 million and grossed \$402 million. Now word comes that there'll be a "Dune 3" based on Frank Herbert's second novel "Dune Messiah."

When asked if she'd sign on for a third film, Zendaya proclaimed, "I mean of course. Anytime Denis [Villenueve] calls, it's a yes from me, at least." Chalamet agreed, stating: "I think we're all super-enthusiastic about that." (His "Wonka" film has already passed \$600 million.)

(Spoiler alert ahead!) Even though Butler has completed "The Bikeriders" (due June 21) and the recently released Apple TV+ series "Masters of the Air," don't expect to see him in "Dune 3," except maybe in a flashback. Just like "Elvis" had left the building, Butler has left Arrakis!

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NOTICE TO CREDITORS

Notice is hereby given that Original Letters Testamentary for Docket No. 521890; Estate of WALTER RAYMOND ALLEN, Deceased; In Probate Court No. 1 of Harris County, Texas, were issued on FEBRUARY 19, 2024 to:

WALTER RAYMOND ALLEN

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 22, 2024

by WESTON COTTEN Attorney for the Estate

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Trail Riders on their way to RodeoHouston

Continued from Page 1: Northeastern Trail Ride brings a bit of history to Crosby

Bar Rodeo Arena off FM 1409 in Dayton. Construction in Dayton and parts of Liberty County made the fourth day a little more arduous, but the trail riders made their way into Crosby, coming down US 90 to Church Street and then into the Crosby Rodeo and Fairgrounds around 4:30 p.m. on Wednesday. The Thursday trek took riders into the Sheldon area and north Houston at Triangle Seven Arena off Parker Road. On Friday, the trail riders rode into Memorial Park and met up with 10 other trail rides and hundreds more riders and wagons who spent the night before the Saturday pa-

The trail ride was founded by Bruno's father and 13 other friends and family members.

"We wanted to represent the northeast part of town where we live and our Louisiana culture," Bruno said. His father, Joseph, rode in the trail ride until he turned 82 and physically could no longer make the trek into Houston. He passed away at 90 in 2022, the day after Christmas.

Bruno's great great grandfather was born a slave and worked as a stable boy.

"He would train the mules and horses for the plantation that he lived on. That's where our horse and mule interest came into play. We've had horses all our lives," Bruno said.

The trail boss retired from trucking after 30 years and went back to work with his dad as a longshoreman at the Port of Houston.

"You can't imagine how much water is moved across those waters," he smiled. He praised the insurance his father had through the longshoremen local and believed it helped extend his life.

The smaller group is tough on the trail ride.

"It's economics. This is an expensive hobby. We're just doing our best to keep our culture alive and teaching people about our history," he said.

Like his father taught him, Bruno had his daughter with him on the trail ride this year.

The trail ride started with 36 riders, but not all can take the whole week off, so they join them on different days during the ride.

We have more people on our roster than rides on the trail ride, so they kind of rotate the days off," he

The riders are escorted by law enforcement and every trail ride has scouts who are responsible for the safety of the riders, flagging down traffic and leading the trail mostly on the side of the road or in a single lane so traffic can go around them safely.



The Northeastern Trail Ride is one of the smaller groups to make their way to the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo, but a proud one with a rich history and tradition. The group travels approximately 111 miles from Cheek, Texas near Beaumont to Memorial Park every year for the annual HLSR parade.



Trail riders wind down Church Street in Crosby on their way to the Crosby Rodeo and Fairgrounds. Flagmen for the trail ride are wearing the construction type vests and flags to direct traffic.

"When we get home after this trail ride, we start immediately planning for next year," Bruno said. "We already have campsites secured for next year and we can always make adjustments if something comes up."

The trail ride is a little more modernized using RV's and custom trailers for the meals at night and sleeping arrangements.

Typical fare includes chili one night, etouffee another, and other trail delicacies.

Along the trail, riders make stops at local elementa-

ry schools in Devers, Dayton, and Sheldon to present scholarships and share history with the kids.

Some of that history includes the restoration of the wagons.

"Every wagon out here is an authentic 1800 wagon," he said. "They are refurbished, but the undercarriage on all of them are from the 1800's and brought up to standards." Some of those wagons are from the plantations in Louisiana and a couple from Tennessee.

"The Amish do a lot of refurbishing work on the wag-

Bruno has been riding since he was 9 years old and has no plans of retiring from the trail ride. He plans on continuing his legacy, sharing history to anyone who will listen.

Judge at the Rodeo,

deo season, Harris County Hat Toss Day, where we officially welcomed one of our prized tenants, the Houston Livestock Show & Rodeo, to Harris County's NRG Stadium. Harris County and the Houston Livestock Show & Rodeo have such a special relationship and the rodeo means so much to our community. I think we can all remember the first time we came to the rodeo and just being in awe of how impressive it is and how much it brings our community together. Going forward, the opening day of Cookoff will always be Harris County Hat Toss Day," said Judge Lina Hidalgo.

Press event attendees included: Lina Hidalgo, Harris County Judge

Ed Gonzalez, Harris County Sheriff

Ryan Walsh, CEO/Harris County Sports & Convention Corporation Executive Director NRG Park

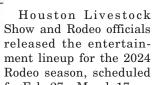
Pat Mann Phillips, Houston Livestock Show & Rodeo, Chairman of the Board

Dr. Chris Boleman, Houston Livestock Show & Rodeo, President & CEO

Howdy, Rodeo Mascot

The Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo is a co-tenant in the 1.9 million-square-foot NRG Stadium, the largest and most expensive rodeo and football facility ever built. The rodeo has been held at NRG Stadium since 2003. The Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo is a Section 501(c)(3) charity that benefits youth, supports education, and facilitates better agricultural practices through exhibitions and presentation.

Rodeo Announces Star-Studded 2024 RODEOHOUSTON® Entertainment Lineup



Show and Rodeo is proud to bring such a wide range of musical genres to the RODEOHOUSTON stage," said Chris Boleman, Rodeo president and CEO. "We're welcoming 10 new entertainers who will make their debut on the star stage, as well as many fan-favorites from a variety of genres from our country roots, to EDM and hip-hop.'

Some of these artists have special connections to the Rodeo including 50 Cent. In 2023, his Champagne, Le Chemin du Roi Brut won the Rodeo Uncorked!® Grand Champion Best of Show honors and was auctioned off for a record-setting \$325,000. A true Houston icon, Bun B debuted on the rap scene in 1992, and over the past two years, he has had dozens of guest appearances during his performances at RODEOHOUSTON. This year, Bun B has another incredible lineup of guest artists who will join him on the star stage.

As for the Jonas Brothers, they will be returning to RODEOHOUSTON for the first time in over a decade. We are thrilled to welcome back longtime supporters of the Rodeo, Brad Paisley, Hank Williams Jr., Zac Brown Band and for KING + COUN-TRY. Los Tigres Del Norte will return to RODEO-HOUSTON to perform on Go Tejano Day, presented by Fiesta Mart, on Sunday, March 10. 2024 will be memorable for country star Luke Bryan as he performs for the 10th time on the iconic star stage in NRG Stadium. The Rodeo is thrilled to showcase both Lainey Wilson and HAR-DY before they begin their own tours later this year. And award-winning artist, Eric Church will close out

for Feb. 27 - March 17. The Houston Livestock

The following entertainers will perform on the RODEO-HOUSTON stage in NRG Stadium, Feb. 27 - March Tuesday, February 27 -

Pearce Armed Forces Appreciation Day presented by Crown RoyalThursday, February 29 - for KING + COUNTRYFriday,

March 1 – 50 Cent Black Heritage Day presented by KrogerSaturday,

March 2 - HARDYSunday, March 3 - Ivan CornejoMon-

March 4 – Hank Williams Jr. First Responders Day presented by BP AmericaTuesday,

March 5 - Oliver Anthony-Wednesday, March 6 – Jelly Roll

Community Day presented by TC EnergyThursday, March 7 - Luke Bryan Volunteer Appreciation Day

Presented Phillips 66Friday, March 8 - Major LazerSat-March 9 - Lainey Wilson-

March 10 - Los Tigres del Norte Go Tejano Day presented by Fiesta MartMon-

March 11 - Whiskey MyersTuesday,

March 12 - Bun BWednesday, March 13 - Nickelback-Thursday, March 14 – Zac Brown BandFriday, March 15 – Jonas BrothersSaturday, March 16 – Brad PaisleySunday,

March 17 - Eric Church

chased tickets, download

ports Texas youth, showcases Western heritage, and provides year-round educational support within the community. Since its

beginning in 1932, the Rodeo has committed more than \$600 million to the youth of Texas and education. The 2024 Rodeo is scheduled for Feb. 27 -March 17. The 2024 World's Championship Bar-B-Que Contest, presented by Cotton Holdings, is scheduled for Feb. 22 -24. For more information, visit rodeohouston.com and follow @RODEO-HOUSTON online via Facebook, X (Twitter), <u>Instagram</u> and <u>YouTube</u> for all the latest news.



Blake Shelton Opening Day presented by Texas CapitalWednesday, February 28 - Carly

the 2024 Rodeo on Sunday,

OHOUSTON entertainer

lineup will perform on the

star stage for the first

time: Carly Pearce, 50

Cent, HARDY, Ivan

Cornejo, Nickelback, Oliv-

er Anthony, Jelly Roll,

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son, Whiskey Myers and.

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Wave 2 tickets for March 8 - 17 performanc-(The Online Waiting

Rooms will open at 9:30 a.m. for Wave 1 and 1:30 p.m. for Wave 2. Customers in the Waiting Room

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A place in the Waiting Room does not guarantee tickets. Ticket prices start at

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Individual Rodeo tickets can be purchased online at All tickets will be deliv-Mobile ID Delivery; please

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login with the email used to purchase tickets. About the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo The Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo promotes agriculture by hosting an annual, family-friendly experience that educates and entertains the public, sup-

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