

Crosby
Volunteer Fire
Department
15 Year Award
- Fire Chief
Alan Kulak
presents the
15 year
Service Award
to Ruben Leal.
See STORY
and PHOTOS
on Pages 1
and 2.



HIGHLANDS

CROSBY

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THURSDAY, MARCH 21, 2024

P.O. DRAWER 446, HIGHLANDS, TEXAS 77562

IN THE STARS

EVENTS

Crosby Chamber EXPO March 21

Crosby/Huffman Chamber will hold a Business EXPO Thursday, March 21 from 11:30am-1:00pm at the Crawfish Shack, 5822 FM 2100, Crosby. Join the EXPO and chat about everything business in an awesome and fun environment. Each Chamber member will have the opportunity to share thoughts and ideas to their business community. Deadline to RSVP is March 14. Reserve your table today! For more information, contact Traci.Galyean@marriott.com. Crosby/Huffman Chamber, 281-328-6984 or chamber@crosbyhuffmancc.org.

North Shore Rotary FISH FRY Sat. April 20

North Shore Rotary will hold its 49th Annual Catfish Fry, Shrimp and Crawfish Boil. Serving from 11:00am to 3:00pm, at the Rotary Pavilion on Wallisville Road behind the Courthouse.

Also a Live and Silent Auction, and a Raffle to award a lucky ticket holder a new Toyota Tundra Pickup truck, or a Toyota Rav4 SUV, from Community Toyota*Honda*Kia. Raffle tickets \$100, Food Tickets \$15, available from all North Shore Rotarians.

HIGHLANDS/LYNCHBURG CHAMBER

I-10 Replacement Bridge Design nearly complete

By David Taylor
Managing Editor

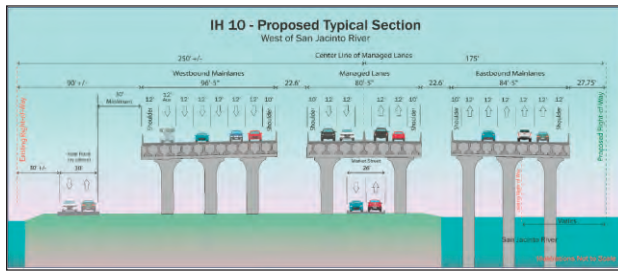
Highlands Chamber of Commerce members were happy to hear from TxDOT representatives concerning one new project and another that has yet to materialize but shows promise.

TxDOT Project Manager Stephan Gage was the main speaker discussing the I-10 East Planning and Environmental Linkages Study and the presentation ended with Project Manager Jeanne C. Javadi briefly answering questions concerning the I-10 at San Jacinto River Bridge Reconstruction project.

Most members' interest was piqued by the more looming bridge contract since most are directly affected by the construction.



TxDOT's Stephan Gage speaks at the Highlands Chamber luncheon.



Cross-section of the new Bridge Design shows three structures with a "managed" reversible lane in the middle of two one-way bridges.

Javadi confirmed that the project is on schedule.

"We're finishing up the schematic design and then it will go through a very formal process with the Federal Highway Administration," she said on Friday.

The project is just over 4 miles long and begins at Magnolia Road and ends at Thompson Road and includes the Spur 330 exchange.

The funding has been secured and includes both state and federal funds.

Javadi said it will take the next couple of years to finalize the plans and secure the right-of-way they need.

"It's not a lot," she said, "just adjusting utilities and so on, but it does take time."

She anticipated seeing contract letting by September of 2027.

Javadi estimated the project to cost taxpayers approximately \$555 million.

It's a project she said the district is focusing on.

"We're putting a lot of effort into it," she said. "It's a priority project. When it was shut down because of the (barge) accident, we realized how vital it is."

She also confirmed that it will be bid on one contract and not several that can sometimes occur and it will be a steel bridge.

"We will have three bridges essentially," she described it. "We'll build the south segment first, which will be eastbound, and then there will be a bridge in the middle for managed (HOV) lanes, two time."

Continued. See CHAMBER hears about I-10 Bridge, Page 5

Dakota Ehlenberg named Crosby Firefighter of the Year

By David Taylor
Managing Editor

Every year, at least as long as Crosby Volunteer Fire Department fire chief Alan Kulak can remember, the department has been hosting a banquet to celebrate the successes and reward the members of the department who have exhibited exemplary work during the year. Kulak, who has been with the department for 43 years, is proud that the department continues



Crosby VFD FIREFIGHTER OF THE YEAR — Chief Alan Kulak, Assistant Chief Russell White, and Assistant Chief Ryan Allen present Dakota Ehlenberg with the 2023 Firefighter of the Year Award.

the tradition.

"It started out as being nothing but a potluck dinner," he said, "and this year we were able to celebrate at the Monument Inn," he said, a considerable step up.

The department has much to celebrate and give thanks for, Kulak said, with the growth of a department that once had only one station and a couple of trucks to battle fires.

Now, they have grown to five stations with at

least a couple dozen apparatus, and equipment to outfit their 85-member strong department.

Among the awards given out at the banquet was Rookie of the Year awarded to Isaiah Herrera, Junior Firefighter of the Year earned by Dillion Bear-don, and 2023 Firefighter of the Year awarded to Dakota Ehlenberg. Angelica Quintero won the 2023 Explorer of the Year award, Jonathan Riker

Continued. See CROSBY FIREFIGHTER OF THE YEAR, Page 2

Highlands Rotarians spread Valentine Love to Senior Citizens



Happy Valentine's Day! Highlands Rotary Club partnered with the San Jacinto Community Center and sponsored a Valentine's Day Party for over 100 Senior Citizens. Rotarians provided and served an Italian lunch and dessert. San Jacinto Community Center staff provided a bouquet of flowers for all the ladies and the entertainment. A good time was had by all!!!

UIL realignments announced for area

Eastside Districts thrown into a Fray with Realignment

By David Taylor
Managing Editor

Realignment always brings hope and change, but mostly results in heartache and heartburn for some schools. Eastside school districts Crosby, Huffman, Sterling, Lee, Barbers Hill, and Goose Creek Memorial will find some love, and some tough roads for the next two years.

The football gods at UIL realign and reclassify teams based on their enrollments to balance fair play between schools every two years.

The new enrollment

figures this next biennium include 6A numbers at 2,275 and above, 5A is 1,315-2,274, while 4A numbers are 545-1,314, 3A enrollments 254-544, 2A from 105-253, and 1A 104.9 and below. Some districts petition to be moved up, some move up or down because of increasing or decreasing enrollments. Others petition the changes based on driving distance or what might seem to make more sense for them. The appeals have been filed and UIL granted some and refused others.

Here's how the chips fell for area schools:

Barbers Hill—5A Division 1, District 9

The Eagles 2023 campaign (9-3, 6-2) was a memorable one, but not always for the best reasons. Their only two regular season losses came against district champ La Porte (34-29) and an overtime loss to third place Porter (27-21). Losing by a combined six points was bittersweet for Barbers Hill sending them into the playoffs against McKinney North, which the Eagles conquered easily 43-21, and an ear-

Continued. See UIL Realignment, Page 5

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Crosby VFD Honors Heroes and Tradition at Annual Banquet,

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

was presented the Captain of the Year award, and Fire Marshal Jacque Darbonne was named the Officer of the Year.

Longevity awards were given to 15-year veteran Ruben Leal, 10-year veterans Casey Ward and Gage White, and 5-year veterans Safety Officer Jeff Stilwell, Training Captain John Garcia, and Michael Speaks.

Kulak, who was hit hard by the COVID-19 virus and faced death, survived, and worked a full-time job for Exxon-Mobil 33 years before retiring.

"This has been my community service to Crosby since 1981," he said proudly. His buddy, Assistant Chief Russell White, joined shortly afterward in 1984 and the two have seen a lot from where they came to their lot in life now at the department.

"We now have five stations to serve the Crosby area," he said, each with four to five apparatus including a fire truck, tanker, four by four booster truck, and now high-water vehicles and boats to aid in water rescue where necessary.

While the area is becoming more urbanized, there are still good portions of the district that remain rural and difficult to access without the correct equipment.

The amazing success of the department, Kulak believes, is it remains fully volunteer operated.

"We have systems in place and programs for our members and many still do a 12-hour shift," he said. They are one of the very few in the county that maintain a fully volunteer department.

Last year, the department responded to 1,315 emergency responses for service, an increase over 1,285 responses in 2022.

"We've had a steady increase every year," the chief said remembering how the early days were a couple dozen a month.

"With the Crosby-Bartlett Station growth pace, who knows how much more year to year. We need more roads to move traffic safely and help re-

duce motor vehicle incidents," he hoped.

Of those 1,315 incidents they responded to, they were broken down into fire calls, motor vehicle rescues, UTV accidents, structure fires, vehicle fires, gas leaks, hazmat, grass fires, trash fires, down power lines, and various public assist calls with children locked in cars, and even mutual aid provided to nearby agencies.

When Kulak first joined, the only station was on Reidland near the Mobile station.

"Now we use it as our maintenance facility and use it to store supplies and equipment," he said.

The department struggled to pay bills for years until the public voted to allow them to capture a portion of the sales tax.

"That's been a real blessing," he said. "For years and years, we were struggling. We had no money in the 80s and we were begging for donations and barely survived. We held fundraisers, barbecues, and street dances," he recalled.

Even with a solid 85 volunteers, Kulak said it's never enough.

"We're always looking for more volunteers to join us," he said.

To entice more volunteers to join them, they are now participating in the Texas Emergency Service Retirement System. After 15 years, members become vested and earn a retirement from the department.

"We spend a lot of time and money for training and so we want to keep them as long as we can," he said.

Kulak said it costs at least \$11,000 to outfit a firefighter with the right equipment, not including their radio, which can cost as much as \$7,500 or more.

"It's used on a county-wide radio system that stems from interoperability from 9/11," he said. "That was one of the positive outcomes of 9/11."

In the Houston area, he deemed it critical with the weather-related events like hurricanes, tornadoes, and such that affect the community.



Chief Alan Kulak presenting 15-year service award to Ruben Leal.



Training Captain John Garcia presented the Rookie of the Year Award to Isaish Herrera. He is joined by Matt Klein, training lieutenant.



Chief Alan Kulak and Assistant Chief Alan Kulak present his 5-year service award to Training Captain John Garcia. He is joined by Assistant Chief Ryan Allen.



Chief Alan Kulak and Assistant Chief Russell White present a 5-year service award to Michael Speaks. He's joined by Assistant Chief Ryan Allen.



Chief Alan Kulak presents a 5-year service award to Safety Officer Jeff Stilwell. He is joined by Assistant Chief Russell White and Assistant Chief Ryan Allen.



Chief Alan Kulak and Assistant Chief Russell White present a 10-year service award to Casey Ward. They are joined by Assistant Chief Ryan Allen.



Chief Alan Kulak and Assistant Chief Russell White present a 10-year service award to Gage White. He is joined by Assistant Chief Ryan Allen.



Chief Alan Kulak and Assistant Chief Russell White present Jonathan Riker the 2023 Captain of the Year Award. They are joined by Assistant Chief Ryan Allen.



from left are John Garcia, training captain; Warren Thompson, Station 82, captain; Gage White, Station 84, captain; Jonathan Riker, Station 81 captain; and Brian McClanahan, Station 83 captain. Not pictured, Miguel Najera, Station 85 captain.



Training Captain John Garcia presented Angelica Quintero the 2023 Explorer of the Year Award. They are joined by Matt Klein.



fire officers from left are Jeff Stilwell, safety officer; Russell White, assistant fire chief; Cameron Elles, District 81 chief; Ben Hathorne, District 82 chief; Ryan Allen, assistant fire chief; Alan Kulak, fire chief; and Jacque Darbonne, fire marshal.



Training Captain John Garcia presented the Junior Firefighter of the Year Award to Dillion Beardon. He is joined by Matt Klein.



Chief Alan Kulak and Assistant Chief Russell White present Fire Marshal Jacque Darbonne the Officer of the Year Award. They are joined by Assistant Chief Ryan Allen.

National Fallen Firefighters Foundation

9/11 Memorial Stair Climb and Walk "Under the Lights"


Hosted by Crosby Volunteer Fire Department

MARCH 23, 2024

6:00 pm

Crosby Cougar Stadium
14703 FM 2100
Crosby, Texas, 77532

Scan for more information or to register



Barbers Hill Press

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THURSDAY, MARCH 21, 2024

MONT BELVIEU, TEXAS 77580

ON THE HILL

Family History Day at the Sam Houston Regional Library and Research Center: Saturday, March 30 in Liberty

Liberty, TX – Have you ever wondered how to take care of your family's treasures, like old photographs, letters, scrapbooks, newspaper clippings and journals? Have you ever wondered how to learn more about the ancestors in those heirlooms? Now is your chance to learn how to discover and preserve of your family's history. The Sam Houston Regional Library and Research Center (SHC) in Liberty, part of the Texas State Library and Archives Commission (TSLAC), will be hosting on Saturday, March 30, a one-day family history workshop designed for new and advanced genealogists and people who are interested in learning how to keep their historic records safe.

TSLAC staff will provide sessions on finding your ancestors' stories within SHC and TSLAC collections and on basic preservation of paper-based materials. Attendees are encouraged to bring their own family treasures to get expert advice about their care. Pre-registered participants will receive a free preservation kit. Don't miss this free informative workshop! To pre-register, please email samhoustonscenter@tsl.texas.gov or call (936) 336-8821.

Schedule of events on Saturday, March 30:
10:00 am – 11:00 am Introduction to TSLAC Genealogy Resources, Tonia Wood, TSLAC Information Services Supervisor
11:00 am – 12:00 pm Deep Dive into Early Texas Records for Genealogists, Tonia Wood, TSLAC Information Services Supervisor
12:00 pm – 1:00 pm Lunch on Your Own
1:00 pm – 3:00 pm Preserving Your Family Treasures, Jelain Chubb, State Archivist

The Sam Houston Center is a component of the Texas State Library and Archives Commission and serves as the official regional historical resource depository for the 10 Southeast Texas counties of Chambers, Hardin, Jasper, Jefferson, Liberty, Newton, Orange, Polk, San Jacinto and Tyler. The Center's primary mission is to collect, preserve and provide access to historically significant state and local government records and publications of the designated region and secondarily to serve as a library of Texana and genealogical resources.

The Texas State Library and Archives Commission provides Texans access to the information needed to be informed, productive citizens by preserving the archival record of Texas; enhancing the service capacity of public, academic and school libraries; assisting public agencies in the maintenance of their records; and meeting the reading needs of Texans with disabilities. For more information, visit www.tsl.texas.gov.

Alana Inman, Manager, Sam Houston Regional Library and Research Center (936) 336-8821

'Mane Event' Helps fill Coffers for Bay Area Homeless Shelter; Wadzinski roasted

By David Taylor

He was a good sport—for the most part—as friends and acquaintances lobbed a few good-natured insults and jokes at the expense of Jim Wadzinski all in the name of raising funds for the Bay Area Homeless Shelter on Feb. 24 at the Hyatt Regency in Baytown.

The Mane Event 2024 famously hosts the dinner, live auction, and roasts an area celebrity to raise funds for maintenance and operation costs of the ministry at 3406 Wisconsin Street in Baytown.

Bill Eckert, executive director for BAHS, was thrilled with the outcome.

"I've been here since 2012 and we've been doing this every year. This was the most beautiful venue," he said. "We were so impressed the staff at the hotel who was really responsive to our needs and helped us put on the best one so far."

Eckert didn't have a final number on how much was raised because the total involved a combination of things.

"We had a very successful live auction, and the silent auction totals won't come in for a few days. We also have the donations for the beautiful flowers on the tables and we won't know till later how many scanned the QR code on the tables to make donations," he said. Despite having the exact numbers, Eckert felt like it was the best fundraiser they have held since his coming.

"It will be a record-setting year for us," he said proudly.

One of the tables front and center was decorated with a black tablecloth and a rose. Next to it was a photo of former Baytown mayor, the late Pete Alfaro who helped the floundering shelter when they were in financial need.

Wadzinski took a ribbing on the love for his Green Bay Packers. He was born and



Jim Wadzinski laughs at a zinger delivered by his boss Roger Elswick, Community Auto Group, at the annual The Mane Event which raises money for the Bay Area Homeless Shelter. Elswick was among several who roasted Wadzinski.



This was the first year that the late former Mayor of Baytown Pete Alfaro was not at the banquet. The formidable leader helped bail the non-profit out when they were financially strapped.

raised in Rhineland, Wisconsin and attended the University of Wisconsin where he studied Theater Performance and Business Administration.

Goose Creek Consolidated Independent School District Superintendent Dr. Randle O'Brien salivated returning the favor to Wadzinski after O'Brien was subject to the ridicule last year.

"We all know Jim supports public education because he named his son Sterling," O'Brien said. "He shouldn't have stopped there. He could have named his other son Robert E. Lee instead of Sean, or Charisse could have been named Goose," he joked.



Wadzinski wipes the brow of Goose Creek CISD Superintendent Randle O'Brien during the live auction as the price for an item grows exponentially. O'Brien got his revenge when he roasted Wadzinski later in the program



Roger Elswick of Community Auto Group hired Wadzinski in 2010 as the Community Affairs/ Customer Relations Director. He enjoyed his opportunity to tease his employee at The Mane Event on Saturday, Feb. 24.

One of the surprises of the night came when Wadzinski's hero, former Green Bay quarterback Brett Favre, made a cameo appearance via video courtesy of roaster Robin McDougald from Baytown Theater.

"I've heard you have a tendency to cheat at golf and you pre-cast your shows at the theater," Favre said to the laughter of the audience.

Retired police chief Keith Dougherty, a golf ringer that always seems to end up on Jim's team to help him allegedly win more trophies.

"He forgot to unblock my phone calls when I was chasing him down on an open war-

rant for hunting a Hodag out of season," Dougherty laughed while he was trying to call him back to agree to roast him at the event.

Jim's boss at Community Auto Group, Roger Elswick, opined Wadzinski's collection of community awards. "I just want you to think about how much these awards have cost me and not one of them has my name on them! All these items and awards should be company awards," he joked with Wadzinski.

The funds raised at The Mane Event are used to take care of the daily expenses including salaries, supplies, food, and miscellaneous ex-

penses that arise.

"We have a capital campaign that's underway as well to tear down two old buildings and install two state-of-the-art facilities to replace them," he said. Those funds are separate from the Mane Event fundraiser.

As a facility that operates 24/7 and 365 days each year, Eckert said this fundraiser was key to maintaining the viability of their work.

The executive director said that donations have been down, and he blames the state of the economy.

"The economy has a lot to do with it. Nationally, the philanthropic community has shifted their focus. Homeless shelters are not exactly on the top of everybody's list of things to support," he said.

Eckert said the shelter services a huge area of 2,100 square miles in east Harris County that includes Baytown, Channelview, Galena Park, Jacinto City, up to Crosby, and most of Chambers County.

"It's difficult. Most people when they leave work can shut out the lights out and walk out for a day off. We can't do that," he said. It's a lot of shifts and often overworked employees.

Master of Ceremonies Steve Don Carlos, former mayor of Baytown, urged the community to invest into the shelter.

"Our mission is different from most other homeless shelters," he explained. "We don't just provide a bed and a roof and food for folks, we give out what I like to call a hand up, not a handout. When families, men or women come into the homeless shelter, they are given financial counseling, we help them to find a job, out of their checks we will hold some until we have saved enough for them to get their own home or their own apartment" he said, helping them make their own way and fulfilling their own dreams.

Safari on the Hill: West Chambers County Pilot Club Gala Returns for Annual Fundraising Event 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 Hill".

For more information contact W.C.C.P.C. at P.O. Box 1032, Mont Belvieu, TX 77580, 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 will 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



2024 "Safari on the Hill" Gala Silent Auction Sculptures, School Bus and Jungle Gym donated to West Chambers County Pilot Club by BillyV's Upcycle Art, Billy Van De Berghe sculptor




(Pictured l-r) Shay's Jewelry Inc. Owner Shay Rogers and Grandson Brandon Gorman. Shay's Jewelry Inc. donated an Invicta Watch to the West Chambers County Pilot Club 2024 "Safari on the Hill" Gala Fundraiser Live Auction.



OPINION PAGE

OPINION
By **BILL KING**



HPD Not Investigating Crimes is No Surprise

I am sure you have seen the recent media coverage of a scandal that has broken, regarding the Houston Police Department routinely dropping the investigation of crimes by using a code indicating the case was being dropped for a lack of manpower. The fact that HPD was not investigating thousands of crimes should have been a surprise to absolutely no one.

In this Houston Chronicle column in 2008, I wrote about how awful HPD's clearance rates were. There has been no improvement since 2008. Here are the latest numbers for HPD from the Texas Department of Public Safety:

Offense	Percent Cleared
Murder	60%
Rape	19%
Robbery	15%
Aggravated Assault ³	28%
Burglary	5%
Larceny ⁴	4%
Auto Theft ⁵	6%
Arson	15%
Human Trafficking	21%

To be fair to HPD, the clearance rates are shockingly low for just about all law enforcement agencies. Here are the statewide averages and the clearance rates for the Harris County Sheriff's Department.

Offense	Statewide	Harris County Sheriff's Department
Murder	58%	55%
Rape	20%	9%
Robbery	22%	23%
Aggravated Assault ³	38%	54%
Burglary	9%	7%
Larceny ⁴	10%	7%
Auto Theft ⁵	7%	2%
Arson	24%	20%
Human Trafficking	35%	0%

Law enforcement predictably responds to criticism of their embarrassingly low clearance rates by complaining that it needs more resources and personnel. There is undoubtedly some validity to their complaint. But raising the clearance rate will require more than just throwing more money at law enforcement agencies.

Since I wrote my 2008 column, HPD's budget has increased by 73% (\$600MM\$1BB). That is about 20% higher than inflation. That could be explained had the department expanded to match Houston's population growth during that time, but rather its personnel has slightly declined (6,3756,254).

Some of you may recall that in 2009, Houstonians voted to allow the City to raise property taxes above the 2003 referendum cap by \$90 million. However, that increase did not result in any increase in personnel.

I agree with law enforcement that if we want to significantly move the needle on the clearance rate will take more resources. But that does not mean just blindly adding more "boots on the ground." We will have to be much smarter about how we approach the clearance rate problem.

First, we must devote more resources to forensics. While there have been some high-profile scandals about DNA tests being abused, the reality is that we have more forensics tools to solve crimes today than any time in history. But the backlogs at the Houston Forensic Science Center (HFSC) are completely unacceptable. According to its website, the average time to process a rape kit is 173 days. This is a total failure of our City to seek justice for rape victims and almost certainly contributes to HPD's abysmal 19% clearance rate for rapes, which is a disgrace. The backlog for firearm examination is a jaw-dropping 307 days.

Second, we must do more to prioritize investigation rather than patrol. I know that seeing a patrol car rolling through a neighborhood makes people feel safer, but actually taking dangerous criminals off the street will actually make them safer.

In this year's budget, about 22% of HPD's headcount (1,352) is assigned to investigation. That percentage has been gradually increasing in recent years but I would argue it has not increased nearly enough. There are a little over double that number assigned to patrol (2,874). About a third of the department's personnel are assigned to support, administrative, airport security, and other miscellaneous areas. I think the department should take a hard look at what support and administrative services could be outsourced or handled by civilian employees to increase the number of investigators.

Another idea I heard from one retired officer is to bring back retired detectives to work on cases on a contract basis. I am sure a detailed review of the department's operations would discover other ways to increase our investigative efforts. A better use of technology is likely one.

But if we want to solve more crimes, it must be made a priority. When I was running companies, one of my mantras was, "if you cannot measure it, you cannot manage it." So, clearance rates should be reported by HPD on a monthly basis. And we need to start paying attention to the clearance rates. The media needs to start paying attention to the clearance rates. When is the last time you heard the media report how awful the clearance rates are? I suspect never.

But most of all, City Council needs to start paying attention to the clearance rates and demanding answers from the Department as to why the rates are so low. The upcoming budget hearings would be an excellent time to do so.

Until we, as a community, demand better performance from all of our law enforcement agencies at solving crimes, the vast majority of victims will continue to be denied justice for the crimes committed against them. That should be on all of our consciences.

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**



Massive Wildfires Ignited by Power Lines

Two wildfires that burned more than 1 million acres in the Panhandle were caused by downed power lines, according to the Texas A&M Forest Service.

Juan Rodriguez, with the service, told the Texas Standard that its law enforcement investigators had concluded their probe into the source of the Smokehouse Creek and Windy Deuce fires.

"In this case, we saw winds that were over 60 and 70 miles an hour. And so, when the winds are doing that, driving down the roadways, you can just see power lines just bouncing up and down," Rodriguez said. "It's bound to cause one of these power lines to fail or something like that. So, you know, one of them or some of them may have fallen or just got out just due to the sheer wind."

Xcel Energy last Thursday issued a statement acknowledging that its facilities "appear to have been involved in an ignition of the Smokehouse Creek fire."

The company is urging people who lost property or livestock during the fires to submit a claim to the company.

As of Sunday, the Smokehouse Creek fire was 87% contained, while the Windy Deuce fire was 92% contained.

SOME INCUMBENTS LOSE IN PRIMARY

At least nine Texas House incumbents targeted by Gov. Greg Abbott and others lost bids for reelection in the March primary, while eight more are headed to runoff. The Dallas Morning News reported.

In addition, three sitting judges on the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals lost their races after Attorney General Ken Paxton and former President Donald Trump endorsed their opponents.

Abbott spent more than \$6 million to target incumbents who blocked his school choice proposal last year.

"He's made it clear that if you cross him, you're going to have to fight for your reelection," Austin-based lobbyist and political consultant Bill Miller said. "For some people, that's like, 'Bring it on.' For



others, it means, 'I quit.'"

House Speaker Dade Phelan faces a runoff without support from Abbott, who thus far has remained neutral in that race. Paxton and Trump backed his opponent, David Covey, after the House voted to impeach Paxton on corruption charges. The Senate ultimately acquitted Paxton.

Phelan trailed Covey in the March primary and called the upcoming runoff a battle for the "soul" of the Southeast Texas district.

"In the next couple of months, the deceit and vitriol we've witnessed from my opponent and his dark money allies is poised to escalate to even greater heights," he said in a statement.

The Texas runoff election for races where no candidate exceeded 50% is on May 28. Early voting begins on May 20 and ends on May 24.

CHARTER SCHOOL NETWORK PLACED UNDER CONSERVATORSHIP

The state's largest charter school network has been placed under conservatorship by the Texas Education Agency following a three-year investigation into its spending practices, the Texas Tribune reported. The arrangement is part of a settlement agreement between TEA and IDEA Public Schools, which has 143 campuses.

During the investigation, TEA learned IDEA officials used taxpayer dollars to purchase luxury driver services and spent \$15 million to lease a private jet.

IDEA's schools serve about 80,000 students in grades K-12. While independently run,

they are funded with state money, totaling about \$821 million in the current school year.

Under the arrangement, conservators have the authority to oversee and direct all district actions, though they will not fully take over governing the district.

IDEA said in a statement that it's "pleased to have reached a settlement agreement ... to resolve compliance issues our organization self-reported to regulators after an internal investigation in 2021."

TPWD APPROVES LAND SWAP WITH SPACE X

The Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission last week voted unanimously to swap 43 acres of state park to SpaceX in exchange for nearly 500 acres of privately-owned land near Port Isabel, the Texas Standard reported. The decision came despite hearing from Rio Grande Valley residents who opposed the swap.

The Boca Chica State Park land sought by SpaceX, owned by Elon Musk, is spread around the company's launch facilities. It contains some of the most sensitive habitats in the world, particularly for migrating shorebirds.

SpaceX has not purchased the 477 acres yet. TPWD will now conduct an environmental assessment of the land, which will include a 30-day comment period.

Dozens of Rio Grande Valley residents drove to Austin to attend the hearing and voice opposition. They questioned including why the hearing wasn't held in Brownsville.

"The process, the notice and this public meeting seems to have been intended to impede participation by the public, especially those who would be most impacted by the decision," Marisa Perales, an environmental justice attorney based in Austin, told commissioners.

COUNTIES BRACE FOR MASSIVE TRAFFIC AHEAD OF ECLIPSE

Hundreds of thousands of tourists are expected to flock to the Hill Country and other small towns in the prime viewing path of a rare solar eclipse on April 8. Some counties have already issued emergency declarations to help them prepare and respond to an expected strain on their infrastructure, The Dallas Morning News reported.

Bell and Kerr counties have already issued emergency declarations, and San Saba County is expected to do so as well. Hill Country officials are urging residents to stay home, avoid driving, refill prescriptions, buy groceries and fuel vehicles several days before the eclipse.

Some counties expect their population to double or even triple as folks flock to Texas to glimpse the rare phenomenon.

When the moon passes between the sun and Earth, the eclipse will result in total darkness for more than four minutes in areas in the path of totality. It will enter the state southwest of Uvalde at 12:10 p.m. and exit at 3:06 p.m. north of Texarkana.

THE POSTSCRIPT
By **Carrie Classon**

Rod Stewart Hair



"I like your hair!" a woman at the party said.

This is always nice to hear. My hair is my least endearing feature, primarily because there is not much of it. But since my husband, Peter, started cutting it, I worry a lot less.

"How does my hair look?" I ask as I head out the door. Peter always pretends to take this question very seriously. (He should, as my hairdresser.) He scrutinizes the top of my head for a long moment. He asks me to turn all the way around. Then he reaches over and tousles something on the top.

"Perfect!" he says. And I choose to believe him.

"My husband cuts it," I told the woman at the party. "He cuts his own hair, too!"

"Ooh! Isn't that hard?" "He's been doing it since he was 17, when the local barber wouldn't give him the haircut he wanted."

This is true. Peter started cutting his hair when the barber was threatening to give him a buzz cut—because that was the only kind of haircut he gave. Peter got up from the barber chair, walked out, and cut it himself. I like that story. Peter has always known what he wanted and has always figured he could learn new things.

"Don't tell people I cut my own hair!" Peter told me on the walk home.

"Why not?" "They'll think I'm strange." "You're married to me! I think they may have already formed an opinion."

Peter granted this was true. As it happens, I was feeling particularly pleased with my hair that evening because Peter had given me a haircut just that morning. Usually, the haircuts were his idea.

"Your hair could use a trim," he will announce in a way that makes it clear I am looking pretty scruffy. So I put on a raincoat, and raise my office chair as high as it will go, and he gets out his sharp scissors that make a satisfying "Snick! Snick! Snick!" noise and, in less than five minutes, he has cut my hair. He doesn't have much to work with, after all.

But this time, getting a haircut was my idea. I'd just watched an interview with Rod Stewart, the iconic rock star. He is 79 years old, and he has just released a jazz album. He is also a keen builder of model trains. But I was more interested in his hair than either his jazz or his trains. His hair looked great. I wondered how a man approaching 80 managed to have such ineffable style, and I decided it was, in large part, because he wasn't too worried about being tidy. Rod Stewart has the untidiest hair you're likely to find on an octogenarian (outside a long-term senior care facility), and I decided he was my new role model. His music is good. But his hair is terrific.

"I want hair like Rod Stewart!" I announced, after watching the interview, and Peter got out his noisy little scissors and set to work.

I'm not saying I look like Rod Stewart. I don't. He has a lot more hair and a lot more experience looking unkempt. But I woke up this morning and looked at myself in the mirror. I left the comb on the shelf. I ran my fingers through my hair and made it stand a little more on end than usual.

"How do you like your haircut?" my hairstylist asked.

"I love it," I told him. "I look just like Rod Stewart!" "You do," he said.

And I choose to believe him. Till next time, Carrie

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Medicaid, CHIP Postpartum Coverage Extension To 12 Months

AUSTIN – Governor Greg Abbott and the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) today announced that the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) has approved Texas' request to extend Medicaid and Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) coverage from two to 12 months after pregnancy.

"This past regular legislative session, I was proud to sign a crucial bipartisan law that extends postpartum coverage for Texas mothers from two to 12 months," said Governor Abbott. "With Texas' application approved by CMS, this postpartum extension will help Texas mothers receive high-quality healthcare across our great state. I thank the Texas Health and Human Services Commission, Senator Lois Kolkhorst, and Representative Toni Rose for their work to ensure this critical postpartum extension is available to new moth-

ers in need across Texas."

"I thank Governor Abbott and the Texas Legislature for standing by our families," said HHS Executive Commissioner Cecile Erwin Young. "Twelve months of postpartum coverage will help mothers across this state gain access to high-quality healthcare."

Last year, Governor Abbott signed House Bill 12 into law, which extended Medicaid and CHIP postpartum coverage from two to 12 months. The law will take effect on March 1, 2024. Under the state plan amendments, anyone enrolled in Medicaid or CHIP who is pregnant or becomes pregnant will be automatically enrolled for 12 months of postpartum coverage. Services covered by Medicaid and CHIP include prenatal doctor visits, prenatal vitamins, labor and delivery, and postpartum checkups.

Coverage will be auto-

matically reinstated for individuals who are not current Medicaid or CHIP recipients, but who were enrolled in Medicaid or CHIP in Texas while pregnant and are still within their 12-month postpartum period, as long as they are still residents of Texas. Their coverage will be reinstated for the remainder of their 12-month postpartum period.

Women who are enrolled in Healthy Texas Women who are still within their 12-month postpartum period will be transitioned back to full-coverage Medicaid or CHIP for the remainder of their 12-month postpartum period.

Texas projects approximately 137,000 women will benefit from 12-months postpartum coverage in fiscal year 2025. To apply for Medicaid or CHIP, call 2-1-1 and choose Option 2 or visit YourTexasBenefits.com.

UIL Realignment for area schools,

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

ly exit with a heart-breaking loss to Richland in the Area round, 48-47. The Eagles moved out of District 8 and over into District 9 with Angleton, Baytown Sterling, Beaumont United, Beaumont West Brook, Galveston Ball, and former District 8 foe Port Arthur Memorial. The Eagles should fly high in District 9 and a district title looks obtainable. A deeper run into the playoffs could be on the horizon.

Crosby—5A Division 1, District 11

After taking it on the chin most of 2023 with a 2-8 season record and 2-6 in district, better times could be ahead for the Cougars. Crosby leaves behind a tough District 8 with La Porte, Barbers Hill, Porter, and Port Arthur Memorial for a friendlier schedule. The new district will have the Coogs, Fort Bend Kempner, Friendswood, Houston Spring Woods, Humble Kingwood Park, La Porte, New Caney Porter, and Pasadena. The Bulldogs and Kingwood Park will provide heat for the district title along with New Caney Porter and Friendswood. While a playoff spot isn't ever a given, this district could be Crosby's best bet to get back into the groove.

Goose Creek Memorial—6A, District 23

The Patriots make the leap up from 5A Division 1 into the big time with the likes of North Shore, Atascocita, Summer Creek, and C. E. King, all of which are perennial powerhouses with playoff

history. The district is called the 'Little SEC' for a reason. The supremacy of 23-6A has come in the form of 5 state title appearances by North Shore in the last six years, and three titles in that time; 1 state title appearance by West Brook; 1 state title appearance by Summer Creek; dozens of bi-district, area, regional semi's, and regional final appearances (three between North Shore and Atascocita) and semi-final appearances all along vanquishing Houston area opponents. The Beaumont schools are gone and GCM and Channelview have replaced them. The Falcons have finished either first or second in the district for the last two years and will also be looking to make their stake in the new district. There's also Humble and Kingwood to round out the district. There's no chance this district will lose a step.

Huffman Hargrave—4A Division 1, District 10
Hargrave isn't going anywhere, but there will be more competition in the next two years. The only team to exit the district is Splendor who moved up into 5A Division 2, District 8. Bridge City, Hardin-Jefferson and Liberty move into the district from 4A Division 2, District 9. The Falcons will still play Livingston, Lumberton, Orange Little Cypress-Mauriceville, and Vidor.

Lee 5A Division 2, District 9

The Ganders will be all over the place. With de-

clining enrollment, they will move out of 5A Division 1 to Division 2 and the travel will mean crisscrossing across Harris, Fort Bend, Galveston, and Brazoria counties. They will also face state power Fort Bend Marshall. The new district includes Alvin Iowa Colony, Lee, Fort Bend Marshall, Richmond Randle, Rosenberg Lamar Consolidated, Rosenberg Terry, Santa Fe, and Texas City.

Sterling, 5A Division 1, District 9

The Rangers will remain in 5A Division 1 and move from District 8 to District 9. They will join the Beaumont schools United and West Brook. They will also face Angleton, last year's district champion Galveston Ball, and state playoff teams Barbers Hill and Port Arthur Memorial. The district chase should be between Ball, Barbers Hill, and Port Arthur Memorial, but stranger things have happened.

Football schedules are still being finalized.

Comprehensive details, including district alignments for football, basketball, and volleyball, as well as conference and division cutoffs, and realignment maps, can now be accessed on the UIL website at <http://www.uil-texas.org/alignments>.

Alignments for other UIL sports and academic contests will be released later.

OBITUARIES

DAVID ALAN PETERSON

July 12, 1944 - February 9, 2024
79 Years Old



David Alan Peterson, 79 of Crosby, TX, went to be with his Lord and Savior on February 9, 2024. He was born in Crosby, Texas on July 12, 1944 to Marguerite Nelson Peterson and John David Peterson. In his early years he enjoyed sports, fishing, playing and running around with his many cousins and friends in Crosby. As he matured as a young adult he found the love of his life, Margie Burk Peterson, and they were blessed with two loving children, David Wayne and Margie Ann. He began his life and family with strong roots in faith.

David was a proud alumnus of the University of Houston, Majoring in Engineering. He worked for Olson Engineering, Brown and Root, A. O. Smith, and Armco Steel. At the young age of 27, he was titled Chief Elec-

trical Engineer for Armco Steel. In 1973 he was given the opportunity to join the family business, C. A. Fortner Insurance, and took over the operations as Peterson-Fortner Insurance Agency in 1974. He served the community as the President of the Crosby-Huffman Chamber of Commerce, President of the Lions Club, Crosby Ambulance Board, one of the founding members of Churches United in Caring.

David was preceded in death by his parents. He is survived by his

loving wife of 57 years, Margie Burk Peterson; son David Peterson and wife Diane of Humble, TX; and Margie Ann Peterson Guidry and husband Todd of Crosby, TX; grandchildren, Christopher Guidry and wife Ashley Bell Guidry of Minneapolis, MN, Austin Peterson, and Ashley Peterson of Humble, TX; sister-in-law Donna Sheffield; and niece and nephews, family and friends.

Memorial Service will be held Saturday, March 23, 2024, with Visitation 10 AM and the Service 11 AM, at First Baptist Church of Crosby, 615 Runneburg Road, Crosby, TX 77532.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests donations be made to one of David's favorite charities, Churches United in Caring or the Crosby Historical Society.

Chamber hears about I-10,

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

in each direction, and then the north bridge will be the westbound lanes. Between the eastbound and westbound will be a total of 11 lanes, and then the middle bridge will have two lanes each direction."

According to the TxDOT website, the replacement I-10 bridge, while currently still in design, would tentatively consist of a steel girder bridge with a 52-foot vertical clearance and a 386-foot horizontal clearance.

Of concern to many area commuters is the barges that were freed during the hurricane, taking out the bridge with damage for months.

"We're going to have a lot of protection. There's going to be piers in front of the columns and little dolphins on the north side," she said. The dolphins will act as a barrier,

quay wall, or jetty.

Another concern with residents was the ongoing cleanup of the San Jacinto River Waste Pits area.

"We'll be working at the same time but will cooperate with the EPA," she said. "We have regular meetings with the EPA to coordinate with what we're doing."

LJA Engineers is working together with TxDOT on the project.

"They're already very familiar with this area," Javadi said.

Gage said public comment on the I-10 East Planning and Environmental Linkages Study ended on Friday for now, but the study was still a priority to finish by the end of the year. The study is currently in the 8th out of 13 steps.

Gage pointed out that congestion on the east side

is only expected to increase with the accompanying growth occurring in the area. Projected traffic volumes are expected to increase exponentially particularly from downtown to the North Shore and Channelview corridor. Truck volumes, which fuel the local economy particularly coming out of the Port of Houston area, are expected to increase by 18 percent.

Gage also demonstrated 2045 traffic volumes along I-10E will increase by an average of 68 percent. In the North Shore and Channelview area, from the current 112,000 VPD (volume per day) to 216,000.

No plans have been made or funds expended, but the project manager said it was a blueprint for the future on what needs to be done and how to develop those plans.

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Crosby native serves aboard U.S. Navy warship in Mayport, Florida

By Rick Burke, Navy Office of Community Outreach

MAYPORT, Fla. - Petty Officer 2nd Class Shereese Thomas, a native of Crosby, Texas, is serving aboard USS Winston S. Churchill, a U.S. Navy warship, operating out of Mayport, Florida.

Thomas, a 2011 graduate of Juan Seguin High School, joined the Navy eight years ago.

"I joined the Navy to travel and to pay off college debt," said Thomas.

Today, Thomas relies upon skills and values similar to those found in Crosby to succeed in the military.

"I learned in my hometown that, just because you are a product of your environment, it doesn't mean that you have to be your environment," said Thomas. "You always have a choice to do and be better."

These lessons have helped Thomas while serving in the Navy.

Winston S. Churchill is a guided-missile destroyer that provides a wide range of warfighting capabilities. The destroyer is a multi-mission ship that can operate independently or as part of a larger group of ships at sea. The ship is equipped with tomahawk missiles, torpedoes, guns and a phalanx close-in weapons system.

More than 300 sailors serve aboard Winston S. Churchill. Their jobs are highly specialized, requiring both dedication and skill. The jobs range from maintaining engines to handling weaponry along with a multitude of other assignments that keep the ship mission-ready at all times, according to Navy officials.



Petty Officer 2nd Class Shereese Thomas

With 90 percent of global commerce traveling by sea and access to the internet relying on the security of undersea fiber optic cables, Navy officials continue to emphasize that the prosperity of the United States is directly linked to trained sailors and a strong Navy.

"Our mission remains timeless - to provide our fellow citizens with nothing less than the very best Navy: fully combat ready at all times, focused on warfighting excellence, and committed to superior leadership at every single level," said Adm. Mike Gilday, Chief of Naval Operations. "This is our calling. And I cannot imagine a calling more worthy."

Serving in the Navy means Thomas is part of a team that is taking on new importance in America's focus on strengthening alliances, modernizing capabilities, increasing capacities and maintaining military readiness in support of the National Defense Strategy.

"The Navy protects and guards

the seas by having a presence around the world," said Thomas.

Thomas and the sailors they serve with have many opportunities to achieve accomplishments during their military service.

"My proudest accomplishments are making it to eight years of service, making the rank of petty officer second class, receiving three Navy and Marine Corps Achievements Medals and helping out my junior sailors," said Thomas.

As Thomas and other sailors continue to train and perform missions, they take pride in serving their country in the United States Navy.

"To me, serving in the military means I get to be an example to my family, friends and community that there are multiple ways to be successful rather than just going to school," said Thomas.

Thomas is grateful to others for helping make a Navy career possible.

"I would like to thank everyone that I've worked with that has helped me with the knowledge I have today," added Thomas. "Also, I want to thank my family who supports and motivates me to keep me going."

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Notice is hereby given that Original Letters Testamentary for Docket No. 522917; Estate of TOMMIE YVONNE (BRENTS) RODGERS, Deceased; In Probate Court No. 2 of Harris County, Texas, were issued on MARCH 4, 2024 to:

TARA RODGERS
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 MARCH 7, 2024

Weston Cotten
by WESTON COTTEN
Attorney for the Estate

LEGAL NOTICE

NOTICE TO CREDITORS

Notice is hereby given that Original Letters Testamentary for Docket No. 521456; Estate of LUCILLE B. TRAHAN A/K/A LUCILLE B. (BAUDOIN) TRAHAN, Deceased; In Probate Court No. 1 of Harris County, Texas, were issued on MARCH 5, 2024 to:

DOLAN L. TRAHAN
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 MARCH 11, 2024

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by WESTON COTTEN
Attorney for the Estate

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Martin Freeman, left, and Jenna Ortega star in "Miller's Girl."

"Miller's Girl"

"Miller's Girl" (R) — Martin Freeman ("Black Panther: Wakanda Forever") and Jenna Ortega ("Wednesday") star opposite each other in this erotic thriller, produced by Seth Rogen. Ortega portrays Cairo Sweet, an 18-year-old Tennessean girl who lives alone in her family's mansion. Cairo begins taking the creative writing class of Jonathan Miller (Freeman), a semi-successful author who is impressed by Cairo's extensive knowledge of literature. Cairo's best friend, Winnie (Gideon Adlon), raves about the idea of a teacher-student affair and even convinces Cairo to seduce Miller. Cairo does attempt to entice Miller, but the repercussions that follow are quite dangerous. Out now to rent. (Prime Video)

"Wonka" (PG) — The origin story of chocolatier

Willy Wonkawas such a success at the box office that it became the eighth highest-grossing film of 2023. Starring Timothee Chalamet as the title character, the movie kicks off in a dreary 1934 Europe, where Willy arrives with a few coins in his pocket and an intention to establish his own chocolate shop. However, a grimy pair of locals hoodwink Willy into staying at their boarding house, tricking him into signing a contract that he wouldn't be able to pay off for years. Not to mention, the rival chocolatiers won't let him sell chocolate anywhere in the town. But even with all the odds stacked against him, the happy-go-lucky chocolatier is determined not to fail. Co-starring a great ensemble cast, including Calah Lane, Keegan-Michael Key, Sally Hawkins and Olivia Colman, "Wonka" is out now. (Max)

"Damsel" (PG-13) — Millie Bobby Brown ("Stranger Things") leads this dark-fantasy film out now! Elodie (Brown) is a princess whose father has found a match for her in Prince Henry (Nick Robinson). Ever the dutiful daughter, Elodie agrees to marry Prince Henry, amid warnings from her stepmother, Lady Bayford (Angela Bassett), that she doesn't trust his family, especially his mother, Queen Isabelle (Robin Wright). Elodie quickly discovers this for herself after participating in a ceremony that leads to the prince himself chucking her into a cave with a dragon to repay an ancient debt. Stuck with nothing but the clothes on her back, Elodie must outwit the fearsome dragon to escape the cave in one piece. (Netflix)

"Love Island: All Stars" (TV-MA) — You might've heard of the "Love Island" dating game show and its many versions around the world. But the U.K. series came back in a major way with a season featuring former contestants and fan favorites from previous seasons. The show follows its original format, with a handful of men and women who enter the "Love Island" villa for a few weeks and "couple up with" another contestant to win the prize money of 50,000 pounds. But you should expect some insane twists along the way, in true "Love Island" style. Notable contestants are footballer Tom Clare, Georgia Steel ("Celebs on the Ranch"), former Playboy Bunny Hannah Elizabeth and Chris Taylor ("Barbie"). The full season is out now! (Peacock)

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Q: When does Lisa Vanderpump's new show premiere? Will any of the cast of "Vanderpump Rules" be in it? — K.J.

A: "Vanderpump Villa" will debut on Hulu beginning April 1. It features an all-new cast selected to work at an exclusive French estate by "The Real Housewives of Beverly Hills" alum (and restaurateur) Lisa Vanderpump.

According to Hulu, each episode follows her elite staff working and living together 24/7 while they try to provide a curated experience for their guests. Meanwhile, Vanderpump is also deciding whether she wants to make this French pop-up experience — and its staff — a full-time business for her growing empire.

Q: What happened to the show "Elsbeth"? They aired one episode, and now it's gone. Has it been canceled already? — C.I.

A: You're not the only one to ask. The new detective show — and spin-off of "The Good Wife" and "The Good Fight" — generated fantastic ratings when it premiered in late February, attracting 4.5 million viewers to CBS. The show stars Carrie Preston as a quirky but whip-smart, "Columbo"-type lawyer from Chicago who ends up in the Big Apple. Don't worry, though; it's coming back.

The show begins by revealing who the murderer is each week to the audience, similar to another hit show, Peacock's "Poker Face." But don't let this deter you! The fun is watching Elsbeth outwit the NYPD and trick the suspect into confessing. Her purpose is to observe the police force for any corruption, but she somehow always ends up solving their cases.

In addition to Preston, "Elsbeth" has a solid cast that includes Wendell Pierce, Carra Patterson and Gloria Reuben. Guest stars include a who's who from past hit sitcoms, including Jesse Tyler Ferguson ("Modern Family"), Jane Krakowski ("30 Rock"), Retta ("Parks and Recreation") and Linda Lavin ("Alice").

Unfortunately, "Elsbeth" had to go on a four-week hiatus because of President Biden's State of the Union Address and the NCAA March Madness tournament. CBS plans to re-air the pilot before "Elsbeth" returns with its second episode on April 4.



Lisa Vanderpump ("Vanderpump Villa")

Q: Is it true that Eddie Van Halen's son played guitar on the "Barbie" soundtrack? I thought I saw the name "Van Halen" in the credits. — N.N.

A: Yes, Wolfgang Van Halen, son of the late "Van Halen" guitarist Eddie Van Halen, ended up on the "Barbie" soundtrack by chance, but also because of his talent. He met the movie's music producer Mark Ronson while performing at the Taylor Hawkins' tribute concert in 2022. The two became friends, and Ronson asked him if he'd collaborate on the fabulous composition titled "I'm Just Ken." He even performed the song on stage alongside Ryan Gosling's Ken at the Academy Awards this month, along with another great electric guitarist — Slash from Guns N' Roses.

"I'm Just Ken" was not only nominated for an Oscar, but made it into the Top 5 of Billboard's Hot Rock & Alternative Songs chart.

Send me your questions at NewCelebrityExtra@gmail.com, or write me at KFWS, 628 Virginia Drive, Orlando, FL 32803.

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ENTERTAINMENT

Amber Waves



Weekly SUDOKU by Linda Thistle. Grid with numbers 1-9. Difficulty: Moderate. HOO BOY!

HOCUS-FOCUS by Henry Boltinoff. Two panels of a boy fishing. Find at least six differences in details between panels.

March 18, 2024 Posting Date King Crossword

Crossword puzzle grid with ACROSS and DOWN clues. Includes a list of 57 clues and a grid with numbers 1-57.

Trivia test by Fifi Rodriguez. 10 trivia questions with answers. Includes a King Crossword grid and solution time: 26 mins.

1. Florin; 2. Mountbatten-Windsor; 3. "The Big Bang Theory"; 4. Arizona; 5. Loose lips; 6. Andorra; 7. Hypothalamus; 8. The head; 9. Red; 10. Tequila.



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