



A Nurdle is a tiny plastic pellet. See story below.

HIGHLANDS

CROSBY

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IN THE STARS

Highlands Post Office now open 24hrs

Due to recent break-ins in the Lobby, the Highlands Post Office was only open Monday-Saturday 8am to 4:30pm. However, Security Cameras have now been installed, and the Lobby and access to Post Office boxes have been restored, and the lobby is open 24 hours daily.

EPA meeting on Waste Pits Tuesday Jan. 7

The EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) has scheduled a public meeting to update persons on the status of the remedial work at the Superfund Site.

The Meeting is Tuesday, Jan. 7 from 6:00pm to 7:45pm at the Highlands Community Center, 604 Highland Woods Drive, Highlands 77562.

A full report will be in next week's newspaper and on line at our website.

Huffman FFA Livestock Show & Sale Jan. 25

The 2025 Huffman FFA Livestock Show is Jan. 22-24, and the Livestock Auction is Saturday, Jan. 25th. 11:00am Buyers Luncheon, 1:00pm Livestock Auction. Ag Department, 25400 Willy Lane, Huffman 77336.

THEA finds new Toxic danger: Nurdles

Train wreck in East Harris County spews deadly micro plastic into water supply

By Jackie Medcalf

If this is the first time you have heard of a nurdle, you are not alone. It's not a common word, but nurdles are all around us. A nurdle is a plastic pellet that is so tiny that 22,000 of them fit in a one pound container.

On December 6th, a Union Pacific train accident near Highlands derailed fourteen cars, including cars containing liquified petroleum gas (LPG). Fortunately, the LPG cars remained intact, but more than five cars containing nurdles did spill their contents, with two of the cars coming to rest in the drainage canal

that connects the Trinity and San Jacinto Rivers. Each railcar can hold 22,000 pounds of nurdles, or about 4.8 million.

Authorities quickly said everything was under control. The Houston Office of Emergency Management said, "This incident does not pose a threat to the city's drinking water supply" and the fire marshall's office said there was no hazardous material release. Union Pacific said the derailment was "under investigation."

Here's what was missing from the official announcements - Nurdles, released from the overturned rail cars covering



Plastic Pellets called "Nurdles" were released after this train derailment in Highlands.

the ground like snowfall. Also missing - concern over the potential environmental harm from the tiny plastic pellets. Depending on their chemical composition, they can release toxins over time. Worse, if they reach water supplies they look like fish eggs. If

birds swallow them, they can be a choking hazard. When fish eat them, the plastic can fill their bellies, keeping them from digesting real food.

Since they are made of plastic, nurdles don't decompose and disappear;

they break down into even smaller "nanoplastics."

In response to community concerns, THEA's team went to inspect the site and collect samples

Continued. See Toxic Nurdles, Page 6

CROSBY SUPERINTENDENT'S MESSAGE

Crosby ISD Rings in 2025 with Financial Achievements, Expansion Plans, and Celebration

Hello East Harris County and Crosby ISD families,

Happy New Year! Welcome to 2025!

We hope our families continue to enjoy the Winter Break. Just a reminder that staff members return and district offices reopen on Monday, January 6. Students return for the start of the spring semester on Tuesday, January 7.

I want to share some important financial news to start the year. Crosby ISD maintained a School



Paula Patterson Crosby Superintendent

FIRST Superior Achievement rating for the 2022-2023 fiscal year. The School FIRST (Financial Integrity Rating System of

Texas) grades Texas public schools for the quality of their financial management. It is important to note that the School FIRST ratings are given for the prior fiscal year, meaning the 2022-2023 rating is issued during the 2024-2025 school year. Crosby ISD Chief Financial Officer, Ms. Yvonne Johnson, shared the School FIRST report during a public hearing at the Board of Trustees meeting last month. Kudos to CFO Johnson and the financial team for maintaining a



Superintendent for the Day, 6th grader Stratton Manuel, visits a construction site with Superintendent, Mrs. Paula Patterson and Crosby ISD Director of Operations, Mr. Chuck Murray.

Continued. See CROSBY SUPERINTENDENT, Page 2

Highlands Chamber holds Christmas Luncheon



A select group of choir students from Baytown Sterling High School sang for the Highlands-Lynchburg Area Chamber of Commerce on Thursday for their annual Christmas luncheon. Students performed several group numbers blended in with a variety of solos.

Each month, the Highlands-Lynchburg Area Chamber of Commerce recognizes their Students of the Month from area schools. This month the recognized Aylin Orturio from Hopper Elementary School; Mia Cuellar from Highlands Elementary School; Derion Godfrey from Highlands Junior High School; and Bryant Ndofor from Goose Creek Memorial High School.



GOOSE CREEK SUPERINTENDENT'S MESSAGE Reflecting on Our Past, Investing in Our Future

As we embark on a new year, I want to take a moment to consider where Goose Creek CISD has been, where we are, and where we are going. The upcoming legislative session in Austin will bring significant discussions around school choice, a topic deeply connected to our community. While this concept can sometimes feel divisive, I believe there's an opportunity to ensure all families have access to high-quality educational options while maintaining the strength of our public schools.

A decade ago, our district experienced significant growth as local industries expanded, leading to the development of our first master-planned neighborhoods, replacing sod farms and agricultural estates. We've transformed these challenges into opportunities thanks to our staff's dedication,



Goose Creek CISD Superintendent Randal O'Brien

our citizens' continued support, and well-established partnerships with our local chamber of commerce and businesses. Today, our schools are centers of collaboration, innovation, and student achievement, reflecting the power of a united community working toward shared goals.

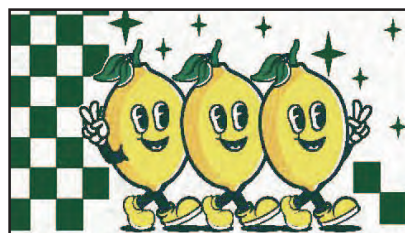
Throughout the past decade, we have introduced state-of-the-art learning

facilities that have transformed educational opportunities within our district. A few highlights include celebrating the first graduating class of IMPACT Early College High School in 2014 and the opening of Stuart Career Tech High School in 2017, followed by their first graduating class in 2021, which has expanded pathways toward even greater student success.

Additionally, we have revolutionized Pre-K education by implementing our Early Learning Academies partnered with Fueling Brains curriculum, laying a strong foundation while closing achievement gaps. The 2013 and 2019 bond referendums allowed us to bring first-class facilities to our community, with many new security features, auxiliary buildings, elementary and jun

Continued. See Goose Creek Superintendent, Page 2

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Crosby ISD maintains superior financial rating, prepares for new middle school and 50yrs of basketball History,

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Superior Rating and continuing to cement the sound financial footing for the district.

2025 will be the year of the completion of the Crosby High School expansion. It will also be the year we begin the process to plan a second middle school. This second middle school will begin as a sixth-grade campus with ability to expand to a full 6th through 8th grade middle school. After the CHS expansion, a second middle school was next on the priority list approved by the Board of Trustees, based on recommendations from the 2023 citizen construction committee. The project will be funded by the remainder of the 2017 voter-approved bond money. We will begin with selecting the location, conducting land surveys, and then proceeding to the design process. The actual construction process typically takes two years for the average middle school, starting from the time ground is broken. We will keep you updated every step of the way.

The Crosby ISD motto is "Tradition ... with a Future." So, as we innovate, we also honor district history and honor those who made significant achievements as Cougars. Last month, we celebrated the Crosby High School boys basketball team that went to the state finals in Class 3A in 1974. Coach Lee Haywood and his players ended the 1973-74 season with only three losses. On Saturday, March 2, 1974, they battled Gonzales High School in the state championship. In the end, the final score was 77-62, as Crosby High School



Photo of the Golden Reunion Celebration for the 1974 State Finalist boys basketball team from Crosby High School. The CHS Cougars were celebrated for reaching the 3A state finals 50 years ago this year. 10 players attended along with family members representing two other players. They received certificates and celebratory t-shirts from Superintendent Paula Patterson, Coach Edwin Egans, and Trustee Karen Thomas.



Superintendent for the Day, 6th grader Stratton Manuel, poses for a photo with his kindergarten teacher, Mrs. Quinn. Mrs. Quinn fondly remembered Stratton from his days at Crosby Kindergarten Center. Stratton was the winner of an auction during the Crosby Education Foundation Gala in September.



6th grader Stratton Manuel wraps up his day as Superintendent for the Day. He posed for a photograph with Superintendent Patterson, Crosby Middle School Principal, Mr. Jose Lozano, CMS Assistant Principal, Mr. Kyle Leonard, and the CMS Star Steppers dance team!



Photo of carpentry lab currently under construction in the Crosby High School expansion.

wound up as state finalist runner-up. On December 20, Coach Haywood and the players were honored by current Crosby High School Head Basketball Coach, Mr. Edwin Egans, with a reunion dinner and recognition ceremony. It was great to reminisce and to celebrate 50 years of history!

Now, allow me to brag on our students. What a

joy it was to spend the day with Superintendent for the Day, Mr. Stratton Manuel. He's a sixth grader from Crosby Middle School. Stratton was the winner of the auction from the Crosby Education Foundation gala in September. He had a chance to spend the day with me performing superintendent duties, including meeting with principals,

and signing important proclamations. Stratton started the day with a hard hat tour of the Crosby High School construction site. He also read to students in Ms. Quinn's kindergarten class at Crosby Kindergarten Center. Stratton was a student in Ms. Quinn's class when he was in kindergarten. What a neat full circle moment! Stratton also returned to Newport Elementary School, where he was once a student and had a chance to check in with his former teachers. I so enjoy the days I can spend time with students.

A quick reminder that Crosby ISD campuses and district offices will be closed on Monday, January 20 in honor of the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday. Classes will resume on Tuesday, January 21.

On February 6, Crosby ISD will host the 4th annual District Spelling Bee. Over the next few weeks, students at elementary schools will compete in campus spelling bees to see which students compete to be the district Spelling Bee Champion. Last year's winning word was "surplus," which is defined as "something that remains above what is used or needed." I can't wait to cheer on this year's winner! By the way, February 6 will also mark our 100th day of school!

There's so much to look forward to! It's going to be a great year!

We are Committed to Excellence! Go Cougs!

GCCISD reflects on a decade of growth, plans for a future of innovation and excellence,

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

ior schools, secondary academic, athletic, and fine arts upgrades, and a new bus fleet.

Looking ahead, I see a school system that continues to grow and evolve, offering numerous educational pathways to meet the unique needs of every student. Imagine a district where every child, regardless of circumstances, has access to a tailored education that prepares them to thrive in an ever-changing world. Goose Creek CISD remains committed to strengthening our campuses to include schools of choice for our families, offering innovative programs, robust

academics, and extracurriculars at all levels.

The citizens of Goose Creek CISD are essential partners in shaping the future of our schools. Your active participation in long-range planning initiatives like GC2035, future bond considerations, and other collaborative efforts will directly impact the resources and opportunities we can provide for our students. We are deeply grateful for your trust and engagement and will remain dedicated to earning it every day through our transparency, commitment, and focus on student success.

I encourage everyone to

stay engaged as we make these important decisions. Attend board meetings, ask questions, and share your vision for our schools. Together, we can ensure that Goose Creek CISD remains a beacon of excellence and opportunity for future generations. Despite obstacles, I know our future is bright because of your partnership, and I sincerely believe we may continue to dream big and achieve even more. Thank you for being a vital part of this journey, and we wish each of you a very Happy New Year!

Dr. Randal O'Brien
Superintendent of Schools

Goose Creek ISD Shines in The Summies Awards

By Norma Martinez

Goose Creek CISD is proud to announce its 3rd place achievement in the large district category of SummitK12's prestigious "The Summies" awards. Competing against 650 districts across Texas, this recognition highlights outstanding achievements in educational technology and student outcomes for Emergent Bilingual students. This accomplishment reflects the district's effective use of SummitK12 resources, innovative implementation strategies, and impressive TELPAS scores. TELPAS (Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System) measures the progress of Emergent Bilingual students in acquiring English, and Goose Creek CISD's results dem-



Associate Director, Zamira Torres-Banda, holds The Summie Award, surrounded by the Multilingual Specialists. (Photo by Yulia Trujillo-Rodriguez)

onstrate significant growth in this area.

A key achievement for the district is the reclassification of 430 Emergent Bilingual students in the 2023-2024 school year. According to the Texas Education Agency (TEA), reclassification occurs when students have reached the necessary language proficiency to no

longer need bilingual or ESL services. This milestone is critical as it shows these students have developed the academic English skills required to succeed in mainstream classrooms.

Zamira Torres-Banda, Associate Director for the Multilingual and Migrant Education Department, expressed, "Given Goose

GCCISD Announces District-Wide Rezoning to Address Overcrowding and Ensure Equity

By Nancy Bonds

Goose Creek CISD is embarking on a district-wide rezoning initiative to address overcrowding and create equitable learning environments across its campuses. The rezoning effort reflects the district's commitment to meeting the needs of its student population while maintaining efficient operations and fostering student success.

The decision to rezone comes as part of a comprehensive review of enrollment patterns, facility capacities, and projected growth within the district. Key goals of the rezoning plan include:

- *Reducing Overcrowding: Balancing student enrollment across campuses.
- *Establishing Clean Feeder Patterns: Ensuring students remain with their peers as they transition to junior high and high school.
- *Promoting Equity: Providing all students access to quality learning environments and resources.
- *Maximizing Taxpayer Resources: Making the best use of existing facilities and funding.
- *Improving Transportation Efficiency: Streamlining bus routes for greater cost-effectiveness.

"At the heart of this rezoning initiative is a commitment to equity. Every child in Goose Creek CISD deserves access to the same support, resources, and opportunities, regardless of where they live or attend school. This process will allow us to align our resources strategically, ensuring that we meet the needs of our students and families as our community continues to grow." ~ Dr. O'Brien, GCCISD Superintendent

The rezoning process will include the following steps:

- *Review of Enrollment Data: District leaders consulted with demographic experts at Population and Survey Analysts (PASA) to assess current and future needs.
- *Development of Rezoning Options: The district formed a rezoning task force to evaluate a first draft rezoning option provided by PASA. Through multiple committee meetings, two zoning options were established to meet the needs of the district.
- *Community Feedback: GCCISD will launch an online survey to gather community input and address concerns.
- *Develop Final Rezoning Option: Feedback, combined with PASA's expertise, will be utilized to provide the board with a recommendation that balances enrollment, addresses overcrowding, and promotes equity.

The district invites families and community members to stay informed and provide feedback throughout the process. For more information and to complete the online feedback survey, visit <http://www.gccisd.net/page/Rezone2025.Overview>.

Creek CISD's large, diverse population, including many emergent bilingual students, this recognition highlights our commitment to equity and inclusion. It's an impactful testament to the programs and initiatives that we've helped lead which are making a real differ-

ence, especially in addressing the unique needs of our emergent bilingual students.

With over 25% of the student population identified as Emergent Bilingual, this award underscores Goose Creek CISD's dedication to enhancing student learning,

increasing engagement, and empowering bilingual students through the use of technology. To learn more about the Bilingual and ESL programs within the Multilingual and Migrant Education Department,

visit: www.gccisd.net/page/multilingual.home

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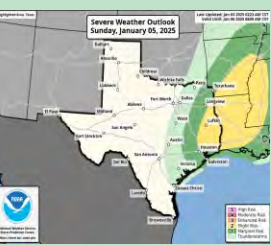
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THURSDAY, JANUARY 9, 2025

MONT BELVIEU, TEXAS 77580

ON THE HILL

Weather Alert Prepare for a Strong Cold Front & Severe Weather Risks



A strong cold front is expected to move across our area on Sunday, bringing a prolonged period of below-normal temperatures next week. Before the cold front arrives, we may experience strong to severe thunderstorms, with potential threats including:

- *Large hail
- *Damaging winds
- *Isolated tornadoes

While the greatest risk of severe weather is expected northeast of us, residents should plan ahead and stay weather-aware.

What to Expect:

- *Several days of freezing or below-freezing temperatures.
- *Wind chills in the 10s and 20s.
- *The coldest night will likely be Tuesday, with the potential for hard freezes.

Although this cold event will not be like the extreme freeze of 2021, it's important to prepare appropriately.

Preparation Tips:

- *Protect sensitive vegetation (cover plants or bring them indoors).
- *Insulate exposed outdoor pipes (shut off and drain sprinkler systems).
- *Provide proper shelter and warmth for pets, livestock, and animals.
- *Limit outdoor exposure to avoid the effects of cold wind chills.

Stay informed, stay prepared, and stay safe!
Sign up for ChambersWarns to receive pertinent updates and information at chamberswarns.org.

Chambers County Job Fair 2025

Date: January 15, 2025
Time: 10am to 2pm
Location: White's Park Community Building, 225 White Memorial Park Rd, Anahuac, TX 77514

Partner Agencies: Includes ExxonMobil, Coastal Gateway Health Center, Chambers Health, Baytown-west Chambers County Economic Development Foundation, Chambers County Sheriff's Office, Workforce Solutions, Lee College, Chick-fil-A, H-E-B, and Others.

For More Information: Call 409-267-2692.

The event is presented by Chambers County, Texas, and aims to connect job seekers with local businesses and agencies.

First Baby of 2025 Welcomed at Houston Methodist Hospital Baytown

The joyous event took place at 3 a.m. on Wednesday, Jan. 1, marking a bright new beginning to the year for the family



Swaddled with love, Baby Ariely was born at Houston Methodist Baytown Hospital at 3:00 a.m. on Wednesday, Jan. 1. (Photo: Houston Methodist Baytown Hospital)

BAYTOWN - (Jan. 1, 2025) — Houston Methodist Baytown Hospital announced the birth of its first baby of the New Year. The joyous event took place at 3 a.m. on Wednesday, Jan. 1, marking a bright new beginning to the year for the family. Baby Ariely Yarleth Contreras, a girl, arrived weighing 6 pounds, 13 ounces and measuring 19 inches long.

Parents Brenda Peralta and Ruben Contreras of Baytown are both elated about the birth of their new daughter and thank the entire health care team for providing great care throughout the labor and delivery process.

The family also received a special gift basket prepared by the labor and delivery department nurses in honor of them delivering the first baby of the year.

Charles Johnson Wins Baytown Mayoral Race, Becomes City's First Black Mayor

Baytown, Texas, has etched a remarkable new chapter in its history with Charles Johnson's victory in the December 14th runoff election, making him the city's first Black mayor. Charles Johnson, a former District 3 city councilman who served from 2017 to 2023. This isn't just an electoral win; it's a resounding statement of progress, unity, and hope for the diverse residents of the city.

Johnson, a lifelong Bay-

town resident, has always been a man of vision, deeply connected to his community. "I've loved Baytown all my life. Since I was eight, I knew I wanted to represent my neighbors without regard to race or color," he reflected. Johnson's journey—from the local schools of Goose Creek ISD to his dual studies at Lee College and the College of Biblical Studies—set the stage for his leadership.

Unofficial combined



Charles Johnson Baytown Mayor

vote totals from Harris and Chambers Counties, including early voting and Election Day results, show Johnson with 1,230 votes,

defeating incumbent Mayor Brandon Capetillo, who received 1,024 votes.

In Harris County, with 41 of 42 voting centers reporting, Johnson secured 1,153 votes, including 654 early votes, 126 mail-in ballots, and 373 Election Day votes. Capetillo earned 946 votes, comprising 461 early votes, 160 mail-in ballots, and 325 Election Day votes, according to Harris County's election website, www.harrisvotes.org.

In Chambers County, Johnson received nine mail-in ballots, 44 early votes, and 24 Election Day votes for a total of 77 votes, representing 49.68% of the county's total. Capetillo garnered six mail-in ballots, 55 early votes, and 17 Election Day votes for a total of 78 votes, or 50.32%.

The mayoral election was a joint effort between Harris and Chambers Counties. All results remain unofficial pending final certification.

Houston-area State Reps Push for Nativity Scene on Capitol Grounds

The bills by state Sen. Mayes Middleton and state Rep. Briscoe Cain come as numerous Republican lawmakers are testing the boundaries of church-state separation and arguing for a more explicit role for Christianity in American and state government.

Two Houston-area lawmakers have filed bills that would require the placement of a nativity scene on the Texas Capitol grounds during the month of December. The move comes as several Republican legislators are testing the boundaries between church and state.

State Sen. Mayes Middleton (R-Galveston) filed the nativity scene bill in the Senate as Senate Bill 515, while state Rep. Briscoe Cain (R-Deer Park) filed an identical bill in the House as House Bill 1497.

"Religious liberties and freedom of expression of our faith, Free Exercise Cause, are very important in our State Legislature," Middleton said, "and this is something that I thought was important for everybody in the state that celebrates Christmas."

But not everybody in the state celebrates Christmas. According to the Pew Research Center's Religious Landscape Study, an overwhelming majority of adults in Texas (77%) identify as Christian. Roughly 4% practice non-Christian faiths (Judaism, Islam, and Buddhism each registering about 1% of the population), while about 18% are unaffiliated with any religion.

The arguments for and against a nativity display

Middleton pointed to a variety of existing displays linked to Christmas and Christianity at the Texas



State Sen. Mayes Middleton (Right) and Rep. Briscoe Cain (left) speaks at the state capital.

Capitol. "We have Christmas trees in the Texas House," he said. "We have Christmas trees in the Texas Senate. There's actually Bibles in every House desk. There's Bibles in every desk in the Senate. And both chambers begin each day in prayer."

David Brockman, a non-resident scholar in religion and public policy at Rice University's Baker Institute, said that the Christmas tree has effectively become a secular symbol.

"In fact, the Supreme Court has talked about a Christmas tree, Santa Claus, reindeer, things like that as being primarily secular, rather than sectarian," Brockman said. "A nativity scene is something altogether different. A nativity scene is explicitly Christian."

Asked whether he was concerned about what a display means for non-Christians, Middleton said, "They don't have to visit the nativity scene, just like they don't have to visit the House chamber and see the Christmas tree. They don't have to

visit the Senate chamber and see the Christmas tree. It says, 'In God We Trust' above the Senate dais. It says 'In God We Trust' above the House dais. They don't have to see it."

Stephanie A. (Sam) Martin, Frank Church Chair of Public Affairs at Boise State University, disagreed, arguing that the move was part and parcel of wider efforts by Christian nationalists to impose their version of Christianity on the American government.

"There definitely is a constituency of citizens in Texas and in the United States who feel very upset by the sidelining of faith in the United States, Christian faith in the United States, and who feel very sure that it has been to the nation's detriment," Martin said, "That constituency is enjoying in this moment a kind of access to power and the microphone that they haven't had for a long time."

David Brockman cited the same trend. He pointed to a 2023 bill to require the placement of the Ten



Visitors walk pas a monument of the the Ten Commandments outside the Capitol, in Austin Texas

Commandments in all public school classrooms – a version of which passed in Louisiana, but which is now under a federal court injunction.

As for Middleton's argument that non-Christians are under no obligation to look at a nativity display, Brockman said that's missing, or ignoring, the point.

"It does risk saying to non-Christian Texans that they are outsiders in their own state Capitol," Brockman said.

No such thing as church-state separation?

Middleton cited the Ten Commandments monument on the Capitol grounds, which withstood a U.S. Supreme Court challenge, as a further argument in favor of a nativity display. He also rejected the argument that such displays violated the Constitution or the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment.

"There is no such thing as the separation of church and state," Middleton said. "That is a made-up doctrine that was in one letter from (Thomas) Jefferson to the Danbury (Connecticut) Baptists."

Brockman countered that while the Constitution does

not use the words "separation of church and state," the principle of church-state separation is very much in the Constitution. He noted the Constitution prohibits religious tests for public office, which had been a common practice in the colonies and then in the new states prior to the Constitution. Further, he said, the Establishment and Free Exercise Clauses of the First Amendment prohibit the government from favoring any one religion over another.

"The argument that because the words 'church-state separation' are not in the Constitution means that the principle doesn't exist would also apply to the concept of federalism, which, the word 'federalism' does not appear in the Constitution, or 'separation of powers,' that also does not appear in the Constitution, or 'checks and balances,'" Brockman said. "And pretty much everybody, including conservatives, agree that the principles of federalism, checks and balances, and separation of powers do exist in the Constitution, despite the fact that those are not specifically mentioned."

OPINION PAGE

OPINION By John Hryhorchuk, Texas 2036

Looking Ahead: Texans Ready to Shape a Stronger Future

As 2024 comes to a close, Texans are turning the page to a new year — and a new chapter of opportunity.

Texas has long been a symbol of immense opportunity. Last year, nearly 612,000 people moved to Texas, while about 478,000 moved out, according to the latest Census Bureau numbers.



The poll results show that Texans are ready to work toward practical solutions to these pressing issues. Our future depends on more than data identifying problems; it's about envisioning and embracing pragmatic solutions that protect our quality of life and create greater opportunities for all Texans.

Take water supply, for example. Texans understand that water is life — essential not only for families and communities but also for industries and economic growth.

Or consider education and workforce readiness. More than 90% of voters believe high school students should have access to the training or certifications that will allow them to graduate ready to compete for good-paying jobs.

The same forward-thinking approach extends to issues like housing affordability and child care availability. Voters want solutions that ensure everyone has the chance to thrive in our rapidly growing state.

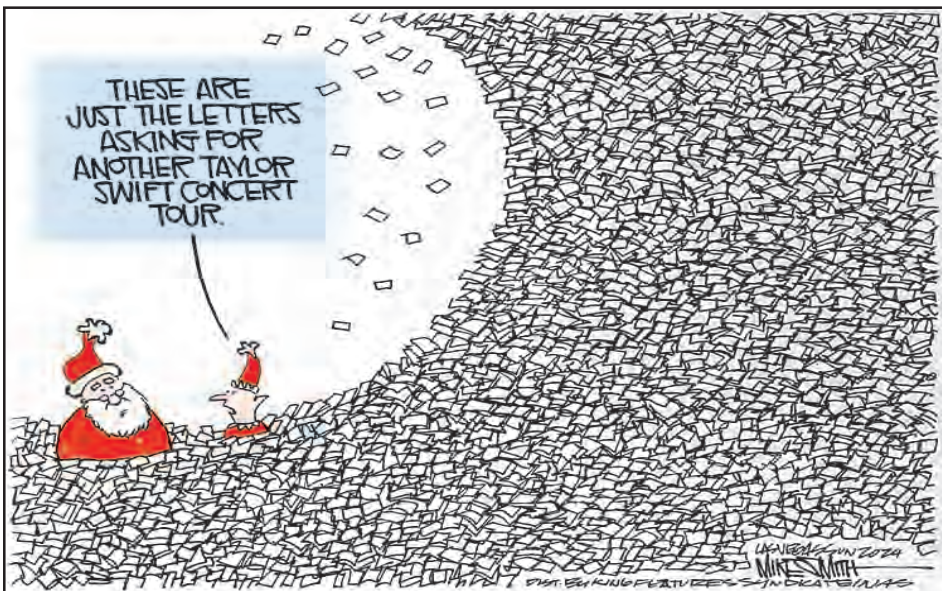
Many Texas voters also remain hopeful — maybe because they are ready to tackle the issues head on. The number of voters who told us they were extremely or very concerned about Texas's future is down significantly from last year and down to numbers not seen since before the pandemic.

The combination of optimism and pragmatism is a deeply Texan trait, which reflects our resilience and belief in solving big problems together. That's why the 89th Texas Legislative session offers a critical opportunity to translate these proposed solutions into action.

As we step into 2025, let's seize this moment to unite and approach our challenges with determination and hard work — the Texas way.

To learn more about the Texas Voter Poll and the work Texas 2036 is doing to address these challenges, visit www.texas2036.org/poll.

John Hryhorchuk is senior vice president of policy and advocacy at Texas 2036.



THE POSTSCRIPT By Carrie Classon

The Scale



"It's not what you eat between Christmas and New Year's that counts, it's what you eat between New Year's and Christmas."

I've had this mantra in my head because my husband, Peter, and I have been trying to keep our weight in check. Peter is doing it for sensible reasons. His cholesterol and blood pressure have been high.

In response, Peter has been terrifically disciplined and has avoided sweets for more than two months. He has gotten a lot slimmer. I have gotten slimmer, too. But I have no sensible protocol.

Peter's sensible portion control method is very slow and reliable. My method of "just don't eat until I'm ready to fall over" is probably not as medically sound, but also works.

Peter and I share the same scale. He weighs himself first and, when I get up a bit later, I weigh myself. Sometimes we compare notes. Sometimes we commiserate.

But now is the season that everyone frets about, and there are going to be days when eating too much is pretty much inevitable.

"Oh, no," I announced to Peter one morning after a particularly decadent dinner. "I don't think I want to see the scale today!"

Peter replied, "Even the scale deserves a day off." We both glanced at our little digital nemesis with a mixture of emotions, none of them good.

And sometimes, a little denial can go a long way. I have that found my weight fluctuates wildly from one day to the next. I started weighing myself in kilograms for a while, just because the numbers represented larger chunks of weight.

In the U.K., many folks still use stones as a measurement of weight and, while I'm not a fan of getting too much information, this seems like taking it a little too far. A stone is equal to 14 pounds. Ignoring the situation until I had added on the equivalent of a retaining wall seems like more deliberate denial than even I could manage.

But it is the season for big meals and cheese and crackers and cookies and rice pudding, and I honestly can't see myself missing any of it. I know Peter will keep being disciplined and avoiding sweets.

I'm thinking avoiding the scale sounds easier. Till next time, Carrie

STATE CAPITAL HIGHLIGHTS By Gary Borders



Abbot Unveils New Border Strategy

Gov. Greg Abbott said last Thursday the state is initiating a billboard campaign across Central America and border cities in northern Mexico to discourage migrants from attempting to enter Texas.

The billboards are in multiple languages, including Spanish, Chinese, Arabic and Russian. They tell stories of migrants being sexually assaulted while trying to enter the United States.

"This is tough medicine," Abbott said. "But we want no more rape trees in Texas. Do not make the dangerous trek to Texas." He was referring to the ashes of a tree where migrant women were sexually assaulted by human traffickers and left to die, according to the Statesman.

Abbott is seeking another \$3 billion in the next legislative session for Operation Lone Star. Since launching in March 2021, the state has spent \$11 billion to deter migrants and fortify the border.

REGULATORS: MORE THAN 250 NEW CASES OF GROUNDWATER CONTAMINATION

Nearly every county in Texas has at least one case of groundwater contamination, according to an annual report outlined in The Texas Tribune. The latest report compiles 2,870 open cases of groundwater contamination, some of which go back decades, according to the Texas Groundwater Protection Committee.

During 2023, 252 new cases were reported that could affect public drinking water. In addition, 289 property owners were notified that such contamination could affect their private wells.

The state relies on groundwater from aquifers for roughly 55% of its water supply. Voters in 2023 approved a \$1 billion fund to develop more water resources, including desalination of brackish groundwater.

"Any groundwater contamination is a cause for concern," said Adam Foster, director of the Texas Alliance of Groundwater Districts. "It needs to be reported properly and addressed."

Groundwater contamination falls under the purview of either the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality or the Railroad Commission, depending on its source, with the former handling 80% of the cases.

The single most common source of groundwater pollution in Texas is gas stations, which make up a third of all cases.



STATE CAPITAL HIGHLIGHTS By Gary Borders

A map of groundwater contamination cases can be found on the TCEQ site by going here: https://tinyurl.com/375xrerk.

NEW SPACE INSTITUTE IS UP AND RUNNING

The Texas A&M Space Institute, to be located next door to NASA's Johnson Space Center in Houston, recently broke ground on a 400,000-square-foot facility. The \$200 million facility is funded by 2023 legislation creating the Texas Space Commission with the purpose of keeping Texas at the forefront of the space program, the Texas Standard reported.

Institute Director Dr. Nancy Currie-Gregg, a former astronaut and an engineering professor, noted the U.S. and Texas face competition from many other nations with their own space programs. Among the projects to be tackled at the new institute will be rover and spacesuit development, and possibly developing concepts for a space hospital.

"It's really meant for collaboration between academics, industry and government to achieve government goals or to achieve, just quite frankly, commercial space goals," she told the Standard. "But it's all about collaboration." Currie-Gregg added the long-term goal is traveling to Mars, but first "we really need to return to the lunar surface."

INVESTIGATION: BIG TRUCK OVERSIGHT HAS WANED

An investigation by the Austin American-Statesman indicates commercial vehicles are being stopped for safety inspections far less than they used to be, even as commercial traffic has increased. The Statesman found that random roadside safety inspections dropped 20% statewide over the past decade.

The reasons include staffing at state and local law enforcement agencies failing to keep pace with the state's growth and thousands of Department of Public Safety troopers being sent to the border for Operation Lone Star and other immigration-related issues.

DPS spokeswoman Sheridan Nolen acknowledged that the border assignments have hamstrung commercial vehicles oversight operations. The agency plans to ask the Legislature for more money in the next session.

The Texas Department of Motor Vehicles reported the number of commercial vehicles operating solely within state lines rose to 459,000 last year from 340,000 in 2013.

At least one Republican elected official is critical of the decrease in safety inspections. "With the safety concerns that we have, I think that pulling officers off for Operation Lone Star or any other gimmick is just bad governance," Ector County Judge Dustin Fawcett, from Odessa, said.

SCHOOL DISTRICTS ASKED TO REFUND \$16 MILLION TO FEDS

Federal officials are asking Texas schools to return \$16 million they say was billed incorrectly to Medicaid, The Tribune reported. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services sent an email recently to 572 school districts in the state asking them to return anywhere from \$100 to \$800,000 for services billed in 2011. A 2017 audit found Texas schools had improperly billed the agency 238 times.

The state has already paid the \$16 million and now is required by law to recoup its costs from the districts, many of which are struggling financially. "Because this comes in the middle of a budget year, it makes planning for schools virtually impossible," said Brian Woods, director of advocacy at the Texas Association of School Administrators. "Had this clawback been known prior to schools approving their budgets in the summer of 2024, then at least it could have been planned for, right?"

More than 40 schools owe more than \$100,000 while more than half owe less than \$10,000.

RRC ADOPTS NEW OIL AND GAS WASTE MANAGEMENT RULES

The Texas Railroad Commission has adopted a "significant overhaul" of rules and regulations for oil and gas waste management facilities in Texas. It is the first overhaul of the agency's waste management rules in four decades.

"The oil and gas industry has evolved dramatically since the 1980s. After a years-long process, and with thoughtful and thorough deliberation from the public, agency experts, and industry stakeholders, I am proud to report the Railroad Commission has passed its first overhaul of waste management rules in 40 years," said Chairman Christi Craddick.

The new rules can be found on the RRC's website: rrc.texas.gov. Gary Borders is a veteran award-winning Texas journalist. He published a number of community newspapers in Texas during a 30-year span, including in Longview, Fort Stockton, Cadogoches, Lufkin and Cedar Park.

Email: gborders@texaspress.com

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North Shore Bakery Goes Viral nationwide with Pumpkin Sweetbread Sensation

By David Taylor
Managing Editor

A small, obscure Mexican bakery in a strip center on Uvalde in North Shore exploded to popularity in October when their own creation became the talk of the country.

La Hacienda Bakery is located at 180 Uvalde Road and shares the nondescript building with several other small businesses including Mr. Gatti's Pizza, the largest retailer in the strip center.

The bakery achieved notoriety when one of their customers posted on Tik Tok and Instagram their newest creation—a pumpkin sweetbread with a pumpkin spice filling, dusted on top with a pumpkin-type icing.

The video went viral



Denis Gonzalez gets busy making more dough that will eventually become one of the pumpkin sweetbread delights.

and caught the attention of local news station Good Morning America and ABC-13. It also caught the eye of producers at Good Morning America and the next thing you know, the little bakery was flooded with television media seeking the story of the unique concha-like creations.

“It was crazy having Good Morning America and ABC-13 News here in our restaurant. We are the only ones in the country making this that we know of,” said Denis Gonzalez, one of the workers at the bakery.

After the video went viral, pastry lovers across



Bakers begin to add the pumpkin spice to the sweet bread dough.



A baker removes trays full of the pumpkin delights from the oven just in time for hungry customers to add them to their purchases.

Harris County, the state, and country were trying to get their hands on the pumpkin delicacies.

“I start with the dough for the sweet bread first,” Gonzalez said. And as is the case in all good things, it takes awhile to rise. “The process is slowed down a bit because the dough has to rise about 45 minutes before baking,” he said.

Once the dough has risen, next comes the insertion of the special pumpkin spice. Bakers use a knife to make ridges in the dough to simulate a pumpkin and then the trays get slid into the oven to bake.

Once baked, they receive an orange icing top and a green stem to finish it off.

They became so popular that they extended their hours to 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. to accommodate the business.

“We had some this morning who saw the story on Good Morning America and drove here from Mississippi to try them out,” Gonzalez said surprised at the length of travel.

After the news came out, the parking lot was full most of the day and the store with a line all the way outside and down the sidewalk with customers wanting to try it out.

“We were making between 5,000 to 10,000 every day to keep up with the demand,” he said.

They also earned a new business, shipping pastries around the country.

“We’re going to keep making the fillings for these because that’s what everyone seems to like,” Gonzalez said.

Brenda Betancourt of North Shore said she’s a regular at the bakery picking up a variety of pastries. She and her partner first saw the delectable sweetbread on Tik Tok and decided to pick some up. Betancourt not only got several of the pumpkin bread delights, but also picked up a few other goodies along with it.

“I literally just got off work and came right here after work to pick some up,” she said.

Alejandro Hernandez says they have been in

business for awhile and at least 13 years at their current location.

“My son-in-law came up with the recipe and now it has gone viral,” he said. “I wouldn’t have imagined this in my best dreams,” the owner said.

They began selling them on Oct. 1 and ended the run of the pumpkin delicacies on Oct. 31 after feeding a store full of customers all day.

Hernandez immigrated to the United States when he was 19 years old and has been here 45 years and is grateful for the business.

“We’re using a secret ingredient in the conchas that makes it so appealing,” he said. His son-in-law had been trying different spiced pumpkin flavors and made their own.

He wasn’t ready to give away the secret ingredient after it turned the county and the country upside down.

Workers say they will announce a new creation for the Christmas holidays so stand by.

Wire thieves active again in Highlands

By Evelyn Redmond Heater

HIGHLANDS – A warning to everyone to be on the look out and stay aware. The thieves are stealing copper wiring again. All of the communication wiring in front of our building and on the corner of Jones and S Main were stolen last night. They pulled the poles down and cut the wiring. If anyone saw anything please private message me.

The police/Centerpoint and all communication companies are now involved but if you



have any information or happened to have seen anything please let me know.

Thank you. Photos attached of some of the damage

★ OBITUARY

KENNETH ALAN WARDLAW

Kenneth Alan Wardlaw passed away from a tragic death on November 20, 2024.

Survived by his Wife Falein Wardlaw, Mom Deborah Morris, Dad Frank Alan Wardlaw, sisters Stacey, Che-



rie and Chrissy and other extended family and friends.

Service will be held on Sunday, December 22nd from 1:30 to 2:30 p.m. at Crosby Church, 5725 U.S. 90, Crosby, Texas 77532.

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Toxic Nurdles,

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

from residential properties. We discovered that no provisions had been made to contain the plastic pellets or keep them from reaching water sources. Without quick remedial action, nurdles will have a

presence in Highlands and in nearby waterways for some time to come.

Reporters from the Houston Landing accompanied the THEA team. Here is their report:

HOUSTON LANDING: Plastic Pellets worry residents,

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

By Elena Bruess
December 10, 2024 | 12:57 pm

At the base of the overturned train car, Jackie Medcalf scoops small plastic pellets from the muddy ground and deposits them in a mason jar. When it's about halfway full, she caps the jar and places the container in her tote bag. For every mason jar filled, she snaps a photo of the location.

Plastic pellets right by the train car. Pellets a few yards away. Pellets spewing directly from the train car.

"This has to do with accountability," Medcalf said. "If they won't tell us what's going on, we'll find out."

It's early Monday afternoon and Medcalf – the founder of the Houston non-profit Texas Health and Environment Alliance – is standing where 14 train cars derailed Friday night in East side Harris County, expelling mounds of nurdles, small plastic pellets used in plastic manufacturing.

The train derailment alarmed environmental activists and residents. While the city and the train operator – Union Pacific Railroad – have confirmed that any immediate danger has passed, residents and activists said they are being left in the dark with little to no information about the nur-

dles spread across the area and what is being done to clean it up. Because of this, environmental activists like Medcalf are out in the field – sampling for what they say may never be publicly available.

Rachel Jordan, Texas Health and Environment Alliance, at left, collects plastic pellets that came from inside derailed trains after an overnight derailment, Monday, Dec. 9, 2024, in Highlands. (Antranik Tavitian / Houston Landing)

Medcalf heard about the incident only a couple hours after it occurred Friday evening. Residents in the area contacted her, concerned about the train cars exploding or leaking environmental contaminants. Along with the pellets, some of the cars held petroleum gas. She decided, along with her team, to check out the area Monday and to collect samples.

The train cars rammed into each other after the conductor attempted to connect two trains together, according to Harris County Sheriff's Office. The collision derailed the cars from the tracks. Two train cars also smashed into the side of a blasting and coating facility, tearing down the entire outer wall of the building.

Some train cars landed in residents' yards and others

ended up in the canals that feed into Lynchburg Reservoir for the City of Houston's East Water Purification Plant – a source for Houstonians' drinking water supply. However, no train cars released any contaminants into the water or air, according to city officials.

In a statement, Union Pacific said the investigation into Friday's derailment remains under investigation.

At the collision site, Medcalf and two other THEA members walked down the train tracks, pausing every once in a while to scoop a sample or veer off the track to analyze a derailed car. The trains, which have crisscrossed Harris County for decades, are a common concern for residents. They can stop for hours on end, posing a serious danger to children, and have historically contaminated entire neighborhoods.

Union Pacific personnel used heavy equipment to upright some of the cars and cleared the track so the trains could proceed with their journey several hours after the incident. Union Pacific will be conducting the cleanup, which is ongoing, according to Robynn Tysver, media relations for Union Pacific, but the company said it does not have an estimate on when it will be completed.

Problem with nurdles
After the train cars derailed on Friday night, the city turned off the water pumps from the Lynchburg Reservoir so they were no longer pulling water from the canals. They were turned back on once Hazmat first responders determined there were no leaks.

"There was no impact to the water supply and no contamination," said Erin Jones, public information officer with Houston Public Works. "Everything was back to normal at the reservoir on Saturday."

Still, as of Monday afternoon, nurdles were scattered throughout the collision site – concerning THEA mem-

bers and confusing nearby residents. In one account by Grizzly's Hood News – a local Houston news source – the nurdles were in massive piles immediately after the accident.

Nurdles are about the size of a lentil, melted down and used in the production process of water bottles, plastic bags, clothes and other items. They are a major element of microplastic pollution with an estimated 230,000 metric tons entering the ocean every year.

(Left) Jackie Medcalf, Texas Health and Environment Alliance, collects plastic pellets spilling from a derailed train after an overnight derailment, Monday, Dec. 9, 2024, in Highlands. (Antranik Tavitian / Houston Landing)

Because these little plastic pellets look like food, wildlife often eats it when it finds them. Because the plastic cannot be digested, this can ultimately lead to malnutrition or starvation.

The pile of nurdles from the night of the accident had since been removed, but still the remaining little plastic pellets looked like a layer of snow in the mud.

Near one tipped train car, Medcalf gestures to a resident's chicken coop, looking concerned. The resident had about six train cars in his yard after the incident. It also rained the night of the

derailment, meaning water could have moved the plastic around.

"I mean, absolutely these birds are going to eat the plastic if they haven't already," she said. "The nurdles get everywhere and it's hard to track them all down."

At another spot, THEA member Rachel Jordan stopped to spoon up some green-looking sand – and pellets. Everywhere they look, the team is finding pellets.

"I am told these types of pellets have very specific chemical signatures," Medcalf said, rolling one around between her fingers. "We're really concerned, the pellets are so openly exposed right here and plastic persists for a long time."

The green sand comes from Interfab Services, a blasting and coating facility that had its outer wall facing the train tracks completely destroyed in the incident.

The company's president and CEO, Felix Valdez, said he had just left the facility for the night when he was called back by a neighbor saying, "Something is blowing up your place." He arrived around 8:45 or 9 pm and didn't leave until around 4 am.

"It was scary," he said on Monday. "You get to a point

when you are looking at the damage and you're looking at a tanker five feet from you that could explode at any time. They are handling such sensitive material."

A tank carrying liquefied petroleum gas is stationed between two merging canals after an overnight derailment, Monday, Dec. 9, 2024, in Highlands. (Antranik Tavitian / Houston Landing)

He estimated the damage to the property at around \$250,000, but he said Union Pacific told him they would take care of everything. Valdez said they also said not to worry about the nurdles, that the plastic can be dangerous for wildlife and fish, but he shouldn't be worried about ground contamination.

The train cars that fell in the canal have since been removed. One car with the words "Non odorized liquefied petroleum gas" is lying on its side just across the tracks. Another THEA member, Kristy Smith, takes a photo of the train car and looks around it to see if she should collect any samples.

Medcalf and Jordan look around the canal where the train cars fell in.

"You know, maybe people are doing work on cleaning this up, but too often these kinds of things get brushed under the rug," Medcalf said. "And if they are doing work, we're not being informed about it."

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Scarlett Johansson, left, and Channing Tatum star in "Fly Me to the Moon."

"Fly Me to the Moon"

"FLY ME TO THE MOON" (PG-13) — This film deemed as a "rom-com drama" tells an intriguing story about marketing specialist Kelly Jones' (Scarlett Johansson) efforts to improve NASA's public image during the Space Race. Kelly moves from New York to Cocoa Beach, Florida, to start work at the Kennedy Space Center, where she meets launch director Cole Davis (Channing Tatum), who disagrees with her marketing strategies. However, their opposing energies cause a romantic spark to develop between them, even though Kelly is hiding the fact that she's also been secretly tasked with creating a fake moon landing just in case the Apollo 11 mission doesn't succeed. Ray Romano and Woody Harrelson co-star in the film, which is out now to stream. (Apple TV+)

("Pretty Little Liars") star opposite each other in this Christmas rom-com out now; although for a Christmas movie, the holiday spirit is lukewarm at best. Focusing more on the amusement of its incredulous story rather than the elements needed to tell the story properly, "Our Little Secret" follows exes Avery (Lohan) and Logan (Harding) who receive the surprise of a century when they bump into each other at their new significant others' family Christmas celebration. Realizing their new partners, Cam and Cassie, are siblings, Avery and Logan agree to keep their romantic past a secret so that they can make it through the holiday without any hiccups. The highlights of the film were the quips made by the supporting cast, specifically Kristin Chenoweth, Dan Bucatinsky and Judy Reyes. (Netflix)

"OUR LITTLE SECRET" (TV-14) — Lindsay Lohan ("Irish Wish") and Ian Harding

"THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF DISNEY: HOLIDAY

"SPECTACULAR" (TV-PG) — Alfonso Ribeiro and Julianne Hough trade the "Dancing with the Stars" ballroom for Disney to host this holiday special out now! In this 1-hour-and-20-minute spectacular, viewers can enjoy performances of their favorite holiday songs and a few new songs from Disney films like "Moana 2" and "Mufasa: The Lion King." Look out for musicians such as Elton John, John Legend and Pentatonix, as well as familiar faces like Auli'i Cravalho, Seth MacFarlane and Leslie Odom Jr. The performances were filmed in Disney resorts located in Florida, California and Hawaii. (Disney+)

"SUPER/MAN: THE CHRISTOPHER REEVE STORY" (PG-13) — This documentary, out now, recounts the life of actor Christopher Reeve, who is known best for his role as Superman in the 1978-1987 "Superman" films. But Reeve's career spanned over 30 years, with many television, theater and directing credits to his name. Unfortunately, in 1995, Reeve suffered a spinal cord injury after falling from his horse, which paralyzed him from the neck down. Fortunately, though, it catapulted him into activism as a result, and he began advocating for disabled people and spinal cord injury research. In the doc, there is ample footage of Reeve and his wife, Dana, as well as his children, Alexandra, Matthew and Will. Actors Jeff Daniels, Susan Sarandon, Glenn Close and Whoopi Goldberg were also interviewed for the film. (Max)

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Q: I just read that Robert De Niro is going to star in a TV series soon. Has he ever done one before or just movies? — K.E.

A: According to TV Guide, two-time Oscar winner Robert De Niro was "pretty much Hollywood's last A-list holdout" when it came to starring in a regular television role. The series that lured him away from motion pictures is "Zero Day," a six-episode miniseries that will premiere on Netflix on Feb. 20, 2025. It also stars Emmy nominee Connie Britton ("Nashville") and Oscar nominees Jesse Plemons ("The Power of the Dog") and Angela Bassett ("Black Panther: Wakanda Forever").

While the conspiracy/political thriller will be De Niro's first contract role in a series, he has guest-starred on a few others, playing himself on the NBC sitcom "30 Rock" and the British series "Extras." In "Zero Day," which he also produces, De Niro will play the former leader of the free world, who faces a global cyberattack.

One of the creative minds behind the series is Michael Schmidt, who won a Pulitzer Prize for his reporting on the sexual harassment case against Bill O'Reilly. He also wrote the book "Donald Trump v. The United States," which was published in 2020. "Zero Day" is his first TV script.

Q: I love watching "A Christmas Story" marathons when they show it every year on TBS. I know the actor who played Ralphie has gone on to do other things in show business, but whatever happened to Ralphie's younger brother? — M.S.

A: Peter Billingsley, who played young Ralphie in "A Christmas Story," is one of the few success stories involving a child actor in Hollywood. As an adult, he's gone on to produce and direct several projects, even making (and starring in) "A Christmas Story Christmas" — the 2022 sequel to the original. Melinda Dillon and Darren McGavin, who were both brilliant as Ralphie's parents, have since passed away, but their characters live on each year when "A Christmas Story" airs on TBS, TNT and Max.

Ralphie's younger brother, Randy,



Robert De Niro (Upcoming in "Zero Day")

who ate mashed potatoes like a "little piggy," was played by Ian Petrella. He continued working as a child actor in the 1980s and most recently worked in animation and puppetry, according to Entertainment Weekly.

Petrella reprised the role of Randy in "A Christmas Story Christmas," along with actors Scott Schwartz as Flick (whose tongue infamously adhered to an icy pole in the original) and R. D. Robb as Schwartz (who laughed at Flick's predicament).

Q: Is "The Night Agent" returning for another season? My wife and I really enjoyed the first one. — K.A.

A: Yes, "The Night Agent," an action-thriller series based on the novel of the same name by Matthew Quirk, proved to be a big hit on Netflix during its first season. Starring Gabriel Basso ("Hillbilly Elegy") as an FBI agent working in the basement of the White House, it's already been renewed for a third season before the second has even premiered. Look for season two on Netflix, beginning on Jan. 23, 2025.

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

Comic strip panels with dialogue about cows and space.

Tiger comic strip panels by Bud Blake.

The Spats comic strip panels by Jeff Pickering.

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Trivia Test Answers list.

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Crossword puzzle grid with clues for Across and Down.

King Crossword puzzle grid and answers.

Trivia test by Fifi Rodriguez

- 1. FOOD & DRINK: What kind of cake is named after a British queen?
2. TELEVISION: What is the name of the family dog on "The Simpsons"?
3. ANATOMY: How long does a human red blood cell exist?
4. GENERAL KNOWLEDGE: Where is New Year's celebrated first each year?
5. ADVERTISING: Which company sponsors a 13-foot-long Weinermobile?
6. MEASUREMENTS: How many pints are in a quart?
7. MOVIES: What is the name of the dance performed in the "Rocky Horror Picture Show"?
8. BIOLOGY: What does the term ectothermic mean?
9. GEOGRAPHY: Which country has the longest coastline in the world?
10. LITERATURE: Who is the author of "The Canterbury Tales"?



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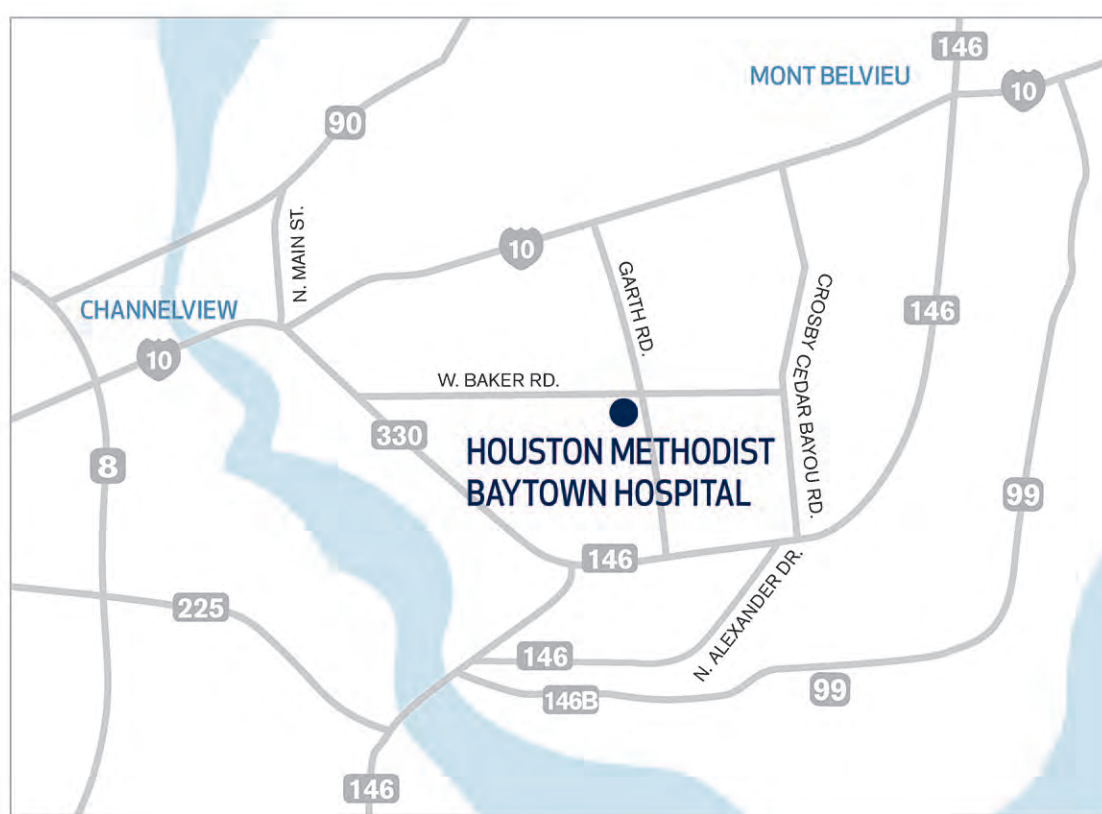
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