



Food Drive and Turkey Trot.  
See story on Page 2

HIGHLANDS

CROSBY

# Star Courier

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P.O. DRAWER 446, HIGHLANDS, TEXAS 77562

## IN THE STARS

### Rotary Chili Feast set for Saturday Feb. 1

Highlands Rotary Club will hold their 50th Annual Chili Feast, Raffle & Auction on Saturday, Feb. 1 from 11am to 3pm, at St. Jude's Catholic Church Social Hall, 808 S. Main St. Highlands.

Tickets to win a new 2025 Chevy SUV, and two chili dinners are on sale for \$100 from all Rotary members and many local stores.

Call 713-906-2337 for more information, tickets, and sponsors.

### Crosby Lions to meet Jan. 21

The newly formed Crosby Lions Club will host their organizational meeting on Tuesday, January 21, 2025, at Iguana Joe's on FM 2100 in Crosby. The meeting begins at 6 p.m. Officers will be elected. To learn more about the Lions and read over qualifications for those running for office, visit their website at www.lionsclub.org and click on Member Resource Center. For more information, contact Chuck Martin at cmartin77095@sbcglobal.net.

### 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.

## SAN JACINTO RIVER SUPERFUND SITE

# EPA Updates community, listens to complaints

By David Taylor  
Managing Editor

HIGHLANDS – One of the most powerful agencies in the U.S. government made their way to the San Jacinto Community Center in Highlands to deliver information to the community and listen to their concerns particularly about the ongoing plan of action for remediation of the northern impoundment.

“The community involvement plan is a communication tool,” they told the audience of more than 100 in attendance. “It’s not a technical tool, so a lot of the information about the site, technical information will not be in the community involvement plan.”

With that introduction, EPA representative Robert Appelt, remedial project manager, U.S. EPA Region 6, summarized their success with the recently completed southern



Robert Appelt, remedial project manager, U.S. EPA Region 6 gave a brief presentation on the remediation projects at the southern and northern impoundments.

impoundment and then covered where they were in the remediation process for the northern section.

Appelt has been working on the project for the last three years as a professional geoscientist with the EPA.

“We’ve been very busy this last year and we’ve made a lot of progress,” he



Jeanne Javadi, P.E. with the Texas Department of Transportation, was present at the meeting to offer information from TxDOT. Javadi will be working on the massive I-10 corridor project set to begin soon.

said. Appelt explained the area is broken up into three general areas: the southern impoundment, the northern impoundment, and the sand separation area.

The site was built in the mid-1960s for disposal of paper mill waste. Both the northern and southern im-



Carolyn Stone, founder of Channelview Health Improvement Coalition, was prepared with numerous questions for Appelt and other EPA representatives.

poundments cover about 15 acres each and were left contaminated with dioxins and furans, the two primary contaminants.

“You’ll hear this word BMP a lot, which really means it’s best management practice,” he said.

The San Jacinto River Waste Pits site was added to the National Priorities

Superfund site in 2008. The goal is to remove waste from the northern and southern impoundments for offsite disposal and prevent releases into the river during excavation with a wall.

In October 2017 they received a Record of Decision and by April 2018 had received the Remedial design (RD) Administrative Settlement Agreement and Order.

By November 2021, the Remedial Action work plan was approved and construction completed in May of 2024. By August 2024, the draft RA report was received and is under review.

Field activities included removing 150,000 tons of impacted material transported and disposed of off-site which added up to approximately 9,045 loads

Continued. See EPA MEETING ON WASTE PITS, Page 6

## CROSBY SUPERINTENDENT'S MESSAGE

# Crosby ISD Kicks off 2025 with Marathon Runners, School board Recognition, and Exciting Expansion Plans

Hello East Harris County and Crosby ISD families,

We are off to a running start in 2025! Kudos to Crosby ISD students and staff members who will participate in the Houston Marathon weekend. Coach Cindy Whigham and the Crosby Elementary School Run Club are running the “We Are Houston 5K” on Saturday, January 18. Coach Whigham is also running the half marathon on Sunday, January 19 – her 16<sup>th</sup> consecutive year



Paula Patterson  
Crosby Superintendent

running the full or half marathon. Coach Whigham is the PE in-

structor at CES, and she raises money each year for the Sunshine Kids in Houston, an organization that assists pediatric cancer patients. Good luck to all of our Cougar runners!

January is School Board Recognition Month. I want to thank our Board of Trustees for their 27 years of combined service. Trustees are elected repre-

Continued. See CROSBY SUPERINTENDENT, Page 5



The Crosby Elementary School Run Club will be running in the “We Are Houston 5K” on Saturday, January 18 as part of the Chevron Houston Marathon weekend. The students’ sponsor, CES PE Instructor Ms. Cindy Whigham, will be running her 16<sup>th</sup> consecutive full or half marathon on Sunday, January 19.

# Crosby American Legion Honors Vets with Wreath-Laying Ceremony

### From our community

It was a quiet day in the cemetery at Sterling White in Highlands just two days before Christmas. While the rest of the community scurried around finishing up shopping and other details before Christmas, a group of veterans participated in a solemn wreath-laying ceremony Monday, Dec. 23 at the site of the Veterans Memorial in the Sterling White cemetery.

The participants were members of the Crosby American Legion, Ladies Auxiliary, joined by cemetery staff to honor fallen service members during the holiday season.

Legion members and auxiliary volunteers carefully placed ceremonial wreaths at the memorial, paying tribute to the sacrifices of local veterans. The ceremony demonstrated the community’s ongo-



Veterans attending the wreath-laying ceremony at Sterling-White Cemetery included Juan Parga, Ingrid Mota, Kathy and Ernie Roder, Bob Bergeron, Don Guidry and Johnelle Eilers.

ing commitment to remembering and honoring those who served our nation.

The Sterling White Cemetery Veterans Memorial serves as a year-round tribute to service members from the Crosby area and continues to be maintained through the dedicated efforts of cemetery staff and veteran organizations.

## HIGHLANDS ROTARY

# Chili Feast will feature Unique Auction items

HIGHLANDS – Rotarians are in full preparation for their big annual Chili Feast, to be held Saturday, February 1st at the social hall of St. Jude’s Catholic Church on S. Main Street.

A large crowd is expected again this year, and people are anxious to get out and meet their friends in this 50th year tradition.

The event includes delicious chili dinners, cooked with Chester Stasney’s world-famous recipe, a raffle for 16 prizes including a new 2025 Chevy SUV, a silent auction and a live auction. Chili Feast Chairman Patricia Scott pointed out that the live auction contains a number of desirable items, which are offered only once a year to event participants.

This year the auction will include an outdoor porch swing, a Dooley &



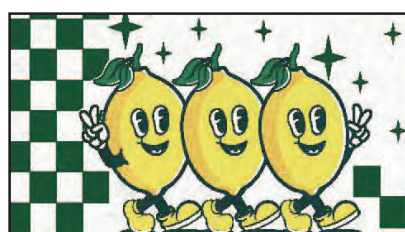
The Live Auction will include several beautiful and unique Quilts made by Rotarian Connie Russell. These are always a favorite of the crowd. Above, a quilt that was in the auction last year.

Burke designer purse, gift cards for crawfish lovers from the Crawfish Shack and the Mud Bug which include crawfish dinners and other memorabilia, a Craftsman Tool Set, gardening cart and supplies, 4 passes to the Crosby Fair & Rodeo plus parking, me-

chanics 297 piece tool set, Picnic Table, ad in the Star Courier, Stihl chain saw, SuperBowl liquor basket, Banana Pudding Cheese Cake, miniature childrens’ vehicles, and Valentine themed items. This is only

Continued. See ROTARY CHILI FEAST, Page 6

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☆ SCHOOL PAGE ☆

# Sterling High's PAL Team Joins Baytown FD to Support Share your Holidays Food Drive



From left Meime Mitchell, 12<sup>th</sup> grade, Abigail John, 12<sup>th</sup> grade, and Evan Garnica, 11<sup>th</sup> grade

By Nancy Bonds

On December 2nd, Sterling High School's PALS team partnered with the Baytown Fire Department, KHOU, and the local community to support the annual Share Your Holidays Food Drive. The event, which also featured the RSS HO HO HO Scavenger Hunt, saw volunteers collecting canned goods at Walmart throughout the day to help families in need.

Sterling High School's PALS students, led by teacher Taylor Kurbad, played a vital role by assisting the Baytown Fire Department in loading food boxes and ensuring the collected goods were ready to be distributed. Their efforts reflect the school's commitment to community service and holiday giving.



Alyssa Herrera, 12<sup>th</sup> grade

The Share Your Holidays Food Drive is a shining example of teamwork between schools, first responders, local businesses, and community members to make the holidays brighter for those in need.



Joseph Franco, 11<sup>th</sup> grade

# Day of Caring at Bowie Elementary



By: Nancy Bonds,

Bowie Elementary School enhanced its Active Recess program to provide students with healthier, engaging play opportunities as part of the United Way of Greater Baytown Area and Chambers County's (GBACC) annual Days of Caring. Volunteers painted activity zones on concrete areas, creating purposeful spaces for re-

cess play. This initiative was built upon a prior grant that trained teachers and provided equipment to enrich student activities.

The project promotes physical activity, boosting strength, endurance, academic performance, and self-esteem. It also fosters better social skills, improves the school's social climate, and can help reduce bullying.

Andrew Eisterhold from Exxon Mobil led the effort, overseeing site planning, equipment acquisition, and volunteer coordination to ensure the project's success.

This collaboration highlights the impact of Days of Caring, showcasing the power of volunteerism and community action to support student well-being and development.

# Highlands Elementary Students Give Back with Food Drive and Turkey Trot



By: Amanda Kennington

Students at Highlands Elementary are spreading holiday cheer and giving back to the community in a meaningful way this season. The school organized a two-fold initiative that has made a significant impact both in the local community and within the school itself.

As part of the school's commitment to community service, students participated in a food donation drive that gathered essential items to support families in need at Thanksgiving. All donations collected, including canned goods and non-perishable items, were delivered to First Baptist Church Highlands Food Pantry, which provides meals and assistance to local families.

"It feels good to give.

Just giving a little of something can make a big difference in another person's life," said Highlands Elementary student Haythem Mueller-Boudreaux. Haythem's sister Helena agrees, "It feels good helping the community. I love to help, and I'll do anything to make our community better."

To kick off the food drive and add some extra fun to the holiday season, Camryn Kotlarz, PE teacher at Highlands Elementary, organized a Turkey Trot event on November 7, 2024, with more than 75 participants. The event encouraged students to participate in a fun and active run while promoting fitness, teamwork, and school spirit. Students raced through the school's outdoor trail, with many families joining in to cheer on participants.

In addition to promot-

ing health and wellness, the Turkey Trot raised \$1,000 for new PE equipment, ensuring that students have access to the best resources for their physical education. The funds were raised through participant sponsorships, with local businesses and families generously contributing to the cause.

Not only did the Turkey Trot help promote healthy habits, but it also raised a sense of unity as the school came together for a good cause. "The funds raised will greatly enhance our PE program, allowing us to purchase much-needed equipment for our students," said Joel Kunz, PE Teacher at Highlands Elementary.

The school's efforts reflect the ongoing commitment to fostering compassion, teamwork, and community involvement.



# Memorial Theatre Triumphant at the Texas Thespian Festival



By: Nancy Bonds

The Goose Creek Memorial Theatre Company proudly represented their school at the Texas Thespian Festival 2024, held in Grapevine, TX. The talented students showcased their exceptional skills, earned accolades, qualified for national recognition, and performed their acclaimed production of Julius Caesar. Head Director Gina Martin and Assistant Director Peyton Wood lead the company.

Memorial Theatre Company was one of only nine theatre companies in the state selected to perform in the exclusive Marathon Play competition. Their compelling production of

Julius Caesar captivated audiences and demonstrated the company's artistry and professionalism. Several students earned individual recognition for their performances. Rubén Fernández and Austin Baker were recognized as Superior Performers, while Jada Freeman received the title of Excellent Performer.

Multiple students also advanced to nationals in various categories. Payden Hinz and Jada Freeman qualified for Solo Musical, Rubén Fernández and Eto Rile for Duet Acting, Autumn Zaruba for Hair and Makeup Design, Michael J. McDonough for Costume Design, and Jasper

Moreno for Sound Design. Additional honors included Trinity Bennett being named an Improv All-Star, E. Anderson receiving recognition as part of the Honor Crew, and the company winning the All-Star Troupe Display award.

Their achievements at the Texas Thespian Festival highlight the strength and vibrancy of the arts within the school and the dedication of its students and educators. These students will represent Memorial Theatre Company at the International Thespian Festival 2025, which will take place June 22-27, 2025, at Indiana University in Bloomington, IN.

# Barbers Hill Press

## Dayton

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MONT BELVIEU, TEXAS 77580

### ON THE HILL

#### In Texas Senate, Republican Middleton part of Strong Leadership Team for the 89th Legislative Session

AUSTIN, TEXAS — The Texas Senate Republican Caucus proudly introduces a strong leadership team in advance of the 89th Texas Legislative Session. Senator Tan Parker (SD12) has been unanimously elected as chairman, alongside newly elected vice chairs Senator Mayes Middleton (SD11) and Senator Kevin Sparks (SD31). The treasurer role will be held by Senator-elect Adam Hinojosa (SD27). The caucus stands united in its commitment to driving policies that bolster Texas' economy, safeguard individual freedoms, and secure a prosperous future for the Lone Star State.

"I am honored to lead the Texas Senate Republican Caucus as we prepare for a remarkable 89th Legislative Session," said Chairman Tan Parker. "We build upon the strong foundation put in place from our past chair Senator Angela Paxton along with past vice chair Senator Bryan Hughes and all those who have served as caucus leaders. Their dedication advanced conservative policies rooted in limited government, economic freedom, and opportunity for all Texans. Together, we will ensure our great state remains the national model for prosperity, liberty, and innovation."

"I am grateful to my colleagues for electing me vice-chair of the Senate Republican Caucus. Together, we will join President Trump in fulfilling the conservative mandate Texas voters chose," said First Vice Chair Senator Mayes Middleton.

"I'm honored to serve the caucus and look forward to partnering alongside my colleagues for conservative victories this upcoming session," said Second Vice Chair Senator Kevin Sparks.

"It will be my honor to serve as Treasurer of the Senate Republican Caucus. I look forward to working alongside Senators Parker, Middleton, and Sparks to advance our shared vision for strong, conservative leadership that prioritizes the needs of all Texans. Together, we will continue to uphold the values that make our state exceptional," said Senator-elect Adam Hinojosa.

The Texas Senate Republican Caucus gives voice to the principles and priorities of Republican Senate members, advancing policies rooted in Texas values and focused on the needs of Texas families, businesses, and communities.

The caucus stands ready to address the needs of all Texans, ensuring the Lone Star State remains a beacon of opportunity and prosperity. As the 89th Legislative Session begins on Tuesday, January 14, the Senate Republican Caucus will lead on critical issues, including economic growth, border security, public safety, education, tax relief, and infrastructure.

#### Texas Bill Would Allow State to Run Austin

### State Rep. Cain Re-files bill to create "District of Austin"

AUSTIN, TX - A conservative leader wants the state to takeover Texas' capital city. Texas State Representative Briscoe Cain filed a joint resolution for the Texas House to consider establishing a new "District of Austin" to combat concerns of rising crime and public safety.

In House Bill 274, Cain proposes a constitutional amendment allowing the legislature to create a new district that serves as the seat of government. This legislation would "empower the Texas Legislature to address concerns about Austin's declining ability to govern as the state capital city effectively," according to the resolution.

Cain, who first filed the legislation in 2021 but was not approved, recently posted on X why he felt the need to re-file it again this year. He said, "...For far too long, city leaders have thumbed their nose at the Capitol and turned their backs on

their own citizens. A District of Austin will keep residents and visitors safe."

Cain is a state representative for District 128 in the Highlands, Deer Park, Sugar Land and Baytown areas. He works in Austin at the Capitol and stated in the resolution that Austin's "soaring homicide rates and spikes in violent crime have highlighted systemic leadership failures, compounded by the defunding of police and policies that deprioritize public safety, leaving the state capital exposed to unacceptable risks."

Austin Mayor Kirk Watson responded to Cain's claims of the city referencing its ranking as one of the best places to live by a U.S. World News report based on the high quality of life, strong job market and overall desirability and value as well as the Milken Institute ranking Austin the best-performing large city in 2024. Watson told MySA in



Rep. Briscoe Cain

an emailed statement, "Austin is a pretty great town" especially "for innovators and people who are vibrant, vital and looking to the future with new ideas."

"The Texas Legislature has been hostile to all Texas cities in recent years, but it's long had a special and unnecessary antipathy for its state capital," Watson said. "It's been an effective political tool for some in control of the Capitol (it gets this sort of media attention) but isn't particularly helpful when we're actually trying to solve our

shared problems."

Last month, the Austin Police Department said they've investigated 62 homicides so far in 2024, which is not far from last year's count at 73. The city has seen a steady rise in crime since 2020, when the city's norm was about 25-30 murders per year, Austin Police Chief Lisa Davis told local media.

In addition to crime, Cain claims the city's "focus on controversial political initiatives rather than infrastructure and public service has raised questions about its ability to manage the responsibilities of hosting the state capital."

"This is about more than just governance—it's about safety, integrity, and protecting the integrity of Texas' government," Cain continued. "Austin's failures are not just an embarrassment; they threaten the people who live and work here and the citizens who visit. The District of Austin

will provide the focused, accountable leadership necessary to address these challenged head-on."

Austinites in the r/Austin subreddit posted their disapproving thoughts on the legislation, with many citing other Texas cities having higher crime rates than Austin.

User Jakefrmstaple-harm wrote, "That's a pretty whiney letter. And funny to even attempt to say they're doing it for the safety of its citizens. They hate liberals and that's all this is about."

Nebbyb said, "Lubbock has a much higher crime rate and is less economically successful, why not take over it? The only think rural legislators should be doing with Austin is learning from it how to run a successful economic entity."

If enacted, the "District of Austin" would be created in the city on this year, 2025.

### Honoring Judge Cryer: A Pillar of Chambers County

Chambers County is proud to recognize and honor those who make a meaningful impact on our community, and today, we celebrate a true legend—Judge Larry Cryer. The Chambers County Commissioners Court has renamed the Cedar Bayou Annex to the \*Judge Larry Cryer Annex Building\* in recogni-



tion of his 42 years of dedicated service as Justice of the Peace for Precinct 6.

Judge Cryer is the only person to ever hold this esteemed position, presiding over thousands of criminal and civil cases, as well as countless weddings. His unwavering commitment, compassion, and tireless work

have made a lasting impact on our community, and we are grateful for his incredible service.

Thank you, Judge Cryer, for being a true pillar of Chambers County and for all the positive contributions you've made to improve the lives of our citizens. You are an inspiration to us all!

### HCDE & Bates Surprise Family with New Car and Gifts for Christmas

By David Taylor

For more than two decades, Lee and Leila Bates have given from their heart and wallet a refurbished car to a deserving family at Christmas time. The auto collision repair company based originally in Channelview and expanded now into Baytown, has worked with the Harris County Department Education Head Start program for most of those years and the program continues to expand.

"It's been such a good partnership," Leila said, "in that they help provide us with nominations that meet our criteria and then help us coordinate this event."

For Octavia Lafayette, a single mom of three children, it was a blessing. She received a silver Nissan Versa at the revealing party.

For the Bates family and committee who helps make the decisions on the parents to receive the gift, it doesn't come easy.

"It's a hard choice to pick just two families each year," Leila said, "but the car plays an instrumental part in that we're looking for hard working families and parents that are engaged and doing good things with their family."

It was the 47<sup>th</sup> car to give away and Bates said she was proud of her team of workers at the shop who



Octavia Lafayette and her son Trayvon are all smiles after getting into her Nissan Versa sedan, gifted to her by Bates Collision Centers in Channelview.



Octavia Lafayette holds up the keys to a vehicle given to her by Lee and Leila Bates, left, of Bates collision Centers in Channelview. Lafayette is joined by her oldest son Strada, daughter Olivia, and baby Trayvon.

contributed to the project.

"They're in a daily grind putting cars back together and on the road again when they are interrupted with this project," she said. "This is changing lives and helping families get further down the road to independence."

There are a couple of major criteria that the Bates committee is seeking.

"This is truly a program that is a helping hand up.

It is not, it is not a hand-out, because

parenting, honestly, is the most important work that we will ever have in our life. It's the most important job that we will ever have in our life. It's the thing that can change the world," Leila said.

They sought parents who were grinding in spite of their circumstances and definitely without transportation.

Lafayette has three chil-

dren: Trayvon the youngest who is in HeadStart, Olivia, and Strada. Lafayette works nights at the airport parking facility and was juggling rides for herself and her son to get to football games during the past season. She was fortunate to have help from her mother to use her car to get the kids to school and to their daily activities.

"What touched us about Octavia is that not only is she figuring out how to make it work right now, she has goals, work ethic, independence, determination and with this car, she'll be able to get her CDL license and training and achieve a better job," Leila said.

Lafayette not only received the keys to a new car but six months of insurance coverage donated to her by AMI Insurance.

After being gifted with her 2024 Responsible Parenting Award, Lafayette was given the keys to her new vehicle parked in the lot just outside the Bates Collision Center buildings.

The car was wrapped in Christmas paper and outside Lee Bates was happy to thank a few more partners for their help.

"The Channelview High School baseball team also helps in collecting toys and loading the car with presents," he said.

After all the thank yous,

it was time for the family to unwrap their big present.

There were lots of smiles and tears of gratitude as they unveiled their Nissan Versa four-door sedan loaded with presents in the front and back seats, and another surprise—the trunk was also full of presents.

"I just thank everybody that's here to celebrate. I had a birthday on the 29th and my son had a birthday on Monday. This makes me feel so good and so happy," Lafayette said.

Lafayette learned about the program at HeadStart and filled out the paperwork not knowing whether she had a chance or not. "I didn't have a lot or anything and just made do with what I had and trusted God that it would work out for me some day," she said, "and it did."

The Smiley High School graduate has a sophomore at Humble High School who is awesome on the basketball team and now she'll be able to watch him play.

Lafayette was having to get up at 4 a.m. to be able to juggle transportation and get the kids to school by 8 a.m. Now she'll have the chance to get some more sleep after working a late-night shift to get her children to school.

"It has been a struggle, but somehow, god made it work," she said.

OPINION PAGE

OPINION

By BILL KING



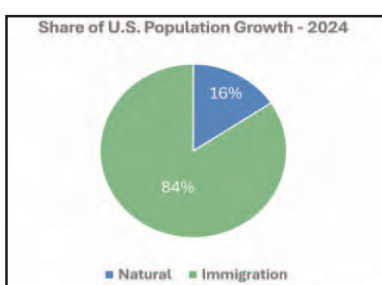
Immigration Continues to Drive U.S. Population Growth

The U.S. Census Bureau just released its population estimates for 2024. It estimated that the nation's population grew by nearly 1%, adding about 3.3 million people. Of that increase, however, 84% was from immigration (2.8 million). Without immigration, the population would have only grown by about .15% (518,000).

However, this probably understates the effect of immigration on U.S. population growth. First, more recent immigrants tend to have a higher birth rate than other U.S. residents.

This study found that in 2019, the fertility rate for Americans born here was 1.69 compared to 2.02 for immigrants. In other words, immigrants are propping up the natural population growth.

Second, the Census Bureau's immigration numbers have been widely criticized as being too low. Last year, when the Census Bureau estimated that net international immigration into the U.S. was 1.2 million, the Congressional Budget Office estimated it was 4 million. So, the Census Bureau's estimate this year of 2.8 million sounds more reasonable. However, our immigration system is so broken that no one knows the actual number. But it is quite likely that if the U.S. were to stop all immigration today, our population would be falling.



Every state added population from international immigration. At 411,000, Florida had the most new residents from other countries, with New York a close second at 389,000. Texas had a 311,000 increase from international immigration. International immigration comprised 88% of Florida's total growth but only 56% of Texas'.

Only three states (Mississippi, Vermont, and West Virginia) lost population last year, but their losses were minimal. However, without international immigration, twenty states would have lost population. California would have been the biggest loser at 129,000. New York, Pennsylvania, Illinois, and Massachusetts rounded out the top five in this category. The twenty states that would have lost population without immigration would have lost a total of 385,000 without it.

There was significantly less moving between states by Americans last year. In 2023, about 1.75 million people moved from one state to another. This year that dropped to 1.15 million, which is about a 34% decline. There has been a decline in interstate migration for several decades, most likely due to an aging population. However, this is an unusually large drop for one year. There has been some speculation about the cause and whether this represents a more persistent trend, but I was unable to find any hard data to explain this year's drop. The ability to work remotely and, therefore, less need to relocate for a job is probably a factor.

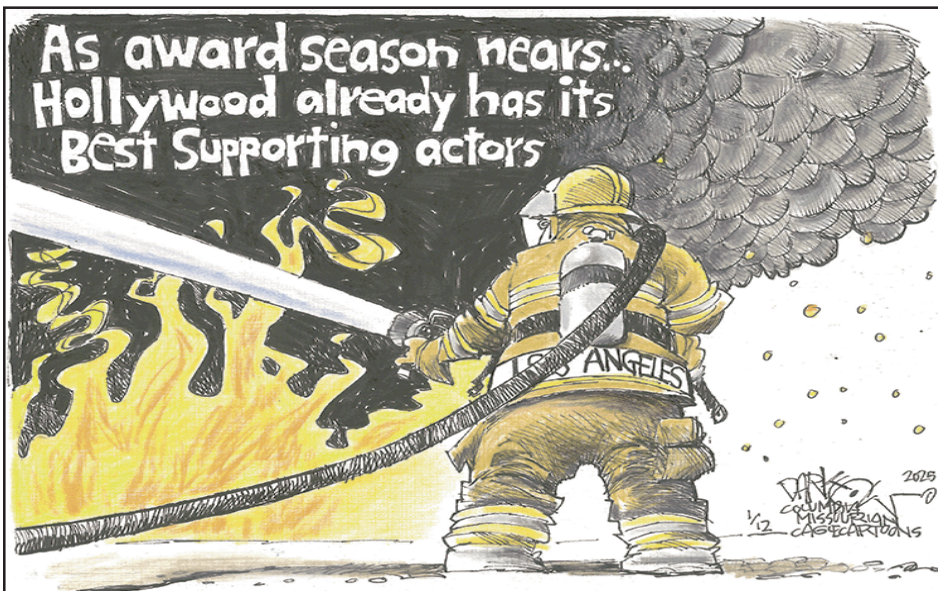
Texas led residents from other states by gaining 85,000. However, that was less than half of its gain from domestic immigration last year. North Carolina was a close second at 82,000. South Carolina, Florida, and Tennessee were third through fifth, respectively. Florida had a jar-dropping 65% decline in domestic immigration (185,000 to 65,000).

California continued to lead the way in losing residents, shedding 240,000 residents. New York lost 120,000. Illinois, New Jersey, and Massachusetts also had significant losses. Louisiana and Mississippi were the only southern states that lost residents to other states.

The new data strongly suggests that assuming the new Trump administration even comes close to making good immigration reforms and deportation promises, there will likely be some significant declines in the U.S. population. The declines will reach almost every part of the country and significantly impact the country. There will undoubtedly be some benefits from a declining population, but there will also be significant and painful disruptions. There will almost certainly be labor shortages in many industries and a significant decline in economic growth.

Polling has consistently shown that Trump's more restrictive immigration policy has widespread support in the country across almost every demographic. It will be interesting to see whether the support continues as the reality of population decline begins to be felt.

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



Legislative Session Begins on Jan. 14

The 89th Texas legislative session begins on Jan. 14 with a still-unresolved race for speaker of the Texas House of Representatives.

State Reps. David Cook, R-Mansfield and Dustin Burrows, R-Lubbock, are considered the frontrunners for speaker, but speculation continues as to whether other candidates will throw their hats into the ring.

The Republican caucus is split between those who oppose appointing any Democrat to chair a House committee and those who contend it's essential to work across the aisle to get the state's business done in a biennial five-month session. Historically, a few chairmanships have gone to members of the minority party.

In the wake of the November elections, the makeup of the 150-member Texas House is 88 Republicans and 62 Democrats.

School vouchers will again be on the legislative plate since they are a top priority for Gov. Greg Abbott. His efforts to pass what are also called Education Savings Accounts failed numerous attempts in 2023, including several special sessions.

Legislative watchers predict more bills aimed at property tax relief but geared more toward business owners, since those passed in the 2023 session were primarily aimed at homeowners.

Another issue that Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick has prioritized is banning the sale of all THC products in Texas. Since the state legalized the growth of hemp, some stores have begun selling products containing previously illegal levels of THC, the compound that gives marijuana its "high."

GOP BILLS SEEK TO REGULATE WIND, SOLAR AND BATTERY POWER PROJECTS

Several Republican lawmakers have filed bills to increase government oversight over renewable energy projects, The Dallas Morning News reported. Proposals include requiring property buffers between the projects and neighboring properties. Another bill



STATE CAPITAL HIGHLIGHTS By Gary Borders

would require environmental fees and studies for any new renewable projects.

The News reported that wind, solar and batteries account for about 46% of electric generation capacity for the Electric Reliability Council of Texas, which controls nearly all of the state's power grid.

"Currently, renewable energy facilities do not have statewide guidelines for permitting and decommissioning, leading to variations in how the installations are installed," said state Rep. Jared Patterson, R-Frisco and sponsor of one of the bills.

FBI PROBES REPORTED THREATS AGAINST SPACEX

The FBI is investigating reported threats made against SpaceX's Starbase Facility near Brownsville, the San Antonio Express-News reported. The bureau's San Antonio office confirmed that it is investigating "possible bomb threats in South Texas in recent weeks."

"While we are working to carefully vet and investigate the information we have received, we want to reiterate that the safety and security of the American people is the FBI's highest concern," the bureau said in a statement late last week.

A frequent camper near the launch site reported five male passengers in a vehicle talked of blowing up a SpaceX space vehicle.

The probe comes as the company is working toward a planned test flight on Jan. 10 of its second-generation Starship.

The company has come under fire in recent months for its environmental record.

Several Rio Grande Valley groups have sued the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality for allowing SpaceX to discharge wastewater from its launch platform without a permit.

TEXAS LOSING ITS CLOUT IN CONGRESS THIS SESSION.

There are fewer Texans in leadership in Congress in the session that just began, largely because of retirements of several GOP members, the Houston Chronicle reported.

U.S. Rep. Kay Granger, R-Fort Worth, who led the powerful Appropriations Committee, and U.S. Rep. Michael Burgess, R-Pilot Point, who led the Rules Committee and was the second-ranked Republican on the Commerce Committee, both retired from Congress this year.

Eighteen of the 25 Texas Republicans in the House have been there for three full terms or fewer. Another incumbent, Michael McCaul, R-Austin, is no longer heading the House Foreign Affairs Committee because of term limits.

STATE STARTS 2025 WITH 2.9 MILLION BUSINESS ENTITIES

Texas rang in the New Year with more than 2.9 million business entities actively registered with the secretary of state's office to conduct business here. That is up more than 125,000 from a year ago, according to Texas Secretary of State Jane Nelson.

"The economic climate in Texas continues to be strong as entrepreneurs grow and create businesses in our state and more out-of-state entities want to expand to Texas," Nelson said.

That number includes both businesses incorporated in Texas and out-of-state companies conducting business here.

STATE'S CITRUS INDUSTRY ON THE BRINK OF DISASTER

The state's citrus industry is reeling after a pair of natural disasters — the deadly winter storm of February 2021 and a severe drought, The Texas Tribune reported. Nearly four years after that winter storm, production levels have not recovered.

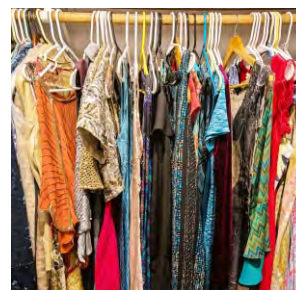
The state's citrus industry is located entirely in the Valley and has an economic impact of more than \$300 million annually. "We are not a large physical footprint anymore, but we still pack enough economic punch," said Dale Murden, president of Texas Citrus Mutual, a nonprofit trade association that represents the interests of commercial citrus growers.

Farmers in the Valley largely depend on surface water from the Rio Grande. A mature citrus tree needs between 40 and 50 inches of water a year, according to the Texas A&M Agrilife Research Center. About half of that amount must be supplied by irrigation. Drought conditions and Mexico falling behind on delivering water under a 1944 treaty are blamed for the drop in citrus production.

THE POSTSCRIPT

By Carrie Classon

The Car Wash Dress



My sister took me to task. "You know I was not being mean about your dress, don't you?"

She meant the dress that she had said made me look like a car wash—the part of the car wash where the floppy things slap the car dry. My dress looked a lot like that, especially if I spun around. I thought this was hilarious and mentioned it in a column.

"Of course I knew you weren't being mean!" I told her.

It was not my intention to be so amusing, wearing the car wash dress. From a certain angle, it looks pretty stylish. It was some designer's idea of a good look, and because I wear a smaller size, I can usually fit into these ill-conceived but affordable cast-offs I find on the internet. Not all of them work out. But I am delighted when I can cause some unexpected merriment simply by showing up in an \$11 used dress.

My sister ought to know this. She should know that, at 62, I am not angling for some best-dressed list. I am all about having fun with clothes, trying weird and different things, and a lot of those things absolutely are not going to work out. That is fine with me. I still have the car wash dress. Unlike an actual car wash, it is black, so I could wear it to a funeral sometime when I felt a little levity might be welcomed at the end of the service.

My family has a fine tradition of teasing. I know some people find this hard to believe, and I know some people tease cruelly. That is not what I mean at all. The teasing in my family has always been delivered with a heavy dose of love. Since I was a small child, I have known that the person who got teased was loved and the more people teased, the more love there was.

My dad and his sister were terrible to each other. My father always gave my aunt the meanest birthday cards, until one year she said, "Just once, I'd like a nice birthday card!"

The next year, my father went on a mission to find the most maudlin, absurdly sentimental, "To My Beloved Sister" birthday cards he could find. We found three, doused them in perfume, and presented them to her. (My dad also made her a rather nice set of candleholders in his woodshop that year, as I recall.)

They both laughed so hard they had to wipe away tears. She never asked for another nice card. So when my sister tells me I look like a car wash, it makes my day. I feel seen. I feel loved.

Being able to tell someone they look like a car wash means you know them well. She knows I have an oversized interest in buying dresses—too many dresses—for cheap on the internet. She knows I am not terribly self-conscious. (OK, I'm a bit of a ham.) Most of all, she knows that I know she loves me. She has supported me through every crazy and life-disturbing decision and event—through career changes, through a divorce, through moves across the country. There has never been a moment of my life when I have doubted that my sister would be there for me.

And so she gets to tease me.

I am definitely keeping the car wash dress. And it's not the last crazy dress I will buy. I figure it's my duty to give my sister something new to laugh about.

Till next time, Carrie

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# 2025 kicks off with many activities at Crosby ISD,

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

representatives who volunteer their time and expertise to make the best decisions for students, staff members, and families of Crosby ISD. Thank you to: President Kea Lynn Lewis (law enforcement advocate and accomplished singer); Vice President Jennifer Roach (lifelong educator and mom of two CHS graduates); Secretary Heather Barrett (Proud Crosby High School graduate and lifelong educator); Assistant Secretary Karen St. Julian-Thomas (community center director and CHS/CMS mom); Trustee JR Humphries (Proud Crosby High School graduate and Barrett Elementary School dad); Trustee Lisa Kallies (retired Crosby ISD educator and proud grandmother); and Trustee Phillip Chapman (custom home builder and Cougar Baseball dad). Our Board members live in our communities and care deeply about what's best for our kids, our employees, and our families.

2025 will be the year the Crosby High School expansion is completed. It will also be the year we begin the process to plan a second middle school. After the CHS expansion, a second middle school was next on the priority list approved by the Board of Trustees. This second middle school will begin as a sixth-grade campus with the ability to expand to a full sixth grade through eighth grade middle school. The project will be funded by the remainder of the 2017 voter-approved bond money. This year, we will begin with selecting the location, conducting land surveys, and then proceeding to the design process. The construction process typically takes two years for the average middle school, from groundbreaking to opening.



Drew Elementary School hosted an "Accelerated Reader Reboot" Pep Rally on the first day of the spring semester. Elementary librarian, Ms. Jones, hosted the event on Tuesday, January 7.



Drew Elementary School students, from kindergarten to fifth grade, celebrated reading at a literacy rally on their first day back after Winter Break. The students played games, including cup stacking, to win free books.

We will keep you updated every step of the way.

Our families should know that our academic calendar planning process has begun. Next month, we plan to submit two years' worth of calendars to the Board of Trustees. The proposal would include drafts for 2025-26 and 2026-27 calendars. Parents will soon receive a survey link with two options for each year on which to vote. The final decision by the Board is expected next month. We hope approving two years of calendars will be an added convenience for our families.

Please note 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.

For those of you already planning ahead to the big day in May, the Crosby High

School graduation will be held on Friday, May 30 at Cougar Stadium. It may only be January right now, but the next five months will fly by!

Finally, our spring semester started just like we ended the fall semester with reading celebrations at campuses. At Drew Elementary School, elementary librarian, Ms. Tedra Jones, hosted an "Accelerated Reader Reboot" Pep Rally. Students, from kindergarten to fifth grade, had a chance to get pumped up about literacy. They played games and won free books. Many of our students told us they couldn't wait to get back to class and start their 2025 by visiting the library and cozying up with a good book. That sounds like a great idea!

I pray our families have a wonderful year ahead.

We are Committed to Excellence! Go Coogs!

# Big Lots store closing indicative of Retail market

Last Minute sale will keep some stores open



By David Taylor  
Managing Editor

Amidst closing sales already ongoing at their area stores, Big Lots, Inc. announced on Friday that it has agreed to a sales transaction to Gordon Brothers Retail Partners, LLC that will enable the transfer of Big Lots assets, including stores, distribution centers, and intellectual property, to other retailers and companies, including Variety Wholesalers, Inc.

The sale is good news for employees who, just days after Christmas, thought they might be losing jobs with the closure. Not all stores will stay open, and it remains to be seen which stores will be saved in the end.

Big Lots, Inc. filed for bankruptcy protection back in September and thought there might be a deal to sell to Nexus, but that deal fell through in early December.

The Gulf Coast area has eight locations including one in North Shore at 5807 East Sam Houston Parkway. Other stores include locations at 919 N. Shepherd Dr., 9795 Westheimer Road, and stores in Webster, Pasadena, Humble, Porter, and Sugar Land. A list of store closings, obtained by USA Today, showed four locations in the area were already closed in Galveston, 5910 Broadway St., Store # 47, Houston, 10951 FM 1960 Rd. W, Store #103, Houston, 8210 Kirby Dr., Store #111 and Baytown, 4815 East Freeway, Store #222.

The company had announced earlier in the year it would be closing 315 stores across 35 states.

Then came the possibility of shuttering every store across the country affecting some 30,000 workers with the closure of the remaining 1,400 stores.

It was reported that the chain's stock took a nosedive of 90 percent in one year sending them into panic mode.

"The strategic sale to Gordon Brothers and the transfer to Variety Wholesalers is a favorable and significant achievement for Big Lots that reflects the tireless work and collective effort of our team," said Bruce Thorn, Big Lots' president and chief executive officer. "This sale agreement and transfer present the strongest opportunity to preserve jobs, maximize value for the estate and ensure continuity of the Big Lots brand. We are grateful to our associates nationwide for their grit and resilience throughout this process."

Rick Edwards, Gordon Brothers Retail Partners' Head of North America Retail, said, "We are pleased to reach this strategic agreement with Big Lots and partner with Variety Wholesalers to achieve a path forward that allows Big Lots to continue to serve customers with extreme bargains and an outstanding shopping experience."

Variety Wholesalers, Inc. already owns more than 400 retail stores in the Southeast and Mid-Atlantic United States under the Roses, Roses Express,

Maxway, Bill's Dollar Stores, Super 10, Super Dollar, and Bargain Town banners. They have announced they intend to acquire between 200 and 400 Big Lots stores which they plan to continue to operate under the Big Lots brand moving forward. They will also purchase at least two distribution centers to support the ongoing footprint of the chain.

"We are excited to partner with Gordon Brothers to provide a path forward for the Big Lots brand and hundreds of its stores," said Lisa Seigies, Variety Wholesalers' president and CEO. "We look forward to working with members of the Big Lots team to realize the exciting opportunities ahead."

The agreement is subject to approval by the Bankruptcy Court and other customary closing conditions.

Big Lots closures join other big box retailers who blame the economy and inflation for closing. Party City and Staples in The Shops at Stone Park on Wallisville and Beltway 8 have shuttered, along with Office Depot on I-10 and Uvalde, and Rue21 at 5830 East Sam Houston. Other retailers planning closures of some stores or have filed for bankruptcy, or reorganization around the area and country include The Container Store, TGI Fridays, American Freight, buybuy Baby, Macy's, Walgreens, CVS, Rite Aid, Red Lobster, 7-Eleven, Joann's, and LL Flooring (formerly Lumber Liquidators).

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# Fresh Start Program Marks 4th year, Helping Hundreds Seal Records & Rebuild Lives

Jan. 9, 2025 – Launched in 2022, the popular Fresh Start record screening and sealing program has screened nearly 2,000 people and helped almost 800 of them seal their records and get back on track over the past three years.

Organizers hope to build upon that success as the initiative marks the start of its fourth year with a **Fresh Start event on Saturday, Feb. 1, 2025, from 10 a.m. to noon at the Harris County Jury Plaza, 1202 Congress St. in downtown Houston.**

**Online pre-registration is required for criminal record screening and sealing and opens at noon on Monday, Jan. 13, 2025: [www.ccl.hctx.net/comcourt.htm](http://www.ccl.hctx.net/comcourt.htm).** Spots are limited and fill quickly.

“We’re excited to have been able to help so many people get back on track over the past three years,” said Judge Erika Ramirez, presiding judge for the 16 Harris County Criminal Courts at Law, “and we look forward to helping even more members of our community as we begin our fourth year of this vital and needed program.”

Fresh Start helps eligible people course correct after encounters with the

criminal justice system by sealing their eligible criminal records and connecting them with community resources. The program aims to help people meet their basic needs — reducing recidivism and making communities safer in the process.

In addition to record sealing, the February Fresh Start will feature:

**Know Your Rights Housing Workshop\* for Landlords and Tenants:** Come-and-go sessions covering topics such as contracts, expectations, landlord and tenant rights, and the eviction process.

**South Texas College of Law Legal Clinics:** Assistance with civil legal matters, including debt relief and estate planning, for eligible individuals. Learn more about available services and apply for the program on-site.

**Consulate General of Mexico in Houston:** Support for Mexican citizens in need of legal services or documents. Includes help with criminal, civil, immigration, labor, and administrative matters, as well as passports, birth and death certificates, military records, wills, and other documents.

**Harris County Voter Registrar:** Meet with the

Outreach Team and get registered to vote.

**Harris County Public Health**

**ACCESS Harris County:** Register for wraparound support and resource assistance related to education, food security, job placement, counseling, peer support, healthcare and insurance, housing, and transportation.

**Lead Poisoning Prevention Program:** Learn about lead poisoning and get tested to find out if you or your children have been exposed.

Fresh Start is offered by Harris County Criminal Courts at Law and their community outreach arm, BAYOU City Community Court, in partnership with Harris County Public Defender’s Office, Harris County Community Supervision and Corrections Department, Harris County State District Criminal Courts, Harris County Civil Courts at Law, Neighborhood Defender Service of Texas, Houston Apartment Association, and Harris County Constable Precinct One.

For more information about Fresh Start or to pre-register, go to [www.ccl.hctx.net/comcourt.htm](http://www.ccl.hctx.net/comcourt.htm).

# EPA Meeting on Waste Pits,

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

of impacted material removed. About 13,000 truckloads of clean fill imported and placed on-site and at least 1.4 million gallons of contaminated water treated.

“This involved over 100,000-man hours of labor, a significant undertaking,” Appelt said.

The Remedial Action Report will be posted to the San Jacinto River Waste Pits website.

Then they turned their attention to the Northern impoundment which wasn’t satisfactory.

“The EPA instead decided that we were going to take a much stronger enforcement stance on the project. In January, we sent them notification that the 90 percent design which had been submitted the previous year was seriously deficient,” Appelt said.

The responsible parties then responded in a letter on January 25, 2024, addressing the deficiencies. After some back and forth, the responsible parties ultimately delivered a 100 percent plan that comes close to what they are looking for.

“There were substantial improvements including the revised excavation of surfaces consistent with

ROD cleanup levels,” he said, “and the removal of capping from consideration, and plans to address storms, overtopping, barge strikes, scour, and heave,” he said.

Other issues that were raised included coordination between Texas Department of Public Safety (a real concern) and implementation of the remedial design, water management, and confirmation sampling.

“To keep them on task, we required the responsible parties to submit portions of the 100 percent Remedial Design at 30, 60, and 90 days after issuance of the EPA response,” the EPA representative said.

Concerns from the audience included hurricanes.

“Nobody can account for a hurricane, in terms of building this containment, but what they did do is they upped the wall height,” Appelt said. The water will also be treated year-round.

Another community concern was coordination with TxDOT once the I-10 bridge corridor begins construction.

“That is going to be an ongoing process. Our coordination with TxDOT won’t stop until both projects are completed.

Because even after, if we get done before they do, we still need to coordinate with them to make sure that they don’t disturb the remedy,” the EPA rep said. He said there would be a significant amount of coordination.

“The current letting date is September 2027 however, they have to secure all the funding first,” said Jeanne Javadi, P.E. with Texas Department of Transportation who is working on the I-10 project and attended the EPA meeting.

“We want it done soon because the old bridge was struck,” she said and was closed for months of repairs.

Javadi also said it would be a massive rebuild from Magnolia to Thompson Road with a lot of additional lanes including some managed lanes.

Residents also presented numerous issues to the EPA rep, many of which they were unaware of and promised to look into them with their help.

Appelt concluded the meeting promising more community involvement with meetings in the near future.

For more information, visit <https://www.epa.gov/tx/sjrw>.

# Highlands Rotary Chili Feast,

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

a partial listing with more to come.

Also available will be three unique and special handmade quilts by Connie Russell, including patriotic and sports team themes including the Astros.

With Valentine’s Day coming up, there are several Valentine themed

items to be auctioned.

Rotarians and local businesses are selling tickets now, for \$100 for the raffle and two chili dinners. Club president GayLynn Milliorn said they are going fast this year. Tickets are available at local banks, businesses, Dr. White’s dental office, Turner Chevrolet, and

many other locations. Or you can call 713-906-2337 for more information.

Chairperson Scott reminds everyone that Rotary welcomes corporate sponsors, and donations of items to the live and silent auctions. Contact her at 713-906-2337.

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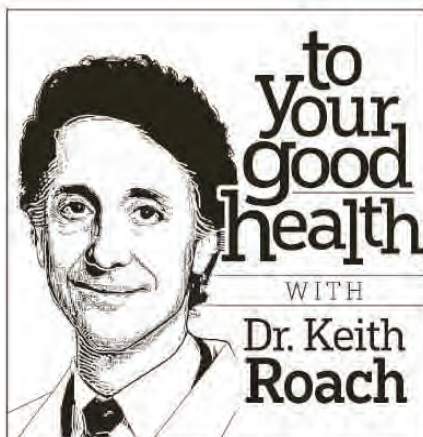
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Steroid Injections Provide Amazing Relief From Shingles Pain

DEAR DR. ROACH: I read your recent column on shingles. I am 66 and in fairly good health. I had both Shingrix shots about five years ago and take hydroxyurea for polycythemia vera (PV).

Around Aug. 1, I noticed some spots on my forearm that appeared to be a spider bite. I went to my family doctor, and she immediately diagnosed me with shingles and put me on gabapentin, which didn't help much. The next month was complete misery.

I never really had itching or an extensive rash, but intense pain and burning developed from the top of my neck down to my left thumb and forefinger. My wife read that hydroxyurea lowers your immune system, which is probably why I had such a bad case of shingles despite the Shingrix shots.

My cousin is a retired anesthesiologist and recommended an epidural steroid injection (ESI) that would help me immediately. I had the injection, and within 24 hours, I had an 80% improvement in my pain level. Over the next month, the pain decreased another 10% to 15%. I went from being almost incapacitated to being able to live again in 24 hours. The outcome was life-changing!

It seems that doctors need to be brought up to date on ESIs for shingles. I understand that the studies are inconclusive, but the on-the-ground results seem to show that

it is effective. The pain from shingles has to be experienced to really understand how debilitating it can be. ESIs are fairly inexpensive, and even if they only helped slightly, they would be worth the cost. To have the improvement I found is priceless. —Anon.

ANSWER: I often recommend the vaccine to prevent shingles, but as your case shows, the vaccine isn't perfect. I agree that your PV and its treatment with hydroxyurea may have predisposed you to the complication of shingles you had, called postherpetic neuralgia (PHN). You are quite right that the pain can be extraordinarily severe.

I am glad you wrote because steroid injections are not a treatment that I have written about before. As you say, not all trials found a benefit, but the largest trial found that intrathecal injections (which are similar to epidural injections but are found to be more effective in a small trial) led to excellent or good pain relief in 90% of people with intractable PHN, compared to 4% in people who didn't receive treatment.

DEAR DR. ROACH: I am a healthy 50-year-old man. When I was at the pharmacy recently, they said I could get a vaccine for pneumonia. Is this something I should do? —S.I.

ANSWER: The pneumonia vaccine at age 50 is a new recommendation by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices. The risk for developing severe pneumonia from the bacteria Streptococcus pneumoniae starts to increase at age 50 and becomes much higher after 65. The new vaccines (PCV20 and PCV21 under the brand name Prevnar) have long-lasting protection for many strains of this bacterial species.

If you haven't had this vaccine and are over 50, you should consider it during your next visit. (It's OK to get the vaccine at the same time as the flu or COVID vaccines.)

Dr. Roach regrets that he is unable to answer individual questions, but will incorporate them in the column whenever possible. Readers may email questions to ToYourGoodHealth@med.cornell.edu.

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celebrity extra by Dana Jackson

Q: Who is the handsome young actor in the new Nicole Kidman movie "Babygirl"? I've never seen him before. —S.W.

A: Harris Dickinson is a 28-year-old British actor who made his feature film debut in the 2017 film "Beach Rats." But 2022 was a big year for him with two more films that exposed him to a wider audience. First up was "Where the Crawdads Sing," the mystery thriller based on the bestselling novel of the same name that starred another Brit, Daisy Edgar-Jones ("Twisters"). The movie earned mixed reviews but was deemed a box-office hit, especially when it was available through streaming. Dickinson then capped off the year by playing a male model in the Oscar-nominated film "Triangle of Sadness," which also starred Woody Harrelson.

Many of his fans state that his best performance is his role as the tragic wrestler David Von Erich in the 2023 film "The Iron Claw," which also starred Zac Efron ("A Family Affair") and Jeremy Allen White ("The Bear"). All of these films eventually led him to being cast in the new movie "Babygirl," where he plays a seductive intern opposite Kidman's married CEO.

Q: Is it true that the TV series "Grimm" is being rebooted? Will it have the same actors as before? —M.N.

A: Yes, there are substantiated reports that a reboot of the supernatural-drama series "Grimm" is in the early development stages. The original show ended in 2017 after airing for six seasons on NBC, but the new incarnation will be on Peacock. It's also not certain yet whether it will be a series or just a movie. Either way, the original showrunners David Greenwalt and Jim Kouf are said to be involved in some capacity with the potential reboot, according to TVLine, while Josh Berman ("Drop Dead Diva") will write and produce the new "Grimm."

NBC's "Grimm" starred David Giuntoli ("A Million Little Things") as Nick, a "slayer of fairy-tale monsters," along with a large cast that included Claire Coffee ("S.W.A.T."), Russell Hornsby ("Mike"), and Bree Turner ("Law & Order SVU"). Whether they'll appear in the



Harris Dickinson in "Where the Crawdads Sing" (2022)

reboot will depend upon their availabilities.

Q: I read that a man is going to replace Hoda Kotb on the "Today" show, but who will be Jenna Bush Hager's co-host on their show? —K.E.

A: Craig Melvin is familiar to "Today" show audiences as he's been a co-host of "Weekend Today" since 2016, so it was natural to name him as Kotb's replacement opposite Savannah Guthrie. However, the fourth hour of "Today" is taking its time finding a host who has the right chemistry with Jenna Bush Hager. They plan to have a series of rotating guest hosts to find the right pick.

The newly rebranded "Today with Jenna & Friends" kicked off on Jan. 13 with Taraji P. Henson ("Empire"), followed by Eva Longoria ("Desperate Housewives") and Keke Palmer ("Nope"). The three actresses (as well as the future co-hosts) will spend anywhere from one episode up to a week's worth in the chair alongside Hager.

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



TIGER



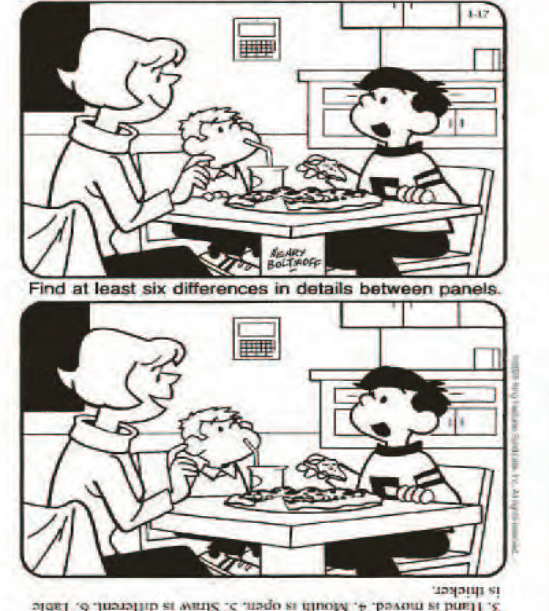
The Spats



Weekly SUDOKU

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

HOCUS-FOCUS

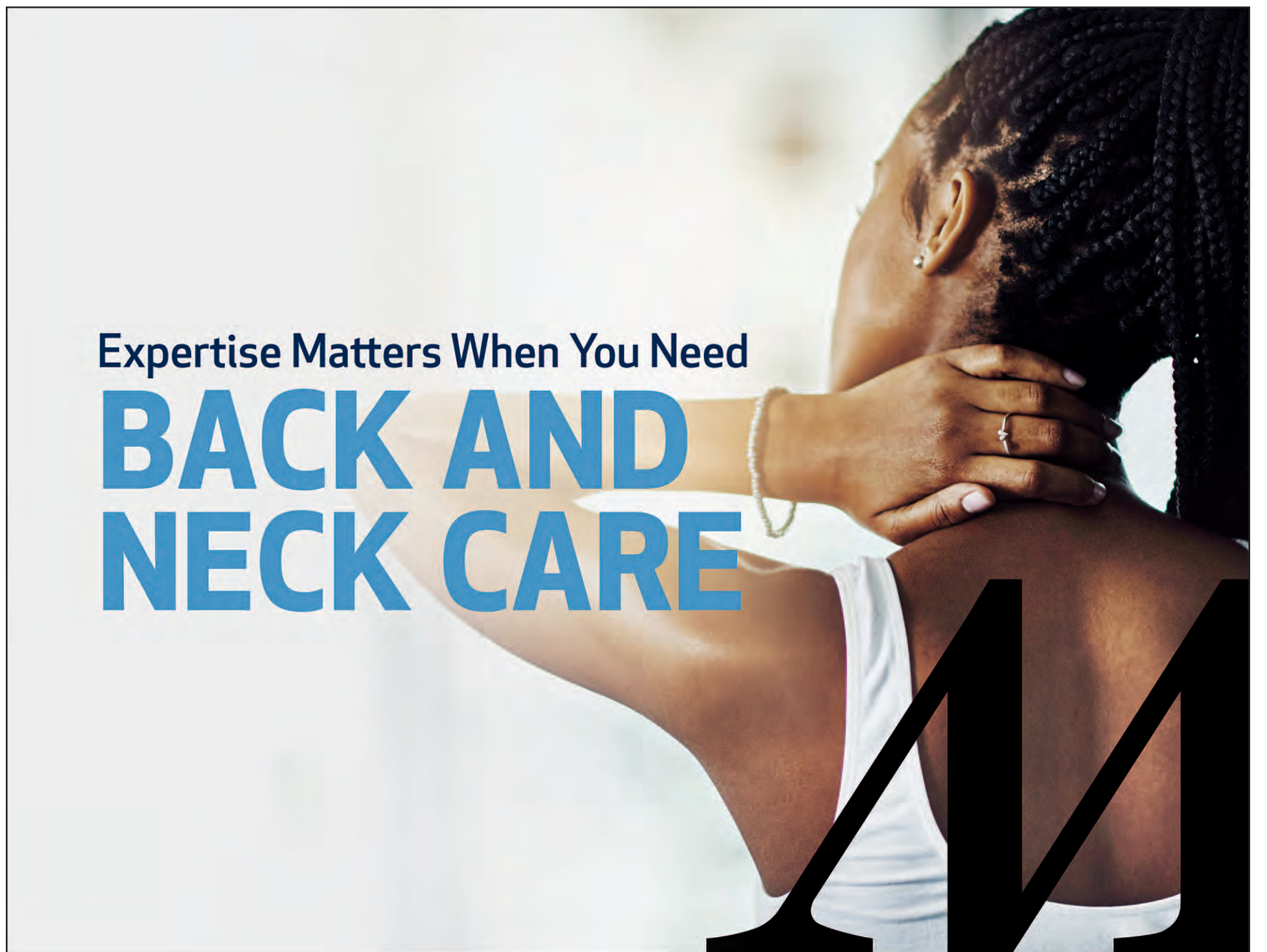


January 13, 2025 Posting Date King Crossword

Crossword puzzle grid with clues: ACROSS 1 Kitten's cry, 4 Bit of advice, 7 Prop for Sherlock, 8 Vice President Burr, 10 Ancient Greek region, 11 Future ferns, 13 Mental agility, 16 Rds., 17 Pitchers, 18 Stickum, 19 Unpaid TV ads, 20 Close, 21 Revue segments, 23 Lover's meeting, 25 Smack a baseball, 26 1982 sci-fi film, 27 Signing need, 28 "— of One's Own", 30 1959 Kingston Trio hit, 33 Burger King, for one, 36 Kilt pattern, 37 Lubricated, 38 Canary snacks, 39 Hosp. scans, 40 Triage ctrs., 41 Salty expanse, 9 Stallion sounds, 10 Mensa stats, 12 Animal's nose, 14 "Jabberwocky" starter, 15 Inherited, 19 Peach center, 20 Wd. from Roget, 21 Hard work, 22 Sunflower State, 23 Walked (on), 24 Date movies, for short, 25 Beach lotion letters, 26 Animated figures, 28 Pursuing, 29 Highways, 30 Sasha's sister, 31 Alliances, 32 Moreover, 34 Sloth's home, 35 Employ.

Trivia test by Fifi Rodriguez: 1. GEOGRAPHY: What is the smallest continent by area? 2. MOVIES: What is Deadpool's real name in the movie series? 3. MEASUREMENTS: How many ounces are in 1 gallon? 4. TELEVISION: What is the name of the character that Jason Bateman plays in "Ozark"? 5. FOOD & DRINK: What is the dimple at the bottom of a wine bottle called? 6. U.S. CITIES: Which city also is known as Motown? 7. LITERATURE: The movie "Bridget Jones Diary" is loosely based on which novel? 8. ANIMAL KINGDOM: Which is the only big cat that doesn't roar? 9. MEDICAL: What is a common name for fasciculation? 10. LANGUAGE: What does the Latin term "magnum opus" mean?

Trivia Test Answers: 1. Australia (Oceania); 2. Wade Wilson; 3. 128; 4. Marty Byrde; 5. Punt; 6. Detroit; Michigant; 7. "Pride and Prejudice"; 8. The cheetah; 9. Muscle twitch; 10. "Great work!"



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