



Rotarians Gaylynn Milliorn & Trisha Scott remind you to get your Chili Fest tickets early.

HIGHLANDS CROSBY
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P.O. DRAWER 446, HIGHLANDS, TEXAS 77562

IN THE STARS

Historic Mountbatten House Closes After 41 Years, Citing COVID, Economic Struggles, and Natural Disasters

By David Taylor
Managing Editor

The historic Mountbatten House in Highlands has shuttered its doors permanently, another victim of the sour economy, COVID, and Mother Nature, according to the board.



Mountbatten House senior living home has shuttered its doors and have listed the property and building for \$1.3 million.



Mountbatten House was a Type A senior living home that hosted residents who were mobile and capable of maintaining their own hygiene.

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.

Huffman FFA Livestock Show & Sale Jan. 25

The 2025 Huffman FFA Livestock Show is Jan. 23-24, and the Livestock Auction is Saturday, Jan. 25th. 11:00am Buyers Luncheon, 1:00pm Livestock Auction. Ag Department, 25400 Willy Lane, Huffman 77336. HUFFMAN ISD IS CLOSED 1/21 AND 1/22 DUE TO THE WEATHER.

The assisted living home, built and sponsored by the Daughters of the British Empire (DBE) in the USA, primarily served seniors who were still mobile and able to maintain their own hygiene. The

PRINCE CHARLES VISITS HIGHLANDS. SEE PAGE 7

The assisted living home, built and sponsored by the Daughters of the British Empire (DBE) in the USA, primarily served seniors who were still mobile and able to maintain their own hygiene. The

home's services were also offered at a much more reasonable cost than similar competitors.

"We've had multiple issues, many out of our con-

control, that forced us into closure," said board treasurer Pauline Symon.

"Due to diminishing funds, and the difficulty in attracting new residents,

we were forced to close our doors to residents on September 30, 2024," she said.

It was distressing to staff and boarders who loved the residence.

Mountbatten House is affiliated with the DBE. The land was purchased in 1979 and construction got Continued. See MOUNTBATTEN, Page 6

New Stratford Librarian Reorganizing 'Friends' Group

By David Taylor
Managing Editor

HIGHLANDS – The Stratford Library is like the United States Marine Corps. They're looking for a few good men and women to fortify their Friends of the Library ranks—soon.

New branch manager Lisa Blackwell didn't sound too desperate but knows that the Friends is a critical part of support for library programs administered to the community.

"I've been a Harris



Lisa Simmons, coordinator of the ESL program at Highlands First Baptist Church, works with new branch manager Lisa Blackwell at the computer.

County public employee for quite a while," she said, "since 2017 and was the one who started the Curiosity Cruiser program, a partnership with the Barbara Bush Literacy Foundation."

Blackwell drove the cruiser taking library books and mobile programs on her route.

Shortly after, she took a brief hiatus to earn her master's in library science which enabled her to take on a new role—branch manager.

While only on the job for a few months at Highlands

Stratford Library, she is building off the legacy of the previous manager's outreach programs to the community including a sprint van.

"It's the size of an Amazon van and we do outreach at parks, vendor-related events, and at least two satellites right now," she said.

The van was donated to the library by the Highlands Rotary Club and fills a great need to supply books to children who

Continued. See STRATFOR LIBRARY SEEKS VOLUNTEERS, Page 6

Music Legends and Rising Stars Collide: The 2025 RODEOHOUSTON® Unveils Epic Entertainment Lineup

The Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo™ is thrilled to release the star entertainer lineup for the 2025 Rodeo season, scheduled for March 4 – March 23. It showcases a diverse lineup that includes a variety of country music, pop, rock, regional Mexican, as well as Christian, R&B and hip-hop.

"Each season, the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo aims to bring a strong lineup of artists that reflect our Western roots while still offering an array of music that embraces Houston's culture," said Chris Boleman, president and CEO of the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo. "Nine entertainers will make their debut on the star stage, alongside some Rodeo fan-favorites and hall-of-fame artists, some of which are returning for the first time in nearly 20 years."

The artists that will light up the star stage for the first time in 2025 include Riley Green, Bailey Zimmerman, Carin León, AJR, Warren Zeiders, Grupo Frontera, Charley Crockett, Zach Top and Post Malone. Among long-time returning Rodeo artists are Brad Paisley and

Day	Artist	Date
Tuesday	REBA McENTIRE	4
Wednesday	RILEY GREEN	5
Thursday	AJR	6
Friday	BUN B'S BIRTHDAY BONANZA	7
Saturday	BAILEY ZIMMERMAN	8
Sunday	CARIN LEÓN	9
Monday	BRAD PAISLEY	10
Tuesday	ZACH TOP	11
Wednesday	LAUREN DAIGLE	12
Thursday	JON PARDI	13
Friday	JOURNEY	14
Saturday	WARREN ZEIDERS	15
Sunday	GRUPO FRONTERA	16
Monday	CHARLEY CROCKETT	17
Tuesday	POST MALONE	18
Wednesday	OLD DOMINION	19
Thursday	CODY JINKS	20
Friday	PARKER MCCOLLUM	21
Saturday	BROOKS & DUNN	22
Sunday	LUKE BRYAN	23

Luke Bryan. The 2025 Rodeo will be Paisley's 17th performance and Bryan's 12th.

REBA McENTIRE holds one of the organization's highest honors as the first woman inducted to RODEOHOUSTON's Star Trail of Fame in 2007. Her 2025 appearance will mark her 20th performance at the Rodeo and her first time back in 18 years.

In a highly requested appearance, Grupo Frontera will make their debut on Go Tejano Day, presented by Fiesta Mart, on Sunday, March 16. The 2025 lineup features two Latin artists with Carin León also making his debut performance on Sunday, March 9. The Rodeo is also thrilled to bring back fan favorite artists, including Brooks & Dunn, Cody Jinks, Lauren Daigle, Jon Pardi, Old Dominion and the Greater Houston area's very own, Parker McCollum and Bun B.

Bun B will bring another group of popular R&B and hip-hop artists to the stage with him again this year for his Birthday Bo-

Continued. See RODEOHOUSTON, Page 5

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★ SCHOOL PAGE ★

GOOSE CREEK SUPERINTENDENT'S MESSAGE Growth and Civic Engagement

Advocacy shapes our daily decisions and actions, whether supporting loved ones, promoting fairness at work, or driving change in our communities. In education, it's no different. The "funding crisis" in Texas public schools, including Goose Creek CISD, highlights the need for collective action and determination. Alarming, some legislators have proposed restricting our right to advocate, making unity more crucial than ever.



Goose Creek CISD Superintendent Randal O'Brien

School funding issues in Texas are not debatable, with the state ranking among the lowest in educational investment. Unlike most states, Texas funds schools based on student attendance while requiring education for all enrolled students, creating a deficit model that reduces funding by about 5% before the school year begins. Texas is one of only eight states using this approach, choosing to keep the withheld funds in its savings.

Over 90% of Texas public schools are underfunded, with 60% chronically so, reflecting decades of neglect. The legislature's failure to increase basic allotment funding, tied to the governor's push for a voucher system, has created unprecedented financial strain. Since 2019, inflation has risen over 22%, driving up costs for schools already stretched thin. One recent survey indicated that school districts across the state that have adopted a deficit budget rose from almost half previously to nearly 80% just within the last year or so. That shortfall is for all school districts across the entire state, symptomatic of a breakdown in our lawmakers' obligation to adequately fund public schools.

How has this affected Goose Creek CISD? In the past two years, to address a deficit budget, the board of trustees directed the administration to find solutions that protect our students and staff and maintain the quality of educational program offerings. Measures included reducing administrative positions and scaling back support services while limiting the impact on students. Staffing reductions were achieved through attrition, leaving some positions unfilled, which led to larger class sizes in some cases. The board also avoided consolidating underutilized campuses by using funds from the district's savings account. However, they acknowledged this approach is not sustainable long-term due to the slow replenishment of those funds.

This year, the board has had to reassess campus efficiency due to demographic shifts that left some campuses underutilized and some well over capacity. While rezoning may help, it cannot fully address the financial strain of operating under-capacity campuses. Consequently, the board approved the administration's recommendation to consolidate and repurpose specific campuses. We recognize that change is difficult, but inaction, amid insufficient legislative support to address inflation, has already harmed public education statewide.

Thank you for supporting Goose Creek CISD. Please know that we want to hear from you. Consider joining one of our future steering committees, which will undoubtedly provide input and direction that will help shape and serve as a catalyst for our future success.

We will continue to evaluate our school system for efficiencies every year. However, as educators, we must also be mindful of the lack of support that has been overtly demonstrated by our elected officials in Austin. A story cannot be spun to explain why our schools have not been adequately funded. We must become our own self-advocates to ensure a high-quality education for all, which we know to be the great equalizer.

I'm not sure what advocacy may look like for you, whether a trip to our capital in Austin, a letter or phone call to your congressmen, or maybe joining a local advocacy group. Whatever it is, I believe it must begin with action. It is crucial to actively confront the diminishment of local control rather than standing passively by.

Please consider how your voice may best be heard in support of our local public school system across our great state. Despite any push for private sector options, public schools still educate nearly 90% of all Americans. The support of any alternative measure designed to educate a small fraction of the student population should be secondary to ensuring that all Texas children are provided adequate educational funding first!

Dr. Randal O'Brien, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools
Goose Creek Consolidated Independent School District



Probiotics May Help Restore Good Bacteria in the Gut

DEAR DR. ROACH: You recently wrote that you do not recommend probiotics in healthy people. I am a 78-year-old male who, three years ago, underwent an esophagectomy to remove my esophagus and part of my stomach because of cancer. I was put on 30 mg of pantoprazole, which was later increased to 40 mg. I've read that prolonged use of this medicine isn't recommended.

ANSWER: Proton-pump inhibitors like pantoprazole are often used in people after surgical treatment for esophageal cancer. They reduce acid reflux and consequently prevent a stricture where the remainder of the esophagus meets the remainder of your stomach. While it is true that proton-pump inhibitors do have the potential for side effects with long-term use, there are times when the benefits outweigh the risks. Many esophageal cancer experts feel that the benefits outweigh the risks in esophageal survivors like you.

Long-term acid suppression does lead to changes in the gut bacteria, called the microbiome. Using probiotics to improve the quality of the microbiome has been studied, and preliminary studies showed that taking probiotics daily can get more healthy bacteria in the gut. What isn't clear is whether this translates to better outcomes for the patient or whether any of the long-term adverse effects of proton-pump-inhibitor therapy will be reduced. It makes sense that it might help, but it is unproven as yet.

There is the potential for harm in probiotic treatment, but it's not common. A very few cases of infection have been shown to be transmitted by probiotics. The main harm is mostly financial, since some probiotics are expensive.

DEAR DR. ROACH: I am 81 years old and in pretty good health. I often have a hard time getting to sleep and staying asleep. A couple of months ago, I was dealing with a sore lower back from overdoing yard work, so I took two ibuprofen tablets before going to bed for several nights in a row. What I noticed is that I was able to get to sleep quicker.

I have continued to take ibuprofen as a sleep aid, and it continues to help me get to sleep. But I am wondering if there might be any medical issue that could arise from the continued daily use of ibuprofen. — J.T.N.

ANSWER: Most people don't find that ibuprofen helps or hurts their sleep, so I don't recommend it as a sleep aid in general. In fact, some people find that ibuprofen can be disruptive to their sleep. Others, however, find that it makes them sleepy.

In any case, the risk of two ibuprofen tablets at night, or even every day, is small. A person with a history of ulcer disease or abnormal bleeding shouldn't take ibuprofen daily without discussing it with their doctor.

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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GCCISD Receives Generous STEM Support from ExxonMobil and Covestro

Story by: Nancy Bonds, GCCISD Director of Communications

Goose Creek CISD is proud to announce two significant contributions from ExxonMobil and Covestro, which aim to enhance STEM opportunities for students and support their future careers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

ExxonMobil, through the GCCISD Education Foundation, has donated \$15,000 to the district's robotics program. This funding will provide students with hands-on experience in robotics, allowing them to design, build, and strategize while honing essential collaboration and team-building skills. The program encourages creativity and problem-solving through innovative activities that prepare students for STEM-focused careers.

Covestro has committed \$10,000 to fund scholarships for graduating GCCISD seniors who plan to enroll in STEM programs at accredited colleges or universities. These scholarships, which vary in number and amount annually, are available to students with a declared major in Chemical, Mechanical, or Electrical Engineering. Eligible students must have a minimum GPA of 3.0 and submit a one-page essay detailing their interest in engineering and highlights of their school, work, and volunteer experiences over the past two years.

GCCISD deeply appreciates the generosity of



Pictured, from left, Dr. Randal O'Brien, GCCISD Superintendent of Schools, Anna Espinoza, GCCISD Education Foundation Director, Connie Tilton, ExxonMobil Senior Advisor of Public & Government Affairs, Leia Miller, Associate Director of Career & Technical Education, Earnest Brooks, Lee High School Principal, and Helen Berrott-Tims, School Board President



Pictured, from left, Dr. Randal O'Brien, GCCISD Superintendent of Schools, Anna Espinoza, GCCISD Education Foundation Director, Jaymie Clary, Covestro TDI Technical Asset Manager, Preslie Cox Lastovica, Covestro External Communications Manager, Leia Miller, Associate Director of Career & Technical Education, Earnest Brooks, Lee High School Principal, and Helen Berrott-Tims, School Board President

ExxonMobil and Covestro, whose contributions are instrumental in advancing STEM education and supporting students on their paths to success.

Growing Minds: Bañuelos Elementary's Garden Impact

By: Nancy Bonds

Dr. Antonio Bañuelos Elementary is extremely excited to share the learning experience that its campus garden provides for its students. Cucumbers, bell peppers, tomatoes, cantaloupe, sage, basil, squash, and pumpkins inspire a nutritional movement every day on campus. School gardens like these support Goose Creek CISD's goals for nutrition education, which are documented in its wellness policy.

Through the CATCH program, schools are incorporating nutrition-based curricula. The school garden-based learning provides students with experiential opportunities to positively influence children's eating habits by helping them understand where their food comes from and how their food choices affect their bodies, the environment, and their community.

The joy of a campus garden is seeing the students pick the vegetables off the vines, wash them with the water hose, and instantly taste the healthy food while learning about the nutritional value and the effort it takes to grow fresh produce. Research shows that school gardens nurture healthy kids, foster environmental stew-



Abigail Baskin, 5th Grade. Photo by teacher

ardship, promote engaged learning, and empower them to taste new vegetables and enjoy outdoor time.

School gardens are exceptional classrooms that bring learning to life. Now is the time to elevate the conversation about how they support equity, sustainability, and daily health and well-being. The students plant seeds, nurture the young vegetation, watch them grow, and pick the vegetables, often carrying them home in their backpacks.

Bañuelos Elementary hopes to inspire other campuses to introduce a school garden to their students, even with limited space. The smiles on students' faces will make gardening worthwhile.

Barbers Hill Press

Dayton

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

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THURSDAY, JANUARY 23, 2025

MONT BELVIEU, TEXAS 77580

ON THE HILL

Jones Public Library

Memorials, Honorariums and Donations

In Memory of:
Crayon, TJ: *Clive Cussler's Ghost Soldier* given by Wanda Crayon Flurry, Barbara: *A Letter to My Teacher and Love, Grandma* given by Angie & Paul Doskocil Stephens, Sandra: *Sew Your Own Wardrobe* given by Lambda Alpha Sigma Sullivan, Nelli: *Home is Right Where You Are* given by Richard and Jennifer Boswell and family
Wilson Sr, Leon: *America, A Patriotic Primer* given by the Boswell Family and Rodney Scott's *World of BBQ* given by the Library Staff.

In Honor of:
Srader, Sidnie: Savor given by the Library Staff.
Donations:
The President and the Freedom Fighter given by Serral Lawson.

Mueller of MontBelvieu Awarded Scholarship at The University of Arkansas

FAYETTEVILLE, AR (12/16/2024) — Bethany Mueller of Mont Belvieu was awarded the David W. Edwards Scholarship this fall from the Fulbright College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Arkansas. This award was one of 1,855 scholarships totaling \$4.9 million given to Fulbright College undergraduate and graduate students across four academic disciplines: arts, humanities, natural sciences and social sciences.

"Helping students like Bethany reach their highest potential is our top priority, and we're thankful to have the opportunity to celebrate their hard work and the achievements they've reached here at Fulbright College and the University of Arkansas," said Brian Raines, dean of Fulbright College.

This fall's scholarships are made possible from the support of donors, who include alumni, faculty, staff and friends of Fulbright College, and aid students as part of the college's commitment to student success.

"Supporting our students requires a comprehensive approach in all aspects of their college experience," Raines said. "Our work to do this would not be possible without the generosity of our Fulbright College friends and supporters. Thanks to their contributions, we're able to provide the tools and resources our students need to succeed."

Each year, Fulbright College awards scholarships to its students to support their academic success, including scholarships for study abroad, honors studies, research fellowships and more. Learn more about scholarships at fulbright.uark.edu/scholarships.

Goose Creek CISD to Hold Board of Trustees Election on May 3, 2025

Goose Creek Consolidated Independent School District (GCCISD) will hold a general election on Saturday, May 3, 2025, for four single-member districts on the Board of Trustees.

The current Board members whose terms will expire in May and are up for election include:

District 1: Howard Sampson (only registered voters within District 1 boundaries will vote in District 1)

District 2: Mercedes Renteria, III (only registered voters within District 2 boundaries will vote in District 2)

District 4: Richard Clem (only registered voters within District 4 boundaries will vote in District 4)

District 5: Helen Berrott-Tims (only registered voters within District 5 boundaries will vote in District 5)

Early Voting Early voting will begin on Tuesday, April 22, 2025, and continue through Tuesday, April 29, 2025, in Harris County.

Board Member Applications Individuals interested in running for the Board of Trustees may file an application from Wednesday, January 15, 2025, through Thursday, February 13, 2025, between 7:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m.

On Friday, February 14, 2025, applications will be accepted from 7:30 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. Applications can be obtained online at www.gccisd.net/page/BOARD.home.

Elected Board members will serve a four-year term.

Additional Information For more information or questions, please contact Noemi Garcia, Administrative Assistant and Elections Administrator, at 281-707-3418. The office is located at 4544 I-10 East, Superintendent's Office.

Whitewater Express Car Wash Celebrates Grand Opening

BAYTOWN – Whitewater Express Car Wash recently opened their newest location in Baytown. They celebrated their Grand Opening with a Ribbon Cutting ceremony with the Baytown Chamber of Commerce.

The friendly and professional staff welcomed Chamber Ambassadors with coffee from Travelin' Tom's Coffee Truck and a free car wash.

Each Whitewater Express Car Wash location provides the highest quality car wash services, with professional staff to tend to your every need! Large or small, you can receive an express car wash with high-intensity tri-foam polish, wheel cleaning, rain repellant, tire shine, flash dry and more, plus always FREE vacuums!

You can find they're Baytown location at 7303 Garth Road. For more information, please visit their website at whitewatercw.com.



Baytown Chamber of Commerce Ambassadors and Whitewater Express Car Wash staff

About the Baytown Chamber

The Baytown Chamber of Commerce is a 501 (c) 6 premier business organization representing the local business community. The Baytown Chamber ex-

ists to promote and protect the free enterprise system and provide experienced leadership for economic growth, enhancement, and quality of life for the Baytown region.

How to Run For Mont Belvieu City Council

Interested in running for Mont Belvieu City Council? Here's your chance! Council election filing is open **today through February 14th at Noon**. Seats include Positions 5 and 6. The City of Mont Belvieu's governing body consist of a Mayor and six (6) Council Members. The City of Mont Belvieu's General Election is held on the 1st Saturday in May of each year. The Mayor and each Council Member shall hold office for three (3) year terms.

How Do I Apply?

To apply for candidacy, please visit the City Secretary at City Hall during our regular office hours. Candidate Packets will be available to be picked up at the Mont Belvieu City Hall, located at 11607 Eagle Drive: City Secretary's Office, between January 15, 2025 and February 14, 2025

What Are The Requirements for Eligibility?

Shall be a resident citizen of the City of Mont Belvieu
Shall be qualified to vote in the State of Texas
Have resided continuously in the corporate limits of the City for 12 months immediately preceding the date of the election

Not be in violation of any provision in this [Charter](#)
Be 21 years of age or older on the first day of the term to be filled at the election

Satisfy any other eligibility requirements prescribed by law for the office for which they are a candidate.

For more election information, please visit our [election information page](#).

Sen. John Cornyn Applauds \$50M CHIPS Funding Announcement for Sunika in Baytown

Award Will Promote Workforce Readiness at San Jacinto Community College

WASHINGTON – U.S. Senator John Cornyn (R-TX) released the following statement after the U.S. Department of Commerce announced it has reached a non-binding preliminary memorandum of terms (PMT) with Sumika Semiconductor Materials Texas Inc., (Sumika) to award the company up to \$52.1 million in direct funding and create nearly 300 jobs in Baytown, Texas. This funding is made available through the *CHIPS and Science Act*, which provided resources for the programs created in Sen. Cornyn's *CHIPS for America Act* to restore semiconductor manufacturing on American soil:

"By investing in semiconductor manufacturing and the industries that support it, we are helping secure this vulnerable supply chain, boosting our national security and global competitiveness, and creating new jobs for

Texans," said Sen. Cornyn. **"The high-purity chemicals made by Sumika in Baytown will help the U.S. reclaim its leadership role in the critically important semiconductor industry, and I look forward to seeing more Texas-led advancements in the years to come."**

Background:

Sen. Cornyn authored the *Creating Helpful Incentives to Produce Semiconductors (CHIPS) for America Act*, now law, to restore semiconductor manufacturing on American soil by increasing federal support to stimulate advanced chip manufacturing, enable cutting-edge research and development (R&D), secure the supply chain, create American jobs, and ensure long-term national security. The bill was included in the *William M. (Mac) Thornberry National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2021* and became



Senator John Cornyn, a Republican from Texas

law on January 1, 2021. Funding for the programs created in the *CHIPS for America Act* was signed into law as part of the *CHIPS and Science Act* in 2022 to spur growth in the domestic semiconductor industry.

The *CHIPS and Science Act* included \$52 billion in financial assistance to build, expand, or modernize domestic facilities and equipment for semiconductor fabrication, assembly, testing, and advanced packaging; research and development; expanding

the semiconductor workforce; and supporting the Department of Defense (DoD).

Under the CHIPS for America program, the U.S. Department of Commerce may offer applicants a PMT on a non-binding basis after satisfactory completion of the merit review of a full application. The PMT outlines key terms for a CHIPS incentives award, including the amount and form of the award.

This investment will support construction of a

greenfield factory in Baytown, Texas to manufacture ultra-high purity isopropyl alcohol used in advanced logic and memory chip production, and it represents the company's first major investment in high-purity chemicals production in the United States. Sumika has partnered with the Lee College Center for Workforce and Community Development and San Jacinto College to support a skilled workforce in high purity chemical processing jobs.

In June 2023, Governor Abbott signed into law the *Texas CHIPS Act*, which works in conjunction with this federal legislation to maintain and expand Texas' dominance in the semiconductor industry.

Senator John Cornyn, a Republican from Texas, is a member of the Senate Finance, Judiciary, Intelligence, Foreign Relations, and Budget Committees.

Houston Rodeo announces Star-Studded 2025 Lineup,

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1



<p>STAR ENTERTAINMENT The following entertainers will perform on the RODEO-HOUSTON stage in NRG Stadium, March 4 – 23.</p> <p>Tuesday, March 4 - REBA McENTIRE Opening Day, presented by Shell Federal Credit Union</p> <p>Wednesday, March 5 - Riley Green Armed Forces Appreciation Day, presented by Crown Royal</p> <p>Thursday, March 6 - AJR</p> <p>Friday, March 7 - Bun B's Birthday Bonanza Black Heritage Day, presented by Kroger</p>	<p>Saturday, March 8 - Bailey Zimmerman</p> <p>Sunday, March 9 - Carin León</p> <p>Monday, March 10 - Brad Paisley First Responders Day, presented by BP America</p> <p>Tuesday, March 11 - Zach Top</p> <p>Wednesday, March 12 - Lauren Daigle Community Day, presented by TC Energy</p> <p>Thursday, March 13 - Jon Pardi Volunteer Appreciation Day, presented Phillips 66</p> <p>Friday, March 14 - Journey</p> <p>Saturday, March 15 - Warren Zeiders</p>	<p>Sunday, March 16 - Grupo Frontera Go Tejano Day, presented by Fiesta Mart</p> <p>Monday, March 17 - Charley Crockett</p> <p>Tuesday, March 18 - Post Malone</p> <p>Wednesday, March 19 - Old Dominion</p> <p>Thursday, March 20 - Cody Jinks</p> <p>Friday, March 21 - Parker McCollum</p> <p>Saturday, March 22 - Brooks & Dunn</p> <p>Sunday, March 23 - Luke Bryan</p>
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nanza. Stay tuned for details about who will join his performance on Black Heritage Day, presented by Kroger, as March 7 inches closer.

Together, the 20 acts have a total of 67 Academy of Country Music Awards, 51 Country Music Association Awards, 34 American Music Awards, 26 Billboard Music Awards and 10 GRAMMY Awards and 5 Latin GRAMMY Awards.

INDIVIDUAL RODEO TICKETS

Tickets will go on sale at rodeohouston.com/tickets Thursday, Jan. 16, 2025, in two waves, 10 a.m. and 2 p.m.

Wave 1 tickets go on sale at 10 a.m. for March 4 – March 13 performances.

Wave 2 tickets go on sale at 2 p.m. for March 14 – 23 performances.

(The Online Waiting

Rooms will open at 9:30 a.m. for Wave 1 and 1:30 p.m. for Wave 2. Customers in the Waiting Room will be randomly selected to enter the store to purchase tickets at 10 a.m. and 2 p.m.)

A place in the Waiting Room does not guarantee tickets.

Ticket prices start at \$25, plus a \$4 convenience fee.

Individual Rodeo tickets can be purchased online.

All tickets will be delivered electronically via AXS Mobile ID Delivery; please allow 48 hours for delivery.

To access your purchased tickets, download the RODEOHOUSTON app and login with the email used to purchase tickets.

About the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo

The Houston Livestock

Show and Rodeo promotes agriculture by hosting an annual, family-friendly experience that educates and entertains the public, supports Texas youth, showcases Western heritage, and provides year-round educational support within the community. Since its beginning in 1932, the Rodeo has committed more than \$630 million to the youth of Texas and education. The 2025 Rodeo is scheduled for March 4 – March 23. The 2025 World's Championship Bar-B-Que Contest, presented by Cotton Holdings, is scheduled for Feb. 27 – March 1.

For more information, visit rodeohouston.com, download the RODEOHOUSTON app and follow RODEOHOUSTON online via Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Youtube for all the latest news.

Texas Budget Writers Will be Helped Again by a Large Budget Surplus

By Rahul Sreenivasan

Earlier this week, Texas Comptroller Glenn Hegar announced that he expects \$194.6 billion of state revenue to be available for general-purpose spending in the fiscal 2026-27 biennium. This biennial revenue estimate is an important step in the continuous two-year state budget process and gives initial funding parameters to House and Senate budget writers for the legislative session now underway.

Here are some initial takeaways on what the numbers could mean for Texas:

Expected Fund Balance and Steady Revenue Collections Drive Projections

The \$194.6 billion in available revenue is, for the second straight budget cycle, substantially boosted by a fund balance, or “budget surplus,” of \$23.8 billion carried over from the previous biennium.

A fund balance of this magnitude is possible due in part to a combination of supplemental COVID-related federal aid as well as legislators’ discipline in allocating resources for maintaining state government operations that leaves a sizable portion of the increased revenue from the current and previous budget cycles.

Also, Texas’ consistently robust economy has driven growth in recent years in the largest source of state tax revenue — sales tax collections.

Opportunity to Address Big Issues

This large “surplus” and strong anticipated revenue outlook gives budget writers more flexibility. Similar to last session, this outlook presents an opportunity to strategically and more comprehensively address difficult, long-term challenges like looming water infrastructure and supply issues.

Lawmakers can also address workforce readiness by continuing the work begun in previous sessions on school finance, coordination of education and workforce agencies and community college funding reform to ensure Texas’ educational and workforce systems can meet rapidly evolving labor force needs.

Legislative leaders have signaled interest in pursuing more funding for the Texas Energy Fund, additional property tax relief, as well as for public education. The revenue outlook likely makes these priorities more viable.

Economic Stabilization Fund is Expected to Reach its Cap

Hegar also announced that Texas is expected to reach the \$26.5 billion cap on the Economic Stabilization Fund (ESF) more commonly referred to as the Rainy Day Fund, at the beginning of fiscal year 2026. This would mark the first time the Rainy Day Fund has hit its fund balance limit in its nearly 40-year history.

In response to hitting the cap, oil and gas severance tax revenues that would have been transferred to the ESF would go to the general revenue fund instead.

What’s Next

The release of the revenue estimate kicks off the part of the two-year state budget cycle where lawmakers weigh in on finalized budget requests from state agencies. Initial drafts of the state budget should be filed in the House and Senate in upcoming weeks, and legislators will begin hearings shortly after on their 1,000-plus page state budget.

At Texas 2036, we will continue to analyze and keep you up to speed on the state budget as it progresses and the implications for Texas in the days and months ahead. Follow us at www.texas2036.org for the latest updates.

Rahul Sreenivasan is director of government performance and fiscal policy for Texas 2036, a nonprofit public policy organization building data-driven strategies to improve opportunities for all Texans.

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Historic Mountbatten House shuttered permanently,

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

underway shortly thereafter. The center opened its door in 1983 and is large enough to host approximately 24 guests.

"DBE Chapters in the Southern District of the DBE raised funds on an ongoing basis to support the home," Symon said. "In that way, we were able to offer accommodations at a very reasonable monthly rent to elderly citizens." The maximum for renters was approximately \$1,750, a real bargain.

Symon said it was a combination of calamities that brought the more than four decades of service to a dramatic end.

"It began with COVID and spiraled after that," she said. "When COVID hit, we were under the same standards and restrictions as all other nursing homes and assisted living centers. Residents felt isolated from their families." At the time, they had 20 residents but couldn't fill anymore and maintain that number due to restrictions. It was a tough time for the industry.

"I want to make it clear that we did not have any that contracted COVID," Symon said, including staff.

Then Mother Nature took its toll.

"In 2020, Hurricane Laura was headed our way and had to evacuate the residents as we do not have the staff available to look after them during hurricanes," she said.

Once they went home to their families, Symon said almost half of them didn't return since the COVID restrictions were still in place.

COVID not only affected the house residents and staff with strict restrictions, but also the amount of donations received since the DBE Chapters were unable to fundraise to the same degree they had previously.



Residents loved the cozy, beautiful layout of Mountbatten House. The senior living home closed September 30, 2024 because of a lack of funds and rough waters over the last four years.

"This meant our finances were depleted considerably.

Another issue that they faced consistently was the inevitable as their residents aged.

"Mountbatten House was a Type 'A' Assisted Living Home, which means that the residents we attracted had to be mobile, be able to look after their own hygiene, etc. This also meant that when a resident's health deteriorated, they had to move to a higher level of care. This resulted in a fluctuation of resident count from time to time," she explained.

Symon said each resident had a separate air conditioning unit in their room which was a significant benefit to the prevention of COVID. The 24-bedroom house also had a dining room, activity area, living room with a large television. Laundry service was provided for them and at least three meals per day.

"We always had people," she said. "We were required to have staff there every night and weekends," she said.

Symon said the toughest part of the COVID pandemic was the isolation from their families.

"The restrictions were terrible," she said. "The

families couldn't visit. Just terrible."

Shortly after navigating the troubled waters of COVID and Hurricane Laura, the center was faced with another serious incident.

"The water system exploded, and everyone had to evacuate for two-and-a-half months while we did the repairs," Symon reported.

The last straw came when the unusual Derecho struck, and Hurricane Beryl was the last straw.

"We didn't have a generator with the power outage," she said. The Highlands area sustained serious damage during Beryl.

"As a board, we had already set a certain level with our portfolio where we needed to consider closure," she said. That came with Beryl.

The last residents moved out at the end of September.

"We now have it on the market for \$1.3 million. It's worth \$1.6 million but we have dropped the price because of the tough economy," she said. The house is listed on Crexi, a commercial real estate site. The listing can be found at

<https://www.crexi.com/properties/TX/Highlands?mapZoom=13> <https://www.crexi.com/properties/TX/Highlands?mapZoom=13>

Stratford Library seeks volunteers to revive friends group and support community programs,

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

wouldn't normally come to a brick-and-mortar building for whatever reasons.

"We go to two satellite locations J. D. Walker Community Center on Wade Road and to Impact School close to Lee College to bring literacy through books," she said.

Blackwell said she planned on driving the van in local parades and other events to let the community know about the amenity.

While parts of the library and the programs will be fine, others will be lacking because Blackwell discovered that the Friends of the Library organization at Stratford has disbanded.

"They were down to one person, and they turned in the checks, and closed the account," she said.

She's not defeated by the prospect but knows that's the financial arm of the library that supports numerous programs and such.

"It's unfortunate, but I'm positive that there's still a large group of people that would be involved in helping the library. Generally, it's retired patrons

who organize and faithfully raise funds," she said.

The book sales are usually held during the day, and it takes volunteers to organize the event, do the sorting, and collecting.

"We are looking for those volunteers who would be interested and ask them to fill out an application online," the branch librarian said.

There is a small fee of \$25 annually or become a Lifetime member with a \$1,000 donation to belong to the Friends of the Library organization.

"It provides much needed funds for summer programs. The Harris County Public Library System doesn't provide us with a lot of consumables, so those funds come from the Friends," she said.

That could be clay, paper, craft supplies, and more.

The library system does provide programs that rotate from one library across the county to the next.

"We have a performer coming on, February 7, and his name is Tommy Terrific. In honor of both Black History Month and

the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo, he will present a program about black cowboys.

Blackwell is utilizing her new library programmer to plaster events all over social media including both Facebook and Instagram.

"We continue with our citizenship and ESL classes to assist the public," she said.

One final announcement that looms large for the public.

"Beginning the first week in February, AARP will be here from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. every Thursday assisting people with their taxes," she said. They will have an electronic sign-up and a telephone number for those who don't utilize email.

To join the Harris County Friends of the Library, visit them on their website home page at hcpl.net where there's a link for the Friends and also a link to get a library card.

To reach out to Blackwell, email her at, Lisa.blackwell@hcpl.net or call her at 832-927-5400.

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Remembering King Charles' (then a Prince) visit to Highlands in 1986

By Gilbert Hoffman

HIGHLANDS – With the death of Queen Elizabeth II, and the ascension to the throne of King Charles, many persons in Highlands are remembering the visit that Charles, then Prince, paid to the Mountbatten House on Maple Street in Highlands in February 1986.

Due to the interest in the subject, we are reprinting part of the Front Page of the *Highlands Star* of February 27, 1986, and below the text of the article that was included:

HRH THE PRINCE OF ENGLAND

'Heir To Throne Visits Mountbatten House'

HRH Prince Charles' Visit Here Leaves Warmth, Friendliness

By Brenda White,

For the first, and perhaps the only time, Highlanders experienced a touch of royalty last week.

His Royal Highness, The Prince Charles, Prince of Wales, eldest son of Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, visited Highlands for approximately one hour on Wednesday, Feb. 19 (1986). The Prince came to an afternoon tea held in his honor at Mountbatten House, a retirement home under the auspices of The Daughters of The British Empire.

Prince Charles arrived riding in an impressive entourage of Jaguars and security forces including Secret Service men, Harris County Sheriff's Department, Houston City Policemen and F.B.I. Agents. Excited Highlanders lined the route along Main Street, down West Wallisville Road, and along

Maple Street where Mountbatten House is located.

Over 600 Highlands Elementary School students stood along Wallisville Road waving British, American and Texas flags. The entire community turned out to give Prince Charles a warm Texas welcome.

At the Mountbatten House tea, His Royal Highness talked with each of the thirteen residents living there. All of the invited guests were also singled out for a royal handshake and a few words with the Prince.

As he left the tea, the Prince surprised everyone by stopping to visit with some of the people waiting along the street. Many of them had been waiting for hours hoping to catch just a glimpse of the Prince.

People who were privileged to chat with HRH were left with an impression of warmth and friendliness. The ability to project such a feeling, is a credit to Prince Charles. When you contemplate the tight schedule he keeps, the hundreds of personal greetings he extends, one might wonder how he can even continue to maintain his famous smile.

Although some complaints were heard concerning the rapid pace of the motorcade, the day may be remembered as an over-all success by most Highlanders.

His Royal Highness has completed his five day visit in Texas with festivities in San Antonio and Austin.

As he ends his second visit to our state, hopefully The Prince will return home with a favorable impression of Texas warmth and hospitality.

ENTERTAINMENT

Amber Waves

by Dave T. Phipps

by BUD BLAKE

by Jeff Pickering

The Spats

Weekly SUDOKU

7	3							
8	3	9			5			
6	7					8		
6	9	2	3	7				4
	3	6	5	4	9	7		
	7		9		3	6		
	6	1	2	4				
5	2			8		1		
1		6	3		2			

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.

DIFFICULTY THIS WEEK: ♦♦♦

♦ Moderate ♦♦ Challenging ♦♦♦ HOO BOY!

HOCUS-FOCUS

BY HENRY BOLTINOFF

Find at least six differences in details between panels.

January 20, 2025 Posting Date King Crossword

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	
12				13			14				
15				16			17				
18				19		20	21				
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	40					41			42	43	44
45	46					47	48			49	
50						51				52	
53						54				55	

ACROSS

- 1 Pickle holders
- 5 Klutz
- 8 Pre-weekend yell
- 12 Layered cookie
- 13 School org.
- 14 Nozzle site
- 15 Complaint
- 16 Mahal pre-ceder
- 17 Memory method
- 18 Jungle trek
- 20 Apple product
- 22 "Lunch break is over!"
- 26 Sports bar fixture
- 29 "Mangia!"
- 30 Avril follower
- 31 Marsh plant
- 32 "Blue Bloods" aier
- 33 Nov. honorees
- 34 401(k) alternative
- 35 Notable time
- 36 Trig terms
- 37 Consecutive
- 40 Puerto —
- 41 Small apes
- 45 Help a hood
- 47 Fanatic
- 49 Aswan's river
- 50 Roster

DOWN

- 1 Want-ad listings
- 2 Region
- 3 Coral formation
- 4 Sleeper
- 5 Eye-related
- 6 One-time link
- 7 Tex-Mex wraps
- 8 Toss
- 9 Favorable sign
- 10 Follower (Suff.)
- 11 Service charge
- 19 Squealer
- 21 Soup cooker
- 23 Skewered entree
- 24 Assess
- 25 Smooch
- 26 Chicago paper, briefly
- 27 Actress Farmiga
- 28 "American Idol" host Ryan
- 32 Sang softly
- 33 Minnesota footballers
- 35 Catchall abbr.
- 36 Learning ctr.
- 38 Poker pot
- 39 Played a part
- 42 Actor O'Shea
- 43 Conspiracy
- 44 Stitches
- 45 Boxing legend
- 46 Morsel
- 48 Numerical prefix

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Trivia test

by Fifi Rodriguez

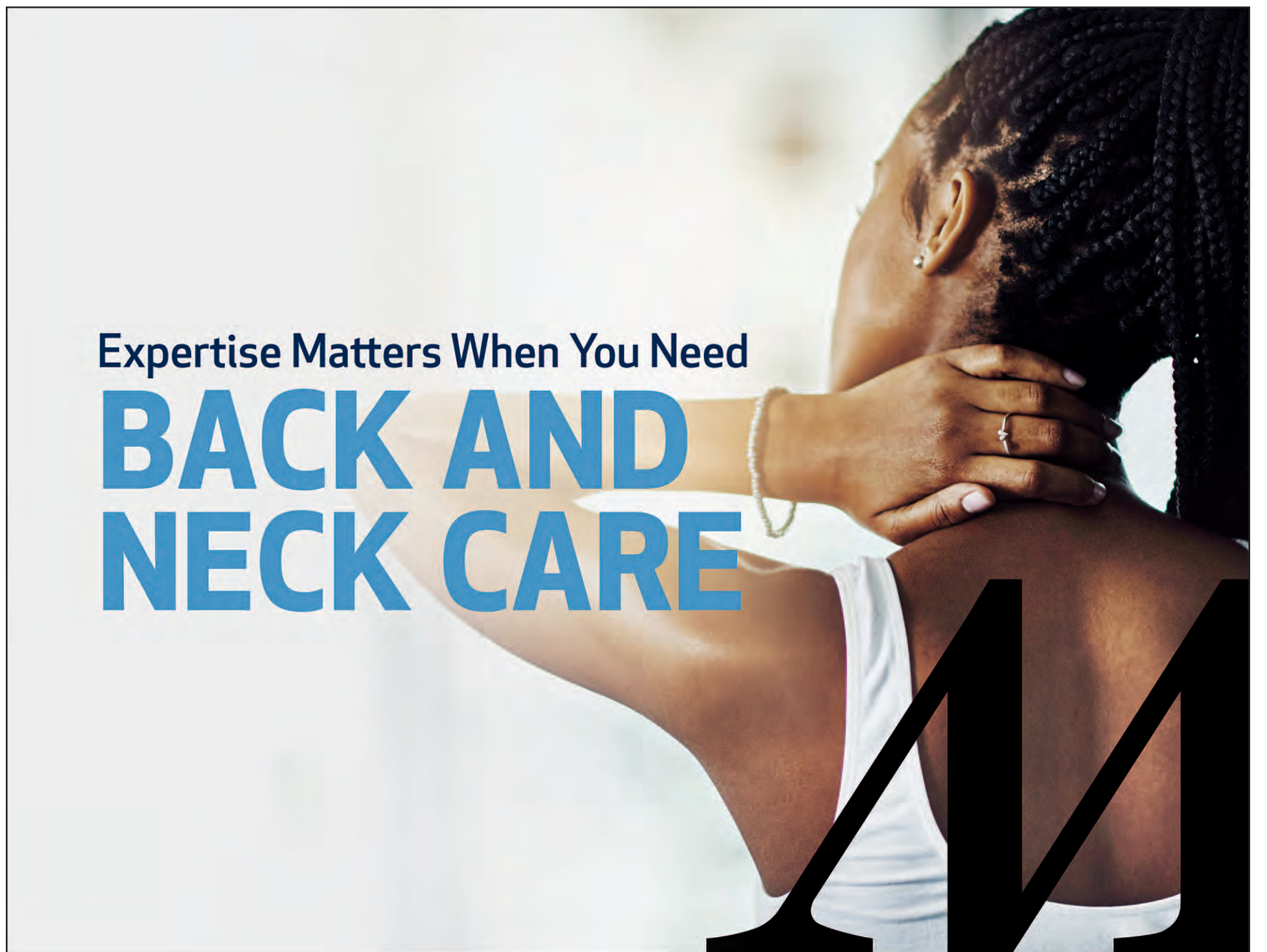
- TELEVISION: Who created the retro TV series "Stranger Things"?
- U.S. STATES: Which state is the home of Yellowstone National Park?
- ASTRONOMY: Which is the only planet in our solar system to rotate on its side?
- MOVIES: What is the given name of the large bird in the animated movie "Up"?
- GENERAL KNOWLEDGE: Which three zodiac signs are considered earth signs?
- LITERATURE: What is the name of Hagrid's half-brother in the "Harry Potter" book series?
- GEOGRAPHY: What is the capital city of Australia?
- FOOD & DRINK: What type of nut is used in the chocolate spread Nutella?
- SPORTS: What kind of sports match is divided into 7-minute periods called mukkas?
- ADVERTISEMENTS: What type of horses often are used in Budweiser beer ads?

Solution time: 25 mins.

Answers

King Crossword

1. The Dufferin Brothers; 2. Wyoming; 3. Uranus; 4. Kevin; 5. Taurus, Virgo and Capricorn; 6. Grawp; 7. Canberna; 8. Hazelnut; 9. Polo; 10. Clydesdale



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