



'CROSBY-HUFFMAN NEW CHAIRMAN' Velma Ellison was sworn in as the chairman of the board for the Crosby-Huffman Area Chamber of Commerce. (David Taylor photo). See Story Below and on page 2

HIGHLANDS CROSBY  
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# Crosby-Huffman Chamber presents Awards at Annual Banquet

By David Taylor  
Managing Editor

There were cheers and tears Thursday night as the Crosby-Huffman Area Chamber of Commerce handed out their annual awards to businesses and individuals who excelled this past year.

A new board was installed with Velma Ellison leading as the chairman. The rest of her executive board includes Toni Handley, 1st Vice Chair; Travis Mann, 2nd Vice Chair, Treasurer Tiffany Muller; Parliamentarian Keenan Smith; Secretary Kim Davila; and Outgoing Chairman Crystal Egorushkin. The remaining board of directors includes Eddie Foster, Chelsey Long, Tim Patterson, Isabelle Dion, Traci Galyean, Kay Sosa, Ed Hardy, Sean Matthews, Carlos May, Krisel Torres, Dr. Paula Patterson, and Dr. Benny Soileau.



A new board was installed with Velma Ellison leading as the chairman. The rest of her executive board includes Toni Handley, 1st Vice Chair; Travis Mann, 2nd Vice Chair, Treasurer Tiffany Muller; Parliamentarian Keenan Smith; Secretary Kim Davila; and Outgoing Chairman Crystal Egorushkin. The remaining board of directors includes Eddie Foster, Chelsey Long, Tim Patterson, Isabelle Dion, Traci Galyean, Kay Sosa, Ed Hardy, Sean Matthews, Carlos May, Krisel Torres, Dr. Paula Patterson, and Dr. Benny Soileau.

"I want to thank everyone for their support and contributions to the Chamber," said Ellison. "This organization is 101 years old this year. Not many businesses can say that. It is

the many generations of civic-minded people who have kept this chamber alive and well over these many years."

Ellison and her husband Bill moved to Crosby in

1984 and have heard growth was coming.

"We are now in the boom everyone has talked about for so many years," she said.

Ellison also spoke brief-

ly about some of the work being done by the chamber board.

"We are working with CenterPoint to get streetlights installed on FM 2100 and we've also been

in communication with TxDOT about completing the overpasses on new US 90," she said.

She said the board has signed a resolution asking TxDOT to make it a priority.

"We have also sent letters to HEB requesting they open a store in Crosby," she told chamber members and guests.

She also told members they have a new website that provides a link to their business and offers a job posting Board.

"We have challenges ahead of us with the explosive growth, but I am optimistic that we will meet the challenges, and I am so appreciative to live and work in a close-knit community where people care about each other and our communities," she said.

The end of the awards banquet was a tearful re

Continued. See CROSBY-HUFFMAN ANNUAL AWARDS, PAGE 2

# Trail Riders head to Houston Rodeo

Northeast trail riders continue legacy

By David Taylor  
Managing Editor

HARRIS COUNTY - The Northeastern Trail Rider's Association rode through the area last week on the way to the parade and Houston Rodeo. Established in 1982, the association ride continues in the face of dwindling numbers, but Trail Boss Anthony Bruno is hell-bent on preserving their history.

The Northeastern Trail Ride is one of the smaller groups to make their way to



After spending the night camped out in Memorial Park, the Trail Riders move into downtown Houston to participate in the Houston Rodeo parade.



Dr. Perry's wagon was decorated with the US and Texas flags and decked out in preparation for the Saturday Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo parade. See Story for the history of the Perry family and the Northeastern Trail Riders.

the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo, but a proud one with a rich history and tradition. The group travels approximately 111 miles from Cheek, Texas near Beaumont to Memorial Park every year for the annual HLSR Parade.

Whether it's the clippity clop sound struck by the hoofs of a horse trotting on pavement, or the rolling sound of the wagon wheels traversing down the highway, the allure of even a modern trail ride is too much to miss for more than 3,000-plus riders who converge on Bayou City for the

Continued. See TRAIL RIDERS, PAGE 5

# Crosby Historical Society hears of early Swedish Settlers

By David Taylor  
Managing Editor

Swede descendants took their turn to share their rich heritage in the area at the continuing series on Crosby's settlers hosted by the Crosby Historical Society on Saturday, Feb. 8. Hosted at the Brethren Church on the corner of First and Church Street, approximately 70-plus registered for the popular event.

According to their charter and by-laws, the organization is required to host a minimum of four public meetings every year of an educational nature. Last fall, more than 90 attended the meeting on Czech heritage.

Many of the speakers at the two heritage meetings were teary-eyed as they remembered their ances-



There may never again be a gathering of such deep heritage from the Crosby community relating to the Swedish settlers. From left, Eric Lindstrom, Donna Swanson, Ellen Peterson, Dee Ann Denson Rook, Anita Runneberg, and Sarah West, Harris County branch librarian from Octavia Fields Library.

tors and talked fondly about them. Their stories were fascinating.

"This is very important to me and the others here today," said Donna Davenport, chairman of the Crosby Historical Society. She also had an unexpected surprise when her cousin came to the meeting.

"I haven't seen him in

seven years," she said. "He lives in St. Augustine now."

The two cousins grew up together playing constantly at the Swanson store since their two fathers worked together.

"Out of all of my cous

Continued. See TRAIL RIDERS, PAGE 5

# Deputies Stop Wrong-Way Driver on I-10 Freeway

HCSO Deputies risk own safety to save others: Crash head-on



Feb. 25, 2025 — Two Harris County Sheriff's Office deputies are recovering from minor injuries they suffered early Tuesday morning after a wrong-way driver on Interstate 10 crashed into their patrol car near Baytown.

Deputies Joshua Blair and Louie Ayala were responding to a report of a wrong-way driver shortly after 1:30 a.m. when they spotted the oncoming vehicle

through the heavy fog. The vehicle was heading westbound in the eastbound lanes of the 18000 block of the East Freeway. The deputies slowed as they neared the vehicle in an attempt to guide the driver to a stop, but the driver continued forward and crashed head-on into the patrol car.

The deputies managed to get out of their crashed patrol car and check on the oth-

er driver, later identified as Nathan Arevalo, 23. Medical personnel responded and determined that none of those involved suffered serious injuries. Arevalo was arrested on a charge of driving while intoxicated.

Deputy Blair joined the Sheriff's Office in 2018 and is a field training officer. Deputy Ayala graduated from the Sheriff's Office academy in December.

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# Crosby-Huffman Chamber honors local excellence, unveils new board at 101st Anniversary Awards Night,

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

membrance of two Huffman employees of B&L Water Wells.

Chris "Big Red" White and Jeremiah Conde jointly won the Huffman Employee of the Year award. Neither were present to accept the award after their untimely death in a tragic accident involving a concrete truck and 18-wheeler. The two were well known around the community for their service digging water wells for Huffman residents.

"Their legacy continues to resonate in all of our hearts," said Toni Handley, chairman of the event and board member for the chamber.

Here are the award winners:

**Chamber Ambassador of the Year** nominees were Traci Galyean, Cheri Melcher, Sue Fitzgerald, Kay Sosa, Isabelle Dion, Vasso Espinoza, Trudi Griffith, and Michelle Thompson. *Kay Sosa was the winner.*

**Crosby Business of the Year** nominees were A-Better Plumbing Company, Ace Hardware, Alliance Properties, ASAP Appliance, Bella Rue Salon, Boom Real Estate, Buck Waste, Community Resource Credit Union, Cougar Nutrition, Courtyard by Marriott Houston Northeast, Crawfish Shack, Crosby Feed Barn, Crosby Fencing Company, GR Cure Pharmacy, Hungry Jack's, La Cruda BBQ, McDonalds, Mike's Jewelers, Peso's Mexican Restaurant, Republic Plumbing, Rusty Bucket, Sheffield's Liquidation, Skero's Furniture & Mattress, Smoothie King, Southern Routes Boutique, Sterling White Funeral Home & Cemetery, The Junction Bar and Grill, Trusted Insurance Group, and Visiting Angels. *The winner was Skero's Furniture & Mattress.*

**Huffman Business of the Year** nominees were B&L Water Wells, BPI Graphics, Huffman Café, Huffman Cajun House, Huffman Self Storage, Lake Houston Brewery, Los Compadres, May Community Center, POPPS Parlor & Popcorns, Republic Growth Partners, Salon M, Texas Turf Tenders, The Axe, and Vista Eye Center. *The winner was*

*Lake Houston Brewery.*

**Crosby Nonprofit of the Year** nominees included Bras for the Cause, Churches United in Caring, Crosby Advisory Council, Crosby Band Parent Organization, Crosby Brethren Church, Crosby Church, Crosby Cougar Star Booster Club, Crosby Education Foundation, Crosby Fire Department, Crosby Fire Department, Crosby Historical Society, Faith Family Church, Future Leaders Scholarship Fund, Kids Kicking Cancer, and Sacred Heart Catholic Church. *The winner was the Crosby Historical Society.*

**Huffman Nonprofit of the Year** nominees included Crosby Church, Huffman Fire & ESD #4, HSA Baseball and Softball, Huffman Education Foundation, Huffman Food Bank, Huffman Lions Club, Huffman Masonic Lodge, I.T. May Family Foundation, Mary's Blessings, May Center Volunteers In Action, and Shepherd's Eye. *The winner was May Center Volunteers In Action.*

**Crosby Volunteer of the Year** nominees were Deanna Becker: Crosby Huffman Chamber of Commerce, Daughters of the American Revolution, Crosby Fair & Rodeo, Future Leaders Scholarship Fund; Donna Davenport: Crosby Historical Society; Dr. Shirley Ellisor: Churches United In Caring & Church of the Resurrection; Eddie & Sylvia Glover: Crosby Rodeo; Enrique Solano: Buck Waste; James Lyles: Crosby Little League; John Webb: Crosby Education Foundation; Julie Gilbert: Community Resource Credit Union; June Sampson: Crosby Community Center; Kay Sosa: Visiting Angels; Pam Jones; Paul Soto: Crosby Fencing Company; Russell White: Crosby Volunteer Fire Department; Teena Galvan: Churches United In Caring; Toni Handley: Crosby Huffman Chamber of Commerce; Velma Ellison: Crosby Huffman Chamber of Commerce; and Vicky Davis: Churches United In Caring. *The winner was Deanna Becker.*

**Huffman Volunteer of the Year** nominees were Christy Graves: Commissioner for ESD Huff-

man; Hat Services; Hope Hartman: Shepherds Eye; Jay Mathis: POPPS Parlor & Popcorns; Keenan Smith: Crosby Church; Layla Karasek: CSI; Robin May: May Community Center, Huffman Education Foundation, Huffman ISD, Huffman Fire Department, Houston Folklore & Music Society, I.T. May

Family Foundation; Steve & Shelly Jones: Huffman Food Pantry, Huffman

Fire Dept.; and Trisha Hobler: Huffman Youth Volleyball, Huffman Youth Basketball, St. Phillips

Catholic Church, Huffman Education Foundation. *The winner was Robin May.*

**Crosby Employee of the Year** nominees were Alicia Davis: Crosby Feed Barn; Andria Ginn: Republic Plumbing; Cassie Rogers: Crosby Community Center; Chelsey Long: Community Resource Credit Union; Christy Shubert Saenz: United Rentals; David Porter: GR Cure Pharmacy; Deanna Becker: Crosby Huffman Chamber of Commerce; Joyce Beckner: Walmart; Melissa Murray: Crosby Education Foundation; and Ross McMurry: Crosby ISD. *The winner was Chelsey Long.*

**Huffman Employee of the Year** nominees were Chris White: B&L Water Wells; Dr. Benny Soileau: Huffman ISD; Huffman ISD Mental Health & Student Wellness Department; Jeremiah Conde: B&L Water Wells; Kim Harris: May Community Center; Kristen Bailey: Huffman ISD; Larry Hill: May Community Center; Lavana Davidson: Huffman Smile; and Shannon Lenox: Huffman Fire Department. *The winners were Chris White and Jeremiah Conde.*



Chef Vasso Espinosa was given flowers for her leading her staff and students in preparing the food for the banquet.



Crosby Employee of the Year was Chelsey Long.



Ambassador of the Year was Kay Sosa.



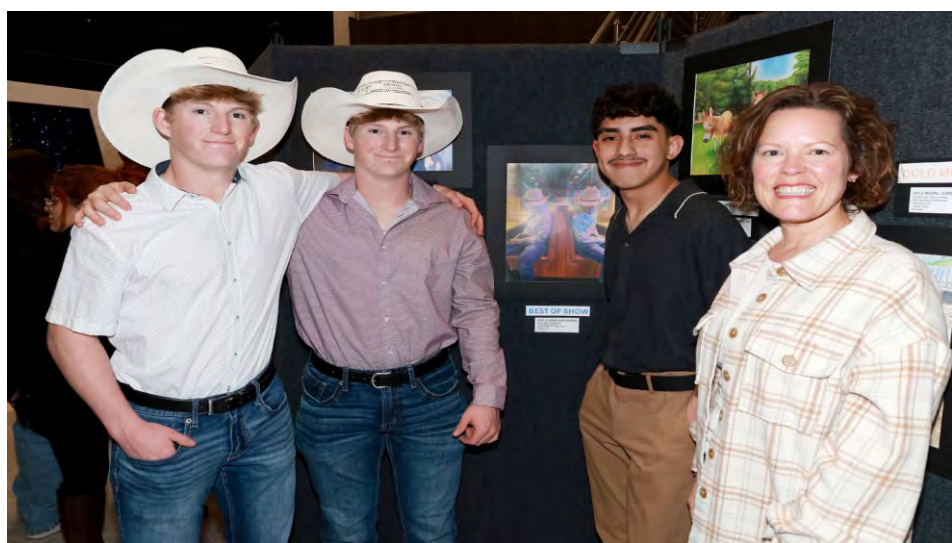
Crosby Volunteer of the Year was Deanna Becker.



Huffman Employees of the Year was Chris White and Jeremiah Conde.



Huffman Volunteer of the Year was Robin May.



Art Show and Rodeo

## Goose Creek CISD Shines in the 2025 Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo School Art Competition

Goose Creek CISD proudly celebrated its talented visual art students during the 2025 Rodeo Art Reception. The event highlighted the dedication, creativity, and skill of student artists across the district who participated in the prestigious Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo School Art Competition.

Dr. Ray Lavan, Director of Fine Arts, remarked during the reception, "This evening is a celebration of all the hard work, skill, and dedication of our visual art students and teachers, as well as the arts as a whole. The arts are the purest expression of the human condition, providing opportunities for our students to accelerate toward a bright future where anything is possible."

The program included recognition of various award categories, with blue, red, and white ribbons representing district-level winners and teal ribbons designating finalists advancing to the next round of judging at NRG Center. Among the most prestigious honors were the Gold Medal, Best in Show, and Special Merit awards, with the winners' artwork displayed in the Hayloft Gallery at NRG.

### Highlights from the 2025 Rodeo Art Awards:

Director's Choice Award Winners

High School: Harley Evink, 12th grade, RSS (Teacher: Annie Watson)

Junior School: Joseph Mendoza, 8th grade, Highlands (Teacher: Cathy Leija)

Elementary: Emily West, 5th grade, Highlands Elementary (Teacher: Mindi Garzoria)

### Superintendent's Choice Award Winners

High School: Abbigayle Garcia, 12th Grade, RSS (Teacher: Annie Watson)

Junior School: Aaleya Castillo, 7th grade, EF Green (Teacher: Rachel Deleon)

Elementary: Ester Centeno, 5th grade, Highlands Elementary (Teacher: Mindi Garzoria)

### Gold Medal Winners

Elementary: SaVon Green, 5th Grade, Crockett (Teacher: Felecia Young)

Junior School: Azalea Barboza, 8th Grade, Highlands (Teacher: Cathy Leija)

High School:

Genaro Silva, 12th Grade, GCM (Teacher: Johnna Morris)

Marco Alvarez, 12th Grade, GCM (Teacher: Johnna Morris)

### Best of Show Winners

Elementary: Alina Valladares, 5th Grade, Pumphrey (Teacher: Sonja Pelton-Sam)

Junior School: Guadalupe Torres, 8th Grade, Highlands (Teacher: Cathy Leija)

High School: Elyas Aguinaga, 10th Grade, GCM (Teacher: Brittney Russell)

### Special Merit Winner

High School: CheyAnne Pittman, 11th Grade, RSS (Teacher: Annie Watson)

# Barbers Hill Press

## Dayton

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MONT BELVIEU, TEXAS 77580

### REPORT FROM THE CAPITOL

#### REPORT FROM TX. SEN. MAYES MIDDLETON

#### Put Prayers Back in Public Schools and Property Tax Relief

Fellow Texan,

The Senate has been hard at work passing property tax relief and delivering on conservative priorities. Last week, I filed S.B. 11 to put prayer back in public schools, a priority of Lt. Governor Dan Patrick and President Trump.

President Trump discusses prayer in schools as a priority

#### Putting Prayer Back in Public Schools

Our schools are not God free zones. We are a state and nation built on "In God We Trust." You have to ask: are our schools better or worse off since prayer was taken out in the 1960s? Ligious atheists are no longer going to get to decide for everyone else if students and educators exercise their religious liberties during school hours.

Thank you President Trump and Lt. Governor Patrick for making prayer in public schools a top priority. Senate Bill 11 allows a student, with parental consent, to opt into a period of prayer and reading of the Bible, or other religious texts. There is no such thing as "separation of church and state" in our Constitution, and recent Supreme Court decisions by President Trump's appointees reaffirmed this. The goal of this bill is to promote freedom of religion for teachers and students in the place where they spend most of their time—school.

#### Property Tax Relief on the Way

Last week, I began my role as Vice Chair on the Committee on Local Government to discuss S.B. 4 and much needed property tax relief for all Texans, especially our senior population. Senator Bettencourt's bill provides the most constitutionally permanent and direct route to relief as it eliminates a portion of your school tax bill. One of the things I remember most about knocking on doors is people telling me that they would have to sell their family homes where their children, siblings, and parents grew up. We must pass property tax relief to make sure Texans aren't taxed out of their homes, and S.B. 4 ensures exactly that.

Homeowners aged 65 years or older would qualify for an additional \$10,000, for a total home-stead exemption of \$150,000. Over 69% of homeowners would not pay school tax currently under the bill, and that number is nearly 80% for seniors. I voted to pass this legislation and take a stand against the out of control cost of owning a home in Texas.

God Bless Texas, Mayes Middleton

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## Alleged MS-13 Gang Member Arrested Hours After Murder in Colony Ridge

Alleged MS-13 gang member arrested during Colony Ridge ICE operation, deported 6 times before

Man charged with murder for killing that happened just hours before arrest.

(ICE) Authorities in Houston have arrested a murder suspect from El Salvador who they believe is affiliated with the violent MS-13 gang.

The arrest reportedly took place on Monday, as the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), the Texas Department of Public Safety, and the Liberty County Sheriff's Office were performing a targeted arrest operation in the Colony Ridge area.

Luis Miguel Perez-Miranda, a 34-year-old Salvadoran national, was apprehended after a manhunt in Dayton, Texas, and was subsequently taken to the Liberty County Jail. This arrest occurred just hours after



Luis Miguel Perez-Miranda, a 34-year-old Salvadoran national

he allegedly murdered a man in the Colony Ridge subdivision in Plum Grove, Texas.

ICE officials believe Perez-Miranda has been deported on six previous occasions.

ICE announced the arrest on X.

More than 100 arrested in Colony Ridge immigration raids, ICE says ICE Enforcement and Removal Operations

Houston Field Office Director Bret Bradford praised the efforts of ICE personnel.

"Despite attempts by some to spread false information and rumors about the brave men and women who work for ICE, they continue to come in to work every day and put their own lives at risk to make our communities safer," Bradford said in a statement announcing



the arrest.

Chad Plantz, ICE Homeland Security Investigations Houston Special Agent in Charge, emphasized the importance of collaboration among law enforcement agencies.

"The residents in Southeast Texas can rest easier knowing this dangerous transnational gang member has been removed from the community and

is safely in custody," Plantz said.

The arrest is part of a growing trend of arrests of people believed to be affiliated with violent gangs in the Houston area. Along with the Mara Salvatrucha gang (MS-13), there have also been arrests of several suspected Tren de Aragua members.

## Senator Creighton files Bills to Ban DEI in Texas K-12 Public Schools

A top Texas senator filed legislation Monday that would extend the state's ban on diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives to K-12 public schools.

Sen. Brandon Creighton, the Conroe Republican who chairs the Senate Committee on Education K-16, introduced both Senate Bill 12 and Senate Bill 1565 after Gov. Greg Abbott expressed support in his State of the State address earlier this month for Texas banning diversity practices across its more than 1,200 public school districts.

"It's clear these programs are already in our schools using millions of taxpayer dollars meant for the classroom to fund political activism and political agendas," Creighton said during a Senate Committee on Education K-16 hearing Thursday.

The introductory text in the legislation suggests school districts that fail to comply with the proposed DEI ban could lose out on funding, but neither bills specify how that would happen. Public schools receive funding primarily from local property taxes and the state budget.

Following the bill filing Monday, Erin Daly Wilson, the communications director for Creighton's office, told The Texas Tribune that the bill would not withhold funding from school districts that violate the law.

**SB 12**, dubbed by Creighton the "Parental Bill of Rights," would still make it illegal for Texas school districts to factor in diversity, equity and inclusion in hiring and employment decisions. It would prevent schools from developing policies, programs and training that reference race, ethnicity, gender identity or sexual orientation. It would require districts to create policies for disciplining employees who engage in or assign DEI-related tasks to others. And it would ban classroom instruction on gender identity and sexual orientation.

**SB 1565** builds on that proposal by allowing parents to submit complaints to principals about alleged DEI violations and requiring school officials to offer parents an explanation of their response to the complaint. Parents could appeal the school's response to the Texas Education Commissioner Mike Morath, who the bill requires to assign an arbitrator to review the complaint and conduct a hearing.

If education officials rule against a school district, the measure would require the superintendent to testify before the State Board of Education about the findings and the number of complaints against that district.

Advocates of the bills argued during Thursday's hearing that DEI policies in public schools are not effective, waste taxpayer money and create division. Julie Pickren, a member of the State Board of Education, said Thursday that DEI programs "may appear well intentioned," but they do more harm than good.

"DEI fosters a culture of entitlement and disappointments that will steal the American dream from kids," Pickren said. "Every minute that we spend on 'woke' DEI indoctrination is a minute that we are not teaching a child how to read or how to do math."

Opponents of both bills testified that students from underrepresented groups would be hurt the most by a potential ban, including Black students and LGBTQ+ children. Critics say the ban could also make it more difficult for the state to recruit new teachers.

Sarai Flores, a policy fellow for the Mexican American School Board Association, testified Thursday that the ban would make it more difficult for schools to hire educators that reflect the communities they teach in. Though about three quarters of all public school students in the state are people of color, the majority of teachers in the state are white, according to Texas Education Agency data.

SB 12 would ban schools from factoring in diversity, equity and inclusion in hiring and employment decisions. That restriction would come as the state is facing a shortage of teachers without formal classroom training. Nearly 40% of new hires in Texas schools during the 2023-24 academic year lacked a state teaching certification.

The bill, which Flores also called "vague and restrictive," might also prevent teachers from having important discussions about race, history and identity due to the fear that they might violate the law, she added.

Other criticisms also centered on SB 12's proposed ban on classroom instruction on gender identity or sexual orientation, reminiscent of the 2022 Florida "Don't Say Gay"



Texas Senator Brandon Creighton

law that gained national attention. Several testified against that part of the bill Thursday, saying it would further negative stigmas toward LGBTQ+ students.

Dash Kostka, a student at the University of Texas in Austin, said LGBTQ+ students would be more likely to have mental health crises or face bigotry if teachers are banned from teaching about sexual orientation.

"Liberals like me are not trying to teach intersectional queer theory to your middle schoolers," Kostka said. "We're not trying to turn your kids gay."

Neither of the proposals would prevent schools "from acknowledging or teaching the significance of state and federal holidays or commemorative months" or teaching how those holidays or months fit into Texas and U.S. history, according to the legislation.

Texas school districts oversee offices and programs responsible for helping ensure students of color, children learning English, kids from immigrant families, students with disabilities and others receive support and feel included on their campuses. Children of color comprise the overwhelming majority of Texas' 5.5 million student population.

Jonathan Feinstein, state director for The Education Trust, told The Texas Tribune that it's also unclear how a DEI ban could impact public school districts' abilities to close achievement gaps among students. Under federal law, the state has a responsibility to close achievement gaps between students of different ethnic and racial backgrounds, he said. In Texas, Black and Latino students are more likely to read below grade level than their white counterparts.

"Would districts or poor [performing] charter schools be restricted from setting goals to explicitly close these gaps by improving academic outcomes

for underperforming students?" Feinstein said.

Antonio Ingram, a lawyer at the NAACP's Legal Defense Fund, testified Thursday against SB 12, saying it would harm all students, but especially Black students. He said that DEI programs are meant to "remediate disparities" that are present because of past segregation. A number of programs that benefit Black students could be on the chopping block, Ingram said, if the DEI ban moves forward.

"SB 12 may cause middle school administrators to curtail mentorship programs encouraging Black girls to pursue careers like engineering or medicine," Ingram said. "SB 12 may cause high school counselors to discontinue implicit bias training [that helps] to prevent Black boys from receiving unjust discipline."

Lawmakers in support of SB 12 and SB 1565, including Creighton, see it as an extension of the state's ban on teaching "critical race theory" in K-12 public schools and a ban of DEI programs and policies in Texas' public universities.

Critical race theory is a college-level discipline that examines why racism continues in American law and culture decades after the civil rights movement in the United States. It is not taught in elementary or secondary schools in Texas but some conservatives use the term to describe what they see as a liberal bent in the way race and racism is taught in public schools.

During the 2023 legislative session, Texas passed a law banning diversity offices, programs and training at publicly-funded universities. The law has caused confusion and fear among university employees and students, while colleges have shuttered DEI offices and efforts. Those offices also aimed to help Black, Latino, LGBTQ+ and other underrepresented students adjust to life on college campuses and foster a sense of community among their peers.

Abbott has since called on lawmakers to ensure that "no taxpayer dollars will be used to fund DEI" in K-12 public education.

"Schools must not push woke agendas on our kids," Abbott said during his State of the State address in early February. "Schools are for education, not indoctrination."

Those efforts mirror attempts to eliminate diversity at the federal level. On Feb. 14, the U.S. Department of Edu-

cation issued a letter to schools across the country giving them two weeks to ban such efforts on their campuses and threatening a loss of funding if schools don't comply. That window of time ends Friday.

Republicans nationally and in Texas often refer to any school activities attempting to create a more inclusive environment for children — such as teaching about systemic racism or allowing students to check out library books that center LGBTQ+ characters — as so-called "woke" liberal indoctrination.

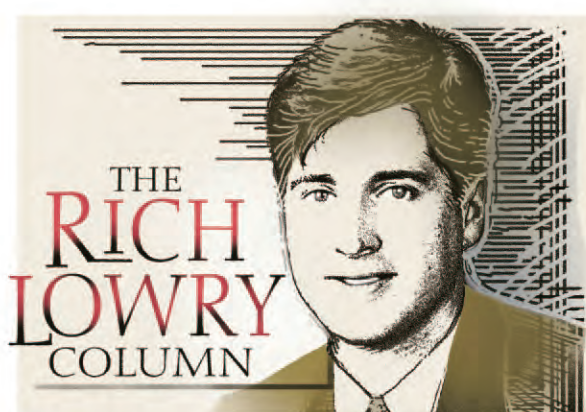
State officials' attempts to extend the diversity ban come as lawmakers continue to push for greater control over public schools and to allow taxpayer dollars to flow toward private ones. In 2021, the state passed a law limiting how Texas schools can teach America's history of slavery and racism. The law instructs schools to teach those topics as "deviations from, betrayals of, or failures to live up to the authentic founding principles of the United States, which include liberty and equality."

The governor and top officials in both the Texas House and Senate have made passing a school voucher bill their top priority this legislative session. At the same time, top Texas officials have expressed a desire to expand Christianity in the classroom. Lawmakers have filed legislation this session that would require schools to display the Ten Commandments, which Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick has declared a priority. Patrick is also prioritizing a bill that would grant school districts the power to provide students and employees "with an opportunity to participate in a period of prayer and reading of the Bible or other religious text" every school day.

A nod to Texas lawmakers' aim to also expand so-called parental rights, the DEI bill filed Monday would also allow parents to apply to remove their children from their local school district to attend another. Under most circumstances currently, a child must attend the school district closest to where the student lives. In SB 12, the district the family applies to could deny the transfer request under certain circumstances, like if it lacks space to accommodate the child or if it has a policy prohibiting students with a criminal background.

--Texas Tribune

OPINION PAGE



Ukraine never should have made the mistake of getting invaded

Ukraine never should have made the mistake of getting invaded

Ukraine got invaded by Russia. According to President Trump, it should never make that mistake again.

Miffed that Ukraine is miffed that it has been excluded from the early stages of negotiations over the war, Trump has blasted the embattled country for sticking up for its interests after being brutalized by Vladimir Putin for three years.

"Today I heard, 'Oh, well, we weren't invited.' Well, you've been there for three years," Trump said the other day. "You should have ended it — three years. You should have never started it. You could have made a deal."

This would be a fair charge to lodge against Ukraine if it had attempted to seize by force Russia's Rostov and Belgorod Oblasts and gotten bogged down in a costly war of attrition with no clear exit plan.

In reality, as we all know, Russia first invaded Ukraine in 2014 (after the Maidan Revolution toppled a pro-Putin president) and then followed up in 2022 with a more far-reaching attempt to decapitate Ukraine and render it a Russian satellite state.

Ukraine's offense is to have been victimized by an expansionist Russia, a quality it has historically in common with Poland, Finland and the Baltic states, among others.

If Ukraine had shown better judgment than to be located next door to a much larger, perpetually aggrieved and autocratic neighbor, with which it shares a complicated history, perhaps this never would have happened.

Skeptics of the Ukraine war want to say that Russia was provoked into invading Ukraine — missing its cities, blowing up its hospitals, destroying its electricity grid — by NATO's assurances that Ukraine was on the path to joining the alliance.

This wasn't in the offing anytime in the foreseeable future, though, and even if it had eventually happened, the idea that NATO would have used Ukraine as a launching pad for an invasion of Russia is phantasmagoric.

Vladimir Putin has set out his views on Ukraine at length, and they amount to the belief that Ukraine doesn't have a legitimate national identity separate from Russia. This is at the bottom of the conflict, as well as Putin's coveting of Ukrainian land and resources and his fear of a successful Slavic democracy next door giving his own people ideas.

When Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy clapped back at Trump, the U.S. president responded with a contemptuous salvo on Truth Social. Trump deemed him a "moderately successful comedian" (Zelenskyy used to have a career in entertainment) and, more significantly, a "Dictator without Elections."

It is true that Ukraine has been under martial law since it (foolishly) got invaded by Russia. Yet, Zelenskyy's popularity has held up, and he has much more democratic credibility than his adversary Vladimir Putin, who poisons and imprisons his political opponents.

Another Trump count against Zelenskyy is that he talked us into supporting Ukraine in the war. If it hadn't been for this scam artist, Trump implies, a bipartisan majority in the U.S. — and our European allies — wouldn't have believed we should stop a nation hostile to the West from installing a puppet government in a neighboring, sovereign state.

All that said, Ukraine isn't going to succeed in reestablishing its pre-2014 or even pre-2022 borders, and any plausible cessation of hostilities will involve painful concessions by Kiev.

This doesn't justify adopting an ahistorical perspective on the war and blaming Ukraine for its plight. Realpolitik is one thing; needlessly insulting an ally and condemning it in perversely moralizing terms is another.

Perhaps Trump's blunderbuss attacks on Ukraine will soften it up to accept an unsatisfactory but unavoidable deal. Still, the Kremlin is surely taking note that the president of the United States can't disguise his bitterness toward the weaker, hard-pressed country that Putin wants to humiliate and dismember.

It used to be said that a liberal is too broad-minded to take his own side in a fight. Trump is too consumed with pursuing a deal to acknowledge Ukraine is on our side.

Rich Lowry is editor of the National Review.

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



House Unveils its Voucher Version

Texas House members filed a bevy of education bills last week, including a proposed \$8 billion investment in public education and a voucher bill that ties the amount of money spent for private schooling to the dollar amount provided to public schools.

The House voucher proposal differs from the version already passed by the Texas Senate in that it sets out a tiered system depending on a family's income and prioritizes children with special education needs.

"We want kids in Texas to do better," Buckley said. "That's what it's about."

At least two Democratic legislators have pushed back. Rep. Gina Hinojosa, D-Austin, said she was "disappointed" by the proposed increase in per-student funding. The \$220 proposed increase does not cover increased costs due to inflation.

"Our neighborhood schools are desperate for the funding they need to keep their best teachers in the classroom," Hinojosa said. Rep. James Talarico, D-Round Rock, cast skepticism on Republicans' claim they have enough votes in the House to pass a voucher program.

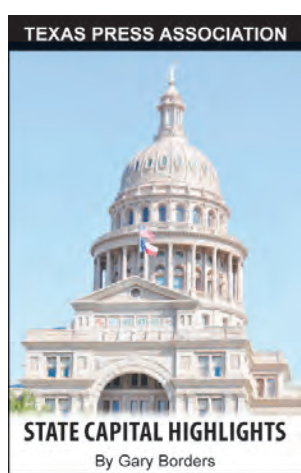
"Voucher proponents have a habit of declaring victory prematurely," Talarico said.

SENATE BILL WOULD CRIMINALIZE HEMP PRODUCTS WITH THC

A bill filed in the Texas Senate would ban all products containing THC, the psychoactive ingredient in marijuana, The Dallas Morning News reported. Thousands of retailers across the state are selling CBD products derived from legally grown hemp but often containing THC. The ban would not affect the sale of nonintoxicating products that contain CBD.

The ban is a priority of Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick, the Senate's presiding officer.

"We must take bold action to keep dangerous drugs away



By Gary Borders

from our communities and out of our schools, and SB 3 is a critical step in protecting Texas families from unregulated and mislabeled intoxicating products," Patrick said in December.

Advocates for consumable hemp — gummies, vapes, drinks and other types of products — are advocating a more measured approach that would include limiting the strength, increasing oversight, and banning sales to minors. The proposed ban would not affect the state's medical marijuana program.

Even if passed, the proposed ban faces an uncertain fate in the House, where no companion legislation has been filed.

AGRICULTURE COMMISSIONER WANTS STATE FLUORIDE BAN

Texas Agriculture Commissioner Sid Miller is urging state officials to ban adding fluoride to public water systems, The News reported. Miller said he was swayed by U.S. Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr., a longtime opponent of fluoridation.

"I don't want big brother telling me what to do," Miller. "Government has forced this on us for too long."

Across Texas, more than 100 public water systems serving nearly 10 million people add fluoride to water. According to the American Dental Association, fluoridation reduces cavities by about 25% in both children and adults. However, critics say the practice is no longer needed because fluoride is already found in toothpaste and other dental products.

MEASLES OUTBREAK SPREADING IN SOUTH PLAINS REGION

The number of people identified as having contracted

measles has risen to 90 since late January, according to the Texas Department of State Health Services. Of that number, 16 have been hospitalized.

"Due to the highly contagious nature of this disease, additional cases are likely to occur in the outbreak area and the surrounding communities," a DSHS news release stated.

Gaines County, between Lubbock and Midland, has reported the largest number of cases: 57 as of last Friday. Five of the people contracting measles said they had been vaccinated against the virus.

Most of the cases have been reported in children from infancy to age 17. DSHS said the best way to prevent getting sick is to be immunized with two doses of the measles-mumps-rubella vaccine.

A COOLER, WETTER JANUARY REPORTED

Texas weather was wetter and cooler in January than in past years, resulting in a slight drop in the percentage of the state in drought, now at 42%, according to Dr. Mark Wentzel, hydrologist with the Texas Water Development Board.

Wentzel said he expects drought conditions to expand modestly in the next few months.

"A big factor in this outlook is an ongoing La Niña event, cooler-than-normal sea surface temperatures in the eastern Equatorial Pacific, that typically bring warmer and drier conditions to the southern U.S., including Texas, during the winter," he wrote. "Farther out, we're still hopeful for more drought relief."

La Niña is expected to be less of a factor after April, meaning that May — historically the wettest month in Texas — could bring added drought relief.

COALITION PRESSING TRANSPARENCY LEGISLATION THIS SESSION

The Texas Sunshine Coalition, which consists of 16 organizations (including Texas Press Association, the Freedom of Information Foundation of Texas and the Texas Association of Broadcasters), is working to pass legislation to improve citizens' access to public information.

Seven measures have already been introduced, including a bill that would require governments to produce public records in their original format instead of converting them into PDF images that are impossible to search and sort.

Other proposals would require governments to respond to Public Information Act requests. The bills resulted from complaints that some government officials simply ignore requests in spite of state laws. The legislation provides for a complaint process when officials fail to respond. Other measures call for resuming access to dates of birth in public records to ensure accuracy when reporting on people with common names; requiring an open government hotline in the Texas Attorney General's office; and establishing a complaint process when public information is withheld.

More transparency bills are expected to be filed soon.

THE POSTSCRIPT By Carrie Classon

Thinking About My Hair



I saw a photo of an author I admire recently, and she had no hair. I worried she was ill, so I immediately investigated. She was not ill. She had cut off all her hair and had done it for good reasons, she said. She had done a lot of thinking about her hair—a lot more than I had.

First of all, she said, she was not blond. "No one is blond," she added, or almost no one.

Less than 1% of the population is blond, and she implied she felt dishonest pretending she was blond when she wasn't. She went on to say that she had spent thousands of dollars and untold time on her hair. She sounded a little angry about the whole thing—the money spent, the dishonesty of it all.

I admit, I felt a little defensive because I am not blond either. I have never been blond. But I had never considered that I was part of some massive blond conspiracy, posing as blond to dupe the unsuspecting. I just assumed that everyone knew I was not blond. So for the record: I am not blond.

I am just not good at growing hair. I used to feel the need to apologize to my hairstylists. "I'm good at doing some things," I would insist. "Growing hair just isn't one of them!"

The hairstylist would work away for long minutes, and at the end, I would get up from the chair and there was no hair to see on the floor. It was as if the entire thing had been a pantomime involving scissors.

So now, my husband, Peter, cuts my hair. He finishes in less than five minutes and, given how little he has to work with, does a very fine job.

And, once every four months, I buy a box of hair dye and bleach my hair screaming blond. (I'm not sure if that's what the color is actually called, but it should be.) I figure, maybe if I'm blond, people won't notice that I don't have a lot of hair and that, what little there is, sticks up in odd directions.

But now I wonder how I'd feel if I cut off all my hair.

Peter would not like it, I know. When I still had other people cut my hair, I used to go to a haircutting school, and so I had very little say in how it was cut. Since there were so few options, this did not bother me. But one time, the teacher cut most of it off. Peter was shocked when I came home—which surprised me, since I had so little to start out with. Peter wants me to keep what little hair I have on my head, so for his sake, I do that.

But I don't think I would want to cut off all my hair anyway.

The feeling I had, reading what this author said, was that being a fake blond was evidence that I was not a very serious person. As I thought about it, I had to agree this was probably true. I am not very serious about my hair, at any rate.

I'm happy with my pony screaming blond hair. My "hairstyling routine" consists of the two seconds I spend every morning checking to see if I have snarls in my hair or if it's standing on end. After that, I can go for the rest of the day without thinking once about my hair.

And that's the way I like it.

Till next time, Carrie

Advertisement for Star Courier newspaper, including contact information and subscription rates.

# Swede descendants reunite, share rich heritage at Crosby Historical Society event,

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

ins, I think we're the closest," she said.

Just feet away from Davenport was yet another special moment at the event.

"I look over and I see this family reunion going on right here with the Lindstroms," she said excitedly. "They didn't even know half of their family was here and so they're reuniting here. This is really, really neat and fun."

The back of the Brethren Parish Life Center gym was lined with tables decorated by relatives who had brought the rare artifacts, photos, and even some clothes from their ancestors.

One by one, Swede settlers stood to tell their story and heritage of coming to Crosby and how their ancestors made their way to the new country.

"Everybody kind of learned there's a lot of stuff about each other and how uniquely we are tied together from our ancestors," Davenport said.

Special speakers included Sara West, from the Harris County Library system; Dee Ann Denson Rook; Ellen Peterson Beck; Donna Swanson Davenport; Anita Runneberg Evans (last living relative of the Runnebergs); and Eric Lindstrom.

Many of the roads in Crosby still bear the names of those early settlers including Lindstrom, Runneberg (Runneberg), Nelson, Reidland, Wahl, Kenning, and Miller-Wilson.

The Swedes settled in Crosby in the late 1800s beating the Czechs by about three years.

"We had a few families,

but when they moved in, they overtook us, but we were first," Davenport smiled.

Dee Ann Denson Rook told about her relative from Sweden, Lars Nelson (1842-1923) and his wife Martha "Mattie" Roos (1849-1936) from Denmark. When he was 20 years old, Lars left home and went to Denmark for four years. During that time, he met the love of his life in Mattie and the two wanted to get married.

"We don't know exactly why but there was a dispute between Denmark and Germany at the time and couldn't get married," Rook said. She said they speculated it was religious since he was a Christian and she was of Jewish faith.

Nothing would impede Lars, and they decided to take a ship and get married somewhere else. They had a choice of Australia or America, and they took the ship to the United States.

They originally came in through Delaware in 1874 and later moved to Manson, Iowa where they settled with another 15 Swede families.

"They formed a Swedish Baptist Church where Lars became the pastor," Beck said.

He heard about cheap land in Texas and the warmer weather was enticing so he convinced several other Swede families, including the Reidlands, to move south and they settled in Crosby in 1896.

The Nelson edition in Crosby is the area behind where the high school was on Runneberg back in that day on the corner of Pecan Street.

"He farmed cotton and

dammed up the gully to irrigate from that turned into a nice pond. There's a record of people coming from town to swim there," she said.

Lars also had a livery stable where he would rent out buggies, horses and such.

He also had a hotel or boarding house and would encourage people to come to Crosby.

There are more stories that feature the entrepreneurship of the Swedes found in the Crosby Historical Society Museum. The museum is open from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Saturdays and private weekday appointments by calling Davenport at 281-731-7010.

Evergreen Cemetery was established in 1899 for the Swedes only originally, but in 1999 the cemetery was open to all ethnic groups. All lots have been sold.

The April meeting topic of the Society will be on the birth and life of the Crosby-Huffman Chamber of Commerce hosted by veteran chamber member Susan Armstrong. A date has yet to be announced.



Elton Runneberg's World War I pants and boots.



It was an impromptu family reunion when some of the family showed up unexpectedly to the Crosby Historical Society meeting. From left, Patricia Connolly (granddaughter of Ernest and Anna Lindstrom), Paul Rodgers (grandson of Elton Runneberg and Ruth Lindstrom), Eric Lindstrom, Neil Lindstrom (grandson of Harry Lindstrom), Gina Lindstrom Bloom, John David Bloom (great, great, great grandson of Ernest Lindstrom), and Riley Bloom.



The first Boy Scout troop in Crosby was established by Elton Runneberg.



Mary Nelson Anderson's tea set.

# Trail Riders Head to Rodeo,

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

annual Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo Parade.

At least 55-plus of them come from Cheek, Texas, an unincorporated community, southwest of Beaumont in central Jefferson County. Every year, the small community established in 1906 becomes the central gathering place of cowboys and cowgirls from around the area known as the Northeast Trail Riders Association.

"It's about a 108-mile trek from Cheek into Memorial Park in Houston," said Derrick Daniels, a scout for the trail ride.

Daniels rides lead for the trail ride and is the first person seen beside the police escorts that accompany the riders as they move from county to county.

"We all work together as a team, talking back and forth to keep traffic moving," he said as they mostly take up at least one lane of traffic on the highway as they head for Houston.

"We use walkie talkies to check on each other, keeping an eye on the health of the animals, and there are no issues with the wagons. My head is always on a swivel the whole ride to make sure we keep our riders safe and the public safe," he said.

They rolled into Crosby, Texas on Thursday about 5:30 p.m., a little bit later than they normally do.

"We encountered a lot of construction and had to make several detours so the traffic behind us could clear too," Daniels said.

They also take breaks to feed and water the animals and take human bathroom breaks, too.

"It's conditioning. We condition the animals year-round, so they are able to make a trip of 108 miles and we break it up into about eight to 10 miles per day," he said.

The trail ride got off to a rough start with a delay. Normally, they pull out on Sunday but there was a lot of



Keeping up a tradition are some of the Northeast Trail Riders. The Perry boys from left Taylor, grandpa Dr. Charles Perry, friend Joshua Joe, Derrick Daniels, and Caleb Perry.

lightning, the only thing that will slow them down.

"We don't ride our animals in lightning," he said. "If it is raining, we ride. Cold weather? We ride. Lightning will stop us so we can be safe."

Instead, they woke up at an early 5 a.m. call and readied themselves and pulled out of Cheek, Texas at 8 a.m.

Trail boss Anthony Bruno says the group plans for this the whole year.

"We have meetings throughout the year and we're always planning, fundraising, and training," he said.

During the day, Daniels said they are constantly replenishing themselves with a lot of fruits, water (especially in the heat), and even more so for the animals.

When it's time to settle in for the night, there's not a lot of microwave dinners or fast food, but plenty of barbecue and all the trimmings to feed the soul.

Throughout the ride the numbers grow and fall off as those who can't always take a full week's vacation join them when they can.

As the riders get into Houston, the excitement and danger increase.

"When we hit Memorial Park, it's a major reunion because you have all the other 12 associations gathering there at the same time. It's a big party on Friday night and

everyone is tasting each other's food and hanging out," he said.

Along the way, there's a lot of storytelling and the word spoken by most on the ride is tradition.

"I have my daughter, my grandsons, my in-laws, and my daughters-in-law with me this year," he said saying it's all about passing on the tradition to future generations.

For 78-year-old Dr. Charles Perry, it's a blessing to have his son and grandsons join him on the ride.

"We come from Arcola and meet up with them out in Cheek to ride in," the wagon boss said.

Don't think his age is slowing him down.

"I get geared up for it because I've been doing it for so long," he said. He's been riding on trail rides for 70 years this year, spending his early years with his grandfather and uncles.

"I enjoy it to my bones," Perry laughed.

One grandson is an assistant wagon boss and the other is learning the ropes with aspirations to take Bruno's spot as trail boss.

"It's important for us to have our kids and grandkids with us to experience this and burn into their hearts a desire to continue the tradition," Bruno said.

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# Rep. Sylvia Garcia Leads 200 Colleagues in Reintroducing the Bipartisan American Dream and Promise Act

By Allan Jamail

February 26, 2025 ~ Congressional District 29 Representative Sylvia Garcia has announced the re-introduction of the American Dream and Promise Act, which would provide a pathway to citizenship for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients, Temporary Protected Status (TPS) holders, and people with Deferred Enforced Departure (DED).

Amid President Donald Trump administrations mass deportation schemes, congressional Democrats have reintroduced legislation to create a pathway to citizenship for millions of immigrants under threat.

If passed, the legislation would impact an estimated

5 million people around the US.

"These Dreamers were brought to this country as children in their heart and the soul and their mind, they contribute to our community and make our country the great nation it is," Garcia said during a Wednesday press conference.

The American Dream and Promise Act would create a "conditional permanent resident" status for Dreamers, valid for up to 10 years, as well as open pathways to lawful permanent residence.

TPS holders and people with DED would also be able to adjust to lawful permanent residence status under certain conditions.

The bill's reintroduction comes as the second Trump



Congresswoman Sylvia Garcia

administration ramps up attacks on immigrant communities, escalating mass deportations and threatening the lawful status of hundreds of thousands of TPS holders.

Immigrants' rights advocates applaud reintroduction.

"Standing up for the op-

portunities and futures of Dreamers, TPS holders, farm workers, and families is essential and a rare point of consensus on immigration among the American majority," Executive Director of America's Voice Vanessa Cárdenas said in a statement.

"The Dream and Promise Act is an important step forward that not only would offer stability and a pathway to legal status for many of these deeply rooted immigrants to fully participate in this nation, but also offer critical protections at a moment the Trump Administration is seeking to enact an indiscriminate mass purge of immigrants, including those eligible for the legal pathways created in this legislation."

Democratic Whip Katherine Clark (MA-5) joined Rep. Sylvia Garcia (TX-29) and Members of the House Democratic Caucus to reintroduce the American Dream and Promise Act, a bill that will provide a pathway to citizenship for Dreamers, TPS (Temporary Protected Status) recipients, and DED (Deferred Enforced Departure) beneficiaries. Below is a transcript of her remarks:

"I am so proud to be here with all of you today to celebrate [the] refilling of this critical bill for our country and for its future.

"Standing up for the opportunities and futures of Dreamers, TPS holders, farm workers, and families is essential and a rare point of consensus on immigra-

tion among the American majority," Executive Director of America's Voice Vanessa Cárdenas said in a statement.

"The Dream and Promise Act is an important step forward that not only would offer stability and a pathway to legal status for many of these deeply rooted immigrants to fully participate in this nation, but also offer critical protections at a moment the Trump Administration is seeking to enact an indiscriminate mass purge of immigrants, including those eligible for the legal pathways created in this legislation."

Garcia shared that she has nearly 200 members of Congress supporting the reintroduced bill.

# Darius Provost-Evans elected East Houston Democrats New President

By Allan Jamail

Houston, Tx. ~ February 20, 2025 the East Houston Democrats held their first meeting of 2025 at the Pine Trails Community improvement Association Clubhouse.

New officers were elected at the previous January meeting. Each of the newly elected officers gave their monthly reports. The members discussed raising college scholarship funds, training new precinct chairs



Members & guest attending East Houston's Democrats meeting. L - R: Lloyd Ford, Carolyn Riggs, Jan Crenshaw, Secretary, Charlotte Jackson, Treasurer, Darius Provost-Evans, President, Linda Britten, 1st. Vice-President, Dianna Williams & Tujuana A. Hunter (attending virtually: Tyna Christmas, 2nd Vice-President & Julia Davis, Parliamentarian) (Photo by Allan Jamail)

and increasing the club's membership.

Darius Provost-Evans

said, "As the newly elected President of East Houston Democrats, my

goal is to increase our visibility and boost our ground operation on the Eastside. The daily news coming out of Washington D.C.

has galvanized the base and we're mobilizing the grassroots. East Houston Democrats are up for the challenge."

Former President Linda Britten, and now 1st. Vice-President said, raising funds for graduating students is one of their priorities. She said some students seeking a higher education will need the club's financial support in order to afford college.

The club meets at 6:30 pm monthly on the 3rd Thursday (March 20th next meeting) at the Pine Trails Clubhouse; 6003 Wood Bend Dr. - Houston, 77049. To join or for more information contact Charlotte Jackson - 832-896-1633.

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From Left, Hugh Grant, Sophie Thatcher & Chloe East star in "Heretic."

"Heretic"

"The 97th Academy Awards" (TV-14) — Hosted by former late-night talk show host Conan O'Brien, this year's Oscars ceremony is out now to stream after its live broadcast on ABC on March 2. In keeping with other awards shows this season, the musical film "Emilia Perez" received the most nominations (13), followed by "The Brutalist" and "Wicked" with 10 each. The Best Actor award will be an interesting category to watch after Adrien Brody landed the Golden Globe and Timothee Chalamet received the SAG. Zoe Saldana, Demi Moore and Kieran Culkin are the frontrunners for the other acting categories, while the Best Picture category is stacked with great films from 2024 like "Anora," "Conclave," and "The Substance." (Hulu) — "Heretic" (R) —

Hugh Grant ("Bridget Jones: Mad About the Boy") leads this chilling horror film from A24, co-starring Sophie Thatcher ("Companion") and Chloe East ("The Fablemans"). Thatcher and East star as two Mormon missionaries who visit the home of Mr. Reed (Grant) to spread information about their church. Mr. Reed invites the girls into his home and welcomes a discussion about religion, but as the discussion carries on, the atmosphere becomes uncomfortable and intense. The girls soon realize that they're stuck inside the house with no phone signal and no way out, leaving Mr. Reed to commence his own sadistic lesson about the nature of belief and faith. Premieres March 7. (Max) — "With Love, Meghan" (TV-PG) — Meghan, Duchess of Sus-

sex, is finally premiering her lifestyle show on March 4 after the series was postponed back in January due to the Southern California wildfires. The show will consist of eight 33-minute episodes filmed at a farmhouse near Meghan and Harry's home in Montecito, California. Throughout the episodes, Meghan will showcase her personal "tips and tricks" in the kitchen, garden and more. Notable guests on the show include actress Mindy Kaling, actress Abigail Spencer, and chefs Roy Choi and Alice Water. Oh, and Prince Harry, of course! (Netflix)

In Case You Missed It "Yellowjackets" (TV-MA) — This thriller-drama series just had its season three premiere back in February, but it's not too late to binge the series and catch up in time for its season three finale in April. "Yellowjackets" follows a high school soccer team whose plane crashes on the way to a tournament in 1996, leaving them stranded in the wilderness for a year and a half. Bouncing between the events in 1996 and the girls' current lives in 2021, viewers get to see firsthand the trauma that the teenagers experienced and how the crash remains a part of them as they navigate the world as adults. The show features an incredibly talented ensemble cast that includes Sophie Thatcher (yes, the same one from "Heretic"), Christina Ricci, Juliette Lewis and Samantha Hanratty. Go stream season one, season two, and the first four episodes of season three! (Paramount+) (c) 2025 King Features Synd., Inc.



Q:I'm so happy to see so many cast members on Reba McEntire's new sitcom. Are there any other cast members from the original "Reba" series set to appear in the future? — M.W.

A: Christopher Rich, who starred on the WB sitcom "Reba" from 2001-2007, recently guest-starred on McEntire's new NBC sitcom "Happy's Place." Rich suffered a stroke in 2018 and was thrilled to reunite with his former co-stars in an episode where he plays a tattoo artist who was also dealing with the residual effects of a stroke. He was eager to incorporate this experience into the character and hopes to return for another guest spot next season.

JoAnna Garcia Swisher, who played Cheyenne on "Reba" and currently stars in the Netflix series "Sweet Magnolias," told People magazine that she would 100% guest-star on "Happy's Place" if and when she's asked. \*\*\*

Q: Did the actress who played Eve on the Apple TV+ series "Bad Monkey" appear on a soap opera when she was younger? She looks like the actress who played Lizzie on "Guiding Light." — U.B.

A: If you're thinking of Emme Rylan, who played Lizzie Spaulding on "Guiding Light" from 2006-2009, she does resemble her, but it's not the same actress. Meredith Hagner, who recently starred opposite Vince Vaughn in "Bad Monkey," did get her start on a CBS soap around the same time as Rylan. She was cast as young Liberty Ciccone on "As the World Turns" and was nominated for a Daytime Emmy award before the long-running soap was canceled in 2010.

Hagner most recently played one of the double-booked brides in the Amazon comedy film "You're Cordially Invited," opposite Reese Witherspoon and Will Ferrell. Off-screen, she's married to actor Wyatt Russell ("Under the Banner of Heaven"), son of Kurt Russell and Goldie Hawn.

"Bad Monkey," which was filmed on location in Florida, will move its production to the West Coast next season after receiving a \$20 million tax credit from the state of California. According to Colleen Bell, director of the California Film



Reba McEntire and Christopher Rich star in "Happy Place."

Commission, these incentives help encourage jobs in the state and drive economic growth. Bell stated, "The impact goes beyond the entertainment industry — it supports families, local businesses and communities statewide." \*\*\*

Q: Is it true that Kate Hudson was originally offered Anne Hathaway's role in the movie "The Devil Wears Prada"? — K.W.

A: Yes, Kate Hudson was offered the role of Andy Sachs in the 2006 hit movie "The Devil Wears Prada" (based on the best-selling novel of the same name), but she turned it down. The film's director David Frankel told Entertainment Weekly that several big-name actresses were in the running for Hathaway's role, including Rachel McAdams, Scarlett Johansson and Natalie Portman. Hudson says that the timing wasn't right for her to do the role, but she regrets her decision after seeing the movie.

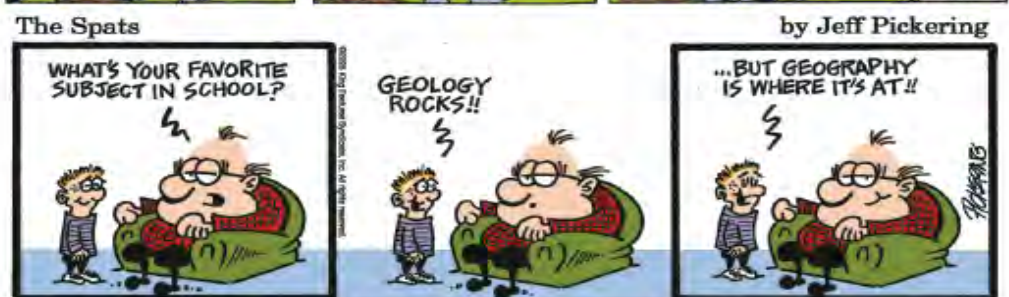
Next up, Hudson stars in the sports-comedy series "Running Point," which was co-created by Mindy Kaling for Netflix.

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

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ENTERTAINMENT

Amber Waves



Weekly SUDOKU puzzle grid and instructions. Difficulty: Moderate. HOO BOY!

HOCUS-FOCUS puzzle by Henry Boltinoff. Find at least six differences in details between panels.

Trivia Test Answers: 1. Harry Potter and the Dursley Family; 2. 'Family Ties'; 3. Martin Van Buren, born after the Revolutionary War; 4. Mercenary; 5. Maybelline; 6. Battle of Lexington and Concord; 7. Cotton candy; 8. 1929; 9. 8.34 pounds; 10. Green, white and red

March 3, 2025 Posting Date

King Crossword

Crossword puzzle grid with clues for Across and Down. Includes copyright notice for King Features Synd., Inc.

Trivia test by Fifi Rodriguez

- 1. LITERATURE: Who lives at 4 Privet Drive?
2. TELEVISION: Which 1980s sitcom featured the Keaton family?
3. U.S. PRESIDENTS: Who was the first American-born president?
4. COMICS: What is Deadpool's profession?
5. AD SLOGANS: Which makeup company's slogan is "Maybe she's born with it"?
6. HISTORY: Which battles marked the beginning of the American Revolution?
7. INVENTIONS: The 1904 World's Fair introduced which fluffy confection?
8. MOVIES: In which year were the first Oscars awarded?
9. MEASUREMENTS: What does 1 gallon of water weigh?
10. GEOGRAPHY: What are the colors of the Italian flag?

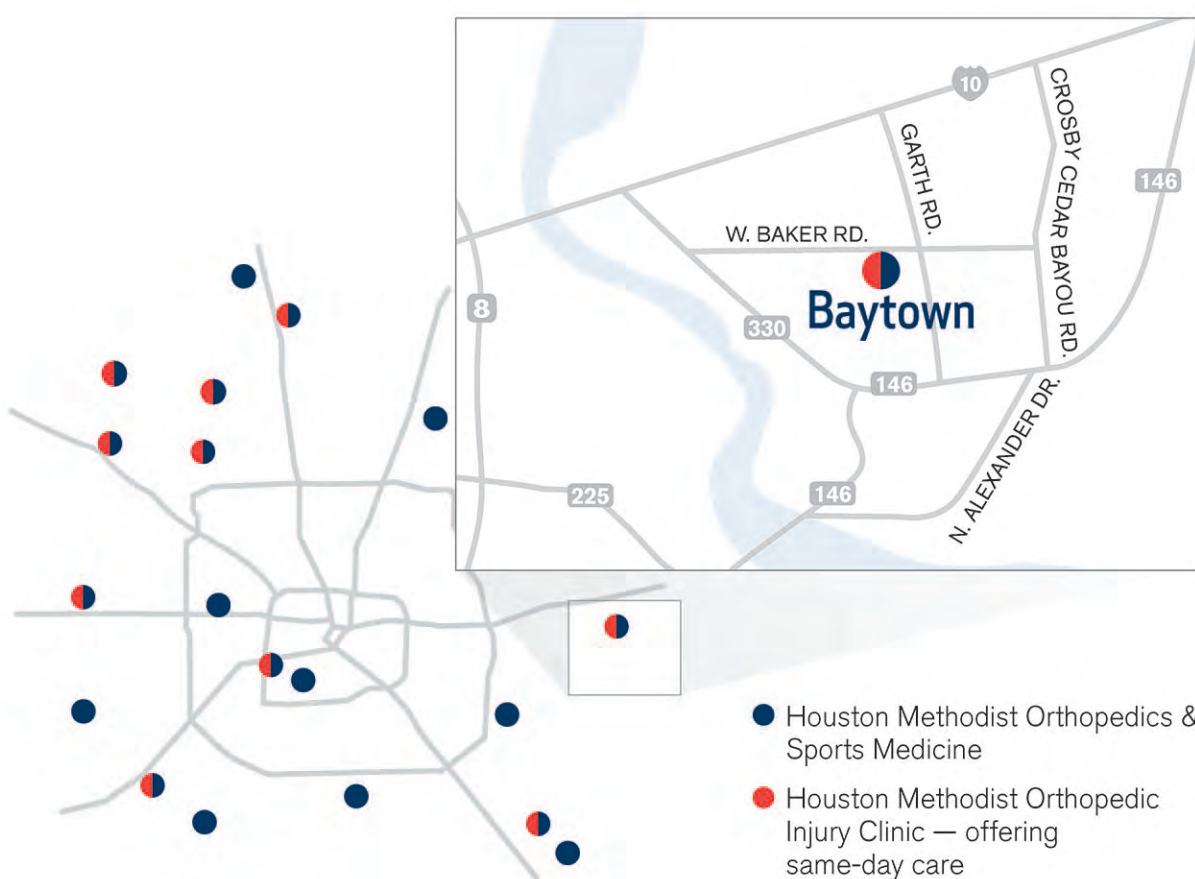
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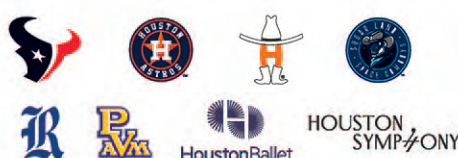
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