



HIGHLANDS

CROSBY

# Star Courier

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THURSDAY, MAY 1, 2025

P.O. DRAWER 446, HIGHLANDS, TEXAS 77562

## IN THE STARS

### Crosby Rodeo announces 2025 schedule

Crosby Fair and Rodeo will kick off starting Friday May 30 and 31st with the Cook-off, and then Monday June 2nd - June 4th the Fair begins with youth exhibits each day/evening. On Thursday June 5th there will be an auction dinner for Buyers from 4-6 p.m. followed by the live auction at 6:00 p.m. Friday June 6th and Saturday the 7th we will have a CPRA Rodeo followed by live entertainment.

In 2024 alone, thanks to your support, Crosby Fair and Rodeo gave away \$47,500.00 in scholarships to our local youth.

You can purchase a membership badge at the CF&R office. Membership is \$60.00 per badge and gets you admission to both nights of Cook-Off & Rodeo as well as the annual Membership Feed.

If you have any questions, please reach out to us through one of the contacts below.

Office 281.328.2113  
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### Election Day May 3 Saturday from 7am-7pm

The following Ballot Issues are of interest to local voters:

#### LEE COLLEGE

-Elect Regents Positions 4,5,6

#### HC ESD#5

-Tax Rate Election

#### HC ESD #5

-Tax Rate Election

#### SAN JACINTO COLLEGE

-Elect Regents Positions 3,4

#### HC FWSD#1A

-Elect 3 Directors

Your may vote at any countywide polling location.

For additional info: [www.harrisvotes.com](http://www.harrisvotes.com).

## Highlands Elementary Hosts 4th Annual Color Run

By: Nancy Bonds,  
GCCISD Director of  
Communications

Highlands Elementary recently held its 4th Annual CATCH Family Color Run, welcoming a record 350 participants to one of the school's most vibrant and anticipated family events. Coordinated by Physical Education teachers Joel Kunz and Camryn Kotlarz, the color run is one of three major family engagement nights hosted on campus each year.

What began with just 100 participants four years ago has grown into a community-wide celebration of health, fun, and togetherness. "This event has been in the works for a long time, and it's amazing to see how much it has grown," said Coach Kunz. "The community has truly embraced it."

Local businesses



Blanca Capetillo, Highlands Elementary Principal, and Dr. G, GCCISD mascot, getting runners ready to take off. (Photo by: Carrie Pryor-Newman)

showed strong support through donations of food, water, medical supplies, and funds. Highlands Elementary PTO played a key role in sponsoring the event, making it possible to expand and enhance the experience each year. This

year's run featured not only the traditional color-tossing fun but also food and drink vendors and booths hosted by local businesses.

Volunteers from Goose Creek Memorial PALS, Soccer, Cross Country, and

Volleyball teams stepped in to assist, along with members of the Lee College Volleyball team, who brought great energy and support to the event. Staff members from Highlands Elementary also pitched in, managing stations and

joining in on the color-throwing fun.

Students were able to purchase color packets and particularly enjoyed covering teachers, coaches, and administrators in bright powder. "The students love it, and the families enjoy watching their kids have such a great time," said Coach Kunz. "There are smiles all around."

Coach Kunz expressed deep appreciation for the staff and volunteers who help make the event possible each year. "Coach Kotlarz and I are so blessed to work with an amazing team. Everyone comes together to create a joyful experience for our students and families."

Plans are already underway for next year's color run as the tradition continues to grow and bring the community closer together.

## Crosby ISD to Build New 6th Grade Center

Crosby, TX - On Monday, April 21, 2025, the Crosby ISD Board of Trustees approved construction of a new 6th grade center.

The 6th grade center building will be located between the current Crosby Middle School and Crosby High School campuses (see attached map). Once the 6th grade center opens, Crosby Middle School will then become home to 7th and 8th grade students only. All 6th grade students in the district would attend the standalone 6th grade campus. The new campus will likely open in time for the 2027-28 Academic Year.

Relief for overcrowding at Crosby Middle School was the second priority for the Board, Superintendent Dr. Paula Patterson, and the citizens construction committee. The first priority was an expansion of Crosby High School, which is happening now. The



CHS expansion will open later this fall.

After the Board vote, Superintendent Dr. Patterson stated, "Crosby ISD is growing. We all know that, and we can all see that. Middle school relief has been one of the top priorities for the district these last few years. Now that we're nearing the finish line for the Crosby High School expansion, it's time to move forward with the next project under this administration. A 6th grade center situated between Crosby Middle School and Crosby High School is the perfect location to build. The district already owns the land, and we have the funds to build. It makes the most financial sense. We can begin the design phase almost immediately with construction to follow. The Crosby High School expansion gives us room

Continued. See CROSBY ISD NEW 6TH GRADE CENTER, Page 5

## Voucher Bill Passed, sent to Governor Crosby Team wins Art Car Performance Prize

Program will officially start in the 2026-2027 School Year

After a yearslong fight, the school voucher bill heads to Gov. Abbott for approval.

Senate Bill 2 would create an education savings account program and has been Abbott's top priority.

It took multiple special legislative sessions in 2023 and Gov. Greg Abbott campaigning against the naysayers to happen, but now a measure that would create a school voucher program in Texas has passed the legislature and is heading to Abbott's office for his approval.

Abbott pushed lawmakers for years to pass the program, which would allow the state to give parents state tax dollars to send their kids to private



State Rep. Dustin Burrows, Gov. Greg Abbott and Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick at the Capitol in Austin. Photo by The Texas Tribune

schools.

The Senate and House were expected to negotiate parts of the legislation. However, in a surprising turn of events, Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick proposed that

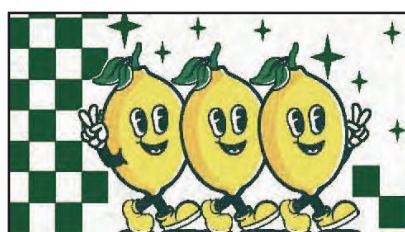
the Senate adopt the House version of the bill as is. "Today is a day I have worked toward for more

Continued. See VOUCHER BILL PASSES, Page 6



Art Car Parade Winners Orange Show Center for Visionary Art Raymond Blanchard and Crosby One Act Players of Crosby High School - Performance Winner

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# SCHOOL NEWS PAGE

## Clark Elementary Student Council Spreads Hope Through Heartfelt Letters

Story by: Nancy Bonds, GCCISD Director of Communications

A simple act of kindness is making a big impact at Clark Elementary. As part of a heartwarming community service project, the Clark Elementary Student Council has partnered with Rexanna's Foundation's Rally Writers initiative to support Matthew, a courageous young cancer patient undergoing treatment at MD Anderson.

Led by President Ezra Salazar, Vice President Koby Davis, Secretary Zoey Zurovec, and Class Representatives Meghan McCleery, Carter Garcia, Michael Ocampo, Leah Taylor, Jaycee Jenkins, and Natalie McWhorter, the Student Council took on the project with heartfelt purpose. Guided by School Counselor Elisabeth Lewis, the students created hand-decorated, motivational cards filled with words of hope and encouragement.

"This all started when Mrs. Lewis told us about Matthew," said Ezra. "We felt bad for him and wanted to help. We thought



Clark Elementary Student Council students ask Matthew questions about his cancer journey. (Photos by: Yulia Trujillo-Rodriguez)



Clark Elementary Student Council students welcome Matthew and exchange gifts to celebrate his visit. (Photos by: Yulia Trujillo-Rodriguez)

writing cards with motivational messages would make him feel better."

The cards, colorful, personal, and filled with heartfelt encouragement, stood out to Matthew, who keeps them in a special shoebox alongside other cherished notes he has received. "I love receiving cards," he shared. "The Clark ones are so decorated, and I love reading them. They're very inspiring."

Matthew's journey has

been long and challenging. Diagnosed with cancer in September 2024 after years of unexplained pain and treatments, he endured multiple surgeries, chemotherapy, and an emotional rollercoaster. "Chemo was the hardest journey of my life. It felt like forever. But these cards helped. They were encouraging. It made me feel like people got to know me through the process."

The project was initiated by Principal Kem Sc-

heidt, who has a personal connection to the cause after her own battle with colon cancer. "We wanted our Student Council's service project to be meaningful," said Principal Scheidt. "Rexanna's Foundation offered the perfect opportunity. It connects students with real people and real stories. It's not just about service, it's about empathy."

Dr. Lisa Spain, founder of Rexanna's Foundation, emphasized the long-last-

ing impact of projects like Rally Writers, which began in 2007 after the loss of her best friend to lung cancer. "It's not just about raising money," said Dr. Spain. "It's about raising spirits. Cancer is a long journey, and support shouldn't stop after the initial diagnosis. These cards show patients that they are not alone."

For Clark students, the lessons go far beyond writing. "It felt nice to make the cards," said Ezra. "We

were thinking about how Matthew would feel. I've learned that a little bit of kindness can go a long way."

Over 120 writers nationwide are paired with patients through the Rally Writers program to send weekly encouragement. Like so many others, Matthew's story reminds us all of the power of human connection and the simple act of showing you care.

## GCCISD Elementary Campuses Bring Career Exploration to Life with Careers on Wheels

Story by: Nancy Bonds, GCCISD Director of Communication

Bañuelos, Bowie, and Travis Elementary School students recently participated in Careers on Wheels, a dynamic program that directly brings career exploration to students through hands-on, real-world experiences. With vehicles, tools, music, and enthusiastic professionals on site, students had the opportunity to explore a wide variety of careers without leaving their campus.

At Bañuelos Elementary, students experienced an exciting mix of learning and fun as they rotated through interactive career stations featuring a wide range of community partners. With music and energy provided by 97.9 The Box, students were fully engaged while meeting professionals from the Baytown Police Department, U.S. Postal Service, Sam's Limousine, Frank's Collision Repair, Baytown Collision Center, COLT, the Harris County Public Library, and more. Even Buster the Bus made an appearance! From emergency services and public transportation to media and mechanical trades, students got a close-up look at how these professionals serve the community while having a blast along the way.

Bowie Elementary also brought career day to life with



Bañuelos Elementary students learn about careers with the Baytown Fire Department. (Photos by: Carrie Pryor-Newman)



Bowie Elementary students learn about careers with the Public Works Department from the City of Baytown. (Photos by: Carrie Pryor-Newman)



Travis Elementary 4th graders Caleb Wilson, Lathan Lackey, and Alan Watson learn about careers with the Police Department from Officer Vanessa Bocanegra. (Photos by: Carrie Pryor-Newman)

visits from Covestro Industrial Park Baytown, which showcased an impressive boom lift, and the City of Baytown and GCCISD Maintenance Department. Students explored vehicles and equipment used daily in essential city services and met real-life heroes like firefighters, EMTs, and even a few horses, all while learning how different careers help keep Baytown safe, clean, and connected.

Over at Travis Elementary, more than 25 different careers were represented, along with three Goose Creek CISD school buses and the district's beloved Buster the Bus. Students rotated through career stations featuring animal shelters, service pets, trades professionals, and city employees. With each stop, they

asked questions, explored tools of the trade, and discovered new possibilities for their future.

These impactful events were made possible thanks to the collaboration of campus school counselors and student success specialists, who played a vital role in planning, organizing, and coordinating with community partners to ensure a smooth and meaningful experience for every student.

Goose Creek CISD remains committed to fostering early college and career readiness. By connecting classroom learning to real-world experiences, Careers on Wheels empowers students to dream big, explore boldly, and begin building the foundation for their future.

## Carver Named Kids Teaching Kids 21-Day Snacking Challenge Participation Champion

Story by: Estefani Guzman, Goose Creek Memorial HS

In February, elementary students across Goose Creek CISD participated in the Kids Teaching Kids 21-Day Snacking Challenge. This program empowers students to drive change and learn together — all while enjoying a variety of nutritious snacks!

Global Business Academy interns from the Community Engagement Team developed and implemented a marketing campaign to promote the 21-Day Snacking Challenge. As part of the campaign, a competition was introduced, with the winner being named the Participation Champion.

At the recent conclusion of the challenge, Carver Elementary was awarded the Participation Champion Award for achieving the highest percentage of registered students who also



Pictured, from left, Estefani Guzman and Adyson Farve, Goose Creek Memorial High School Global Business Academy interns; Brittney Cuipepper, Goose Creek CISD Coordinator of Marketing; Angelica Pedroza, Carver Elementary Paraprofessional; Jayme Reiss and Tony St. Julian, Carver Elementary PE Coaches; Angie Garcia and Z'naï Horn, Goose Creek Memorial High School Global Business Academy interns; Amanda Kennington, Goose Creek CISD Healthy Community School Coordinator; and Dr. Anna Espinoza, Goose Creek CISD Director of Education Foundation and Partnerships.

met the 50% final assessment completion goal.

As campaign champions, Carver Elementary received a trophy to display with pride, PE equipment valued at \$450, and the title of 21-Day Snack-

ing Challenge Participation Champion to celebrate their success!

By championing health and wellness, Carver Elementary is helping to shape the next generation of Giants.

This award would not have been possible without the support of Kids Teaching Kids. Learn more about the program at [kids-teaching-kids.com](https://kids-teaching-kids.com)

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# Barbers Hill Press

## Dayton

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THURSDAY, MAY 1, 2025

MONT BELVIEU, TEXAS 77580

### ON THE HILL

#### Liberty County Commissioner David Whitmire Charged with Sexual Assault



David Whitmire, a 62-year-old Republican elected

A Liberty County grand jury indicted David Whitmire, a 62-year-old Republican elected to serve as Precinct 3 Commissioner, on Wednesday. The alleged crimes occurred in December 2024.

Liberty County Commissioner David Whitmire has been indicted on criminal charges of sexual assault, solicitation of prostitution and official oppression, according to court documents filed in the county northeast of Houston.

A Liberty County grand jury indicted Whitmire, on Wednesday. According to the Texas Penal Code, a person charged with official oppression is accused of using their position as a public servant to deny someone of their rights or subject them to mistreatment or sexual harassment.

Liberty County District Attorney Jennifer Bergman said in a statement to *Houston Media* that public officials must be held to a higher standard and that she would not participate in "any 'good old boy' system."

"As district attorney, I will not tolerate violent criminals or corrupt public officials," Bergman said. "I am committed to pursuing justice without fear or favor and I will use every tool at my disposal to hold individuals accountable, no matter their position. ... I refuse to stand by or be complicit in any 'good old boy' system, and by now, that should be clear."

Whitmire could not be reached for comment Friday.

A judge set Whitmire's bonds at a total of \$35,000 — \$20,000 for the sexual assault charge, \$10,000 for solicitation of prostitution and \$5,000 for official oppression.

Whitmire posted the bonds on Thursday, Liberty County Jail records show.

Sexual assault is a second-degree felony punishable by up to 20 years in prison and a maximum fine of \$10,000. Solicitation of prostitution is a state jail felony punishable by up to two years in prison and a maximum fine of \$10,000. Official oppression is a class A misdemeanor.

--Houston Public Media

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www.BHDPRESS.com

## Goose Creek CISD Celebrates New Professional Development Building and Community Center

Story by: Nancy Bonds, GCCISD Director of Communications

Goose Creek Consolidated Independent School District (GCCISD) proudly hosted a ribbon cutting ceremony on April 15, 2025, to celebrate the grand opening of its new Professional Development Building and Community Event Center. The event marked a significant milestone in the district's continued investment in educational excellence and community engagement.

Superintendent Dr. Randal O'Brien opened the evening by highlighting the building's dual purpose as both a center for professional growth and a public space for community connection.

"This center will host professional development sessions that empower our educators with the tools they need to continue delivering exceptional education," said Dr. O'Brien. "But this center is especially unique because it's also open to the public—a hub of possibility and progress."

The ceremony featured remarks from GCCISD



Community and district leaders gather to mark the next step toward opening GCCISD's newest learning space. (Photo by: Carrie Pryor-Newman)

School Board President Mrs. Helen Berrott-Tims, who thanked the community for supporting the 2019 bond that made the project possible.

"This facility represents our commitment to lifelong learning and excellence in education," said Berrott-Tims. "It's a space that reflects the professionalism and passion of our educators."

Special recognition was given to district leaders, city

officials, the Citizens Bond Oversight Committee, planning and construction teams, and educational partners who played key roles in the project's success.

Leslie Garcia, Coordinator of Professional Learning & Special Projects, will serve as the building's administrator and spoke to the center's future impact.

"We're excited to welcome everyone back to our open house on August 26, 2025," Garcia announced.

"This space will support the growth of our giants, celebrate our successes, and strengthen our community partnerships."

Natalie Edwards, Director of Nutrition Services, also introduced the building's new catering kitchen, which served a tasting menu for guests during the celebration.

The event concluded with a ceremonial ribbon cutting and an invitation for guests to tour the state-of-the-art

facility. Representatives from PBK Architects and the district's facilities team were on hand to answer questions and showcase the space's flexible, collaborative design.

This new facility is a testament to GCCISD's vision for innovative education, community involvement, and a future shaped by opportunity and shared commitment.

## GCM's National Honor Society Hosts Easter Egg Hunt for Victoria Walker Elementary Students



from left, Adalynn Powers and Riley Bloom, GCM National Honor Society Member.

Goose Creek Memorial High School's National Honor Society (NHS) brought smiles and springtime fun to students at Victoria Walker Elementary by hosting a colorful Easter egg hunt on campus, complete with a surprise



Pictured, from left, Tenley Faulkenberry, Soniah Bryant, Pat the Patriot (Kayden Johnson), Melanie Duran, and Aubrianna Chavis.

visit from Pat the Patriot, the GCM mascot.

High school NHS members spent the day engaging with elementary students, hiding eggs,

guiding the hunts, and helping little ones fill their buckets with candy-filled surprises. Pat the Patriot added to the excitement by donning



Pictured, from left, Aleiza Palomares, Owen Jacobs, Ty'lyah Lewis, and Kinsley Williams.

festive bunny ears and posing for photos, making the day even more memorable.

The event was filled with laughter, sunshine,

and a sense of unity between campuses, a perfect celebration of spring and service.

Photos by: Carrie Pryor-Newman

## Joe Matthews Park Now Open

MONT BELVIEU - One of Mont Belvieu's oldest parks is now officially Mont Belvieu's newest park! In March, Mont Belvieu celebrated the ribbon cutting and grand reopening of Joe Matthews Park. With a fresh new look—including a playground, basketball courts, butterfly garden, kayak launch, and more—it's the perfect spot to enjoy the natural beauty our city has to offer.

#### Location

Behind Fisher's Landing/Old River Country subdivisions at 4133-4203 Oak Ridge Dr. Mont Belvieu, TX 77523

#### Features

Joe Matthews Park now features a kayak launch that creates the



New All-Inclusive Playground for Children

City's first "blue trail" with the water tying into the Old River community and out to Lost Lake. The park also includes a new playground that is inclusive for all children, a butterfly gar-

den, new walking trails as well as revamped basketball courts. The park is geared toward getting residents back out into nature and is full of interpretive signage!



★ OPINION PAGE ★

**OPINION**

By State Senator  
Carol Alvarado



### Texas Democrats oppose Voucher Bill SB2

AUSTIN, TX – The Texas Senate Democratic Caucus released the following statement on the final passage of Senate Bill 2:

The Texas Senate Democratic Caucus stands united in strong opposition to Senate Bill 2, a deeply flawed voucher scheme that diverts billions of taxpayer dollars from Texas public schools and channels them into private hands—with no guarantee of better outcomes, no public accountability and no protections for the children who need the most support. These funds are coupons for wealthy families already sending their children to private schools while doing virtually nothing for the vast majority of Texas students.

With a \$24 billion budget surplus, Texas has a historic opportunity to put our children first by making the bold, long-overdue investments our public schools desperately need. Instead of seizing this moment to improve education for the 5.5 million students who rely on our neighborhood schools, however, some state leaders are prioritizing a costly voucher program that serves the few at the expense of the many.

When this bill was first considered in the Texas Senate and subsequently in the Texas House, Democrats offered numerous amendments to protect students with disabilities, uphold anti-discrimination standards for participating private schools, ensure fiscal accountability and basic transparency, prevent program cost overruns and limit eligibility to families who truly need assistance. These amendments were rejected summarily along partisan lines.

If this program truly were designed to support students with disabilities or those at risk, it would require participating private schools to meet the same standards as public schools and prohibit them from cherry-picking which students to accept. Instead, it opens the door to discrimination while using public funds to bolster private profits.

In rural Texas, where private schools are few and far between, vouchers offer no real options—only funding cuts to local schools that often are the heart of their communities and among their largest employers.

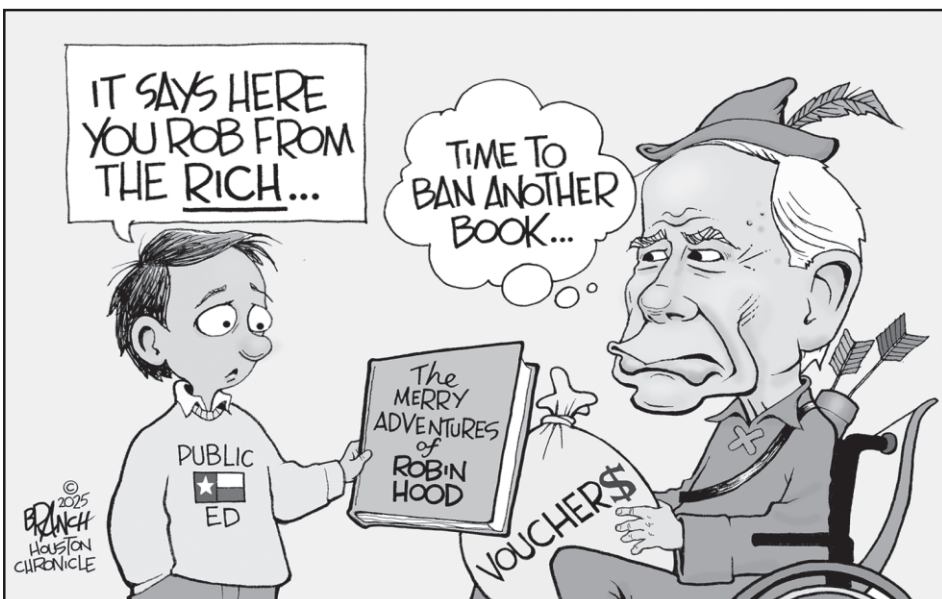
Furthermore, S.B. 2 makes future investments in public education—like reducing class sizes, raising teacher pay and improving student outcomes—far less feasible. School districts will continue to face difficult choices: cut essential programs, fire educators or burden homeowners with even higher property taxes. Essentially, S.B. 2 creates a two-tiered system in which public schools are left to do more with less while private entities profit from taxpayer money without public responsibility.

Finally, other states' voucher programs provide cautionary tales. Costs skyrocket, fraud occurs and public education is slashed, inevitably leading to higher taxes. Notably, none of these programs has been shown to improve student outcomes. Vouchers are bankrupting Arizona, and conservative voters in Nebraska recently repealed vouchers.

Let's be clear: S.B. 2 is not about "school choice." It's about public subsidization of private schools' choice. It is a step backward for Texas, jeopardizing the very system that supports the overwhelming majority of our children and abandoning our constitutional responsibility to provide every child with a quality public education.

Senate Democrats remain steadfast in our fight for fully funded public schools, support and respect for educators and a future in which every child has a fair opportunity to succeed.

**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 Passes School Voucherbill

The Texas House on Thursday passed Gov. Greg Abbott's school voucher bill after a years-long campaign by the governor and his allies, the Austin American-Statesman reported. Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick, who presides over the Senate, announced Friday he recommended that chamber accept the House version, which prioritizes children with special education needs for vouchers. The Senate version, which is less restrictive, passed in early February. In addition to passing the voucher legislation, the House passed a \$7.7 billion school finance package, which will increase the base-level funding per student by almost \$400 — to \$6,555 — and pays for teacher raises and increases in special education funding. The Senate's version is considerably different, so the two school finance bills will have to be reconciled.

#### HOUSE CUTS LOTTERY COMMISSION BUDGET TO ZERO

The budget for the Texas Lottery Commission was reduced to zero in the 2026-2027 budget passed by the House, the Statesman reported. The commission has been under fire for not aggressively curtailing third-party "courier companies" that broker ticket sales for players online. In one instance, a single player bought enough tickets to guarantee a winning ticket for a \$95 million jackpot, according to the Houston Chronicle. The Senate has already passed a bill outlawing courier companies. It is uncertain whether the Senate will go along with the House measure to end all lottery commission funding. The lottery brings about \$2 billion a year to the state.

#### SENATE BILL WOULD BAN FLUORIDE IN WATER SYSTEMS

A bill filed by state Sen. Bob Hall, R-Edgewood, would ban adding fluoride to public drinking water, a cause being championed



by U.S. Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. The Dallas Morning News reported that Hall talked about the potential side effects of consuming an "excessive amount" of fluoride. Health officials assert fluoride has protected against tooth decay and resulted in fewer cavities over the decades it has been added to public water systems. Hall's bill would ban adding "any form of fluoride to any public water supply for the purpose of fluoridation, regardless of the intended concentration." Kennedy has said he plans to ask the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to stop recommending fluoridation of public water systems. Texas Agriculture Commissioner Sid Miller has also called for a ban on water fluoridation. In Texas, nearly three-fourths of the state's population drinks water with fluoride in it, according to the Texas Department of State Health Services.

#### HOUSE AGREES TO GIVE PAXTON BACK PAY

Largely along party lines, the House agreed to urge budget writers to give Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton nearly \$64,000 in back pay to cover the period when he was suspended while impeached. The Chronicle reported the measure passed by a margin of 88-56. Paxton was impeached by the House in 2023, but the Senate acquitted him. He went without pay for about three months. "If we be-

lieve that not only politicians but regular citizens are entitled to the presumption of innocence, we should truly believe that he should have been entitled to his salary during the course of this suspension," said state Rep. Mitch Little, R-Lewisville, the bill's sponsor. "Now that he's been acquitted, if you broke it, you bought it." The House and Senate versions of the budget still have to be reconciled.

#### MIDDLETON JUMPS INTO TEXAS AG'S RACE

Republican state Sen. Mayes Middleton, R-Galveston, has jumped into the race to replace Paxton, who is pursuing a primary challenge to U.S. Sen. John Cornyn. The Chronicle reported that Middleton will self-fund his campaign with \$10 million. "I am running for Texas Attorney General to continue the fight for our shared conservative values that keep the Texas Miracle alive," Middleton said in a statement. "As Attorney General, I will join President Trump in his efforts to return America and Texas to common sense and to fight to secure the border, ensure law and order, and be tough on crime." Middleton was elected to the Senate in 2021 after previously serving in the House. Former U.S. Attorney John Bash declared earlier he also was seeking the position.

#### NATE PAUL FINED \$1 MILLION, CONFINED TO HOME

Real estate developer Nate Paul was fined \$1 million and sentenced to four months of home confinement after pleading guilty to making false financial statements, The News reported. Paul's ties to Paxton in part led to the impeachment charges against the attorney general. The attorney general was accused in a whistleblower suit of using the agency to interfere in Paul's civil and criminal disputes. While he will not face any prison time, Paul will be a convicted felon. "That may not mean anything to some people — after all, we have a president who's a convicted felon at the moment," said Senior U.S. District Judge David Ezra, an appointee of former President Ronald Reagan. "But I'm sure it's important to Mr. Paul."

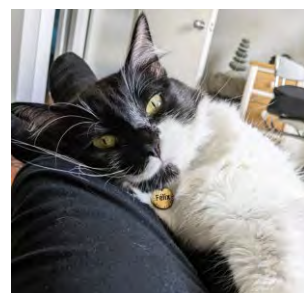
#### IT'S LOOKING LIKE A WARM SPRING

The departure of the La Niña climate pattern makes it likely much of the state is in for a warm, dry spring, the Statesman reported. As of mid-April, more than 80% of Texas was already abnormally dry or in drought, with little relief in sight. Drought conditions are especially severe in Far West Texas into the Big Bend area and throughout Central Texas. The eastern part of the state is the only region not facing drought conditions as of yet.

### THE POSTSCRIPT

By  
Carrie Classon

### A Day like Yesterday



Only after you've had a day like yesterday do you really know you married the right person.

The day started out fine. We were flying back from Mexico to the U.S. My husband, Peter, books all our flights, and he had arranged it so we did not have to get up at "the crack of stupid," as he would say. Instead, the cab arrived in the late morning, so I had time for a last walk around the city before we said goodbye to the wonderful staff at the apartment hotel where we stay every year.

It was only as we were getting off the first plane in the U.S., headed toward our connecting flight, that I suspected something might be wrong. "Felix smells!" I told Peter.

Felix is our cat. He had made a small noise a few minutes before landing, but I had thought nothing of it. Now it smelled as if something was badly amiss. I know you might be having your breakfast as you read this, so suffice to say, of the three types of potential messes an animal could make in a small container, this was the worst of the options.

"What do we do?" Peter asked. Peter had never had a cat before Felix, and so he considers me the resident cat expert, but my previous cat ownership was of no use in this situation.

"Maybe we can hit a bathroom before the next flight." Unfortunately, the security line was very long, and as I slowly wound through the line, I was anticipating having to take this cat out of the carrier and walk through the screening. The mess was even worse than I feared.

"How long do we have?" I asked Peter when we finally got through security with our very smelly cat.

"Not long!" "Do you think we can find a family bathroom?"

We did. I will spare you the details—but bathing a cat on a tight schedule is not something I would recommend if you have any choice in the matter. We exited the bathroom with only minutes to spare.

"Look innocent!" Peter said as we walked out. He started to laugh as we raced through the terminal. "If I ever had to dispose of a body, you're the person I'd want to do it with," he told me.

It was very late when we got home, and I knew the first thing I had to do was shampoo a cat. Felix wasn't any happier about the situation than I was, but I think he knew we were on the same team.

And then, when you think it can't get any worse, it does.

"Why is the carpet wet?" Peter yelled from the bedroom. I was in no position to investigate. I was shampooing a cat.

"Oh, no," I heard. And then, "Oh, NO!"

A sprinkler pipe had broken in the bedroom wall. The floor flooded with water. The walls were soaked. The carpeting was ruined. There was nothing to do but get to bed with our still-damp cat who now smelled of baby shampoo.

"Should we put on life preservers?" I asked Peter.

It was now nearly morning. But before I fell asleep, what I remembered about this day was how much I had laughed.


I had laughed because, as bad as it had been, nothing that had happened was truly terrible. I had laughed because I knew we would make it through. And I had laughed because I had a partner who could—and would—always laugh with me in the worst of times.

Till next time,  
Carrie

**Americanisms**  
  
"You know, doing what is right is easy. The problem is knowing what is right."  
— Lyndon B. Johnson  
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## TripsWithPets.com offers new Travel Assistant Service

**Stress-Free Moves with Pets:**

**TripsWithPets Launches New Travel Assistant Service**

Youngsville, NC — Moving is one of life's most stressful events — and adding pets into the mix only increases the challenge. TripsWithPets.com is easing the burden with its new (and free) Travel Assistant service, helping pet parents find pet-friendly hotels along their moving route and final destination.

The service is designed for those traveling with big dogs, multiple pets, or cats — groups often restricted by traditional hotel pet policies. TripsWithPets does the legwork by providing lodging options that welcome ALL pets, so families can focus on their move instead of worrying about accommodations.

“We understand how overwhelming moving can be — especially when you're trying to find places that will welcome all your pets,” said Kim Salerno, CEO and Founder of TripsWithPets. “Our goal is to take that weight off your shoulders and make the journey smoother for you and your furry family.”

**Pet Parent Pain Points:**

- 82% of families moving with pets experience increased stress
- 65% dread finding pet-friendly accommodations
- 67% regret trying to book hotels “on the fly”
- 88% prioritize their pets' comfort when planning a move

In addition to the free Travel Assistant service, pet parents can

also search and book pet-friendly accommodations directly at TripsWithPets.com.

**About TripsWithPets:**

TripsWithPets.com is the trusted source for booking pet-friendly accommodations across the U.S. and Canada. For over 15 years, the platform has provided resources, travel tips, and personal assistance to help pet parents plan trips with ease.

Through its PAWS (Partners for Animal Welfare Series) initiative, a portion of every booking supports 501(c)(3) animal welfare organizations.

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## Crosby ISD approves new 6th grade center to address middle school overcrowding,

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

for the additional student growth we've seen at that particular campus. Overcrowding at the middle school is something we believe a 6th grade center can relieve within two years.”

Crosby ISD Board of Trustees President Kea Lynn Lewis said, “The Board is thrilled to approve a new campus that will improve instructional opportunities in our school district. The Crosby High School expansion was the first new school construction project in eight years in Crosby ISD. The 6th grade center will be next. This project is so appealing, because we already own the land and can fast-track the construction process. Not having to

purchase land means no taxpayer dollars will be needed to find and purchase real estate right now. The Board believes this is the fiscally conservative choice.

Superintendent Dr. Patterson and her team are ready to get started.”

A land survey is now being done to examine the acreage that will be the future site of the 6th grade center. At the April 21 meeting, the Board of Trustees also hired architecture firm, Stantec, to begin designing blueprints of the future campus. The additional campus between Crosby Middle School and Crosby High School will not add to existing traffic, since Crosby Middle School currently

houses all three grade levels now.

Crosby ISD is home to more than 7,000 students, with more than 1500 students currently enrolled at the middle school. More growth is expected in the 2025-26 School Year. The 6th grade center will be built with funds that were approved by voters in the 2017 Bond.

**Crosby ISD**

Crosby ISD serves the needs of more than 7,000 children in the communities of Crosby and Barrett Station in East Harris County, Texas. Our mission is to produce literate, responsible citizens capable of learning and applying academic and social skills successfully in any life setting. For more information, visit [crosbyisd.org](https://crosbyisd.org)

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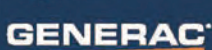


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### Highlands Chamber holds multiple Ribbon Cuttings



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# Mother, Infant Die After Car Plunges Into Water in Channelview; 2 Survive

By Michael Horton  
Published Sun Apr 27,  
2025 9:36 PM CDT

Officials have released the identities of the two victims in a fatal car accident in Channelview.

The two victims were identified as Crystal Njepu, the 39-year-old driver, and Anna Njepu, Crystal's infant daughter.

## OUR FIRST REPORT: Woman and infant dead, 2 children hospitalized after vehicle plunges into water in Channelview

The accident happened late in the afternoon on Friday, April 25. Crystal was driving near the 17300 block of Market Street.

Crystal reportedly suffered a possible medical emergency, causing her to leave the roadway and veer onto a gravel path on the south side.

The vehicle came to an abrupt stop for about one minute. Moments later, it accelerated forward into a



grassy area and subsequently into the water. The car began to sink rapidly and was carried by the current under a nearby bridge.

A witness who stopped to help entered the water and managed to break the back window of the vehicle. This courageous act allowed the witness to rescue

the front passenger and the back left passenger from the vehicle, who were children between the ages of five and seven.

Unfortunately, the driver was found unresponsive and showed no signs of life when emergency medical services arrived on the scene.

During the extraction of

the vehicle from the water, Anna was discovered in the back right passenger seat, also with no apparent signs of life.

The case remains active and is under investigation by the Harris County Sheriff's Office's Vehicular Crimes Division.

--KPRC

## Details of the SB2 Voucher Bill:

Senate Bill 2 (SB2), a Texas legislative proposal, establishes an Education Savings Account (ESA) program, allowing families to use public funds to cover approved educational expenses. SB2 initially allocated \$1 billion over two years for ESAs, with individual accounts potentially reaching \$10,892 per student. The program prioritizes students with disabilities and those from low-income families, with up to 80% of funding going to these groups.

### Key Features of SB2:

**Education Savings Accounts:**SB2 creates ESAs where families can deposit public funds to cover approved educational expenses.

**Eligibility:**Almost any school-age child eligible to attend a public school could participate. The bill defines "low income" as an annual income at or below 500% of the federal poverty guidelines.

**Prioritization:**80% of funding is prioritized for students with disabilities and families with incomes at or below 500% of the federal poverty line.

**Voucher Amount:**The Senate version initially set aside \$10,000 for each eligible student and \$11,500 for students with disabilities.

**Approved Expenses:**Families can use ESA funds for private school tuition, textbooks, transportation, therapy, and other related expenses.

**Accountability:**SB2 mandates strict oversight by the Texas Comptroller, including pre-approval of educational providers and vendors, routine audits, and the ability to suspend or close accounts for misuse.

**Accountability:**Students participating in the program are required to take either the state-required assessment or a nationally norm-referenced exam.

**Special Education Accommodations:**Private schools that accept ESA funds are required to post a notice stating they are not required to comply with federal special education laws.

**Universal Eligibility:**SB2 initially included universal eligibility for all school-aged children, with priority given to students with disabilities or those from low-income families.

**Funding:**SB2 initially included \$1 billion over two years to fund the ESA program.

## Voucher Bill Passes,

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

than a decade, and it is a great day for Texas students and parents," Patrick said after the Senate passed the bill in a 19-12 vote.

The education savings account, or ESA, program will allow enrolled parents to receive around \$10,000

— or 85% of the statewide average amount of funding per student annually — to put toward private school tuition and other approved educational expenses, like pre-K, books and tutoring. Families who enroll a student with special needs into the program will be

able to use up to \$30,000 in state funds. Families who choose to homeschool will receive \$2,000 to be used on approved expenses.

The program will be monitored and audited by the Texas Comptroller.

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Jacob Elordi stars in "The Narrow Road to the Deep North."

"The Narrow Road to the Deep North"

"The Narrow Road to the Deep North" (TV-MA) — Based on the novel of the same name by Richard Flanagan, this Australian war-drama miniseries is led by the talented Jacob Elordi ("Saltburn"). Starring as the young version of Dor-rigo Evans, an Australian doctor and prisoner of war, Elordi lost all the weight that made him into a convincing high school football player in "Euphoria" to become a bone-thin soldier who gets captured in the Pacific during World War II. Ciaran Hinds ("Game of Thrones") plays the older version of Dor-rigo, and Hinds' scenes recount his war experiences while Elordi acts them out for us. All five episodes are out now! (Amazon Prime Video)

In Case You Missed It "Stanley Tucci: Searching for Italy" (TV-PG) — Italian-Amer-

ican actor Stanley Tucci ("Conclave," "The Devil Wears Prada," "Spotlight") wanted to go back to his roots for his travel and food show, and this included heading overseas to Italy to explore each region that the beautiful country has to offer. Beginning in Naples and the Amalfi Coast, the first season highlighted some of the food and culture we've come to love from popular cities like Rome, Milan and Tuscany. But as the second season takes off, less-popular regions like Puglia, Liguria and Umbria take the stage, and the culture that gets discovered there might delightfully surprise you. While this lifestyle show only lasted for two seasons, both of which are available to watch now, Tucci filmed more episodes of a similar show that will eventually come out, called "Tucci: The Heart of Italy." (Netflix)

"The Florida Project"

(R) — Before Sean Baker scored big at this year's Academy Awards with "Anora," he wrote and directed this tragic coming-of-age drama taking place in a budget motel in Kissimmee, Florida, near Disney World. The film logs the treks of a 6-year-old girl named Moonee, who spends most of her days getting into shenanigans with her fellow kids who live in the motel. While her young and lost mother, Halley (Bria Vinaite), grasps at straws to find any way of income after losing her job as a stripper, Moonee is left unsupervised around the motel, causing its manager Bobby (Willem Dafoe) to step in and save them from disaster. This one's not an easy watch but has an exhilarating ending that will stay with you well after the credits roll. Out now. (Max)

"The Worst Person in the World"

(R) — This Norwegian romantic-drama film led by Renate Reinsve ("A Different Man") landed her an award for Best Actress at the Cannes Film Festival in 2021 — an amazing feat for what would be considered her breakout role. The film follows Julie (Reinsve), a young woman in her late 20s as she tries to find her footing in the world. At a loss for what to do in her professional life, Julie bounces from medicine to psychology to photography, never landing on one for good. This is a theme that is mirrored in her romantic life as well; Julie jumps from relationship to relationship, hoping to find the one man who doesn't make her feel uncertain. But only through more experience and more time in life will Julie truly find the answers that she's looking for. Out now. (Hulu)

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Elizabeth Hurley "Runaways"

Q: Is it true that Billy Ray Cyrus is dating Elizabeth Hurley? I thought he was married. — K.S.

A: The "Achy Breaky Heart" singer and father of Miley Cyrus recently went public with his new romance with actress Elizabeth Hurley ("Runaways"). Billy Ray Cyrus was married to Tish Cyrus for 29 years before they split. He then wed a singer named Firerose who was 29 years his junior, but they divorced less than a year later.

His relationship with Firerose seemed to cause a rift between him and his children. Perhaps Hurley can be the bridge that brings them back together. Her 23-year-old son, Damian, publicly gave his approval of their relationship with a heart emoji after the couple went Instagram official. \*\*\*

Q: Whatever happened to Marvel's "Blade" series? Did it just get delayed, or has it been scrapped altogether? — D.D.

A: The 1998 film "Blade," which was originally a Marvel comic, starred Wesley Snipes as a half-vampire/half-mortal. It inspired two more sequels, and Snipes also made a cameo as Blade in "Deadpool & Wolverine" last year. Since 2019, there's been plans for a "Blade" reboot film (not a series, at least not yet) starring Oscar-winning actor Mahershala Ali.

Actor Delroy Lindo, who currently appears in another vampire flick "Sinners," was among the cast for the new "Blade" and spoke to Entertainment Weekly about the delayed project. He eventually left the film during its development process after it "went off the rails."

He stated that Marvel "seemed to be really interested in my input" and that conversations with the producers, writer and director at the time was "all leading into it being very inclusive." But creative differences prevailed, and Lindo moved on to other projects like "Sinners."

Marvel pulled "Blade" from its 2025 release calendar after production got pushed back by the pandemic and the Hollywood industry strikes. Meanwhile, Kevin Feige, president of Marvel Studios, says that he remains committed to Ali's take on the character and that the character "will be

coming to the MCU."

Ali, who won respective Oscars in 2017 and 2019 for "Moonlight" and "Green Book," can be seen in the upcoming "Jurassic World: Rebirth" and has several other projects lined up. \*\*\*

Q: Did the actor who played the judge on "Elsbeth" once appear on "Lost"? I had never seen him before this show, but it's got to be him. — S.E.

A: Yes, Michael Emerson joined the hit mystery-drama series "Lost" in 2006, in what was initially a short-term role. However, he became a full-time cast member beginning in season three. He then starred in another hit series "Person of Interest" on CBS with Jim Caviezel, which lasted five seasons. Then he landed another hit — "Evil" on Paramount+.

I'm willing to bet that his favorite acting gig so far has been playing a villain opposite his real-life wife of 26 years, Carrie Preston, on "Elsbeth." About filming their final scene together, he told TV Insider, "We were ready for writing this strong, and when we got it, we could play it."

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

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ENTERTAINMENT

Amber Waves

Comic strip by Dave T. Phipps featuring a bear and a pig. Panels include: "DAVIS, DEAR, WHERE ARE YOU, SON? IT'S TIME FOR YOUR MONTHLY BATH!", "COME OUT, COME OUT WHEREVER YOU ARE...", "YOU CAN'T HIDE FOREVER. YOU KNOW I'LL FIND YOU SOONER OR LATER.", "SHE'LL NEVER THINK TO LOOK IN HERE."

Comic strip by Bud Blake featuring a baseball game. Panels include: "READY? FIRST GAME OF THE SEASON!", "HERE'S THE FIRST PITCH OF THE SEASON!", "FIRST HIT OF THE SEASON!", "FOUL! FIRST HOMER OF THE SEASON!", "FOUL TIGER", "FAIR", "THAT WAS FOUL!", "IT WAS FAIR!", "FIRST ARGUMENT OF THE SEASON"

Comic strip by Jeff Pickering featuring a man and a woman. Panels include: "DO YOU KNOW ANY GOOD 'TREE' FUNS?", "NO... I'M 'STUMPED.'"

Comic strip by Henry Boltinoff featuring a man and a woman. Panels include: "NO... I'M 'STUMPED.'"

Weekly SUDOKU puzzle grid and instructions. Includes difficulty level: Moderate, Challenging, HOO BOY!

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

April 28, 2025 Posting Date King Crossword

King Crossword puzzle grid with ACROSS and DOWN clues. Includes clues like: "German sausage", "Hoop's great Curry", "More minuscule", "Succeed", "Ridiculous", "Eventually", "Bygone bird", "Valleys", "Pensioned (Abbr.)", "Taking action", "Label", "Corrida bull", "Tennis star Rafael", "Dessert that jiggles", "Violin tuner", "Novelist Deighton", "The Peasant Dance" painter, "Everglades wader", "Give temporarily", "Lumber unit", "Wrestling style", "Nasty!", "Thread holder", "Damage", "South Carolina river", "La Brea attraction", "Oral", "Moving vehicles?", "Ceases", "Garlic crusher", "Catches some rays", "Tolkien creature", "Christie sleuth", "Arm bones", "Shakespeare's '— of Athens'", "Rockies range", "Trail the pack", "Recorded", "Zesty flavors", "Pants part", "Pick up the tab", "Classic catalog giant", "Ecstasy", "Summaries", "Detangle", "Brit's restroom", "Inbox fillers", "Civil wrongs", "Arose", "Ooze", "Cowardly Lion", "Ring decision", "Arctic explorer John".

Trivia test by Fifi Rodriguez. Includes 10 questions: 1. TELEVISION: Which actor was nominated for an Emmy for the same character on three different sitcoms? 2. MOVIES: Who was the first actor to refuse an Oscar award for Best Actor? 3. GEOGRAPHY: Which modern city is in the shadow of the active volcano Mount Vesuvius? 4. FOOD & DRINK: What gas is used to create seltzer water? 5. SCIENCE: What is the center of an atom called? 6. GENERAL KNOWLEDGE: Who are the six men who have made a career Grand Slam in pro golf? 7. ANATOMY: What is the largest artery in the body? 8. LITERATURE: For which category is the O. Henry Award given? 9. ASTRONOMY: Which star system is nearest to our solar system? 10. U.S. PRESIDENTS: How many presidents have died in office?



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