

Art By Mei

This Artwork is on Display at the Silos Studio of Mei Hoffman, 1502 Sawyer Street. 713-906-4585

HIGHLANDS

CROSBY

# Star Courier

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THURSDAY, AUGUST 21, 2025

HIGHLANDS, TEXAS 77562

## IN THE STARS

### Chamber Luncheon Aug. 21 with Comm. Tom Ramsey

Crosby-Huffman monthly Luncheon and Networking. Thursday, August 21 from 11:30am to 1:00pm at Crosby Community Center, 409 Hare Road, Crosby.

### Grand Opening Pregnancy Resource Center Aug. 22

Four days of Opening events at the Pregnancy Resource Center East, 610 S. Main Street, Highlands 77562.

### Prayer Breakfast Thursday Aug. 21 8:30a to 11am. Ribbon Cutting Friday, Aug. 22 11am to 1pm.

Ride for Life. Saturday Aug. 23. Open House Monday Aug. 25, 4pm to 7pm. All are welcome.

# Democrats set to return to House; Abbott calls Special Session #2

AUSTIN – The Democrat members of the Texas House of Representatives who left the state to block a vote on Governor Abbott's desire to redistrict and gain Republican seats in Congress, have now indicated that they will return for the Special Session #2 that Abbott has called, starting Friday August 15. Democratic spokesperson Gene Wu has indicated that if they lose the vote on redistricting, the battle will move to the courts for resolution.

About 50 House Democrats left the state, and stayed in cities such as Boston and Chicago, so that Abbott could not have them arrested and returned to Texas. If successful, the House would have had a quorum and a vote on redistricting.

House Democrats are seeking a vote on other issues, such as flood relief for the Hill country victims. State Representative Armando Walle issued the following statement:

"Here are the facts: after the tragic July 4th floods, Gov. Abbott could have immediately made millions of dollars in flood relief available to our suffering Texas communities. Gov. Abbott can only make these emergency transfers when the #txlege is not in Session. By calling a special session on July 21st, he both wasted over two weeks when he could have made a transfer, and put himself on the sidelines when Texans needed him in the game."

AUSTIN — Governor Greg Abbott has issued a proclamation identifying



President Trump has asked Governor Abbott to Redistrict in Texas, to achieve a net gain for Republicans of 5 seats in the U.S. House of Representatives.

19 agenda items for Special Session #2 that begins at 12:00 PM today, Friday, August 15.

"Delinquent House Democrats ran away from their responsibility to pass crucial legislation to benefit the lives of Texans," said Governor Abbott. "Because of their dereliction of

sense THC regulations, and many others have all been brought to a halt because Democrats refuse to show up for work. We will not back down from this fight. That's why I am calling them back today to finish the job. I will continue to use all necessary tools to ensure Texas delivers results for Texans."

The Special Session agenda items include:

**CAMP SAFETY:** Legislation to ensure and enhance youth camp safety.

**FLOOD WARNING SYSTEMS:** Legislation to improve early warning systems and other prepared

Continued. See DEMOCRATS RETURN TO HOUSE, Page 2

## CROSBY SUPERINTENDENT'S MESSAGE

# "The Story of a District on The Rise" by Dr. Paula Patterson

By Dr. Paula Patterson

On Monday, August 4th, I had the awesome privilege of speaking to our 800+ employees before we opened our doors to students for the new school year. Holding a scrapbook from years past, and while sitting in a district rocking chair with former Crosby Superintendent Dr. Don

Hendrix's name etched at the top, I told the real life story of Crosby ISD. It is my honor to share that story with you.

"Let me tell you a story. Not a fairy tale or a fable—this is a real story. One rooted in courage, commitment, and community. It's the story of Crosby ISD, and it begins not just in a classroom or a



Dr. Patterson reads her "Story of a District on the Rise" to a room of over 800 Crosby ISD Employees. Photo by Katrina White.

boardroom, but in the hearts of those who believe that every child deserves the chance to rise.

"The 2024-2025 school year opened with a promise—a promise to do more

than educate. A promise to inspire. To lead. To restore faith in what public education can be.

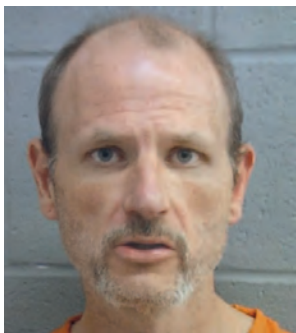
"And so, we went to work.

"We watched our band march all the way to state—4th place in the entire UIL Military Marching Band Championships.

Continued. See THE STORY OF A DISTRICT ON THE RISE, Page 6

## Crosby Man Charged with Killing Parents is Arrested

HOUSTON - Christopher Leonidas Leman Jr., age 47, has been arrested in connection with the July 11 deaths of his parents—75-year-old Christopher Leman Sr. and 73-year-old Mary Leman—at their home near Crosby in eastern Harris County. He is facing charges of capital murder and harassment, and is currently held in the Harris County Jail.



Christopher Leonidas Leman Jr. age 47

Leman Jr. is being held on a \$4 million bail for the capital murder charge, with an additional \$4,000 bail for the harassment charge.

Deputies initiated a welfare check on July 11 after a suspect's brother called deputies saying that he couldn't reach the cou-

Continued. See MAN ARRESTED AFTER, Page 6

## FOOTBALL SEASON PREVIEW:

### Will Arch Manning lead Texas to the promised land? Can Stroud get Texans to the AFC Championship game?

The 2025 college and NFL seasons are right around the corner and both upcoming campaigns are chocked full of questions.

Namely, will the University of Texas win its first national championship in 20 years? Will the SEC send five teams to the College Football Championships (CFP)? Will the Texas Aggies win their first SEC title and earn a spot in the CFP playoffs?

In the NFL, will the Houston Texans finally reach the AFC championship game in their 23rd year of existence? Will the Philadelphia Eagles repeat as Super Bowl champs? Will the Buffalo Bills end decades of frustration and finally bring the Lombardi Trophy to Western New York? Will the Dallas Cowboys bounce back from a 7-10 season and return to the playoffs?

Those questions and many others will be answered in the next six months as another football season gets ready to kickoff in the next few weeks.

Before we take a look at what one person thinks will shake out in the NCAA and NFL this year, let's review a number of offseason moves in both the college game and the NFL.

The NFL will kick off its 106th season on Thursday, Sept. 4 when the defending SB champion Philadelphia Eagles will host NFC East rival Dallas on NBC. The next night, the Kansas City Chiefs will take on AFC West rival Los Angeles Chargers in Brazil. That game



will mark the second straight year the NFL has played a game in South America.

The 2025 season will feature seven new head coaches. Former Detroit offensive coordinator is the new head coach of the Chicago Bears, while Jacksonville hired Tampa Bay OC Liam Coen as its new head coach. Pete Carroll came out of retirement to take over the Las Vegas Raiders, while former Patriot linebacker Mike Vrabel was hired to turn around New England's fortunes. The New Orleans Saints plucked Philly OC Kellen Moore away to inject some life in a listless franchise, while former Nimitz High School and Texas A&M star Aaron Glenn returns to the Jets as their head coach. Glenn was the Jets No. 1 draft choice back in 1994. And Jerry Jones tabbed Brian Schottenheimer, son of longtime NFL head coach Marty Schottenheimer, to turn things around in Dallas. Good luck, Brian, because you'll need it working for Jerry.

The 2025 season will conclude with SB LX on Feb. 8 at Levi's Stadium (home to the 49ers) in Santa Clara, CA. The game will be broadcast on NBC.

There will be six international games this season, Sept. 28 in Dublin, Ireland (Minnesota vs. Pittsburgh); Oct. 5 in London (Minnesota vs. Cleveland); Oct. 12 in London (Denver vs. New York Jets); Oct. 19, in London (LA Rams vs. Jacksonville); Nov. 9, Berlin (Atlanta vs. Indianapolis) and Nov. 16, Madrid, Spain (Washington vs. Miami).

There will be the annual Thanksgiving Day triple header and a Christmas Day tripleheader. Things kickoff in Detroit with the Lions hosting the Packers in a key NFC North contest on FOX, followed by the Cowboys hosting the Chiefs at 3:30 on CBS and the nightcap will be an important one in the AFC North as Cincinnati visits Baltimore on NBC.

On Christmas Day, things begin with an NFC East battle as Dallas visits Washington, followed by Detroit at Minnesota and Christmas night concludes with Denver visiting Kansas City.

The 2025 season will see a return of the Tush Push, made fa

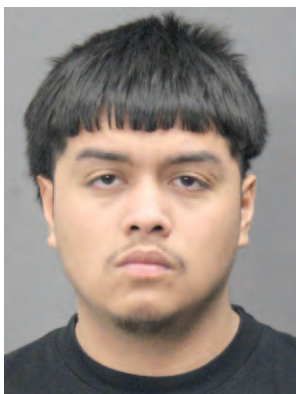
Continued. See KEENEY'S KORNER, Page 5

## Teen Flown to Hospital after Being 'Severely Stabbed' at House Party in Crosby

CROSBY, Texas — A teen was flown to a hospital in critical condition overnight after being stabbed at a house party in Crosby, according to Harris County Sheriff Ed Gonzalez.

The sheriff said there was alcohol and multiple teenagers at the party on Sundown Meadow near Crosby Huffman Road.

At some point, a fight broke out and a 17-year-



Francisco Flores has been arrested and charged in connection with the stabbing of the victim.

old "was severely stabbed," according to Gonzalez.

The 17-year-old was flown to a hospital where Gonzalez said he is in "serious condition" after undergoing surgery.

The sheriff said 19-year-old Francisco Flores has been arrested and booked into the Harris County Jail in connection with the stabbing.

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# Democrats return to House,

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

ness infrastructure in flood-prone areas throughout Texas.

**FLOOD EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS:** Legislation to strengthen emergency communications and other response infrastructure in flood-prone areas throughout Texas.

**RELIEF FUNDING FOR HILL COUNTRY FLOODS:** Legislation to provide relief funding for response to and recovery from the storms which began in early July 2025, including local match funding for jurisdictions eligible for FEMA public assistance.

**NATURAL DISASTER PREPARATION & RECOVERY:** Legislation to evaluate and streamline rules and regulations to speed preparedness for and recovery from natural disasters.

**ELIMINATE STAAR TEST:** Legislation to eliminate the STAAR test and replace it with effective tools to assess student progress and ensure school district accountability.

**CUT PROPERTY TAXES:** Legislation reducing the property tax burden on Texans and legislation imposing spending limits on entities authorized to impose property taxes.

**PROTECT CHILDREN FROM THC:** Legislation making it a crime to provide hemp-derived products to children under 21 years of age.

**REGULATE HEMP-DERIVED PRODUCTS:** Legislation to comprehensively regulate hemp-derived products, including limiting potency, restricting synthetically modified compounds, and establishing enforcement mechanisms, all without banning

lawful hemp-derived products.

**PROTECT UNBORN CHILDREN:** Legislation further protecting unborn children and their mothers from the harm of abortion.

**BAN TAXPAYER-FUNDED LOBBYING:** Legislation prohibiting taxpayer-funded lobbying, including the use of tax dollars to hire lobbyists and payment of tax dollars to associations that lobby the Legislature.

**PROTECT HUMAN TRAFFICKING VICTIMS:** Legislation, similar to Senate Bill No. 1278 from the 89th Legislature, Regular Session, that protects victims of human trafficking from criminal liability for non-violent acts closely tied to their own victimization.

**POLICE PERSONNEL RECORDS:** Legislation that protects law enforcement officers from public disclosure of unsubstantiated complaints in personnel files.

**PROTECT WOMEN'S SPACES:** Legislation protecting women's privacy in sex-segregated spaces.

**ATTORNEY GENERAL ELECTION POWERS:** Legislation that strengthens the Attorney General's authority to investigate and prosecute state election crimes.

**REDISTRICTING:** Legislation that provides a congressional redistricting plan.

**TITLE THEFT & DEED FRAUD:** Legislation, similar to Senate Bill No. 648 from the 89th Legislature, Regular Session, that provides strengthened protections against title theft and deed fraud.

**WATER PROJECT INCENTIVES:** Legislation, similar to Senate Bill No. 1253 from the 89th Legislature, Regular Session, that authorizes political subdivisions to reduce impact fees for builders who include water conservation and efficiency measures.

**STATE JUDICIAL DEPARTMENT:** Legislation, similar to Senate Bill No. 2878 from the 89th Legislature, Regular Session, relating to the operation and administration of the Judicial Department of state government.

# GOOSE CREEK CISD NEWS

## IMPACT Early College High School Students Travel to Thailand for Service Learning Project

Story by: Nancy Bonds, GCCISD Director of Communications

This summer, IMPACT Early College High School students from Goose Creek CISD traveled to Chiang Mai, Thailand, to participate in the Food for Thought Project at Banpanton School, an initiative organized by @worldwiseadventures in partnership with EF Tours. Led by Comprehensive College and Career Counselor Mrs. Evelyn Mexas, the trip combined cultural exchange with meaningful community service aimed at addressing food insecurity and promoting responsible tourism.

During their time at Banpanton School, students created 1,000 mushroom bags to support the school's learning programs and food supply. They also helped plant a vegetable garden designed to provide fresh produce for both student meals and resale within the community. These projects are part of a sustainable effort to help local schools grow their own food, ensuring access to nutrient-rich diets for students and, in many cases, generating extra income for classroom



Pictured, from left, recent graduate Jade Ochoa, current senior Jeikobs Mercado, IMPACT Comprehensive College and Career Counselor Evelyn Mexas, recent graduate Nicholas Garza, and current senior Ydalia Curiel.

resources, teacher wages, and other student needs. Beyond their work at Banpanton School, students volunteered at a local Elephant Sanctuary, where they prepared vitamin balls from local ingredients, cut grass for food stock, and planted corn to feed the elephants. Participants in the service trip included recent graduates Nicholas Garza and Jade Ochoa, as well as current seniors Ydalia Curiel and Jeikobs Mercado.

Together, they represented IMPACT Early College High School and Goose Creek CISD with dedication, compassion, and a spirit of global citizenship. The Food for Thought Project offers visiting students the opportunity to make lasting contributions to local communities while learning about global issues, including food security, environmental stewardship, and cultural exchange.

## Goose Creek CISD Schools Named One of America's Healthiest Schools 2025

National children's health organization Alliance for a Healthier Generation today unveiled its 2025 list of America's Healthiest Schools, celebrating 1,120 K-12 schools nationwide for their commitment to advancing whole child health, including schools from Goose Creek CISD. Supported by Del Monte Foods, Kaiser Permanente, and Kohl's Cares, Healthier Generation's annual award program recognizes schools for implementing evidence-based policies and practices to support academic success and lifelong well-being. Schools are recognized in nine health-related topic areas. The following Goose Creek CISD campuses were recognized for their commitment to health and wellness:

- Alamo Elementary School
- Ashbel Smith Elementary School
- Dr. Antonio Banuelos Elementary School
- Dr. Johnny T Clark Jr. Elementary School
- George W Carver Elementary School
- Harlem Elementary School (All-Star Awardee)
- Highlands Elementary School
- Impact Early College High School
- Jessie Lee Pumphrey Elementary School
- Lorenzo De Zavala Elementary School
- Point Alternative Center • San Jacinto Elementary School
- Stephen F. Austin Elementary School

Each of these campuses were awarded in one or more of the following topic areas: Strengthening Social-Emotional Health & Learning, Cultivating Staff Well-Being, Increasing Family & Community Engagement, Improving

Nutrition & Food Access, Implementing Local School Wellness Policy, Bolstering Physical Education & Activity, Enriching Health Education, Promoting Tobacco-Free Schools and Supporting School Health Services. "Schools play a crucial role in positively shaping the health and well-being of our nation's youth, and they deserve national recognition for their outstanding efforts," said Kathy Higgins, CEO of Healthier Generation. "The dedication of school leaders, educators, and staff to support the physical, emotional, and academic needs of their students is nothing short of extraordinary. Their commitment is creating healthier futures for children and communities alike." See the full list of recognized schools at [healthiergeneration.org/AHS](http://healthiergeneration.org/AHS)

# Congresswoman Sylvia Garcia Provides key Updates in Virtual Town Hall

By David Taylor Managing Editor



In a recent virtual town hall meeting held via Zoom, Congresswoman Sylvia Garcia addressed her constituents, providing crucial updates on various issues affecting the community. The event, which saw active participation from civic club leaders and community members, covered a wide range of topics, from legislative updates to community support initiatives. Congresswoman Garcia began by outlining the ground rules for the meeting, emphasizing the importance of maintaining order and minimizing background noise. She encouraged attendees to submit their questions in writing through the Q&A box, ensuring that everyone's concerns could be addressed. One of the key highlights of the meeting was Congresswoman Garcia's update on the ongoing redistricting efforts. She expressed her concerns about the proposed congressional maps, which she believes are designed to dilute the political power of Latino and urban voters. Garcia criticized the current administration's approach, stating that "the new maps would unfairly benefit the Republican Party by adding five new congressional seats in Texas."

Garcia also touched on the impact of recent legislation passed by the administration, which she referred to as the "big ugly bill." She highlighted the negative consequences of the bill, including an increase in the national debt and significant cuts to healthcare and food assistance programs. According to Garcia, the bill would result in millions of Americans losing their healthcare coverage and facing higher living costs. In addition to legislative updates, Congresswoman Garcia shared the efforts of her office in assisting constituents with various federal issues. She reported that her office had opened 359 cases and closed 214 in the past year, helping residents with matters related to the Veterans Administration, immigration, Social Security, and the IRS. The virtual town hall also featured a guest appearance by State Representative Christina Morales, who provided in-

sights into the redistricting battle from the perspective of the Texas House. Morales emphasized the importance of breaking quorum to prevent the passage of the proposed maps and highlighted the support they were receiving from other states. Throughout the meeting, Congresswoman Garcia encouraged community members to stay engaged and make their voices heard. She urged them to reach out to their representatives, participate in peaceful demonstrations, and stay informed about the issues affecting their community. The virtual town hall concluded with a Q&A session, where Congresswoman Garcia and Representative Morales addressed questions from attendees. They reiterated their commitment to fighting for the rights of their constituents and ensuring that their voices are represented in the legislative process. Overall, the virtual town hall provided a platform for Congresswoman Garcia to connect with her constituents, share important updates, and rally support for the ongoing battles in Washington and Texas. The event underscored the importance of community engagement and the need for collective action in the face of challenging times.

Presented by Alliance for a Healthier Generation

# AMERICA'S HEALTHIEST SCHOOLS

2025 Awardee

# Barbers Hill Press

## Dayton

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THURSDAY, AUGUST 21, 2025

MONT BELVIEU, TEXAS 77580

### ON THE HILL

#### Mont Belvieu Activity Calendar

##### Anything but a Boat Race

Saturday, September 6, 2025 at 10:00 a.m. | City Park

Get ready for a race like no other! Join us for the exhilarating Anything But A Boat Race, where participants will defy convention and race in vessels that are anything but traditional boats. Leave your expectations at the shore and embrace the creativity and ingenuity of this one-of-a-kind, FREE event.

Boat Rules  
Race Rules  
Awards  
Participants operating vessel must be 14 years +

Can be hand-made/constructed. Store bought floats or prefabricated items will be permitted (see next line).

No boats, boat shells, surf boards, paddle boards, body boards, kayaks, submersibles, or other boat-like vessels. Be creative with your floating vessel.

Inner tubes & floats may be used, but cannot be the only component - must build around or add on to your float / tube.

Must be able to float  
Must be human powered only, no motors

Participant / Vessel Operators must wear a Coast Guard approved life jacket while in the water  
No team size restrictions

Register in advance and sign waiver (link below)

Must be able to launch vessel from grass by pond - there is no boat ramp to load in your items.

#### Chrishanda Nicole Wade of Baytown Earns Degree from University of Maryland Global Campus

ADELPHI, MD (07/24/2025)— Chrishanda Nicole Wade of Baytown, earned a(n) Master of Science in Management: Criminal Justice Management from University of Maryland Global Campus in spring 2025.

Wade was one of 6,770 students worldwide who earned degrees from UMGC in the spring 2025 term.

University of Maryland Global Campus was founded more than 75 years ago specifically to serve the higher education needs of working adults and military servicemembers. Today, UMGC is the largest provider of postsecondary education in Maryland and continues its global tradition with online and hybrid courses, more than 175 classroom and service locations worldwide, and more than 135 degrees and certificates backed by the reputation of a state university and the University System of Maryland. For more information, visit [umgc.edu](http://umgc.edu).

## Barbers Hill ISD Unveils \$75 Million High School Expansion to Meet Rapid Growth

Barbers Hill High School has officially completed a significant \$75 million expansion, increasing the school's footprint by 30 percent and more than doubling its original size. The extensive project, driven by the Barbers Hill ISD's growing student population, adds 150,000 square feet of new construction, renovates 32,000 square feet of existing space, and provides 73,000 square feet for 256 new parking spaces.

The expansion comes at a critical time for Barbers Hill ISD, which anticipates enrolling 8,226 students in the upcoming 2025-26 school year. Projections for the 2030-31 school year range dramatically from 11,389 to 14,866 students, highlighting the need for increased capacity.

The centerpiece of the expansion is a new three-story classroom wing and a one-story PE/Athletic facility, designed to accommodate an additional

Have you ever watched a movie where a ship gets lost at sea? The sailors leave port knowing exactly where they're headed, with a clear course set. But somehow, somewhere along the journey, the ship veers off course. Maybe their instruments are off or a small mistake is made while taking readings. Most of the crew doesn't notice at first. They carry on as usual, unaware that they're drifting into dangerous waters.

A wise navigator does all he can to keep his ship on course. He knows lives are at stake. Complacency is not an option. He continually sharpens his skills, checks his instruments, and double checks his



1,000 high school students.

The new additions boast an impressive array of features, including:

- \*40 grade-level classrooms
- \*10 science labs with dedicated prep and storage areas
- \*Modern administration

and counseling suites

\*A dance studio complete with dressing rooms and storage

\*Specialized CTE (Career and Technical Education) lab spaces for Health Services, Anatomy and Physiology, Business



Management, and STEM programs

\*An auxiliary gymnasium

\*PE dressing rooms

\*Team meeting and multi-purpose activity spaces

\*Dedicated football dressing rooms for both JV and Varsity teams

\*New offices for the athletic director and coaches

Beyond the new construction, significant renovations have been made to the existing Barbers Hill High School building. These improvements include modifications to the administration offices and athletic dressing/training

rooms, an expansion of the clinic and attendance office, upgrades to faculty workrooms and foodservice areas, and the centralization of special services instructional, lab, and office spaces.

Originally opened in 2001 with 295,000 square feet and featuring its distinctive three towering rotundas, Barbers Hill High School now spans an impressive 644,000 square feet. This extensive expansion solidifies the school's position as a cornerstone of student learning in the Barbers Hill community, ready to serve its rapidly growing student body for years to come.

### THOUGHTS FROM HILLSIDE CHURCH

By Dr. Mark Trice



## The Danger of Drifting

work. He not only sets the course, but regularly evaluates it, ensuring that the ship's heading is true. - and making corrections when it is not.

The wise Christian does the same. When we come to know Jesus as Lord and Savior we commit to follow Him. We set our spiritual course. From that moment, we begin a relationship with God that requires our constant attention, a consistent focus on our

spiritual direction, momentum, and condition.

We have to regularly take stock of our hearts and our habits. Scripture warns us in Lamentations 3:40 (NKJV): "Let us search out and examine our ways, and turn back to the LORD." Regular self-examination keeps us walking in God's will. Failure to check our hearts leads to spiritual drift.

And spiritual drift is more common, and more

dangerous, than a ship going off course. The consequences aren't temporary; they're eternal. Drift doesn't usually begin with outright rebellion. It's more subtle than that.

It starts with spiritual complacency. We grow comfortable with where we are, thinking, "I'm fine." Our church attendance becomes spotty.

Prayer is reduced to a quick blessing over our meals...sometimes. Our

Bibles start to gather dust. It doesn't happen all at once - it's a gradual progression. Slowly, we stop pursuing intimacy with God and settle for "good enough."

But good enough doesn't cut it; it's never enough to keep us spiritually on course. A Christian who isn't moving forward inevitably falls behind.

Hebrews 2:1 (NKJV) warns us, "Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away." God doesn't give warnings lightly. He knows how easily we can let things slide. That's why He calls us to stay vigilant.

We can't afford to drift. We must stay alert, intentional, and close to the God who saved us.

## Baytown Chamber of Commerce Hosts Ribbon Cutting Ceremony for INSURICA

**BAYTOWN, TX** – The Baytown Chamber of Commerce is proud to announce a ribbon cutting ceremony celebrating their new member, INSURICA. The event took place on Wednesday, August 6<sup>th</sup> at 4:00 PM at INSURICA's Baytown location at 6511 Garth Road. Chamber of Commerce staff, Ambassadors, Executive Committee member Brandon Capetillo, as well as Baytown Mayor Charles Johnson and City Council member Sarah Graham joined to commemorate this exciting event.



Insurica Branch Manager Donald Richardson, Operations Manager Jacquelin Velasquez, Mayor Charles Johnson, along with Insurica staff, City Councilwoman Sarah Graham, and the Baytown Chamber of Commerce Executive Committee and Ambassadors.

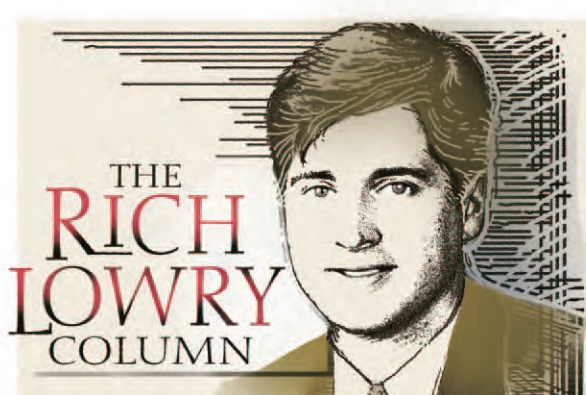
INSURICA, a leading insurance brokerage firm, brings a wealth of experience and innovative solutions to Baytown and surrounding areas, offering personalized coverage options for businesses and individuals. With a strong commitment to customer service and community involvement, INSURICA has a proven dedication to supporting local businesses and protecting what matters most to families and companies alike.

"We are excited to welcome INSURICA to the Baytown Chamber

of Commerce", said Mayor Johnson. "Their reputation for excellence and client-focused approach is an incredible asset to our community."

The ribbon cutting ceremony allowed for networking opportunities, light refreshments and a chance to meet the INSURICA team. For more information or to speak to an INSURICA representative, please visit them at [www.insurica.com](http://www.insurica.com) or call their office at 281-421-3765.

OPINION PAGE



Gerrymander for Me, but not for Thee

Gerrymander for Me, but not for Thee
Let's take a tour of the 13th congressional district in Illinois. It starts in East St. Louis and then moves steadily north.

It's a jagged, narrow strip of territory with no obvious rhyme or reason as it traverses six counties. It's less a congressional district than a road trip, and bears a resemblance to the original gerrymander, a long, salamander-like state senate district in Massachusetts in 1812.

The only point of the new 13th district lines, fashioned with the redistricting after the 2020 census, was to gather together far-flung Democrats to create another Democratic congressional district. Mission accomplished. The 13th district went from being a competitive district long held by a Republican to flipping to the Democrats in 2022.

Overall, Illinois lost one district after the 2020 census and managed to draw lines that changed the congressional ratio from a 13-5 Democratic advantage to a 14-3 Democratic advantage. The political analysis website 538 called the new map "the worst gerrymander in the country drawn by Democrats."

This makes it especially inapt that a contingent of Texas Democrats fleeing the Lone Star State to try to stop what they consider unfair new congressional boundaries found a safe harbor in Illinois. Next time, their travel agent should do a hypocrisy check before booking a destination.

Illinois Gov. JB Pritzker welcomed the self-exiling Democrats and hailed their courage. He told them that he and other top Democrats in the state were pleased "to stand in solidarity with you and send a clear message to all Americans." His conscience showed no sign of being pricked by the fact that he signed off on the redistricting that saw Republicans in 2022 win nearly 44% of the popular vote in Illinois congressional races and only about 17% of the congressional seats.

A special session of the Texas legislature is considering new lines that could net Republicans another five seats. Texas Gov. Greg Abbott has cited a Department of Justice letter saying that some of the current districts need to be redrawn because they represent unconstitutional racial gerrymandering (the Biden Justice Department had been fighting Texas because, in its view, the current lines didn't reflect enough racial gerrymandering).

The Supreme Court is taking up a Louisiana case that should clarify the extent to which states can consider race in drawing so-called majority-minority districts. In the meantime, the partisan effect of the new Texas lines before the 2026 midterms is unmistakable. If Republicans were likely to lose five seats from the redistricting, there's no doubt that the state's Republican governor and Republican legislature wouldn't be undertaking it.

Drawing district lines is an inherently political enterprise, and parties tend to give themselves the best of it. When Democrats controlled the Texas legislature, they maintained congressional lines in their favor. It wasn't until Republicans won the state house for the first time since Reconstruction in 2002 that the GOP could redraw the congressional map and Republicans subsequently won a majority of Texas congressional seats in 2004, also for the first time since Reconstruction.

Since Democrats gerrymander too, they have limited options for retaliating against Texas. Pritzker says he may redraw his state's lines, but this would require gerrymandering on top of his current gerrymander. California Gov. Gavin Newsom is making similar noises, but the California map is already tilted toward Democrats. Republicans won nearly 40% of the congressional vote in the Golden State in 2024, but only about 17% of the seats.

If the Texas plan goes through and all else remains equal, the Lone Star State will have about the same partisan skew as California.

Less gerrymandering would be better rather than more, but Democrats like Gov. Pritzker, who blessed his state's meandering 13th district, have no standing to make the case.

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.



THE POSTSCRIPT By Carrie Classon

Almost There



Everyone will tell you that when you sell a book, you don't get to pick the cover. I know this, and I am fine with it. I don't know much about selling books, and my publisher does nothing but sell books, so I trust they would know what makes for a good cover. But I was flattered when they asked me for ideas about what I'd like on the cover of my book, and I knew right away: Emily Anderson.

Emily Anderson is a wonderful artist who paints scenes from nature in Minnesota. Unlike many northern landscape artists, her work is never dreary. Her scenes of the natural world just exude joy and a sense of discovery and—it might sound odd, but it's true—humor. Her work makes me smile. I want to be in whatever place she has painted. And so, when they asked what I wanted, I said, "Emily Anderson."

But of course, it was just to give the publisher an idea. I never told Emily anything about this. I don't know her personally. The closest I came to speaking to her was writing to ask her permission to use one of her pictures on my website when "Loon Point" was looking for a publisher. She was very kind and said I could use it. I never told her I recommended her art because I never in my wildest dreams thought they would contact her.

Then I heard from my editor. "We have some cover mock-ups for you to see," my editor said, "but we've had a hard time reaching one of the artists for permission." I looked at the mock-ups and was astonished to see... Emily Anderson!

I was over the moon. But why couldn't they reach her? I found her number and immediately dialed her up.

"Hi, Emily! I don't expect you to remember me, but several months ago you let me use one of your pictures on my website for my book."

Silence. I could tell she had no idea who I was.

"Well, the book sold. ..."

I heard a sharp intake of breath. "And my publisher has been trying to reach you..." Now, I heard laughter starting on the other end of the line.

"Oh, no," Emily said. "Did you get an email? They said they reached out to you by email and on Instagram. ..."

There was more laughter. I had never spoken to Emily before, but I could tell I liked her. Now she was really laughing. "I thought it was spam!"

"Oh, no!" "Yes! I even asked a couple of friends. 'Do you think this is spam?' I asked them. 'Totally spam!' they agreed."

Now we were both laughing. "I will get back to them right away!" Emily said.

I had to wait a few days, but I learned that my publisher had licensed Emily's work to use on the cover of "Loon Point." It is not just similar to the cover I wanted—it is exactly what I wanted and never imagined I would get. Emily is delighted to be a part of it.

And there's one more thing. The painting has a name. The name of the painting is "Almost There." I imagine (although I'd have to ask Emily) that it refers to the image of the lake-shore and a canoe that has almost landed, perhaps to camp for the night.

But it seems to me, a first-time novelist, writing this book late in life about the things that matter most to me, having a cover called "Almost There" is about as perfect as it gets.

Till next time, Carrie

STATE CAPITAL HIGHLIGHTS By Gary Borders



Paxton sues to remove 13 absent Democrat House members

Attorney General Ken Paxton has asked the Texas Supreme Court to remove 13 of the more than 50 House Democrats who fled the state to break quorum and effectively halt the special session to prevent a mid-decade redistricting plan, the Austin American-Statesman reported.

"These cowards deliberately sabotaged the constitutional process and violated the oath they swore to uphold," Paxton said in a statement. "Their out-of-state rebellion cannot go unchecked, and the business of Texas must go on."

Gov. Greg Abbott took a similar action against state Rep. Gene Wu, D-Houston, who is chair of the House Democratic Caucus. Paxton is seeking to remove state Reps. Ron Reynolds; Vikki Goodwin; Gina Hinojosa; James Talarico; Lulu Flores; Mihaela Plesa; Suleman Lalani; Chris Turner; Ana-Maria Ramos; Jessica Gonzalez; John Bucy III; and Christina Morales.

Paxton said he targeted those members because they "made incriminating public statements regarding their refusal to return."

U.S. Sen. John Cornyn said the FBI has agreed to help locate the Democrats, who have appeared in Chicago, New York, and Boston, according to the San Antonio Express-News.

The FBI would only assist in finding the Democrats and would not apprehend them, Cornyn said. The members have held several press conferences and aren't exactly keeping their whereabouts a secret. They left the state via a chartered plane on Aug. 3.

SENATE PANEL ADVANCES BILL SWAPPING STAAR FOR THREE TESTS

While the House is unable to meet with the Democrats out of state, the Senate is still in special session. A Senate panel has unanimously advanced a proposal to swap the end-of-year standardized test, called STAAR, for the three shorter tests administered throughout the school year, according to the Texas Standard.

The STAAR test has been widely criticized by parents



and teachers for putting enormous pressure on students. Teachers have complained about having to spend too much time preparing students to take the STAAR.

A companion bill has been filed in the House as well. An effort to pass a similar measure during the regular session failed.

The tests would be shorter than the current test, which can last three hours. The turnaround for the shorter tests would be much faster than it is for STAAR — just two business days.

RIVER AUTHORITY PLEDGES \$1.5 MILLION FOR FLOOD PROTECTION

The Upper Guadalupe River Authority has pledged to spend at least \$1.5 million on flood protection and mitigation measures after a Houston Chronicle investigation revealed it had delayed upgrading its flood warning system, opting instead to keep at least \$3 million in reserve.

The announcement came at a legislative hearing in Kerrville, at which the UGRA has been roundly criticized for not acting earlier.

"It was recognized through studies that you paid for that there was a need for an early warning system," State Rep. Drew Darby, R-San Angelo, told Bill Rector, president of the authority's board. "And yet you didn't do anything about it."

The UGRA's entire board was appointed by Abbott. It is one of the very few river authorities that has the power to levy taxes. That drew the attention of state Rep. Ken King, R-Canadian.

"So you're not accountable to the voters of Kerr County, even though you're taxing

them?" asked King, who chairs the House committee on flood recovery. Rector acknowledged that was the case.

DEADLINE APPROACHING TO APPLY FOR FLOOD DAMAGE AID

Property owners, businesses, renters and others affected by the July Hill Country floods have until Sept. 4 to apply for aid from the Federal Emergency Management Agency, according to the Express-News.

Heavy rains triggered flooding along the Guadalupe River, killing at least 119 people. Another 16 deaths were reported in separate flooding in Travis, Burnet, Williamson and Tom Green Counties.

A total of 10 counties have been designated eligible for federal money: Burnet, Guadalupe, Kerr, Kimble, McCulloch, Menard, San Saba, Tom Green, Travis and Williamson.

FEMA encourages applicants to apply online at DisasterAssistance.gov or call the agency's help line at 800-621-3362, between 6 a.m. and 10 p.m.

EXCLUDING IMMIGRANTS FROM CENSUS COULD BE COSTLY FOR TEXAS

If President Donald Trump is successful in excluding undocumented immigrants from the next U.S. census, Texas could lose seats in Congress and billions of dollars in federal funding, the Chronicle reported.

The state has an estimated population of 2 million immigrants living in the country illegally.

"(We would lose) what the state has gained over the past two censuses, at least a couple of seats," said Jeronimo Cortina, a political scientist at the University of Houston. "And then where do they go? Maybe they go to, I don't know, North Dakota."

It is unclear whether Trump has the authority to implement the census changes. An effort in 2019 to add a question about citizenship to the decennial census was rejected by the U.S. Supreme Court.

DPS ANNOUNCES CREATION OF NEW HOMELAND SECURITY DIVISION

The Texas Department of Public Safety has announced the creation of a new Homeland Security Division, The Dallas Morning News reported.

The new office combines the existing Office of Homeland Security with the DPS Intelligence and Counterterrorism Division to oversee border security operations and statewide intelligence efforts. It will also be responsible for overseeing the protection of infrastructure and emergency preparedness.

"Our No. 1 priority is to protect Texans — especially against hostile foreign adversaries like China, Iran, and Russia" Abbott said. "Texas will always defend our state from hostile foreign nations and terrorists to create greater safety in our communities."

Texas lawmakers authorized creation of the new division during the last regular session.

Advertisement for Star Courier newspaper, including contact information for the Barbers Hill and Dayton Press editions, and details about the publication and subscription rates.

# FOOTBALL SEASON PREVIEW: Will Arch Manning lead Texas to the promised land? Can Stroud get Texans to the AFC Championship game?

mous by Philly QB Jalen Hurts and his massive offensive line. New rules will be: touchbacks on kickoffs will result in the ball being placed at the 35-yard-line instead of the 30, both teams will be guaranteed one offensive possession in overtime, onside kicks can be attempted at any point during a game and a virtual tracking system will be used to measure downs and distance, instead of the chain gang.

The college season kickoffs off on Labor Day weekend with a banner schedule. On Saturday, Oct. 30, No. 1-ranked Texas will visit Columbus to take on No. 2 Ohio State, the defending national champion, while Alabama will visit Florida State, and LSU will take on Clemson that evening. On Sunday, Aug. 30, Notre Dame, the national runnerup in '24, will visit Miami and on Labor Day night, TCU will visit North Carolina and its new head coach, NFL legend Bill Belichick. More on those games in next week's column.

The CFP will enter its second year of the 12-team format. The Power 5 conference winners (Big 10, Big 12, SEC, ACC and Pac 12 earn automatic bids, while the remaining seven spots will be filled by at-large teams.

The four highest-seeded teams earn first round byes, while the higher seeded teams will host first-round games on their home campuses. The Cotton Bowl (Dec. 31), Orange Bowl (Jan. 1), Rose Bowl (Jan. 1) and Sugar Bowl (Jan. 1) will host the quarterfinal games. The semifinal games will be played at the Peach Bowl (Jan. 8) and Fiesta Bowl (Jan. 9). The CFP title game will be played on Monday, Jan. 19 in Miami.

So, without further ado, let's take a look at what the NFL and NCAA have to offer in 2025.

## NCAA

**BIG 12** - The Big 12 should be wide open this year. Eleven of the 16 teams have their starting quarterback returning, led by defending champion Arizona State's Zac Levine. Optimism is high in Lubbock at Texas Tech has high hopes in '25. Depending on who you follow, Tech had the first or second best transfer portal signings in the spring and summer, led by former Stanford defensive end David Bailey (7.5 sacks), the No. 1-rated player in the transfer portal. Head coach Joey McGuire is entering his fourth year and he may need a breakout year to keep his job.



Tech should be improved on defense, and the offense will be potent led by QB Behran Morton (3,335 yards, 27 TDs in 12 games). He has a game breaker in wideout Caleb Douglas (60 receptions, 877 yards, 6 TDs). Tech has seven home games, but must play at Kansas State, a place where Tech has had trouble winning over at the years. Others who should contend will be Kansas State, ASU and Baylor. The University of Houston should be improved with second-year head coach Willie Fritz at the control of the team. UH was 4-8 a year ago and had one of the worst offenses (the Coogs averaged a dismal 14 points a game last year) last year, but should be improved with the addition of former Texas A&M QB Conner Weigman under center.

**SEC** - Texas will enter the season as the No. 1-ranked team in the Coaches Poll and the AP poll and hopes are high in Austin now that Arch Manning (939 passing yards, 9 TDs/108 rushing yards, 4 TDs in nine games last year) is under center. Manning, the grandson of former Ole Miss and NFL star Archie Manning and nephew of NFL greats Peyton and Eli Manning, has a strong arm, which would allow Sarkisian to open up the offense and throw the deep ball more often. UT lost a load of skilled players from last year's 13-3 team, but Sark has recruited well over the last couple of years and there's plenty of talent on hand, led by running back Tre Wisner (1,064 yards, 5 TDs) and returning wideout Ryan Wingo (29 receptions, 472 yards, 2 TDS). The UT defense could be scary good led by linebacker Anthony Hill Jr. (113 tackles, 8 sacks) and defensive end Collin Simmons (9 sacks as a freshman). The 'Horns have a favorable schedule with home games against Florida and Arkansas, but they have a tough road test on Nov. 15 when they visit Athens, GA to take on Georgia.

Speaking of Georgia, which beat UT twice last year (once in the regular season, head coach Kirby Smart (105-19 in nine years in Athens) will have one of his youngest teams ever, but it will be a talented bunch. There's

a new QB in Gunner Strickton (440 yards, 1 TD in limited play), who came off the bench in the SEC title game after starter Carson Beck (now at Miami) was injured. Look for Smart to use the early portion of the season to get his young players the experience they will need to contend in the SEC and be ready for Texas on Nov. 15.

LSU and head coach Brian Kelly should also be in the mix for the SEC title, led by QB Garrett Nussmeier (4,052 yards, 29 TDs), running back Caden Durham (753 yards, 6 TDs) and wide receiver Aaron Anderson (61 receptions, 884 yards, 5 TDs). This might be a put up or shut up year for Kelly.

Speaking of coaches on the hot seat, Alabama's Kalen DeBoer enters his second season after a 9-4 first year, which did not include a trip to the SEC title game or the CFP playoffs. DeBoer will be breaking in a new QB in Ty Simpson, who will have one of the best wide receivers in the country to throw to in Ryan Williams (48 receptions, 865 yards, 8 TDs). Look for the Crimson Tide to be vastly improved in '25.

Texas A&M could be a team to watch this year as second-year head coach Mike Elko returns his entire offensive line, starting QB Marcel Reed (1,864 passing yards, 15 TDs/543 rushing yards, 7 TDs), and running back Le'Veon Moss (765 yards, 10 TDs in nine games). Reed need to improve as a passer, and the addition of North Carolina State transfer wideout K.C. Conception (53 receptions, 460 yards, 6TDs) should be a big boost to Reed and the passing game. The Aggies return eight starters on defense, led by linebacker Taurean York (52 tackles, 2.5 sacks) and shutdown cornerback Will Lee III (2 interceptions, 10 passes defended).

**BIG 10** - Defending national champion No. 2-ranked Ohio State lost a load of talent, but head coach Ryan Day has plenty left in the cupboard to contend for league title and CFP crown. The Buckeyes will break in a new QB in Julian Sayin, a transfer from Alabama. He has a stud to throw to in wide receiver Jeremi-

ah Smith (76 receptions, 1,315 yards, 15 TDs as a true freshman). Smith is a big target at 6-3, 223 pounds and could be the No. 1 pick in the 2027 NFL draft. He's that good. After hosting No. 1 Texas in the season opener, the Buckeyes get No. 3-ranked Penn State at home, but have tough league road games at Illinois, Washington and Michigan (OSU has not beat the Wolverines since 2019).

Penn State (13-3 in '24) might be the best team in the league, especially on offense where QB Drew Allar (3,327 yards, 24 TDs) and running backs Kaytron Allen (1,108 yards, 10 total TDs) and Nicholas Singleton (1,099 yards, 17 total TDs). The defense will be led b defensive end Dani Dennis-Sutton (8.5 sacks, 13 tackles for loss).

**ACC** - Clemson looks like the class of the ACC after a couple of down years for Tiger fans. Head coach Dabo Swiney did lead his team to the CFP playoffs and return one of the top QBs in the country in Austin Westlake star Cade Klubnik (3,639 yards, 36 TDs/463 rushing yards, 7 TDs). His top target will be wideout Antonio Williams (75 receptions, 904 yards, 11 TDs). Klubnik is a bonafide Heisman Trophy candidate. SMU, which won the regular season ACC title before losing to Clemson in the ACC title game, should be good once again led by dual-threat QB Kevin Jennings (3,245 passing yards, 23 TDs/354 rushing yards, 5 TDs). Louisville should also be in the mix for the ACC title.

**NOTRE DAME** - The Fighting Irish were one win short of winning the national title in head coach Marcus Freeman's third year on the job. Freeman has returned ND to glory and should field another team that will contend for the national title. A lot will depend on how well new QB C.J. Carr (grandson of former Michigan head coach Lloyd Carr) handles the job. He will have a stud at running back to help ease the transition in Jeremiah Love (1,125 yards, 17 TDs). ND has another solid runner in Jadarian Price (746 yards, 7 TDs). Look for ND to grind it out this year as Carr settles into the starting QB job.

## PREDICTIONS (CONFERENCE TITLE GAMES)

**BIG 12 - TEXAS TECH OVER KANSAS STATE**

**SEC - TEXAS OVER ALABAMA**

**BIG 10 - PENN STATE OVER OHIO STATE**

**ACC - CLEMSON OVER LOUISVILLE**

**CFP TEAMS**

**TEXAS, PENN STATE, CLEMSON, TEXAS TECH, OHIO STATE, OREGON, NOTRE DAME, LSU, ALABAMA, GEORGIA, TEXAS A&M AND LOUISVILLE**

**CFP TITLE GAME - TEXAS OVER CLEMSON**

**NFL**

**AFC SOUTH** - The Texans should win their third straight division title as they are definitely the class of a weak division. Quarterback C.J. Stroud (3,727 yards, 20 TDs/12 interceptions) didn't have as good of a second year as he did his rookie year when he passed for 4,108 yards and 23 TDs, but that was because he was sacked 54 times. Stroud and the Texans will go as far as their rebuilt offensive line will take them, that is why head coach DeMeco Ryans and General Manager Nick Caserio revamped that unit in the offseason. If the line is improved, the Houston offense should be much better. Running back Joe Mixon (1,016 yards, 12 total TDs) missed all of the preseason with a foot injury. If he can't start the season, former Browns star running back Nick Chubb should be a capable replacement. Look for wideout Nico Collins (68 receptions, 1,006 yards, 7 TDs) to have another big season. The Texans could be special on defense led by edge rushers Will Anderson Jr. (11 sacks) and Danielle Hunter (12 sacks). The secondary could be the best in the NFL led by All-Pro cornerback Derek Stingley (five interceptions), fellow corner Kamari Lassiter (three interceptions) and safety Kalen Bullock (five interceptions). The secondary got even strong with the addition of former Philly safety C.J. Gardner-Johnson (six interceptions, 1 TD return).

**AFC EAST** - This is Buffalo's division far and wide. The Bills (13-4 last year) reached the AFC title game where they lost to Kansas City and are poised to take the next step this year behind MVP QB Josh Allen (3,731 passing yards, 28 TDs/531 rush-

ing yards, 12 TDs). Allen has a solid running back to take pressure off of him in running back James Cook (1,009 yards, 18 total TDs). Look for second-year wideout Keon Coleman (29 receptions, 556 yards, 4 TDs) to have a breakout season. Look for New England to be vastly improved with new head coach Mike Vrabel. Miami will go as far as long as QB Tua Tagovailoa (2,857 yards, 19 TDs in 11 games) remains healthy.

**AFC NORTH** - This is one of the toughest divisions in the NFL. Baltimore (12-5) is once again the team to beat as long as QB Lamar Jackson (4,172 passing yards, 41 TDs/915 rushing yards, 4 TDS) remains upright. The addition of running back Derek Henry (1,921 yards, 18 total TDs) last year gave Jackson another weapon. Look for wideout Zay Flowers (74 receptions, 1,059 yards, 4 TDs) to have another big year. Cincinnati has as good of an offense as any team in the league led by QB Joe Burrow (4,918 yards, 43 TDs) and wide receiver Ja'Marr Chase (127 receptions, 1,708 yards, 17 TDs), led the league in all three receiving categories). If the Bengals improve on defense, they could make a long playoff run. Pittsburgh (11-7) is putting its hopes on Aaron Rodgers (3,897 yards, 28 TDs with Jets in '24) to lead them to a deep playoff run. They acquired him a top flight wideout in DK Metcalf (66 receptions, 942 yards, 5 TDs) from Seattle. The Steelers will be solid on defense led by T.J. Watt (11.5 sacks).

**AFC WEST** - Another tough division that placed three teams in the playoffs in 2024. Kansas City is the defending AFC champs, but were waylaid in the Super Bowl, 40-22 by the Eagles. You have to figure that is enough motivation for QB Patrick Mahomes (3,925 yards, 26 TDs) and head coach Andy Reid (273-146-2, three Lombardi's). Look for speedy wideout Xavier Worthy (59 receptions, 636 yards, 6 TDS) to become Mahome's go-to target this year and look for tight end Travis Kelce (97 receptions, 823 yards, 3 TDs) to once again be Mahome's security blanket.

The Los Angeles Chargers could very well unseat KC at the top of the division. Second-year head coach Jim Harbaugh (11-7) led LA to the playoffs in his first year on the job and should have even a better squad this year led by QB Justin Herbert (3,870 yards, 23 TDs). Herbert has two solid weapons to throw to in Ladd McCokey (82 receptions, 1,149 yards, 7 TDs) and Quentin Johnson (55 receptions, 711 yards, 8 TDs).

Denver will be in the mix thanks to veteran head coach Sean Payton and second-year QB Bo Nix (3,775 passing yards, 29 TDs/430 rushing yards, 4 TDs).

**NFC NORTH** - This is the best division in the NFC as three teams (Detroit, Minnesota and Green Bay) reached the playoffs last year. Detroit (15-3) should once again contend for the NFC title and will be motivated by being upset by Washington in the NFC Divisional round last year. The Lions will once again be potent on offense led by QB Jared Goff (4,629 yards, 37 TDs), running backs Jahmyr Gibbs (1,412 rushing yards, 16 TDs/52 receptions, 517 yards, 4 TDs) and David Montgomery (775 yards, 12 TDs). The Lions have to big-play wideouts in Amon-Ra St. Brown (115 receptions, 1,263 yards, 12 TDs) and Jameson Williams (55 receptions, 1,001 yards, 7 TDs).

The Vikings will be breaking in a new QB in J.J. McCarthy who missed his rookie year after sustaining a knee injury in training camp. McCarthy has one of the best wideouts in football to throw to in Justin Jefferson (103 receptions, 1,533 yards, 10 TDs).

Green Bay will go as far as QB Jordan Love (3,389 yards, 25 TDs) and running back Josh Jacobs (1,329 rushing yards, 15 TDs/36 receptions, 342 yards, 1 TD) take them. It would help Love if his wide receivers could stay healthy. The Packers might have the best defense in the division, which could be a difference maker late in the season.

**NFC EAST** - The Eagles (18-3) are definitely the team to beat in the division and the NFC. They did suffer a number of losses to their defense in the off-season, but they are loaded on offense led by SB MVP QB Jalen Hurts (2,908 passing yards, 18 TDs in 15 games/630 rushing yards, 14 TDs) and running back Saquon Barkley (2,005 rushing yards, 13 TDs/33 receptions, 278 yards, 2 TDs). Hurts has two big-play wide receivers to throw to in A.J. Brown (67 receptions, 1,079 yards, 7 TDs) and DeVonta Smith (65 receptions, 833 yards,

8 TDs). Washington (14-6) was THE surprise team in the NFL last year and reached the NFC title game led by rookie QB Jayden Daniels (3,568 passing yards, 25 TDS/891 rushing yards, 6 TDs). Daniels should continue to improve and received another weapon when the Commanders traded for 49ers wideout DeeBo Samuel (51 receptions, 670 yards, 3 TDs). He should pair well with fellow wideout Terry McLaurin (82 receptions, 1,096 yards, 13 TDs). McLaurin has requested a trade, but look for the two sides to come to an agreement on a new contract.

Dallas (7-10) hired a new head coach in Brian Schottemier, but the key to them bouncing back and contending for a playoff spot will rest on the return of QB Dak Prescott (1,978 yards, 11 TDs in eight games), who suffered a serious hamstring injury last year. Prescott has one of the top pass catchers in the league in CeeDee Lamb (101 receptions, 1,194 yards, 6 TDs) and the addition of former Steelers wideout George Pickens (59 receptions, 960 yards, 3 TDs) should open up things for the Dallas offense. The Cowboys must get better in the run game, which produced a paltry six rushing TDs in '24. The key to any success Dallas will have this year will greatly depend on whether owner Jerry Jones will come to his senses and sign one of the league's best edge rushers in Micah Parson (12 sacks, 52.5 sacks in his first four years).

**NFC SOUTH** - This is a two-team race between Tampa Bay (five straight division titles) and Atlanta. The Buccaneers will be led by QB Baker Mayfield (4,500 yards, 41 TDs), running back Bucky Irving (1,122 yards, 8 TDs) and big-play wideout Mike Evans (74 receptions, 1,004 yards, 11 TDs). Atlanta will bank its hopes on second-year QB Michael Penix (775 yards, 3 TDS in five games), star running back Bijan Robinson (1,456 rushing yards, 14 TDs/61 receptions, 431 yards, 1 TD) and wideout Drake London (100 receptions, 1,271 yards, 9 TDs).

**NFC WEST** - The Rams (11-8) look like the best team in this watered-down division. QB Matthew Stafford (3,762 yards, 20 TDs), running back Kyren Williams (1,289 yards, 14 TDs) and wideout Puka Nacua (79 receptions, 990 yards, 3 TDs) will lead the offense. The 49ers (6-11) were decimated by injuries last year, most notably to star running back Christian McCaffrey. McCaffrey has looked good and healthy in training camp and that has to be good news for QB Brock Purdy (3,864 yards, 12 TDs). Arizona (8-9) could be the surprise team of this division. QB Kyler Murray (3,851 passing yards, 21 TDs/572 rushing yards, 2 TDS), running back James Conner (1,094 yards, 8 TDs) and second-year wideout Marvin Harrison Jr. (62 receptions, 885 yards, 8 TDs) should lead a potent offense. The Cardinals shored up the defense in the draft and in free agency to make them a threat in the West this year.

## PREDICTIONS

**AFC SOUTH - HOUSTON**

**AFC EAST - BUFFALO**

**AFC NORTH - BALTIMORE**

**AFC WEST - LOS ANGELES CHARGERS**

**AFC WILD CARDS - KANSAS CITY, BALTIMORE AND PITTSBURGH**

**AFC TITLE GAME - BUFFALO OVER BALTIMORE**

**NFC EAST - PHILADELPHIA**

**NFC SOUTH - TAMPA BAY**

**NFC NORTH - GREEN BAY**

**NFC WEST - LOS ANGELES RAMS**

**NFC WILD CARDS - DETROIT, DALLAS AND ARIZONA**

**NFC TITLE GAME - PHILADELPHIA OVER DETROIT**

**SUPER BOWL - BUFFALO OVER PHILADELPHIA**

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### Screenings to Identify Disabilities

CISD Special Education department provides screenings for children with suspected disabilities in an effort to identify every student with a disability who lives within the district's boundaries. Crosby ISD is committed to providing excellence in education to all students, and the screenings are designed to help identify children who may qualify for the district's special education programs. Eligible students with disabilities between the ages of 3 and 21 can be provided with services to ensure their successful participation in school. These services and supports may be provided through Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act or through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act. Special education services are also available starting at birth for eligible children who have a visual and/or auditory impairment.

If you know a child who may be challenged with a disability, please contact the Crosby ISD Special Education office at 281-328-9200, Extension 1108. If the child is already a student in Crosby ISD, please contact the counselor at the child's school. The counselor will be happy to assist you.

The special education personnel will coordinate efforts to evaluate the student and, if eligible, ensure that the student is provided with supports and services needed to benefit from instruction.

30-31

## Man accused of killing parents in Crosby arrested,

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

ple for two days. Leman Sr. was pronounced dead at the scene; Mary Leman was airlifted to a hospital and passed away on July 13.

The victims were found in an area with dense vegetation, about half a mile west of the road.

The suspect's brother states that the suspect is "bipolar, extremely hyper, and explosive."

A folding knife was recovered, covered in apparent blood near the parents' bodies

Earlier that day, deputies with Harris Co. Pct 5 Constable met with the suspect at an Academy store. Court documents say Leman tried to purchase ammunition for a revolver, and made a "vague threat"

An Academy employee triggered a call for service, which resulted in an "emergency detention order" for the suspect.

He had a U-Haul truck, which was towed away. HCSO investigators later found a metal baseball bat, believed to be the murder weapon, inside it.

In August, Leman was released from jail on a personal recognizance bond but failed to appear in court.



Leman at top, in Proable Cause court last week.

He was formally charged with capital murder on Friday, August 15, but was on the run until his arrest two days later.

Cell phone records showed he sent multiple abusive messages to his parents before they were killed and was in the home at the time of the murders.

## The story of a district on the rise,

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

History was made on that field, not just with instruments, but with heart.

"We heard our choir raise their voices—not only in song, but in numbers. Doubling in size, competing with pride, and sending dozens to All-State auditions. From the auditorium to the UIL stage, Crosby's talent rang loud and clear.

"We saw students break records on the track, step into leadership roles, and show up for their community. Over 400 volunteers came together to honor the memory of a beloved teacher during the Coleen Walker Relays. That's who we are—a district that leads with love and purpose.

"Academically, we took bold steps. We continued to implement an innovative calendar to attract and retain experienced teachers—and guess what? We have significantly improved our teacher retention and recruitment efforts. Our classrooms have more seasoned professionals ready to teach, coach, and lead.

"Our facilities expanded, too. With hammers and hard hats, we broke ground on a brand-new academic wing at Crosby High School—the first in nearly a decade. And our school board approved a plan to build a sixth-grade campus that will eventually grow into a second middle school. Because in Crosby ISD, we plan not just for today's students, but for tomorrow's future.

"And we did all of this while maintaining a balanced budget and earning statewide awards for communication and community

engagement. Financial stability isn't just about numbers—it's about trust. And we are trying to earn that trust, one decision at a time.

"But here's the thing about a great story: the best chapters are still ahead.

"As we enter the 2025–2026 school year, our focus is clear:

Instruction. Growth. Purpose.

"We're diving deeper into powerful instructional practices like "Writing a Little A Lot," "More Time on Task," and "Better Instruction."

We're using data—not to punish—but to empower. To identify growth, to celebrate it, and to push it further.

"We're opening the doors to a brand-new academic wing this fall—and that's just the beginning. Our

sixth-grade campus is on the horizon. And with it, more space, more opportunity, and more support for the growing dreams of our communities.

"This story isn't mine alone. It's not the board's. Not even the district's.

"It belongs to every teacher who stays late to tutor a struggling student.

"To every bus driver who greets children with a smile at 6:00 AM.

"To every parent who believes in public schools.

"And to every student who dares to dream.

"This is the story of Crosby ISD.

"And friends, I promise you... the next chapter?"

"It's going to be the best one yet.

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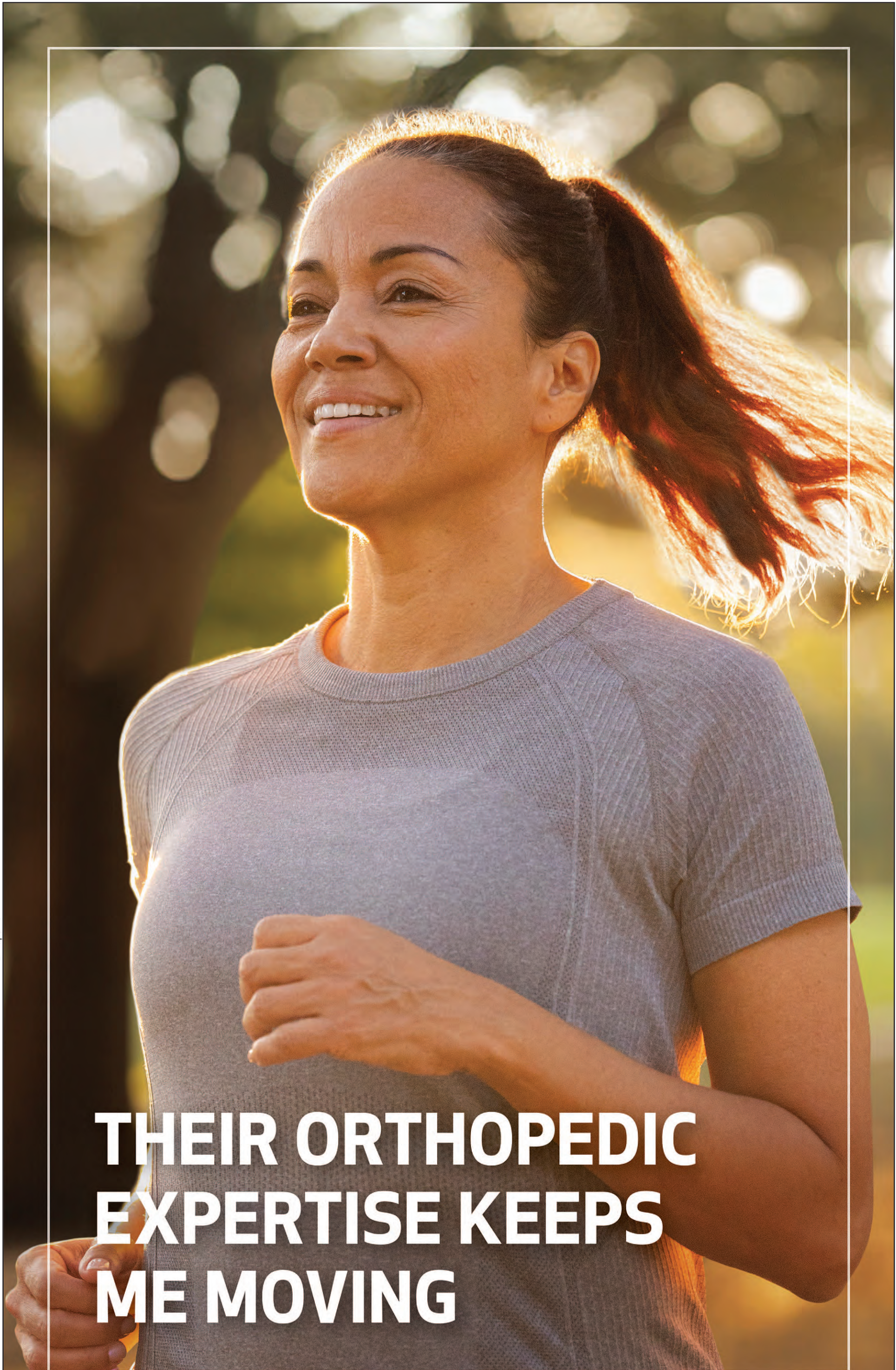
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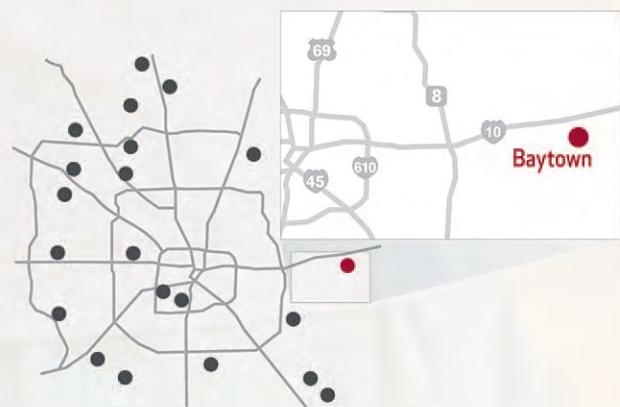


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