



Dr. Sharon Heath Lemond a 57 year educator has a passion for baking as an avid baker of pies, cakes and cookies. (Photo by Allan Jamail) See Story below & on page 2.

HIGHLANDS

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HIGHLANDS, TEXAS 77562

IN THE STARS

Black History Month Honoree: 57 Yr Educator Sharon Heath Lemond

2nd of a series...

By Allan Jamail

February 9, 2026 ~ Black History Month, a month long commemoration of Black/African American history and achievements that takes place in the United States from February 1, 2026 – March 1, 2026.

It's not often as a photojournalist doing stories for the North Channel Star I connect with someone who impresses me as much as Dr. Sharon Heath Lemond. She's very much deserving of my time to honor her and of your time to learn about her during Black history month.

In order to get this story after meeting her husband Larry at the home near the Summerwood Subdivision it was my pleasure to spend hours with her and to treat Sharon for lunch at her favorite Mexican restaurant. There's so much more I could write about her but space and time is limited so this is a condensed history of her extensive biography.

Now that she's retired from teaching after fifty-seven years where she was a member of the American Federation Teachers' Union

Continued. See BLACK HISTORY MONTH, Page 2

ROTARY CHILI FEAST TURNOUT EXCEEDS EXPECTATIONS

By David Taylor
Managing Editor

HIGHLANDS - Johnelle Eilers and Don Guillory have been good friends for quite some time. The couple does everything together including the purchase of a raffle ticket for the Highlands Rotary Chili Feast. "We split it," Eilers smiled, "right down the middle and have been for years," she noted.

She's been buying a ticket for the last decade, but the two of them have split the cost of the \$100 ticket the last three years. They had always hoped they might win, but really donated the money for the mission of the Rotary Club and all they do in the community.

The fundraiser last Saturday happened to fall on the day before they had planned to leave for a



Don Guillory and Johnelle Eilers stand beside their brand new 2025 Chevrolet Trailblazer from Turner Chevrolet, following their ticket being drawn for the top prize at the 51st Rotary Club of Highlands annual Chili Feast on Saturday. They are joined by President Patricia Scott and Connie Russell, president-elect.

cruise so they weren't at the event. When their name was announced, friends at the Chili Feast began blowing up their phone with calls telling them they had won.

They never dreamed they would be the winners of the 2025 Chevrolet Trailblazer or Trax. Eilers works at Sterling-White Funeral Home and said she needs a new car. "I'm in need of a car and it was time so we'll work it out. We'll talk about it while we're on the cruise," she said excitedly.

The Crosby couple rushed to St. Jude's Catholic Church on Main Street in Highlands where the fundraiser was being held and posed for photos with the new car. "He's already told me I

Continued. See ROTARY CHILI FEAST, Page 2

THEA Demanding Actions as EPA Delays Persist on San Jacinto River Superfund Cleanup

By David Taylor
Managing Editor

At the most recent meeting of the Texas Health and Environment Alliance (THEA) last week, community members voiced mounting frustration over continued delays in the cleanup of the San Jacinto River Waste Pit Superfund site. THEA founder and executive director Jackie Medcalf opened the meeting by acknowledging both the "exciting stuff" and "frustrating stuff" on the agenda, emphasizing the group's mission for newcomers. "We work to protect public health and the environment from the

harmful effects of toxic waste. When it comes to toxic waste and contamination, we focus on the old stuff, the stuff that got dumped decades ago that has yet to be dealt with."

Medcalf provided a high-level overview of the Superfund site's history, noting that while the EPA ordered a full cleanup after Hurricane Harvey, "we are still battling for that to take place for the northern site." She criticized the EPA for authorizing "an enormous amount of delays since that 2017 decision," and described the current situation as a "standstill process" with no clear timeline for action. "They said it's illegal right



THEA Founder and Executive Director Jackie Medcalf

now and the project managers cannot disclose any information. For all we know, they can make a decision tomorrow or they can make a decision in five more months. But there is more than enough information for them to make a very well-informed deci-

sion to move this site towards cleanup. But they have to make that decision," Medcalf said.

The meeting also highlighted the community's ongoing efforts to pressure elected officials.

"Where are our politicians representing us? Where's that? I've never seen them come up here. The only thing we have here to move this thing forward is to get the politicians on our side. How do we do that? We can't even get them here," one attendee remarked, capturing the mood of many present. Medcalf responded by promising to send copies of the group's petition to congressional representatives,

underscoring the importance of grassroots advocacy.

"Our voices, our community members matter, all of us and so it's going to take us making them do the right thing."

A new development discussed at the meeting was the ongoing problem of people fishing in contaminated waters near the waste pits. Despite posted advisories, "the fish in the area are highly contaminated, but the fish are plentiful and it is a good fishing spot," Medcalf reported. She urged attendees to report sight

Continued. See COMMUNITY VOICES FRUSTRATION, Page 2

Vouchers: Texas Opens Application Website until March 17

Texas Opens Applications For Texas Education Freedom Accounts

AUSTIN — Governor Greg Abbott today highlighted that families can now apply for the Texas Education Freedom Account (TEFA) program. Administered by the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts under Acting Comptroller Kelly Hancock, the TEFA program gives parents greater freedom and flexibility in choosing the best educational environment for their children.

"With Texas Education Freedom Accounts, more

parents can choose the learning environment that's best for their child and more students will be able to reach their unique potential," said Governor Abbott. "I encourage Texas families to apply for the program which puts parents in the driver's seat of their child's education. This program puts Texas on the pathway to become the No. 1 state for education."

"Governor Abbott's unwavering leadership made this moment possible for Texas families," said Acting Comptroller Kelly Hancock. "The Texas Education Freedom Account program puts parents firmly in charge of their children's education, ensuring families have real

options and the flexibility to choose the educational path that best meets their child's needs, setting students across Texas up for success."

In May, Governor Abbott signed into law Senate Bill 2 (Creighton/Buckley), establishing the TEFA program which allows eligible students to direct funding toward their choice of preapproved educational providers and services such as private school tuition, instructional materials, and educational therapies. With \$1 billion in funding for the 2026-2027 school year, the program will be the larg

Continued. See VOUCHER WEBSITE NOW OPEN, Page 5

By David Taylor
Managing Editor

Oh, the joys of Houston traffic.

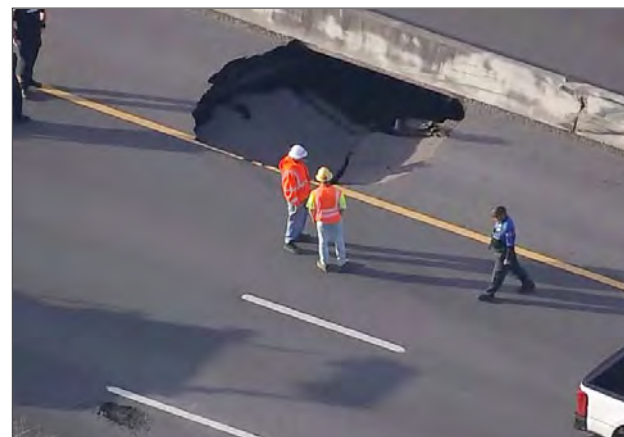
Absolutely no one enjoys the commute into Houston traffic, but coming home to a massive sink hole just miles from home is just the worst.

Last week, drivers were faced with a growing massive sink hole in the east-bound lane of Interstate 10 between Federal Road and Normandy last Wednesday.

Miraculously, no one was reported injured and no vehicles wrecked because of the 12-foot wide sink hole.

The discovery of the hole brought traffic to a standstill and left City of

Water main Leak Triggers Massive Sinkhole, Closure of Lanes on I-10E



An overhead view of the scene provided by KHOU Channel 11 in Houston shows the breadth and width of the damage done by a water main leak.

Houston and TxDOT officials scrambling.

Traffic was backed up for miles both directions while officials quickly discovered that a water main leak beneath the roadway was the culprit, causing the de-

struction of the bridge and the formation of a 12-foot-wide sinkhole.

"A massive sinkhole has shut down part of the

Continued. See TRAFFIC CHAOS AS I-10, Page 6

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Rotary Chili Feast Turnout exceeds Expectations,

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

could have the back tires," she laughed. "We're very excited and feel very blessed.

"The Highlands Rotary Club's annual fundraiser has once again proven to be a resounding success, with this year's event likely surpassing last year's totals and energizing the local community. According to club president Patricia Scott, the club believes it sold all 700 raffle tickets, potentially raising \$70,000, though final numbers are pending due to the treasurer's illness.

"I think it will top last year's. I believe we sold all of our tickets. Our auction was amazing for us, you know but I don't have any numbers. We won't have numbers probably until next week. But I do know it was a very successful event," Scott said.

The live auction alone brought in an estimated \$25,000, a figure that Scott described as "really good" and "definitely better than last year."

She attributed the strong turnout and sales to the club's dedicated supporters and a few last-minute ticket buyers who helped push sales over the top. "We have just a lot of wonderful supporters that come here every year and support the community. And like I said, we had three or four gentlemen that came in at the last minute and bought many tickets. That pushed us over the top on our ticket sales," she explained.

Funds raised from the event support a wide range of local projects. "This fundraiser supports all our local projects, we serve the senior citizens, we support the library. This year we did a project with the pregnancy center here in Highlands. We



Diana Weaver and Hunter Teel pull the capsules with the Raffle Tickets, as excitement builds in anticipation of the winner of the Car.



Robert Woodall is joined by Jeremy Rosenkrantz out at the cooking area where the chili-making was underway.

donated the sign outside and then helped redo the bathrooms, the customers' bathrooms.

And then, of course, we give to the Little League, the Crosby Fair and Rodeo, the Baytown Fair and Rodeo, a large amount of money goes to our scholarships," Scott said.

Every year, the club awards between \$35,000 and \$40,000 in scholarships, primarily to students from Goose Creek Memorial, Chinquapin, and Crosby, as well as to any former Highlands students now in college. "If they got one last year, they're welcome to apply again," Scott noted, emphasizing the club's ongoing commitment to education.

Other initiatives include supporting Highlands Elementary through monthly birthday celebrations, school supplies, breakfasts, and perfect attendance bicycles. Scott also highlighted the importance of community sponsors, who provided \$15,000 to \$16,000 in seed money this year, giving the fundraiser a strong start.

In closing, Scott expressed gratitude to the community and sponsors: "Absolutely thank them and our sponsors, but all the community, 'cause all of our sponsors are within the community."

Sponsors included Daniel's Meat Market, Hill Materials, Chuck and Carol Radney, Griffith Truck and Equipment, Transpak, Community Toyota-Honda-KIA, Capital Bank, Edward Jones-Crosby, Central Auto Inspection, Sterling-White Funeral Home, RE/Max Excellence, BDI Resources and LBY Construction.

LIST OF WINNERS			
TICKET NUMBER	PRIZE DESCRIPTION	WINNING TICKET NUMBER	NAME ON TICKET
Early Bird		334	Joni & Debra Dierck
1 ST	\$200 GIFT CARD	354	Jon & Tara Myers
50 TH	32" SMART TV	566	Patty Sicely
100 TH	PORTABLE ICE MAKER	360	Patty Sicely
150 TH	\$200 GIFT CARD	16	Olivia Gutierrez
200 TH	AIR COMPRESSOR BATTERY CHARGER	142	Martin Maier
250 TH	BEATS SOLO 3 WIRELESS HEADPHONES	503	Jack Adcox
300 TH	\$200 GIFT CARD	288	Lee Brown
350 TH	AIR FRYER	316	Weldon Cottew
400 TH	65 QT COOLER	160	Jerry Fallin
450 TH	SHOTGUN	450	Gil & Mei Hoffman
500 TH	\$200 GIFT CARD	628	Jerry & Julie Fallin
550 TH	8" BLACKSTONE COOKER	78	Bryan Teel II
600 TH	OUTDOOR PROPANE FIRE PIT	478	Glenn & Ree Ree
650 TH	22 - 250 RIFLE	588	Scott White
699 TH	55" SMART TV	183	JACK ADCOX
700 TH	2026 CHEVY TRAILBLAZER OR TRAX	109	DON GUILDFORD & Johnnie Eilers

Highlands Rotary thanks everyone who helped make this 2026 Chili Feast a success.

Sharon Heath Lemond, Black History Honoree,

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

she now spends time with another of her passions of baking... pies, cakes, cookies; Tea Cakes are a favorite.

She likes planting things like flowers and flowering shrubbery and sitting by their pool. She's not a television watcher, she's a dedicated reader usually when she normally arises at 3AM she'll read or write until about 6AM. She requested one of my fig trees which I make from cuttings... I have one with her name on it and we'll plant it together in a few weeks.

She enjoys traveling, not just in the United States but out of the county, some places were: France, Spain, Germany, Trinidad, Denmark, Amsterdam, Dubai (United Arab Emirates), Brussels, Abu Dhabi, UK, Mexico, Bahamas, Hawaii and Norway.

Sharon Dianna Heath, the oldest of eleven children born to Attorney Millard C. and Queen E. Heath. Her siblings are: four sisters are teachers, one an educational administrator, her five brother's work at: post office, Champion Paper Co., Diamond Shamrock, commercial driver and an artist.

Sharon was born July 15, 1945, in Bremerton, Washington. Eventually her parents moved back to their home state - Louisiana. They stayed in Monroe, Louisiana until her father decided to return to Wiley College in Marshall, Texas to complete his college education.

The family then consisting of three children, moved to Houston, Texas

where her father started law school at Texas Southern University School of Law.

Sharon's parents were concerned about education, plus her mother had been a teacher before getting married. So when Sharon was almost six, her parents purchased a house in Galena Park, Texas in the Galena Manor subdivision (a suburban area outside of Houston).

Sharon was eager to attend school. She started at Fidelity Elementary School on Bolden Street. In Elementary School she participated in plays, poetry, wrapping the May Pole, Girl Scouts, and band, all the while, she continued to make above average grades.

In the sixth grade, Sharon went to the new Fidelity Manor School in Galena Manor on Sixteenth Street. She continued through the twelfth grade. While in high school Sharon participated in Marching Band, Concert Band, Pantherettes (Panther school mascot), NHA Queen, Majorette, Girl Scouts, Honor Roll and various academic clubs.

In May 1963, Sharon Dianna Heath, graduated as an Honor Graduate from Fidelity Manor High School. She said, "I'm a proud graduate of Fidelity Manor High School, which was part of the Galena Park ISD."

After being accepted at several colleges and universities, Sharon decided to attend Hampton Institute in Hampton, Virginia. Her major was Dietetics with a minor in chemistry. During her junior year and working as



Dr. Sharon Heath Lemond with her HISD 50-year teaching award. (Photo by Allan Jamail)

an assistant to a Dietitian at St. Elizabeth's Hospital. Sharon realized that she spent all of her spare time in the Children's Ward and she loved the children. She would tell them stories, bring small gifts or just spend time with them. That year, she changed her major to Elementary Education with a minor in Art.

Sharon then started working at the Galena Park Post Office under Howard Curtis as the first Black female Window Clerk. She enjoyed working at the post office but her first love, was working with students. She graduated December 1967 with a BS in Elementary Education and a minor in Art.

Since Sharon had worked at the post office, Houston ISD thought that she would be a great

candidate for the cross over program, (the program placed promising black teachers in white schools).

It was hard, but she stood tall and worked extremely hard. Sharon made sure that she was punctual, well dressed, and that she knew the materials. Her evaluations were excellent and she did not miss any days.

She stayed at the school until she got married and became Sharon Heath Lemond. Then she and her husband, Larry M. Lemond, Sr started their family. Larry until he retired was a supervisor at the Pasadena post office.

Sharon took a two years maternity leave. While she was off on leave, her dad encouraged her to go to law school. Sharon was granted a full Ford Foundation Scholarship to attend. Sharon maintained

a B average in law school but after two years maternity leave was up, Houston ISD would not grant her a one year extension to go to law school because it was not education. So Sharon went back to her first love - teaching.

Then a couple of years passed. Sharon had another child. So, she took maternity leave again. She went back to law school and received her Doctorate of Jurisprudence Degree. Sharon took the bar exam which was strenuous and eight hours long, she missed passing by two points because a lot of the laws had changed over the years.

She continued to stick with education. She's had many rolls in education, chairperson, PTA Second Vice President, led several programs for Houston ISD, Courtesy Committee Chair, Field Trip Chair, Learning Manager of The Year, Summer School Co-Chair, Instructional Coordinator, Asst. Principal.

Houston ISD at an Awards Banquet presented her, as their only HISD teacher with a Fifty Year Service Teaching Award. She's taught third to twelfth grades, honor students, regular students, ESL students, behavioral students and special needs students.

Sharon had spent fifty-seven years in education before retiring. One year at Channelview High School, one and half year at CEP (Community Education Partners), and fifty-four years and a half in Houston ISD.

Sharon was, also a foster parent for eight years to ten wonderful children.

Many of these children as well as ex-students call, text, or come by to visit often, even today.

She's been a blessing to many. When asked how she could continue with education for so long, when many teachers leave, she stated that God's son Jesus had many roles. One of those was that He was a teacher.

Teaching is an honorable profession. Every career starts with a teacher. She feels that her gift from God is teaching because the skill seems to come naturally. She has excelled at every grade level and in many aspects of teaching. Teaching has enabled her to work with students year after year with a smile, true dedication, a listening ear, and the belief that all students can learn if you love them and show them that you care.

Sharon is the mother of five biological children: Charon Martina Lemond Dixon, Larry M. Lemond, Jr, Roderick Heath Lemond, Quinn Eric Lemond an Aron Leander Lemond-all are products of the Galena Park School District.

In later years, after becoming a foster parent, Sharon became the legal parent of love for Taylor Thomas Paustenbach "Lemond".

My lead on this story came from Linda Clark Watkins-Ford-Lemond, no kin to Sharon; they both attended Galena Manor High School.

Barbers Hill Press

Dayton

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THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 2026

MONT BELVIEU, TEXAS 77580

ON THE HILL

Tees for Keys Golf Tournament Set for April 30

BAYTOWN — Baytown Habitat for Humanity will host its annual Tees for Keys Golf Tournament at The Battleground Golf Course on Thursday, April 30, 2026, beginning at 8 a.m.

The event will include breakfast, lunch, swag bags, contests, range balls, and cart and green fees. Teams of four may register for \$600, with an early bird special of \$500 available for a limited time.

Proceeds from the tournament will benefit Baytown Habitat for Humanity's mission to provide safe, affordable housing for families in need.

Sponsorship Opportunities

Several sponsorship levels are available:
Golden Key (Title Sponsor) - \$5,000
Includes logo placement on scorecards, cart signs, website, flyers, and social media; three tee signs; premium banner placement; renewal priority; swag bag merchandise option; premium hole placement; awards announcement; and two golf teams.

Foundation Sponsor - \$3,000

Includes logo on cart signs, website, flyers, and social media; two tee signs; swag bag merchandise option; premium hole placement; awards announcement; and one golf team.

Builder Sponsor - \$2,000

Includes logo and link on website; social media shoutout; one tee sign; swag bag merchandise option; exhibit space; awards announcement; and one golf team.

Exhibit Sponsor - \$600

Includes one tee sign, representative presence at assigned hole, and swag bag merchandise option.

Swag Bag Sponsor - \$750

Tee Box Sign Sponsor - \$150 per sign

Registration Information

Participants and sponsors may register by scanning the QR code on promotional materials. For additional information, contact Baytown Habitat for Humanity at info@baytownhabitat.org.



Baytown Habitat for Humanity
For Questions, email info@baytownhabitat.org

Visit our New Website for Chambers County News:
www.BHDPRESS.com

Baytown Becoming One of the Largest Advanced Recycling Operations in the World

BAYTOWN - Our third advanced recycling unit at our complex in Baytown, Texas, is now operational, a milestone that demonstrates our focus on addressing plastic waste and fostering a more circular economy.

With this addition, Baytown has the capacity to process up to ~250 million pounds of plastic waste annually, and we're on track to reach approximately 450 million pounds of annual advanced recycling capacity at our global facilities by year-end 2026. That means more plastics are diverted from landfills and transformed into raw materials for products people use every day.

Why it matters
Advanced recycling complements traditional methods by handling plastics that are harder to recycle. By embedding



Advanced Recycling Unit 3 in Baytown

advanced recycling units within existing facilities, we can scale faster and more efficiently — turning

plastic waste into the feedstocks that make many other products like fuel and new plastic.

Looking ahead
We have the technology and the expertise to expand advanced recycling.

What's essential now is supportive policy frameworks — clear, consistent laws and regulations that recognize advanced recycling as a proven solution for hard-to-recycle plastics. We're seeking the opportunity to keep doing what works, not asking for subsidies. That's why we're in support of federal legislation that would officially recognize advanced recycling as recycling, establish clear standards for recycled content claims, and ensure alignment across federal agencies, providing clarity for both industry and consumers. And it's supported by local and federal leaders, including the City of Baytown and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Lee Zeldin.

Three units strong, and we're just getting started.

BARBERS HILL ISD SUPERINTENDENT'S MESSAGE

District Foundation Defends Integrity, Transparency

By Dr. Greg Poole,



Dr. Greg Poole
Barbers Hill ISD Superintendent

I and our education foundation board of directors have been made aware that there are politically motivated aspersions being lodged against our foundation.

Our education foundation has existed for 15 years, and it is one of the most significant initiatives in the history of our district because it will provide funding as an endowment fund for the entirety of our dis-

trict's future.

This money is all the more needed to help offset the \$300 million our taxpayers have sent back to the state through the Robin Hood system.

I have a reputation for being outspoken and direct and I want to make this crystal clear: I have been the executive director for the history of our foundation and no single board member has ever acted with undue influence nor have any of our actions been influenced

by a single board member. We have an extremely reputable board and every single decision has been based on sound fiduciary, responsible criteria. I would add these decisions from an investing standpoint have been impeccable because our returns have been some of the highest in the nation and our investment firm is known for their sound management of risk. The bottom line is this ... those that are implying impropriety

simply need to provide the evidence.

There will be no evidence ... but there could be legal consequences for those who continue to use fabrications and innuendo to libel one of the finest education foundations in the nation.

Since I did mention generations of school children, it seems appropriate for those that did not know it to show pictures of the cutest two-month-old granddaughter in the history of the world.

Mont Belvieu Police Dep. Welcomes New Officer

By Gerardo Hernandez,

MONT BELVIEU — The Mont Belvieu Police Department officially welcomed a new member to its ranks as Chief Ellison administered the oath of office to Officer Leah McMaster.

Officer McMaster joins the department after serving the past year as a patrol officer with the Dayton Police Department. Her law enforcement career also includes six years as an investigator with the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, where she handled sensitive cases involving child welfare and family protection.

In addition to her investigative background, McMaster brings five years of experience as a police crime scene technician, providing her with specialized skills in evidence collection, process-



ing, and documentation. Chief Ellison and department staff expressed their enthusiasm in welcoming McMaster, noting

that her diverse experience and commitment to public service will be a valuable asset to the community.

Baytown Police Arrest Suspect in Fatal Apartment Shooting

BAYTOWN, Texas - Authorities reported that police officers have taken a suspect into custody and filed charges in connection with a fatal apartment shooting in Baytown.

According to the Baytown Police Department, 20-year-old Zachary Eleby was arrested and charged in the killing of 32-year-old Jerome Harris, a resident of Louisiana. Officials said the shooting occurred on Jan. 31 at approximately 10 p.m. at an apartment complex located in the 1700 block of James Bowie Drive.

Authorities stated that officers arrived at the scene after receiving a report of an unresponsive man.

Upon arrival, Baytown Fire Department paramedics were already administering emergency lifesaving care to Harris, officials said.

Harris was transported to a nearby hospital, where he was later pronounced deceased, authorities said. Investigators determined that the cause of death was a gunshot wound.

Officials said Baytown Police Department crime scene investigators responded to collect and process evidence. Police said Eleby's arrest resulted from investigative efforts that included "a combination of evidence analysis, technology, and strong community partnerships."

Authorities did not immediately provide details regarding a possible motive in the deadly shooting.

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OPINION PAGE

VOTERS GUIDE
By League of Women Voters of Texas

LWV Texas Launches Nonpartisan 2026 Primary Voters Guide on VOTE411

AUSTIN, TX — Ahead of the 2026 Primary Election, the League of Women Voters of Texas has released its nonpartisan 2026 Primary Election Voters Guide, available online at VOTE411.org and at LWVTexas.org.

Through VOTE411, Texas voters can enter their address to view the races and candidates appearing on their ballot, compare candidates' responses to unbiased questions prepared by the League, and create a personalized ballot to take to the polls.

To ensure the Guide reaches as many voters as possible, LWV Texas is offering the information in multiple formats and languages. VOTE411.org presents information on statewide races in English, Spanish, Vietnamese, and Chinese.

With many Texas districts heavily favoring one political party, primary elections often determine who will represent the state in Congress and who will govern Texas.

"The upcoming primary elections are extremely important for Texas," said Joyce LeBombard, president of the League of Women Voters of Texas.

Publishing the trusted, nonpartisan Voters Guide is central to the League's mission of empowering voters and defending democracy.

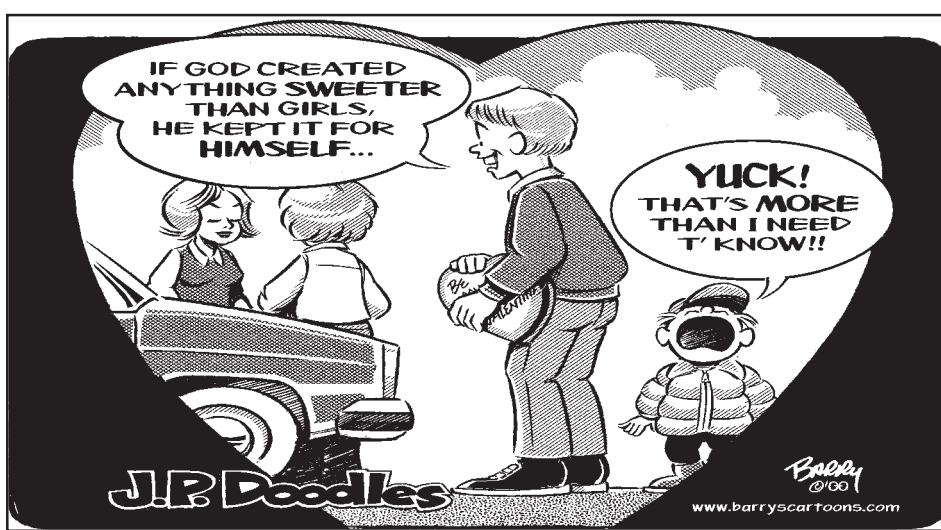
"We urge our fellow Texans to use this resource," LeBombard added. "And we encourage our supporters and partner organizations to share the Voters Guide with their communities across Texas."

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.

Art By Mei

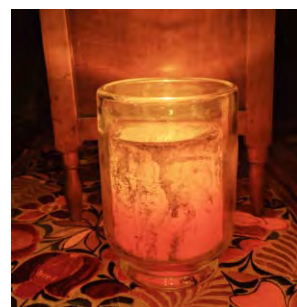


This Artwork is on Display at the Silos Studio of Mei Hoffman, 1502 Sawyer Street. 713-906-4585



THE POSTSCRIPT
By Carrie Classon

Seek the Good



There's a reason I don't write about current events. The news flies at me faster than I can absorb. I cannot make sense of it all, and it feels as if I should always be doing something more, knowing more, helping more than I am.

The parable in the Bible that made the biggest impact on me as a child was the story Jesus told of how, when the master went away, he gave his servants talents to safeguard.

I didn't want to be that servant who stuck his talents in the ground and did nothing with them. Those talents didn't do any good. They didn't grow. They didn't help anyone.

In the years since I was eight or nine, I've come to realize this is not as easy as it sounds. Every single person has more talents than they know what to do with. The trick is deciding what to do with whatever we have and using it wisely in whatever time we are given.

So I went to church. It was cold and gray, and I was grumpy. But I figured those were good reasons to go to church rather than stay at home. Once I got there, I was surrounded by folks who seemed busy doing the things they felt they needed to do—using their talents to the best of their abilities.

"We will seek the good," the benediction said. It said a few other things, but that phrase, "seek the good," stuck with me because, for the first time in several days, I felt as if maybe there was something I could do.

I could seek the good—in every person I encounter, in every interaction I have, with the hearts and minds of the folks I might not agree with. I can seek the good.

It doesn't sound like a lot. It seems like a pretty simple thing, actually, not a serious job assignment. It doesn't sound entirely sensible, and it certainly doesn't sound pragmatic. But I'm going to seek the good because this morning, it suddenly seemed to me that making a practice of seeking the good is a lot harder than it seems.

It is so easy to lose hope. It is so easy to become deeply cynical. It's easy to explain what is wrong with others and what is wrong with ourselves, and there are a lot of people who do that well.

But right now, when there is no shortage of anger or fear or cynicism, I'm going to try to seek the good instead—the good I know is all around me—sometimes in plain sight, sometimes in places I forget to look.

Till next time, Carrie

STATE CAPITAL HIGHLIGHTS

By Gary Borders



At Least 11 Dead in State After Winter Storm

At least 11 people have died in Texas, nearly half of them children, after Winter Storm Fern swept the state last week, the Texas Standard reported.

Several unhoused people died of exposure in Austin, Houston and Fort Worth, according to reports. Nationally, the storm has killed at least 50 people.

Nearly five years after Winter Storm Uri overwhelmed the state's power grid and left millions without electricity, officials with the Electric Reliability Council of Texas noted the grid held, though localized outages were reported, especially in East Texas.

The storm forced nearly 2,400 flight cancellations at airports in Dallas, Houston and Austin.

NO NEW H-1B VISAS FOR UNIVERSITIES, AGENCIES

Gov. Greg Abbott has ordered universities and state agencies to stop asking for new H-1B visas until next year, the Houston Chronicle reported.

Abbott said the H-1B program has "too often been used to fill jobs that otherwise could — and should — have been filled by Texans."

The order is in effect at least until the Texas Legislature meets next January, when it is expected to consider "guardrails" for the program.

Charles Foster, a Houston immigration attorney, said the visas are used to recruit



STATE CAPITAL HIGHLIGHTS By Gary Borders

top talent in competitive technical and medical fields. "You cut off the H-1B, you cut off the line by which the best and the brightest can immigrate," he said.

STATE'S POPULATION GROWS AT SLOWER RATE

Census data released last week shows the state's population growth slowed significantly, though Texas still led the country in adding new residents.

Much of the slowdown comes from a steep reduction in the number of immigrants moving to Texas, driven in part by the Trump administration's immigration crackdown.

Texas ranked fourth in pace of population growth in 2025, trailing South Carolina, Idaho and North Carolina.

HHSC ANNOUNCES \$44 MILLION FOR RURAL HOSPITALS

The Texas Health and Human Services Commission has made \$44 million in grant funding available to hospitals that serve rural communities.

The Rural Health Financial Stabilization Grant provides support for rural hospitals determined by HHSC to be at moderate or high risk of financial instability.

"Rural hospitals are an integral part of the Texas health care infrastructure," HHSC Executive Commissioner Stephanie Muth said.

SBOE TAKES UP BIBLE-INFUSED REQUIRED READING LIST

The State Board of Education last week tabled a proposed reading list presented by the Texas Education Agency, deciding instead to seek public input.

Board member Will Hickman of Houston proposed a pared-down version of the list, which the board will also consider after receiving public input.

The list would create a single required reading list for every public school in the state. TEA officials have said teachers would be free to add any texts they wish.

The matter will be taken up again at the board's April meeting.

IT'S GETTING MORE EXPENSIVE TO LIVE IN TEXAS

New census data indicates the state's housing costs have outpaced income growth, resulting in Texas homeowners and renters spending a larger share of their income for housing.

"Texas is in no position to be taking a victory lap right now on housing affordability," said Ben Martin, research director for Texas Housers.

More than half of the state's 4.1 million renters are considered "cost-burdened," meaning they spend more than 30% of their income on rent.

Lawmakers last year passed a slate of laws aimed at easing the state's housing shortage by making it easier to build new apartments and housing.

POLICE WRANGLE A RUNAWAY KANGAROO

Police in Cleveland, north of Houston, were kept hopping last week trying to catch a kangaroo spotted hopping down a road.

Texas is one of 13 states that allows people to own kangaroos.

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Texas School Choice Program Launch Shatters Records

Texans made their enthusiasm for school choice crystal clear Wednesday when they turned out in force to apply for the Texas Education Freedom Accounts (TEFA) program. More than 35,000 applications were submitted by Wednesday evening, making it the largest day-one school choice program launch to date.

Thousands of applications poured in within an hour of the TEFA application window's opening. By noon, the program had logged more than 20,000 applications, Acting Texas Comptroller Kelly Hancock said in a press release.

TEFA accounts can cover tuition, tutoring, therapies, instructional materials, and other expenses. Most students will be awarded \$10,474, with up to \$30,000 for students with special needs. The billion-dollar program is the largest day-one, state-based school choice program in the country.

AFC encourages families who have not yet applied to do so as soon as possible. Applying takes roughly 15 minutes, even for families with multiple children.

Families can apply through March 17. The program is not first-come, first-served, and those who

apply early in the application window will have the same chance as those who apply later.

Statement from Nathan Cunneen, Texas State Director, American Federation for Children:

"The Texas Education Freedom Accounts (TEFA) program launched in true Texas style, with application figures eclipsing those of other states. This extraordinary response underscores Texans' demand for school choice. If you have not yet applied for TEFA, please do so today by visiting education.freedom.texas.gov."

Voucher Website now open,

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

est day-one launch in the country.

The TEFA program is accepting **online applications** from February 4 through March 17, 2026. All Texas children

are eligible to apply if they live in Texas and are a United States citizen or were lawfully admitted into the U.S. This is not a first-come, first-served

program. Families can apply any time during the application window without affecting their child's chances of receiving funding.

Community voices frustration over superfund cleanup delays,

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

ings of fishing activity, explaining that these reports are forwarded to the EPA's remedial project manager and included in weekly activity logs.

The meeting also included updates on related issues, such as delays in the San Jacinto River bridge replacement project and the recent release of a cancer assessment by the state health department. Medcalf criticized the state for withholding detailed cancer data, saying, "The data you all have asked for,

it exists and we're just being denied this information. So, to me, I was talking with one of my mentors and she had let me know about a campaign a community did and it was that you're insulting our dignity. I'm thinking, they're denying us data and they're insulting our dignity. You know, I mean, it's just, it's the community's data."

Looking ahead, THEA announced two upcoming town halls focused on air and water pollution and

barge-related benzene issues, encouraging community members to attend and stay engaged. Medcalf closed the meeting by reaffirming THEA's commitment following the recent merger.

"I want you all to know that I'm not going anywhere and that THEA is not going anywhere. This is my hometown. This is what started THEA and our hearts, our passion, everything remains," she said.

IMPORTANT DATES FOR THE 2026 TEXAS PRIMARY ELECTION

JAN 1	First day to apply for a ballot by mail
FEB 2	Last day to register to vote
FEB 17	First day of early voting
FEB 20	Last day for ballot by mail application to be received
FEB 27	Last day of early voting
MAR 3	Election day

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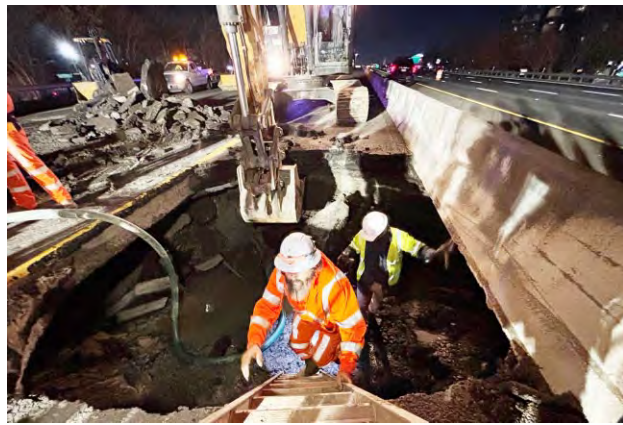
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Emmy Robins

Traffic chaos as I-10 sinkhole halts commute,

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

East Freeway, creating a major traffic mess on Houston's east side," TxDOT reported. All eastbound lanes of I-10 were closed near Federal Road, just outside the 610 Loop, forcing drivers off the freeway at John Ralston Road. On the westbound side, one inside lane and the shoulder remained closed, though traffic continued to move.



Construction workers labor into the night to repair the heavily used section of the Interstate 10 freeway. Their quick work only inconvenienced motorists for a couple of days, shorter than the expected Monday reopening.

TxDOT spokesperson Bambi Hall explained the uncertainty surrounding the reopening.

"We don't have a timeline to bring the roadway back online. It will take a little more time. I'm not sure what the entirety of the city's process may be. My understanding is whatever they have to do could take up to eight hours. And so that'll put us into the middle of the night.

According to TxDOT, reopening the freeway required a two-step process: first, the City of Houston had to repair the broken water main beneath the roadway. Only after that work was completed could TxDOT begin fixing the damaged freeway.

Houston Public Works crews began pumping water out of the sinkhole and conducting their assessment Wednesday evening. "A little bit before 4 p.m., we were advised that there had been a failure in the roadway in that segment of I-10 around the Federal Road exit and so we went out from the southeast area office," Hall said. "We had crews go out there and

we met with City of Houston personnel, because what we discovered is that it was a broken water line underneath that segment of Interstate 10."

The chaos was compounded by confusion over the scope of the closures. The City of Houston initially posted that westbound lanes would also be fully shut down, but Hall clarified, "There has been some reports about all of the lanes being closed east and westbound along that segment of I-10, and that is not the case. We did close all the eastbound lanes, and we have one inside — that's the left lane — plus the shoulder on the westbound side. And so, there is drivability along the westbound lanes, just not on that innermost lane and the shoulder next to the concrete barrier."

Even after repairs were complete, Hall warned that the roadway would still need time to dry before traffic could return.

"When you're doing roadway repair work, anything that involves asphalt concrete has to cure. So that means it's going to have to dry. So we're going to have to have a drying period once the repair is even done."

Drivers were advised to expect heavy traffic on the feeder road and to use alternative routes, including Highway 90 to Beltway 8, 610 South Loop to Highway 225, or Market Street to reconnect with I-10. Delays were expected, and TxDOT urged motorists to drive with caution through work zones and to be on the lookout for work crews and their equipment.

The delays spilled over onto New US 90 east toward Crosby. Commuters faced backups from FM 2100 in Crosby as far back as Beltway 8 into North Shore.

By Friday, just 48 hours later, all crews and equipment were gone and all lanes reopened.

Lee High School Shines in United Way Campaign



At the inaugural GCCISD School Board meeting of 2026, Lee High School was celebrated for its exceptional contribution to the 2025-2026 United Way Campaign. The school was honored as the top large campus contributor, having raised a remarkable \$5,135. This achievement highlights the generosity, unity, and dedication of the entire campus community.

Principal Earnest Brooks received special recognition for his leadership, alongside campaign coordinators Mrs. Connie Guerrero and Ms. Clemencia Vigil. Their hard work and enthusiasm were pivotal in achieving this success. The event underscored the powerful impact of collective effort in supporting community initiatives.

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LEGAL NOTICE

NOTICE TO CREDITORS

Notice is hereby given that Original Letters Testamentary for Docket No. 538450; Estate of TIMOTHY BENOIT Deceased; In Probate Court No. 1 of Harris County, Texas, were issued on DECEMBER 2, 2025 to:

JOHNATHAN ALLEN WILSON

The residence address of the administrator is in Harris County, Texas. The mailing address is:

c/o Weston Cotten
1500 E. Wallisville Road
Highlands, TX 77562

All persons having claims against this Estate which is currently being administered are required to present them within the time and in the manner prescribed by law. Dated this JANUARY 27, 2026

Weston Cotten

by WESTON COTTE5N
Attorney for the Estate

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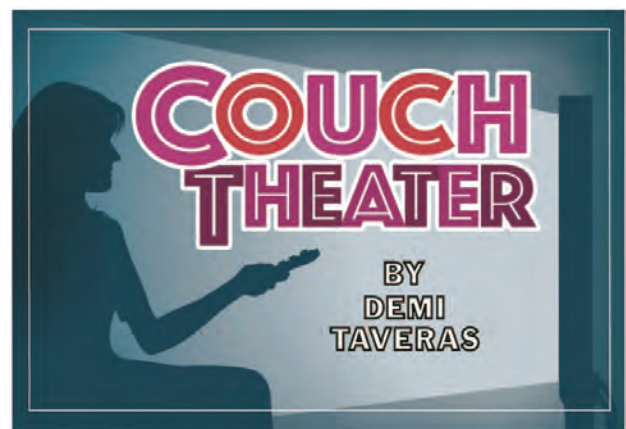
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"A Knight of the Seven Kingdoms" (TV-MA) — Fans of George R.R. Martin's "A Song of Ice and Fire" franchise should be quite happy to receive a third TV-series adaptation based on Martin's immersive books...

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Q: Is it true that Paul Bettany was supposed to be on "The Crown"? Who was he going to play, and who replaced him? — L.J.

A: Yes, this is true. In an interview with "Prima" magazine, actor Paul Bettany stated that before the third season of the popular Netflix series "The Crown" premiered...

It all worked out for both actors. Menzies' exposure on "The Crown" led him to star in the recent Oscar-nominated film "F1," and Bettany is starring in "Vision-Quest," the upcoming limited series about Vision's path to recovering his memory and humanity...

Q: I was sad to hear that Prue Leith has quit hosting "The Great British Bake Off." Will the show go on? Is Paul Hollywood still staying? — U.C.

A: Alas, Prue Leith and her colorful eyeglasses are retiring, but it's understandable since, as she explained, she's 85 years old! You might not remember this, but Leith also replaced one of the original judges Mary Berry...

Nigella Lawson has been tapped as the newest host in the big white tent. Lawson is familiar to American audiences for her shows on the Food Network such as "Nigella Bites" and her many cookbooks...

Q: I love Tracy Morgan's new comedy "The Fall and Rise of Reggie Dinkins." I don't know anyone else who watches it, and I'm worried that it'll get canceled. How are its ratings? —



Stana Katic in "Absentia"

L.D. A: Gone are the days when NBC comedies drew ratings like "Friends" did back in the '90s with an average of 25-40 million viewers. This was before competition from streamers, so expectations are now much lower for network sitcoms...

In comparison, "Stumble," another new NBC comedy that's a hidden gem, is unfortunately averaging less than 2 million viewers per week. Season two of "St. Denis Medical," also on NBC, hovers around 2.8 million watchers.

One big advantage that "Reggie Dinkins" has is that it was created by Robert Carlock and Sam Means, who are two writers and producers from hilarious sitcoms like "30 Rock" and "Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt."

Send me your questions at NewCelebrityExtra@gmail.com.

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by Dave T. Phipps



by Bud Blake



by Jeff Pickering

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February 9, 2026 Posting Date King Crossword

Crossword puzzle grid with clues for Across and Down. Includes copyright: © 2026 King Features Synd., Inc.

Trivia test by Fifi Rodriguez. 10 questions on Geography, Food & Drink, Television, Music, Psychology, Movies, U.S. Presidents, Literature, History, and Anatomy.

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1. Tegucigalpa; 2. Poppin' Fresh; 3. Illinois; 4. Fear of Peanut Butter sticking to the roof of one's mouth; 5. 'Creep'; 6. Dr. Rene Bellog; 7. William Henry Harrison; 1 hour and 45 minutes; 8. South Africa; 9. International Committee of the Red Cross; 10. Calcium



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