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The Facility aims to expand access as growth continues east of Houston. (Photo Houston Methodist). See Story on Page 3.

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THURSDAY, APRIL 16, 2026

HIGHLANDS, TEXAS 77562

## NEW FIRE STATION PLANNED FOR HIGHLANDS

### ESD#14 has acquired property on Main Street for new Facility

By Gilbert Hoffman  
Star-Courier Publisher

HIGHLANDS – ESD #14 (Emergency Service District) has announced that they are planning a new fire station, to replace the aging Station #17 on San Jacinto Street.

Jim Strouhal, president of the ESD#14 board, said that the new building was necessary after HVFD Fire Chief Mike Carsner reported to the ESD Board problems with the existing building, including mold accumulation in the HVAC system. Strouhal said that a recent survey of the problems indicated repair or

remediation of the existing building would cost as much as \$700,000, and the board felt that the money should be spent instead on a new facility.

Since then, Fire Chief Mike Carsner, along with ESD board members Jerry Ickes, Johnny Gaeke, Mark Taylor, Elaine Marshall, and Jim Strouhal have been investigating options and best practices for a new station. Many other ESDs in the area have recently built new buildings, giving Highlands insight on possibilities.

In preparation for the new building, the ESD#14



HIGHLANDS FIRE STATION #17, Build in 1994, needs to be replaced due to aging problems. ESD#14 has purchased property on Main Street, and plans to build a Replacement Fire Station.

purchased a 10 acre site at 700 South Main Street, next door to the Post Office and St. Jude Thaddeus

Catholic church. They paid about \$2,000,000 and took ownership of the property last September, according

to Strouhal. The purchase was financed by loans, and will be paid for in about three years.

The board is proceeding with a mind to the most cost effective facility for the community. A RFP (Request For Proposal) to architects and contractors is expected in about two months. Construction may be complete, and a new station in operation, by 2028 or 2029.

Plans include six truck bays, the same as in the current Station 17. In addition, there will be new offices, a Day Room and Kitchen, sleeping quarters for current staffing of Paramedic crews for medic units that become full-time around the clock, and a meeting room for the community to accommo-

Continued. See NEW HIGHLANDS FIRE STATION, Page 6

### IN THE STARS

#### 34th Annual Tees-N-Tails Golf Tournament Set for April 16

The Crosby-Huffman Chamber of Commerce will host its 34th Annual Tees-N-Tails Golf Tournament on Thursday, April 16, 2026, at Stonebridge at Newport. Registration begins at 8:30 a.m., followed by breakfast at 9:00 a.m., with a shotgun start scheduled for 10:00 a.m.

Team entry is \$500, and individual player registration is \$150. Registration includes green fee, range balls, half cart, breakfast, lunch, drinks, giveaways, goodie bags, and awards for winning teams. Sponsorship opportunities are available.

The community is invited to participate in this annual event supporting local business and community initiatives. Lunch for the tournament will be provided by Crawfish Shack.

## San Jacinto Day Celebration Brings Texas History to Life with Reenactments and Family Festivities

By David Taylor  
Managing Editor

LAPORTE — The thunder of cannons and the crack of musket fire will once again echo across the San Jacinto Battleground this month as the annual San Jacinto Day Celebration 2026 commemorates the 190th anniversary of the Battle of San Jacinto, a decisive moment in Texas history.

Scheduled for Saturday, April 18, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., the daylong event is presented by the San Jacinto Museum in partnership with the Texas Historical Commission. Organizers promise a full slate of activities blending education, entertainment,



Scenes from previous San Jacinto Day celebrations at the monument in LaPorte, Texas. Thousands of visitors will descend on the park for the festivities.

and hands-on experiences designed for visitors of all ages.

At the heart of the celebration are battle reenactments that recreate the dramatic events of April 1836. Reenactors

dressed in period clothing will portray Texian and Mexican soldiers, bringing to life the clash that led to one of the most impactful military victories in North American history. The Battle of San Ja-



Scenes from previous San Jacinto Day celebrations at the monument in LaPorte, Texas. Thousands of visitors will descend on the park for the festivities.

cinto Reenactment is scheduled to take place twice during the day, at 11 a.m. and again at 2 p.m., allowing visitors multiple opportunities to witness the pivotal moment when General San-

ta Anna was defeated. Beyond the battlefield, the event offers a deeper look at the broader story of the Texas Revolution

Continued. See SAN JACINTO DAY, Page 5

## Houston Astros Opening Day Brings Joy to Seniors & Kids at San Jacinto Community Center in Highlands

HIGHLANDS, – The San Jacinto Community Center in Precinct 3 buzzed with excitement as senior citizens gathered to watch the Houston Astros' opening day game. The event, a cherished tradition, allowed local seniors to enjoy the thrill of baseball without leaving their community.

Attendees were treated to classic ballpark fare, with hot dogs topped to perfection being a crowd favorite. The atmosphere was lively, with kids of all ages joining in the fun, munching on popcorn and eagerly watching the Astros' performance.

Adding to the festivities, seniors received special swag bags, enhancing the celebratory spirit of the day. The event not only provided entertainment but also fostered a sense of community among the attendees, making it a memorable start to the Astros' 2026 season.



Senior citizens in Precinct 3 community centers around Harris County enjoyed watching opening day for the Houston Astros from their own local center.



Seniors received some special swag bags while attending the opening day festivities at their local community center in Precinct 3.

Continued. See SENIORS CELEBRATE ASTROS' OPENING DAY, Page 6

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# Building the Future: Sulzer Turbo Named GCCISD CTE Partner of the Month for March

Story by: Kami Johnston, GCCISD CTE Business and Community Partner

The Goose Creek CISD (GCCISD) Career and Technical Education (CTE) Department has named Sulzer Turbo as its Partner of the Month for March. The award recognizes the company's work in giving local students the practical skills, mentorship, and opportunities needed to enter the industrial workforce.

While Sulzer is known worldwide for its turbo-machinery services and engineering, the local facility has made a name for itself as a direct supporter of public education. Through a highly active collaboration with GCCISD, Sulzer is proving that the best way to build a strong local workforce is to work directly with students and teachers.

Sulzer's involvement with GCCISD spans several programs designed to give both students and educators a realistic look at modern industrial careers.

To help keep the school curriculum aligned with current industry standards, Sulzer opens its doors to teacher job-shadowing opportunities. This allows instructors to observe modern workforce practices and bring those techniques back to their classrooms.

Students also get direct access to the industry. Sulzer regularly hosts student job-shadowing days and facility



Daren Legg-Sulzer and Jacob Macias, Stuart Career Tech High School Alumni and Sulzer Employee. (Photos by: Bobby Hathaway)



Stuart Career Tech High School Seniors and Darren Legg-Sulzer. (Photos by: Bobby Hathaway)

tours. For many students, stepping onto the shop floor and seeing precision machinery in action is what drives them to pursue a technical career. When they aren't host-

ing students at their facility, Sulzer staff are often found on GCCISD campuses giving classroom presentations. These visits allow technicians and engineers to share their career stories

and talk about the high demand for skilled trades.

Sulzer's commitment to GCCISD goes beyond field trips; the company helps guide the direction of the district's CTE programs. Representatives from the company serve on multiple advisory boards, offering feedback that shapes course offerings and student training.

The company also participates in district industry panels, sharing information on hiring trends and the specific credentials local employers look for.

When it comes to preparing students for the hiring process, Sulzer employees volunteer to conduct mock interviews. This gives students the chance to practice their communication skills, fix up their resumes, and get feedback from actual hiring managers.

The most impactful part of this partnership is Sulzer's willingness to invest in students professionally. The collaboration creates a direct path from graduation to employment. Fulfilling the CTE program's main goal, Sulzer actively hires graduates from GCCISD. By providing local young adults with good careers right out of high school, Sulzer is directly supporting the local economy.

A shining example of this pipeline in action is Jacob Macias, a member

of the Stuart Career Tech High School Manufacturing Class of 2025. After successfully completing the program and graduating, Macias was hired by Sulzer Turbo, where he now utilizes his technical training in a professional capacity.

Demonstrating the lasting impact of the mentorship cycle, Macias recently spoke to the Stuart Career Tech Manufacturing Class of 2026 during their recent visit to Sulzer. During the visit, he shared insights about his transition from student to employee and offered advice on the technical expectations of the modern workforce, providing current students with a relatable roadmap for their own future success.

Business partners are essential to the success of CTE programs, and Sulzer Turbo doesn't just talk about supporting the next generation; they show up and do the work. GCCISD CTE is proud to recognize them as the March Partner of the Month.

To learn more about how local businesses can partner with the Goose Creek CISD Career and Technical Education Department,

visit their website, <https://schools.gccisd.net/page/cte.SWC>.

# GCCISD Students Advance to National History Day Competition



GCCISD students celebrate their awards at the Texas History Day competition in Austin. Pictured, from left, Anay Gupta, Manavendra Chouhan, Aron Salazar, Arya Patel, Ananya Sood, Jack Pettine, David Orellana, Austin Thomas, and Isaac Graham. (Photo by: Amy Maddie, GCCISD Social Studies Liaison)

Story by: Amy Maddie, GCCISD Social Studies Liaison

Goose Creek CISD (GCCISD) is proud to announce that 46 students recently competed in the annual Texas History Day contest in Austin, earning top honors and advancing to the national level.

Each year, students across GCCISD participate in National History Day, where they develop original research projects based on a unifying annual theme. This year's theme, "Revolution, Reaction, and Reform in History," was selected in recognition of the upcoming United States Semiquincentennial.

The Texas History Day competition featured more than 1,100 student competitors and 555 project entries from across the state, highlighting the high level of achievement required to advance. GCCISD students submitted 30 projects to the state contest, with six earning first- or second-place finishes and several receiving prestigious special awards.

Students from Goose Creek Memorial High School, under the guidance of teacher April Vogel, produced four of the district's top entries. Manavendra Chouhan earned first place for his historical paper, "The Spark in Champaign: Revolution Through Satyagraha, Reaction of Empire, and Reform that Reshaped India." Arya Patel and Aron Salazar

received second place for their group website, "A Voice in the Pecan Dust: Emma Tenayuca's Grassroots Revolution, the Red-Baiting Reaction, and the Reform of Mexican-American Labor." Ananya Sood earned first place for her individual documentary, "We All Bleed Red: Science, War, and the Fight for Equality," and also received the Senior Division Award from Baytown Regional History Day. Anay Gupta received first place for his individual website, "When Truth Hit the Headlines: How the Pentagon Papers Sparked Reaction and Demanded Reform."

Baytown Junior School students Austin Thomas, David Orellana, and Jack Pettine earned first place for their group exhibit, "On the Line of Scrimmage: Revolution, Reaction, and Reform Under the Helmet," sponsored by teachers Seth Tunink, Heather Caraway, and Joshua Sifuentes.

From Gentry Junior School, Isaac Graham, under the direction of teacher Christina Barlow, received first place for his individual exhibit, "Revolution, Reaction, Reform: The Vietnam Draft Protests and America's Debate Over Duty." Additionally, Gentry Junior School student Brinkley Benoit earned the Junior Division Outstanding Regional Award from Baytown Regional History Day for her individual documentary, "Up in Smoke:

How the Tobacco Industry Lost Its Grip on America," under the sponsorship of teacher Sarah Capestani.

In addition to category awards, organizations across the nation sponsor special recognitions for outstanding projects. Goose Creek Memorial students Jonathan Lewis and Yashvir Singh Gill earned both the Naval Order of the United States Award and the National Maritime History Society's Special Prize for Maritime Projects for their group exhibit, "SUBSAFE: Revolutionizing the Depths through Vital Reform."

Amy Maddie, Social Studies Liaison for GCCISD, praised the students' dedication and long-term commitment to the process. "I am so proud of these students. They began their research in the fall and created their projects for their campus History Day fairs. From there, they advanced to the regional competition and now to state. I look forward to taking them to National History Day for what will be Goose Creek's 36th year of participation."

Students who placed first or second in their categories have qualified to compete at the National History Day National Contest, which will be held June 14-16 in College Park, Maryland.

GCCISD congratulates all participating students and teachers for their dedication, academic excellence, and commitment to historical inquiry.

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# Barbers Hill Press

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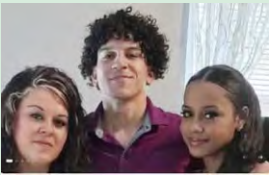
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THURSDAY, APRIL 16, 2026

MONT BELVIEU, TEXAS 77580

### ON THE HILL

#### Four Killed in Chambers County Crash; Three Were Youth



CHAMBERS COUNTY - A Friday evening crash in Chambers County claimed the lives of four people, including three young passengers, according to the Texas Department of Public Safety.

The crash occurred around 7 p.m. April 10 on FM 563, approximately 0.8 miles south of Interstate 10.

According to DPS Sgt. Sammy Lattner, a 2005 Chrysler 300 sedan driven by Kara Beagle, 37, of Liberty, left the roadway and struck a tree. Beagle and all three passengers in the vehicle were killed.

The passengers were identified as Jay Shawn Godfrey, 19, of Houston, and two juveniles, ages 17 and 15. Authorities have not released the names of the juveniles. Next of kin for all four victims have been notified.

Lattner said speed is believed to have been a factor in the crash. An autopsy will be performed on the driver. The investigation remains ongoing.

In a Facebook post Saturday, Liberty ISD Superintendent Dusty McGee confirmed that Liberty High School students were among those killed and expressed condolences to the families affected.

"We are heartbroken by the loss our community is experiencing following a fatal car accident involving LHS students last night," McGee wrote. "When words fall short, all that we can do is come together to support one another while honoring the privacy of the families who are grieving."

"This tragedy has deeply affected many of the families, friends, classmates, and teachers that we have spoken to and visited with throughout the night and this morning. Beginning Monday, counselors and members of our ministerial alliance will be available on campus for any students who need someone to talk to. Family grief resources are also available on our website: <http://libertyisd.net/health>. Please don't hesitate to reach out if you feel your child may need additional support.

"As a school community, we will continue to care for one another with compassion in the days ahead. We will only share additional information as appropriate and in coordination with the families."

## Houston Methodist Breaks Ground for new Baytown Emergency Care Center

BAYTOWN, Texas – (April 8, 2026) – Houston Methodist has officially broken ground on a new Emergency Care Center (CCC) in Baytown, expanding access to high-quality emergency care for patients across Baytown and surrounding communities.

"Expanding access to high-quality emergency care for residents of Baytown, Mont Belvieu, and neighboring areas remains a central priority," Adrienne Joseph, chief executive officer of Houston Methodist Baytown Hospital and senior vice president of Houston Methodist said. "This new 11,900-square-foot Emergency Care Center, featuring 10 exam rooms, state-of-the-art imaging capabilities, laboratory services and an on-site pharmacy, is designed to meet this commitment. I am grateful to our board and the Houston Methodist Baytown Hospital team, physicians and staff, whose tireless work continues to enhance health care delivery in our region."

An emergency care physician will be on-site 24 hours a day, seven days a



Houston Methodist begins construction on a new 24/7 emergency care center in Baytown with this traditional groundbreaking. (Photos courtesy Houston Methodist)



Opening remarks by CEO Adrienne Joseph

week, to ensure prompt, high-quality care.

To further streamline visits, the center will also have a dedicated outpatient entrance and parking area for guests receiving imaging services, along with separate check-in kiosks and a designated subwaiting area. These features aim to reduce wait times and enhance the patient experience.

The opening of the Houston Methodist ECC in Baytown is part of the health care system's broader strategy to expand convenient access points across the region while maintaining its commitment to unparalleled care.



Construction for the Baytown Methodist Care Center is estimated to be completed in mid-2027. (Photo Credit Philo Wilke)

### NEW CHAMBERS COUNTY JUDGE:

## Dagley Pledges to Build on Legacy of Service

By David Taylor  
Managing Editor

Ryan Dagley has been elected County Judge, securing the county's top elected position after running on a platform that emphasized public safety, infrastructure investment, and fiscal responsibility.

Dagley, who previously served as county commissioner and as mayor of Beach City, said his campaign and candidacy were rooted in a desire to continue serving a rapidly growing county.

"I am proud of all we have accomplished during my tenure as County Commissioner, from supporting our law enforcement officers and lowering the tax rate to enhancing the quality of life with better roads, drainage, and amenities," Dagley said in a statement issued during his campaign for the office.

He has also pointed to longstanding ties to the community as a central motivation for seeking judgeship.

"My family and I have lived in Chambers County for over 20 years, and with Judge Sylvia's retirement, I am eager for the opportunity to continue serving our community as the next Chambers County Judge," Dagley said.

Dagley takes office at a time when growth across the region is placing increased demands on county government, infrastructure, and public services.



Dagley at the podium will begin a new generation of governance for Chambers County in January 2027. Chambers is among the fastest growing counties in the nation.

Liberty County Judge Jay Knight, while serving as the chair for the Houston-Galveston Area Council, the regional leader who has frequently spoken about the challenges facing fast-growing counties, has emphasized the importance of steady leadership and long-term planning. Dagley has similarly described growth as both an opportunity and a responsibility, calling for experienced leadership to guide the county forward.

"Chambers County is one of the fastest growing counties in the country and needs experienced, conservative leadership to ensure the community is a place for families and businesses to thrive for generations to come," he said.

A fall showdown would have been lopsided, but Dagley didn't draw a Democratic opponent or

one in the March Republican Primary.

It didn't discourage him from campaigning anyway.

"I just wanted to get my name out there and make sure people associated with that. They know me as Ryan Dagley County Commissioner, but since I was running for a new role as the county judge, I thought it was important for me to not take that for granted and to go ahead and put signs across the county, since I've historically only focused on one precinct," he said. Now he's focused on a few things before stepping aside from his commissioner's duties.

"Well, I'll finish my term out as county commissioner and then I'll transition in January, I'll get sworn in as county judge. My job is to finish

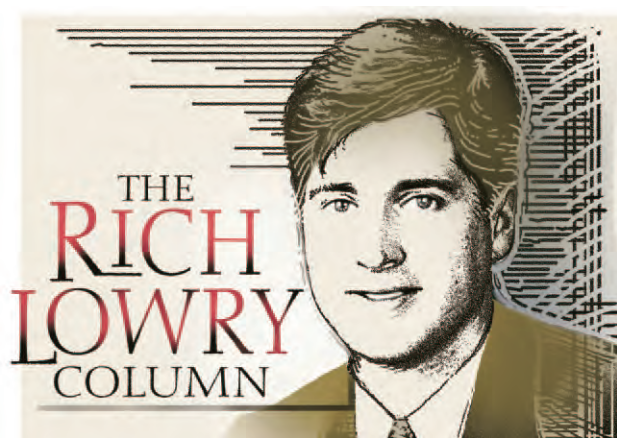
all the projects that I have started and start for the remainder of the year while focusing on the future of the county," he said. Some of those projects include a large community soccer field, community center project, and several drainage projects. "We have a new road called Chambers Parkway, Gordon Spear Parkway, that phase one, two, and three are all being developed as we speak," he said. The new road will connect SH 146 with FM 3180.

Dagley said he would begin planning for his judgeship during budget time and the latter part of the year. He said he had some plans in mind, but none he was ready to share just yet. "I'll just keep those cards a little closer to the vest right now," he smiled. "I'm grateful to County Judge Jimmy Sylvia for his service to the county and wish him the best in retirement, slowing down to spend some time with his grandkids. I am thankful for his support and encouragement for me along the way and I'm ready to take the reins," Dagley said. Sylvia makes his exit as one of the longest serving county judges in the state of Texas with three decades on the bench. Some of the duties that fall on Dagley's shoulders as county judge include budget officer for the county—planning and adopting, planning and administering the agenda

of commissioner's court, and other jobs. "It's the 'other' jobs that can demand a lot of your time," said next door neighbor Liberty County Judge Jay Knight. "Some of those can involve drainage, transportation planning, economic development, law enforcement, serving the courts, and judicial," Knight related. He said roughly 40 percent of his job is judicial because he still does probate, guardianship, and juvenile adjudications. "I'm also the director for emergency management for the county, sign burn bans, and dozens of other official duties," he said. Knight was confident Dagley is ready for the role. "I'm sure he knows a lot of that already. He's a good guy, I like him and he's going to be just fine. He's a very outgoing, personable fellow," Knight said.

Shortly after his swearing-in ceremony next January 2027, Dagley will pack his bags and head to Judicial Orientation for New County Judges at the Overton Hotel and Conference Center in Lubbock where he will receive training and classes related to his new job. "Thank you for all of y'all's votes and your confidence in me," he said to voters. Bill Wallace, Jr. will succeed Dagley as Precinct 4 Commissioner, a third term for him after he defeated old rival and former Pct. 4 Commissioner Rusty Senac.

OPINION PAGE



Artemis II: Yes, Boldly Go

Yes, boldly go
So much for journalistic objectivity.
The BBC science editor covering the launch of Artemis II couldn't contain her enthusiasm when the first plumes of smoke spread out from the launch pad.

Rebecca Morelle can be forgiven for falling in love with the subject of her story. A rocket launch is an awe-inspiring event — a controlled explosion hurling a gigantic projectile into the ether.

NASA hasn't been glamorous in decades. Once upon a time, kids were putting up glossy photos of Apollo rockets and astronauts on their bedroom walls.

The space shuttle made space flight routine and boring, and there was nothing particularly ambitious about the International Space Station.

There is no substitute for manned space flight. The Artemis project is not exactly boldly going where no man has gone before, since it seeks to return to the moon after we were there half a century ago.

This is all to the good, but Artemis has been plagued by delays and cost overruns. NASA hasn't been able to replicate the urgent, mission-driven approach that characterized the Apollo program.

NASA projects tend to get caught in a cycle: One president proposes a big new initiative, only for it to get canceled by his successor, who proposes his own initiative that is canceled in turn.

That said, the space expert Robert Zubrin notes that space is particularly appealing to Americans as a people defined, in part, by the frontier.

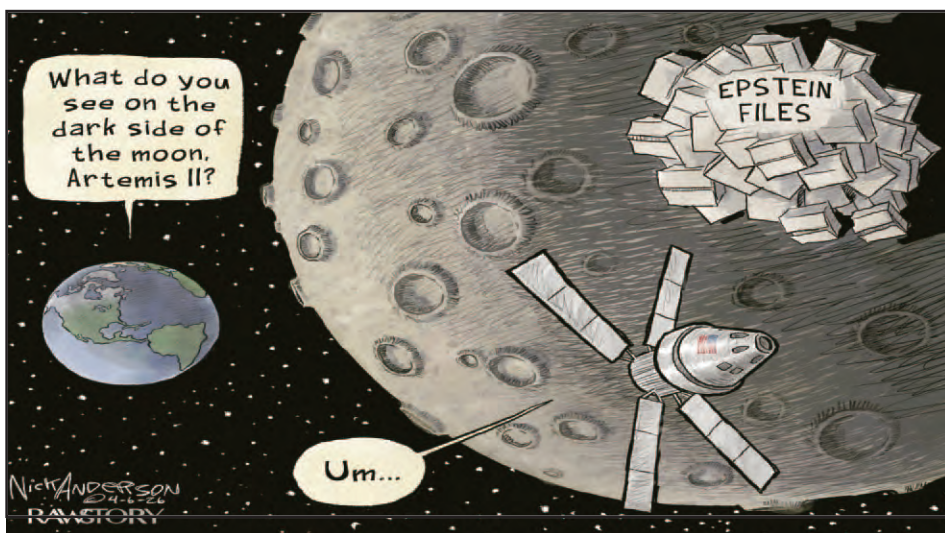
Certainly, the American space program is a marked contrast with that of the Europeans, the European Space Agency. NASA's budget is several times larger. We've sent men to the moon, whereas they haven't.

Getting back to the moon is nice, but it is a manned mission to Mars that should be our ultimate objective. It would truly be another giant leap for mankind, opening up a vista of homo sapiens as a multi-planetary species.

Right now, the most popular movie in America is "Project Hail Mary," a sci-fi thriller about a desperate mission into space. The film plays to our inherent interest in journeys into the unknown, and to our admiration for those who have the courage to explore new worlds.

Artemis II tapped into the same thing, which is why that BBC reporter — and so many of the rest of us — were so moved.

Rich Lowry is editor of the National Review.
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THE POSTSCRIPT By Carrie Classon

Crazy Couch



Three years ago, I was in San Miguel de Allende, Mexico, walking through what had once been a large fabric mill. It has since been turned into an art gallery called, appropriately, La Fabrica, where artists of all kinds lease space to show their work.

One day, while passing a shop, I saw the most outrageous couch.

It was an old camelback couch—a loveseat, really, but with wide, rolled arms. It appeared to be an older piece of furniture that had been restored. The fabric was crazy. It was a patchwork of burned velvet fabric in brilliant hues.

I don't know how stories come into being, but that brilliant couch, three years ago, left an impression on me.

I started writing a new book. The book was about a house that had lived in a small town by the river for 150 years and had, over the course of time, developed a fondness for the women who lived in it, especially its current tenant, Max.

The story became "The Turnip House." When it was finished, I sent it to my agent and, after editing it, we submitted it to my publisher. And we have just learned that they want to publish it.

Last week, my husband, Peter, and I were considering moving from our tiny and much-loved apartment at Casa de los Soles. We decided not to move. We realized we could not stand to be away from this place that has become our home away from home.

I went into the shop. "You had another couch," I began, "but it was in brighter colors."

The young woman did not look perplexed in the least. She headed off to the back of the store and indicated that I should follow her.

"No way," I thought. We climbed a flight of stairs. And there, sitting like it was waiting for me, was my couch. Except now, it was 40% off.

"Oh my gosh," I said in English.

I came home and told Peter. "If you like it, that's all that matters," Peter said. (Peter is wonderful that way.)

Then I asked Jorge, our landlord, if he'd mind if I replaced his couch with a new one. At first, he thought I was asking him to buy it.

"No! No," I told him. "It's a gift—to me." And I told him the story.

Jorge smiled. "No problem!" So today I am waiting. I should be getting the final contract for "The Turnip House," which will make it all official.

And I should be getting delivery of the brightly colored couch that inspired it. I'm not sure which will arrive first, and I know they don't matter. I know they belong together and are part of the same story.

Till next time, Carrie

STATE CAPITAL HIGHLIGHTS By Gary Borders

Border Wall Through Big Bend Apparently on hold

After public outcry, a physical border wall through Big Bend National Park appears to be on hold, The Texas Tribune reported.

In February, the Trump administration waived more than two dozen environmental laws in order to clear the way for a 150-mile-long wall through West Texas, including Big Bend and the adjoining state park.

The sheriffs of Brewster, Culberson, Hudspeth, Presidio and Terrell counties — a mix of Democrats and Republicans — wrote an open letter that said: "Based on decades of combined experience working with this terrain, we believe that construction of a continuous physical border wall in the Big Bend region would not represent the most practical or strategic approach to border security in this area."

Now, a map on the U.S. Customs and Border Protection website no longer indicates plans to construct a physical wall in the Big Bend region. It is unclear if those plans are final, since the map has been changed several times in the past few weeks.

The rugged area historically has been the least-busy of the nine Border Patrol sectors, accounting for just 1.3% of the 237,538 apprehensions recorded along the entire U.S.-Mexico border during the last fiscal year.

STATE ON TRIAL FOR UN-AIRCONDITIONED PRISONS

The state of Texas is now on trial in an Austin federal court to determine whether it must provide air-conditioning in state prisons, kut.org reported. Inmates and their attorneys have argued for decades that summer conditions — where temperatures can reach 110 degrees — constitute cruel and unusual punishment.

"The Constitution requires living conditions that are not exposing individuals to high heat levels, and the evidence has consistently shown that what TDCJ has done as an alternative has just not been effective," attorney Brandon Duke said. "It's not a solution."

The state counters that it is bringing more AC online at its prisons. Plaintiff attorneys say at least five inmates have died in Texas from heat-related illness since 2023.

The Texas Department of



Criminal Justice says it would cost \$1.5 billion to install air-conditioning systems at all its prisons, and that state lawmakers must approve the funding.

U.S. District Judge Robert Pittman is expected to rule from the bench after the trial concludes.

CAMP MYSTIC FILES APPLICATION TO REOPEN THIS SUMMER

Camp Mystic has filed an application with the state to reopen this summer, the Houston Chronicle reported. More than two dozen children and two camp counselors were killed in the July 4 flash floods that swept the camp. The Texas Department of State Health Services, which oversees camp licensing, said it has received complaints about the camp and that it will be "investigated for violations of the laws and rules governing youth camps."

DSHS has been sued by the parents of nine victims who contend the camp was wrongfully licensed just two days before the disaster last summer, even though it lacked an evacuation plan. In a separate case, a Travis County judge has ordered Camp Mystic to preserve for future examination the cabins and grounds damaged in the floods.

Camp leaders are asking for permission to open its Cypress Lake campus, which they said is "in compliance with all aspects of the state's new camp safety laws and has implemented additional safety measures that exceed the requirements of those laws."

TEXAS PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHER PAY DROPS

A new report from the University of Houston Education Research Center indicates average pay for Texas public school teachers has dropped about \$5,000 over the past decade,

the Chronicle reported. The decrease comes even as the cost of living has increased during that time span.

"When we look at those regional differences, there are some increases across the state, but really what we're seeing is that average teacher salaries haven't kept up with inflation," said Toni Templeton, the Education Research Center's senior research scientist.

Average base pay for the state's most experienced teachers, those with 11 or more years of experience, has declined from about \$73,000 to about \$66,000 in 2024-25, according to the report.

The Texas Legislature approved pay increases based on teachers' years of experience, and those raises could show up in future studies.

SPACEX PLANNING WHAT COULD BE BIGGEST-EVER IPO

Elon Musk's SpaceX is confidentially planning to sell shares to the public in what could be the largest initial public offering in history, the Austin American-Statesman reported. It has filed paperwork with the Securities and Exchange Commission that indicates it could raise as much as \$75 billion in an IPO by July.

The confidential filing allows companies to get feedback from regulators without revealing information to competitors. However, Space X will have to release a public filing at least 15 days before its IPO "road show," when it presents its financial plan to potential underwriters and institutional investors.

SpaceX has become the world's leading commercial rocket launch company. Over the past five years, it has secured \$6 billion in contracts from the federal government.

TDI HELPS STOP \$400 MILLION MEDICARE SCHEME

A Texas Department of Insurance investigator and crime analyst played a key role in arresting a Russian national who submitted \$400 million in fake Medicare claims. Nikolai Buzolin established a durable medical equipment company in Houston in 2025. He is charged with stealing patients' and doctors' identities to submit fraudulent claims to Medicare Part C.

"A few of the patients checked their explanation of benefits and noticed that they were getting medical equipment that they didn't need. And it was coming from doctors they'd never met," said TDI Fraud Unit investigator Sgt. Kevin Mannion.

FBI agents arrested Buzolin as he was boarding a plane in Los Angeles to Russia. He faces up to 20 years in prison if found guilty.

"TDI works with federal, state, and local partners to follow cases wherever they go, whether it's California or right here in Texas," said Mannion. "We track them down, we shut them down, and we help dismantle these criminal activities."

Gary Borders is a veteran award-winning Texas journalist. He published a number of community newspapers in Texas during a 30-year span, including in Longview, Fort Stockton, Nacogdoches, Lufkin and Cedar Park.

Email: gborders@texaspress.com.

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# New Highlands Fire Station,

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

date about 60 persons. A Heliport will probably be part of the overall site plan, that will include electronics that will allow Life-Flight to respond and land in low visibility to pick up critical patients, which average approximately 30 per year. The large 10 acre site will allow for better staging, cleaning and repair of equipment, and storage.

Strouhal noted that due to the mold and a/c problems, parts of the existing building are not useable, and have been replaced by temporary buildings on-site.

The new construction will be paid for with prop-

erty taxes, sales tax revenue, and loans. It is not expected that property owners will have any additional taxes.

The Highlands Fire Department is a proud member of the community, and Fire Personnel and ESD members have a special relationship to the department and its history. Jim Strouhal has been a member of the ESD for 25 years, and Jerry Ickes was a member of the department for 40 years, since 1975. Many others share this commitment.

The Highlands Fire Department was founded in 1942 by community mem-

bers. The fire department proudly serves the community of Highlands Texas and has mutual aid agreements to provide aid to neighboring cities. The department is supported by the community members of Highlands through donations, ESD #14, and our annual fire department BBQ fundraiser. ESD #14 was founded in 2000 and has generously supported the fire department. Station 17, at 123 San Jacinto St. was built in 1994. Station 27 was replaced in 2017 with a new state of the art \$2.4 million dollar station which was paid off in May 2021.

# Seniors celebrate Astros' opening day,

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1



No trip to the baseball park or community center for an Astros ballgame would be complete without a hot dog! Look at those toppings!



Kids of all ages enjoyed popcorn and the drama of the Astros opening game for the '26 season.

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**LEGAL NOTICE**

**NOTICE TO CREDITORS**

Notice is hereby given that Original Letters Testamentary for Docket No. 535112; Estate of WILLIAM WESLEY HICKS Deceased; In Probate Court No. 2 of Harris County, Texas, were issued on JANUARY 8, 2026 to:

**WESLEY WADE HICKS**

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 APRIL 13, 2026

*Weston Cotten*  
 by WESTON COTTE5N  
 Attorney for the Estate

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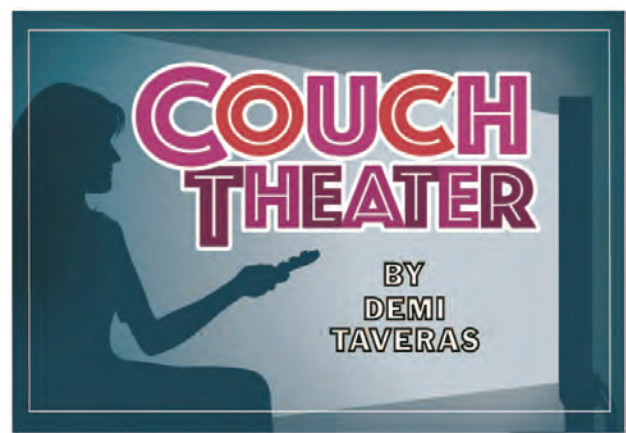
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Keanu Reeves star in "Outcome."

"Outcome."

"Euphoria: Season Three" (TV-MA) — After a four-year wait between seasons and a few dramatic shifts in the cast, the smash-hit series "Euphoria" is finally back on our screens with its third season. Premiering April 12, season three kicks off with a five-year time jump from when we last left off with Rue (Zendaya) and her high school classmates, who are now young adults taking their first steps in the "real world." Oscar nominee Jacob Elordi ("Frankenstein") is back as Nate Jacobs, who is now married to Sydney Sweeney's ("The Housemaid") Cassie. In addition, Hunter Schafer and Alexa Demie reprise their roles of Jules and Maddy, respectively. The late Eric Dane ("Grey's Anatomy") is also featured, in what was one of the 53-year-old actor's last roles before passing away from ALS. (HBO Max)

(TV-MA) — This anthology series that premiered in 2023 went on to win eight Emmys for its first season, including acting wins for Steve Yeun ("Mickey 17") and Ali Wong ("Monsters at Work"). Its second season is now releasing on April 16 with a brand-new cast of characters who have beef - lots of it, served raw. This time around, we have two incredible dramatic actors, Oscar Isaac ("Frankenstein") and Carey Mulligan ("Maestro"), playing a married couple named Josh and Lindsay. When Josh's subordinate at work catches the couple in an intense fight, Josh and Lindsay get sucked into an odd dynamic full of blackmail and coercion. Cailee Spaeny ("Wake Up Dead Man") and Charles Melton ("May December") co-star. (Netflix)

adaptation of the video game "Five Nights at Freddy's" is out now to stream, and it couldn't have come to streaming at a better time. We've been lacking a bit of horror! The second film picks up a year and a half after the events of the first film, where Mike (Josh Hutcherson) and Vanessa (Elizabeth Lail) had to fend off deadly Chuck-E-Cheese-type animatronics to save Mike's little sister, Abby (Piper Rubio). Abby, who had a much different relationship to the animatronics than her brother, misses the comfort of the Freddy Fazbear restaurant and decides to travel back to its original location. In the process, Abby reopens a dark, hidden chapter of Freddy's history by letting out an animatronic that is possessed by the spirit of a murdered child. (Peacock)

HOLLYWOOD

by Tony Rizzo

HOLLYWOOD — Seven studios bid to produce Jane Fonda's next film, and Lionsgate won. The film is called "The Correspondent," and it's about a retired woman who processes her grief through letters.

It was announced that Fonda would give a tribute to Robert Redford during the Oscars, but Barbra Streisand, who only made "The Way We Were" (1973) with Redford, outranked her. This was disappointing since Fonda made five films with Redford: "Tall Story" (1960), "The Chase" (1966), "Barefoot in the Park" (1967), "The Electric Horseman" (1979), and "Our Souls at Night" (2017). The Academy bowed to Streisand, and Fonda wasn't happy!



Bud Cort (1948-2026) for "Harold and Maude" (1971)

The Oscars In Memoriam omitted at least four other film stars. Considered one of the most beautiful woman in the world, Brigitte Bardot became internationally famous for the 1956 film "And God Created Woman." She wed "Barebella" director Roger Vadim in 1952, and he later wed Jane Fonda in 1965.

Bardot made 47 films before retiring at 41 in 1971. She died on Dec. 28, 2025, at 91. Despite her being an animal activist, it was her controversial homophobic and Islamophobic remarks that were supposedly the reason why she was omitted from the In Memoriam segment.

Another omission (with no reason given) was Bud Cort, who died on Feb. 11 at 77. He made 40 films, most notably "M.A.S.H." (1970) and "Brewster McCloud" (1970). He hit it big with "Harold and Maude" (1971), which was a sensation because he played a 22-year-old boy who was in love with the 72-year-old Ruth Gordon. He surely earned the recognition that he was sadly denied.

A third omission was Robert Carradine, who died on Feb. 23 at 71. I met Bobby when he was 17 and starred alongside John Wayne in "The Cowboys" (1972). He was in at least 38 films, including "Mean Streets" (1973),

"Orca" (1977), "The Long Riders" (1980), the "Revenge of the Nerds" franchise (1984-1994), "Django Unchained" (2012), and the completed upcoming film "Sorority Shark Attack" before he died.

The fourth omission was June Lockhart from the Golden Age of Hollywood, who died on Oct. 23, 2025, at 100 years of age. She acted in 31 films, including "A Christmas Carol" (1938); "All This, and Heaven Too" (1940) with Bette Davis; "Adam Had Four Sons" (1941) with Ingrid Bergman; "Sergeant York" (1941), for which Gary Cooper won his Oscar; "Miss Annie Rooney" (1942); "Meet Me in St. Louis" (1944) with Judy Garland; "The White Cliffs of Dover" (1944); "Son of Lassie" (1945); "She-wolf of London" (1946); and "Lost in Space" (1998).

She also starred in both "Lassie" and "Lost in Space" when they became hit TV series. I used to visit with June and her actress daughter Anne Lockhart ("Battlestar Gallactica"). Looks like Lassie's mom will be lost in space for eternity!

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ENTERTAINMENT

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