

NORTH CHANNEL★STAR

Your News, Your Newspaper

Serving all of the North Shore -- Channelview, Sheldon, Galena Park, Jacinto City

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THURSDAY, AUGUST 10, 2017

www.northchannelstar.com

CHANNEL CHATTER

Texas Sales Tax Holiday is Aug. 11-13

(AUSTIN) — Texas Comptroller Glenn Hegar reminds shoppers they can save money on certain items during the state's annual sales tax holiday. This year, the sales tax holiday is scheduled for Friday, Saturday and Sunday, Aug. 11-13.

The law exempts most clothing, footwear, school supplies and backpacks priced below \$100 from sales tax, saving shoppers about \$8 on every \$100 they spend during the weekend. "Most folks won't hear the back-to-school bell for another month, but it's never too early to take advantage of the opportunity to save money on everything from ball caps to ballpoint pens," Hegar said. "As the father of three young children, I know how these expenses can add up."

Lists of apparel and school supplies that may be purchased tax-free can be found on the Comptroller's website at TexasTaxHoliday.org.

This year, shoppers will save an estimated \$87 million in state and local sales taxes during the sales tax holiday.

Texas' tax holiday weekend has been an annual event since 1999.

Robert E. Merrill Dead at 76

The community mourns the death of well-known and liked businessman "Bob" Merrill, owner of the Ace Hardware store on Uvalde Road. SEE STORY, page 3.

North Channel Ed. Foundation Casino Night

As a fund raiser, the North Channel Area Education Foundation will hold its annual "Casino Night" on Friday, August 11 from 7:00 pm to 11:00, at the Jacinto City Town Center, 1025 Oates Road. Entitled "Gamble the Night Away, Deep in the Heart of Texas!" this promises to be the event of the year, with attendees experiencing Las Vegas in the North Channel.

The Foundation is looking for corporate sponsors, at \$600. Individual tickets are \$75, contact the Chamber for either.

Back to School in Galena Park Aug. 16

Galena Park will observe its 2nd Annual Back to School event on Wednesday, August 16th from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. at the Galena Park Assembly of God Church, 1211 2nd Street. Backpacks and school supplies will be given out, as well as vaccinations and immunizations, well-child physicals, hearing and vision screening and more.

Special thanks to the Assembly of God church and all the other sponsors.

Constable Chris Diaz speaks to NC Chamber

Harris County Pct. 2 Constable Chris Diaz was on familiar ground last Friday, when he was the speaker at the North Channel Chamber's monthly luncheon. The event was held at the Jacinto City Towne Center, where Diaz was once city councilman, and then Mayor. Accompanying him at the head table was Ana Diaz, his wife and current mayor.

Diaz made a lively presentation, explaining the organization and functions of a Constable's office.

He explained that the duties break down into these categories:

- Civil Process, which includes process serving and seizure of property, as an officer of the court;
- Criminal and Law



Constable Chris Diaz was the featured speaker last Friday at the North Channel Chamber luncheon.

Enforcement, including arrests either with a warrant, or without for felonies;

- Patrol and traffic, especially in the unincorporated areas of the Precinct,

accident investigation, and task force duties;

- Support, including office and record keeping functions;
- Training;
- Community Services, including such activities as National Night Out, Easter Egg Hunt, Parades and other events involving participation in the community.

Diaz said that each Constable's office is charged with patrolling and enforcement on the Harris County Toll Roads, and "incident management" for the sections in their area.

Diaz has found that the practice of deputies being employed as Contract Deputies has helped expand the services and personnel of his department. He has contracts with the Galena Park school district, individual schools, and MUD districts, especially in the areas south of the Ship Channel around Pasadena.

Precinct 2 includes the cities of Jacinto City, Galena Park, South Houston, and portions of southeast Houston, Pasadena, Pearland and Friendswood.

Diaz was first elected as a constable in



Constable Diaz and Chamber President Margie Buetello talk after the luncheon, which was held at the Towne Center in Jacinto City.

2012, starting to serve in 2013, and he is now in his second term. A 1991 graduate of Galena Park high school, he still lives in Jacinto City with his wife Ana and their two boys. He is a graduate of San Jacinto College, and a member of a number of local civic organizations.

Rep. Gene Green hosts 22nd Annual Immunization Day Aug. 19

HOUSTON, TX – Congressman Gene Green will be hosting his Annual Immunization Day on Saturday, August 19, 2017, from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. at three locations in the 29th District, which are listed below. In addition to providing free immunizations for children, the event will give parents an opportunity to speak with Congressman Green about preventive health initia-

tives.

Immunization Day is one of our most widely attended events. "Last year, over 1,500 shots were given," said Congressman Green. "Immunizations are one of the most important disease prevention steps we can take to protect our children. This is a great opportunity for children to get the shots they need for school at no cost."

Parents are encouraged

to bring their child's immunization record to ensure that all necessary shots are received.

Rep. Green would like to thank the groups who will be helping to make Immunization Day a success this year: Harris Health System, UT Physicians Community Health & Wellness Center - Jensen, Texas Children's Hospital, and Aldine Community Health

Center who will all be administering the immunizations. Texas Children's Health Plan will be providing information on children's health insurance plans. Other partners include Aldine ISD, Galena Park ISD, Houston ISD, Walgreens, Rotary International District 5890, Lyondell Basell, and St. Hope Foundation.

The locations include:

•AAMA Learning Center
6001 Gulf Freeway, Houston, TX 77023

•Galena Park High School (Galena Park ISD)
1000 Keene Street, Galena Park, TX 77547

•UT Physicians Community Health & Wellness Center - Jensen
2620 E. Crosstimbers, Suite 100, Houston, TX 77093.

More Waste Pits by McGinnes IMC discovered in Galveston County

McGINNES WASTE PITS
HALLS BAYOU

Another waste pits site used by McGinnes Industrial Waste Corporation has come to the attention of local authorities, environmental agencies, and the media. After a TV report on the Halls Bayou Waste Pits, by Channel 26 KRIV's Greg Groogan, State Senator Larry Taylor, and the Galveston Bay Foundation's Scott Jones, called for an investigation into the status of the pits.

The San Jacinto Waste Pits are one site where McGinnes Industrial Waste Corporation deposited sludge from the Champion Pasadena paper mill. But there is a site along Halls Bayou (the one in Galveston County, not Harris County) near the Intercoastal Waterway, between the mainland and Galveston, where McGinnes dumped sludge after they quit using the San Jacinto river pits.

In a recent report by Greg Groogan on Channel 26 KRIV, the Galveston Bay sludge pits were investigated and presented to the public for the first time. Groogan discovered that there are 32 pits or ponds, enclosed with earth berms but open to the sky. These pits were an alternate site for waste from the Pasadena



Halls Bayou (Galveston County) sludge pits. Aerial view courtesy of KRIV CH26.

na Champion paper mill, after the site on the San Jacinto River was no longer used due to capacity. They have existed here for over 40 years.

Groogan was made aware of the pits by a former chemical engineer who worked for the Simpson Pasadena Paper mill, and has knowledge of the dumping. Dr. Kent Hood told Groogan he was concerned because he believes the pits are a threat to public health. Some of the pits contain the deadly chemical Dioxin, he said.

Although McGinnes and Simpson met require-

ments of state law at the time, Dr. Hood feels that McGinnes should have taken more precautions to protect the public. The sludge was loaded onto barges in Pasadena, and dumped into unlined, open pits.

Dr. Hood says that an environmental report by a consultant, RMT environmental, made in 1992, shows high levels of Dioxin in the waste material. Hood says that Dioxin is a known carcinogen, and causes developmental problems in infants, and infertility in adults. Dioxin enters the body through consumption of fish from a

contaminated source.

The State of Texas was aware of the pits and their poisonous content, Hood says. But McGinnes told them as recently as 1993 that the sludge was stored safely, and posed no harms to humans or wildlife. The Halls Bayou Sludge Pits were used from 1966 to 1994, when the mill closed.

In the early 1990s, State Representative Mike Martin tried to get the dump cleaned up, and led a public campaign against their presence in the community. Groogan quotes Martin "the idea of putting it in an open pit on the side of a

bay and thinking that's okay. I mean it's stupid on its face."

Environmental lawyer Jim Blackburn, well known in the environmental community, tried in 1992 to hold McGinnes responsible for dumping toxic waste without a solid waste permit, but was unsuccessful. Blackburn says it is still an issue today, and the public should demand a clean-up by the responsible authorities or companies.

See **MORE WASTE PITS**, page 3

COMMUNITY NEWS

Auto theft gang nabbed

HARRIS COUNTY – The Harris County Sheriff’s Office has shut down a far-reaching auto theft operation that has victimized dozens of dealers and dozens more unsuspecting shoppers.

The two-year investigation culminated in indictments that were handed down last week by a Harris County grand jury.

The grand jury returned 17 charges against nine suspects after hearing evidence presented by the Harris County District Attorney’s Office.

Eight of these nine suspects have been arrested. Felony criminal charges include participation in organized crime, theft, money laundering and making false statements to obtain credit. Some charges carry punishments that include the possibility of life in prison.

Deputies found equipment, materials and tools to create vehicle keys in 8 locations. They also found open vehicle titles and other documentation used to fraudulently sell stolen vehicles.

The investigation found that these suspects were targeting recent immigrants from Spanish-speaking countries, selling them stolen vehicles through social media, Craigslist and Offer Up.

Each of these cases involves two victims: the auto dealer and the buyer. Here are the numbers:

- 25 victimized dealers
- 27 victimized buyers
- 29 stolen vehicles

The total loss in retail value to dealers was \$787,294. Buyers of these vehicles lost \$229,000.

Sheriff’s investigators seized 18 vehicles and \$8,600 in cash. They also seized four guns, including two AR-15 rifles.

The pictured are indicted in the case:

- Jaime Zamarron Jr., 26, engaging in organized criminal activity
- Herber Viera-Baires, 27, engaging in organized criminal activity
- Joshua Azpiazu, 29, engaging in organized criminal activity (OPEN WARRANT)
- Donaltilla Reyes-Chicas, 25, engaging in organized criminal activity

- Arther Sabala, 28, engaging in organized criminal activity
- Jackie A Gonzales, 31, engaging in organized criminal activity
- Leopoldo Daniel Garcia, 26, engaging in organized criminal activity
- Jonathan Ortiz, 20, engaging in organized criminal activity
- and at top: Victor Hugo Torres, 48, false statements to obtain credit



San Jacinto Museum offers military Free Admission

The San Jacinto Museum of History Association is pleased to announce its participation in the Blue Star Museums program in 2017, offering free entrance to all active duty military personnel, including National Guard and Reserve, and their families from Monday, May 30, 2017, (Memorial Day) through Monday, Sep-

tember 5, 2017, (Labor Day). Up to five family members will also be admitted free of charge.

The museum association will give qualifying personnel free access to the Texas Forever!! The Battle of San Jacinto digital presentation; the nearly 500-foot elevator ride to the Observation Deck atop the San Jacinto

Monument with views of the historic battleground of San Jacinto and many square miles of surrounding area; and the museum’s special exhibit, A Destined Conflict: The U.S. - Mexican War, which looks at the events following the Texas Revolution that led to the United States’ first foreign war.

Charged in Crosby murder



A suspect in the shooting death of Carlton Griffin, 46, and wounding of Leonard Taylor, 17, in Crosby Park was charged with murder but Sheriff’s Media Deputies refuse to say with which murder he was charged on Tuesday, August 10.

CROSBY – The community is still reeling from the incredible murder and aggravated assault with a deadly weapon in Crosby Park here on July 28 at about 5:00 p.m.

Carlton Griffin, 45, was killed by three bullets and his stepson Leonard Taylor, 17, was wounded by gunfire in that incident and according to Harris County Sheriff’s Homicide Division two black males about 18 to 25 years of age were suspects.

During the course of conversation with family members and witnesses the name of Marcos Salas, 24, was mentioned although any connection to him by Griffin or Taylor remained a mystery.

Family members indicated that an incident at apart-

ments located at 6616 N. Main St. were related to an armed man demanding silence of a special needs child inside an apartment. And that Griffin and Taylor were following the man into the park. They indicate shots rang out, three hit Griffin mortally wounding him and one hit Taylor.

Marcos Salas, 24, was already in jail on Tuesday, August 8. He had been picked up on felony bond forfeiture on a cause related to possession of a controlled substance. In 2016, he had been convicted of having Crystal Methamphetamine according to online records. Authorities had placed a probationary mandate that he submit to drug testing but sometime last Summer, they lost track of



Marcus Salas

him.

Harris County Media Deputy Tebben Lewis indicated that Salas was charged with murder while in Harris County Jail but that the Homicide Division was not releasing which murder at this time.



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CROSBY’S HOME TOWN HOME CARE



Promoting Heart Screenings Across Texas
www.codystephensfoundation.org

This foundation is providing assistance to Texas school districts in the implementation of an ECG Screening program, to improve physicals to middle and high school student athletes, to improve education and raise awareness of sudden cardiac death (SCD) among young seemingly healthy students. The Foundation is endorsing the availability of low cost ECGs as a part of pre-participation physicals for all athletes and available to all.

Join us for the 5th Annual Dinner, Auction and celebration
American Legion Hall in Crosby, TX
Date: August 26, 2017 Time: 7 p.m.

“The Cody Stephens Go Big or Go Home Memorial Foundation” is a 501(c)3 tax deductible donation. It will be at 7 pm at the American Legion Hall on FM 2100 in Crosby, Texas on Aug. 26. Tickets are \$50 or a table for 8 is \$400; can be purchased thru paypal on the website by clicking on the “Donate” button. Currently searching for ticket buyers Corporate sponsors and auction items.

Please contact us for Inquiry
(713) 451-3600
15021 Bohemian Hall Rd., Crosby, TX
scottpstephens@gmail.com .

Boot and jeans attire. Tea, water, beer and setups are available, otherwise bring your beverage of choice. Thank you for the support.

Corporate sponsors needed, includes table to event if wanted:
Team 76 \$1,000, Bronze Sponsor \$1,500
Silver Sponsor \$3,000, Gold Sponsor \$ 4,500 and Platinum \$6,000
Thank You Scott P. Stephens

COMMUNITY NEWS

Falcon Band begins practices

Members of the Channelview High School Falcon Band began preseason practices last week. The first practices involved drills that involved learning the footwork of routines for the upcoming performances for the 2017 football season. The first game of the year is 7 p.m., Sept. 1 at Channelview's Ray Maddry Memorial Stadium.



COMMUNITY EVENTS

Evening San Jacinto Pilot Club Meeting

This newly chartered club meets on on the 1st Tuesday of each month at 7 pm at the Woodforest Presbyterian Church. For more information, see the Facebook page entitled Evening San Jacinto Pilot Club or call 832-264-1565 / 832-289-4762.

Galena Park Senior Dance

Senior Dance is every Monday at the Alvin D. Building, 1302 Keene St., Galena Park. 7 pm - 9 pm. No cover charge. Live band Country music. Call for more information: 713-455-7335.

North Shore Senior Dance

North Shore Seniors holds a dance every Thursday from 1 - 4 pm at the Grayson/Baldree Building, Corpus Christi street. Live bands and refreshments. Cost is \$ 5/per person. For more information call 713-455-3660.

The Buckshot Jamboree

Enjoy Classic Country music every Saturday night from 7 pm - 10 pm with The Buckshot Jamboree at 7414 Hartman near Old Beaumont Highway. More info, call 281-458-0729 or 832-444-5000.

San Jacinto Pilot Club meeting

The Club meets the 2nd Thursday of each month at LyondellBasell on Sheldon Road at noon. For more information, please visit www.SanJacintoPilot.com.

Trip Israel

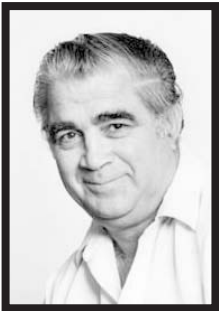
Join Wayne & Patsy Moss on a trip to ISRAEL! March 2018. Call for more information. 281-447-4307.

OBITUARIES

Robert Evans Merrill August 11, 1940 - August 2, 2017

Robert Evans (Bob) Merrill, 76, of Houston, Texas passed away peacefully, surrounded by his loving family, on August 2, 2017. He was born in Houston, Texas on August 11, 1940. He was married to Jeanette Merrill on July 8, 1985. Bob had a career as a business owner of Pettigrew-Smith Auto Parts and Ace Hardware Stores. He had a passion for his family, his businesses, and riding his tractor.

Bob was preceded in death by his first wife, Virginia Merrill. Left to cherish his memories are daughter Ramona Reddell and husband Terry; son Robert Merrill and wife Danita; son Ron Merrill and wife Darci; daughter Robin McCauley and husband Scott; daughter Melissa Wagner and husband Chris; son Scott Blanchette; daughter-



in-law Linda Blanchette; daughter Shana Taylor and husband Steve; 15 grandchildren and 6 great-grandchildren.

Family will receive friends for visitation from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. on Saturday August 5, 2017 at Brookside Funeral Home, 13747 Eastex Freeway, Houston, Texas 77039. Funeral service will begin at 1:00 p.m. in the Grand Chapel at Brookside with the interment to follow in Brookside Memorial Park.

More Waste Pits,

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

In recent time, Groogan's report says that McGinnes had the pits tested for Dioxin, and in three of the 32 found levels of Dioxin that were five times higher and more toxic than those in the San Jacinto River Waste Pits.

McGinnes and the state TCEQ, or Texas Commission on Environment Quality, claim that this poison is safely contained, and hasn't leaked into the waters of Galveston Bay. But a scientist and attorney with Galveston Bay Keeper, Bruce Bodson, claims that the real danger is from a hurricane such as Ike, or a storm that would inundate the pits and allow their contents to be washed into the waterways of the Gulf. He points out that even now the Texas Department of State Health Services has issued a Dioxin consumption warning for the whole Galveston Bay system. The TDSHS advisories cover the Houston Ship Channel, the San Jacinto River below the Lake Houston Dam, and all connected waterways north of the SH146 bridge. They also include Upper Galveston Bay, and Lower Galveston Bay. The Advisories are to limit eating certain High Risk and Medium Risk fish because they may contain Dioxins

and PCBs (Polychlorinated biphenyls).

The successor company to McGinnes, Waste Management, issued this statement: "Measured levels (of Dioxin) are typical of decades-old legacy waste from that period. The facility was certified closed more than a decade ago, the material continues to be safely contained, and TCEQ confirms that the ongoing maintenance of the site continues to be appropriate."

However, the investigative report points out that since 2010, TCEQ had not inspected the pits on-site, relying on self-inspection by McGinnes and a report submitted to them.

As environmental attorney Jim Blackburn said, "We have not seen the bad storm that is coming, and it is coming."

—Adopted from a TV26 report by Greg Groogan.

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Another fun-filled summer concludes at San Jacinto College

The College hosted 20 summer camps

PASADENA, Texas – Hundreds of young minds were introduced to college life through 20 camps hosted this summer at San Jacinto College.

From maritime and energy to robotics, science, music and athletics, campers were kept busy every week of the summer months. It was a time of career exploration for Jennifer Del Angel, a Channelview High School senior, who has spent the last three summers participating in the College's maritime summer camp. She's become so proficient in the mari-

time activities that she's often called upon to demonstrate techniques for other campers.

"Three years ago, my mom found out about this camp and asked if I wanted to try it," said Del Angel, who also recruited her sister to follow in her footsteps in attending the camp. "I loved it, the water and nature, everything. I learned a lot about the transportation and cargo jobs, different types of vessels and their functions."

Although she's still on the fence about her future career choice, Del Angel said the camp has helped her make one important decision. "Even though I have not decided on mar-

itime, I have decided to attend college after graduating from high school," she said.

For Yolanda Tijerina of North Shore, the STEM Survivor summer camp at San Jacinto College provided her two sons with supplemental education for the summer.

"This was a great opportunity for my sons," said Tijerina. "This was their first summer camp, and they came home excited to share what they learned each day."

For a glimpse of the many summer camps hosted at San Jacinto College during summer 2017, visit the College's summer camp Flickr album.



Fall classes begin
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OPINION PAGE

Two keys to protecting water wells from contamination

(NAPSI)—Over 15 million U.S. households rely on private, household wells for drinking water, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports.

If your family is ever among them, you should know how to protect your water quality. Two of the most important considerations are a proper well cap and plugging any abandoned wells on your property, advises the National Ground Water Association.

Why Cap A Well

If an active water well is not capped properly—or if an abandoned well is not plugged properly—it can be a direct pathway for contamination from above the ground to groundwater used by well owners for drinking.

Private well owners are responsible for making sure their wells are properly capped and any abandoned wells on their property are properly plugged.

What makes for a properly capped water well? Not just any covering will do on top of the well casing, that vertical pipe that extends above the ground in a water well. A proper well cap should:

- Be bolted or locked, so it cannot be easily removed
- Have a rubber seal to prevent anything from infiltrating the well where the cap is joined to the well casing
- Be in good condition.

A well cap that lacks a rubber seal or is cracked or otherwise broken can allow bugs, vermin, bacteria or other types of contaminants above the ground surface into the well, while even a tight-fitting well cap that is not bolted or locked can be jarred loose or removed by someone other than the well owner.

Well caps should be installed by a water well system professional and any well cap maintenance or replacement should be done by a professional. Also, a well system should be disinfected when a well cap is installed, repaired or replaced.

How To Plug An Abandoned Well

It can sometimes be a challenge to find aban-

doned wells on your property. Some abandoned wells are less obvious than others. Look for:

- Pipes sticking out of the ground
- Small buildings that may have been well houses
- Depressions in the ground
- Concrete vaults or pits
- Out-of-use wind-mills
- Additions to an old home that might cover up an abandoned well.

Old, abandoned wells can also be found by consulting your neighbors and old maps, property plans or property title documents. A water well system professional may do additional checking—including a records check—for more information about abandoned wells.

To properly plug an abandoned well, the professional should:

1. Remove all material from the well that may hinder proper plugging
2. Disinfect the well
3. Use a specialized grout that both keeps surface water from working its way into the borehole and prevents water from different levels in the subsurface from mixing.

How Much Will It Cost?

This depends on several factors including the depth and diameter of the well, the geology of the area and the well's accessibility and condition.

Learn More

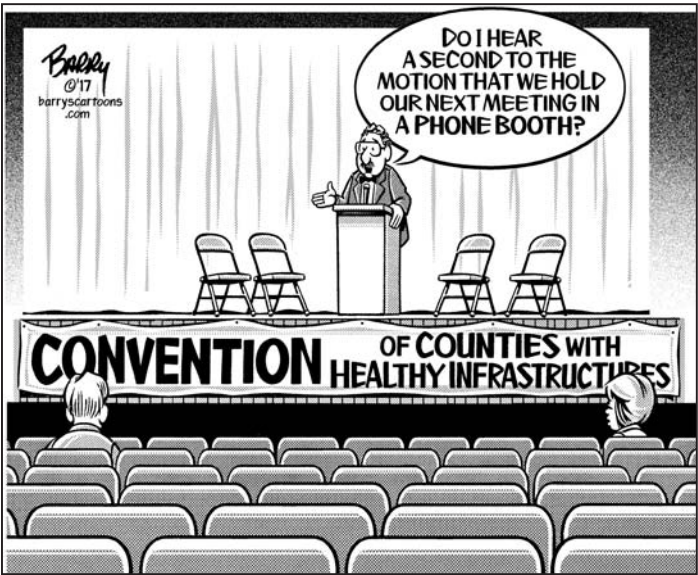
Visit www.WellOwner.org for further information about protecting groundwater and water well maintenance. There, you'll find:

- Webpages on well maintenance and groundwater protection
- Online lessons and webinars
- A well owner app and corresponding online well owner's manual
- Access to a monthly Private Well Owner Tip Sheet.

These resources and more have been underwritten by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in cooperation with the Rural Community Assistance Partnership.

tional outcomes, as is being proposed, accomplishes very little.

"I have worked very closely with Education Chairman Larry Taylor, R-Galveston, on Senate Bill 16, the School Finance Commission Bill as well as with Chairman Jane Nelson, R-Flower Mound, and Chairman Joan Huffman, R-Houston, on Senate Bill 19 -- which includes a career bonus for teachers and a boost for TRS-Care for retired teachers. I join these senators in urging that the Texas House move quickly on both bills."



House passes bills to give retired teachers relief from rising costs

AUSTIN – The Texas House on Aug. 1 approved House Bill 20, legislation appropriating \$212.7 million from the “rainy day” reserve fund to help defray rising healthcare costs for retired school employees.

Primary authors of HB 20 include: Trent Ashby, R-Lufkin; Drew Darby, R-San Angelo; Gary VanDeaver, R-New Boston; John Zerwas, R-Katy; and Donna Howard, D-Austin.

The House also approved HB 80, legislation that through the Teacher Retirement System of Texas would make a one-time cost-of-living adjustment to the retirement benefits paid to certain retirees, disability retirees and survivors. To be eligible for the increase, the annuitant must have retired between Aug. 31, 2004 and Aug. 31, 2015.

Primary authors of HB 80 include: Rep. Darby, Ryan Guillen, D-Rio Grande City; Rene Oliveira, D-Brownsville; and Bobby Guerra, D-McAllen.

Speaker Joe Straus, who presides over the House, applauded the action, saying: “Since the end of the regular session, House members across the state have heard from retirees who are concerned about some significant increases in premiums and deductibles. Based on the feedback we’ve heard back home, the House cast an overwhelming vote (Aug. 1) to help retired teachers who are facing very steep increases in their monthly expenses.”

In other news, the House passed HB 25, which would appropriate \$34 million from the state’s \$11 billion rainy day fund and \$45 million in federal funds for fiscal year 2018, plus another \$36 million from the rainy day fund and \$48.3 million in federal funds for fiscal year 2019 to the Health and Human Services Commission for Medicaid acute care therapy services.

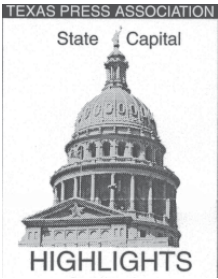
Primary authors of HB 25 include: Sarah Davis, R-Houston; Walter “Four” Price, R-Amarillo; Rep. Guerra; Rep. Darby; and Matt Krause, R-Fort Worth.

These and all House bills, however, must be approved by the Senate in order to move forward to the governor’s desk for final consideration.

Former governor dies

Mark White, who served as governor of

STATE CAPITAL HIGHLIGHTS By Ed Sterling



Texas from 1983 to 1987, died Aug. 5 at age 77. He was the last living Democrat to have held the post.

White also served as Texas attorney general from 1979 to 1983, and as Texas secretary of state from 1973 to 1977.

Gov. Abbott ordered flags statewide to be lowered to half-staff in honor of Gov. White. “Mark White cared deeply about Texas, and he devoted his life to making our state even better, particularly when it came to educating our children,” Abbott said.

While White served as governor, the Texas Legislature passed the “no-pass, no-play” law affecting secondary school athletes. Lawmakers also passed a tax to fund teacher pay-raises. Plans are for White’s body to lie in state in the Capitol Rotunda. Burial will be in the state cemetery.

Tax revenue increases

Texas Comptroller Glenn Hegar on Aug. 1 announced that state sales tax revenue totaled \$2.56 billion in July, 7.9 percent more than in July 2016.

Sales tax receipts from all major economic sectors were up compared to last year and total sales tax revenue for the three months ending in July 2017 is up 7.3 percent compared to the same period a year ago, Hegar said.

“The most notable increases were from oil- and gas-related industries, as spending on well development continues to rebound. Despite the recent uptick, sales tax revenue remains in line with recent estimates from my office,” he added.

Railroad funding arrives

The U.S. Department of Transportation on Aug. 3 announced the Texas Department of Transportation has received a \$7 million federal grant to help rebuild the Presidio-Ojinaga, Mexico, International Rail Bridge and 72 miles of track on the state-owned South Orient Rail Line that runs from the border to near Coleman.

Texas Transportation Commission Chairman Tryon Lewis hailed the “FASTLANE” grant as a critical investment in the West Texas oil and gas industry.

“Cross-border trade is the lifeblood of many communities in my district,” commented U.S. Rep. Will Hurd, R-San Antonio, whose congressional district includes the affected area. “As one of five border crossings between Texas and Mexico, these repairs are vital to Texas’ economy,” he added.

Hurricane briefing is held

Gov. Abbott on Aug. 4 announced that he joined President Donald Trump, heads of federal agencies and other governors from across the country via teleconference for a 2017 White House Hurricane Briefing.

“Texas is in a constant state of hurricane preparedness and the safety of Texans is our top priority,” Abbott said.

Growing support for Limiting Growth In Government Spending

AUSTIN – July 25, 2017 – Governor Greg Abbott today announced that his call for limiting the growth in government spending to no more than the growth of population and inflation is generating growing support across Texas. This issue is part of the Governor's 20-item agenda for the ongoing special legislative session.

“NFIB/Texas fully supports legislation which will limit the growth of government and keep spending in check. In an NFIB/Texas survey, our members strongly favor legislation that would limit future annual increases in state spending to the increase in the rate of inflation plus state population growth.” - Will Newton, Executive Director, National Federation of Independent Business - Texas

“TPPF's research finds that Texas' state budget is up 11.8% above population growth plus inflation from 2004 to 2017, which amounts to an excessive burden of \$1,600, on average, per family of four. With Texas on course to having a historic back-to-back Conservative Texas Budgets that increase by less than this metric while meeting the needs of Texans, strengthening the state's spending limit to permanently restrain the growth of government should be a top priority so taxpayers have more opportunities to prosper.” – Vance Ginn, Economist, Texas Public Policy Foundation

“Spending limits are the foundation for fiscal responsibility and are designed to reduce the dependence on government. We applaud Governor Abbott for adding this item to the Special Session call and look forward to working alongside the Governor and all elected officials in this effort to limit the growth of government” – Jerome Greener, Texas State Director, Americans for Prosperity.

Lt. Governor Dan Patrick: Commitment to Public Education

AUSTIN – August 8, 2017, Lt. Gov. Patrick made this statement following a press conference held by over a dozen Texas senators:

"Texas senators spoke out this morning on what has been one of my top priorities for over a decade since first serving on the Senate Education Committee and later as Education Chairman. Public education is also a top priority for the majority of Republican senators and they are absolutely right that simply adding more funding without a focus on teachers and educa-

LIFESTYLE

OBITUARIES

Derna Maria Hughes



Derna Maria Hughes, 91, of Houston, Texas, passed away August 03, 2017. Derna was born June 26, 1926 in Italy to parents, Angelo & Albina Memmo. She grew up in Italy during World War II, where she met her husband of 70 years, Robert Eugene Hughes, Sr. at the conclusion of the war. She was a loving wife, mother and grandmother who lived most of her adult life in the North Channel area raising two sons and a daughter and was diligent at making sure they all graduated from Northshore High School. She was a great cook and loved listening to a variety of music especially Vince Gill music and opera on

Sunday. Derna and her husband often volunteered for the Right to Life organization through church and worked with the Sheltering Arms facility for the elderly. She is survived by her husband, Robert Hughes, Sr; by children, Lilly Hughes & her partner, Dennis W. Renfro; Robert E. Hughes, Jr. & wife, Lee-Ann; and Roger Hughes & wife, Jerri; by grandchildren, Austin Hughes, Zackery Hughes, Jarred Hughes; great-grandchildren, Kandis Golden, Kolby Hughes, Tucker Hughes and Tred Hughes; as well as by one sister, Diomira Dubose and by other extended family and friends. A visitation and service celebrating her life will be held Monday, August 7, 2017 at Carter-Conley Funeral Home with visitation starting from 11:30 to 12:30 p.m. and services starting at 12:30 p.m. She will be laid to rest in the Houston National Cemetery following services.

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We are all familiar with the Beatitudes of Jesus in the fifth chapter of Matthew. But Psalm 84 contains three beatitudes.

The first talks about our relationship with God - about being with Him and worshipping Him and praising Him. "Blessed," said the psalmist, "are those who dwell in Your House; they are ever praising You." Indeed, we are truly blest that His invitation to us is "Come, now is the day of salvation" - an invitation to be with Him today and every day throughout eternity. To dwell in His presence forever.

The second beatitude we find is "Blessed are those whose strength is in You, who have set their hearts on pilgrimage." Throughout this life we are not on our own to struggle with the difficulties of life. His strength is always available to us when we are weak, weary and worn out. He knew pilgrimage would be long and difficult, so He made Himself available to us whenever we call on Him.

And, perhaps the last beatitude actually sums up the other two: "O Lord Almighty, blessed is the man who trusts in You."

A young college student was dying from cancer at home. He had been heavily sedated for days. Every now and then his Mother would sit by his bedside and ask, "Dennis, are you here?" He would answer her, "Yes, Mom, I'm still here." On the day of his death, however, he responded to her question, "No, Mother I'm going home."

Above his bed in an empty room are the words: "I hear you, Christian, happy, unafraid, For you hear a song from the other side of death."

Indian Gaming active at Livingston Reservation

HIGHLANDS – Two members of the Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas told the Rotary Club about their reservation 17 miles east of Livingston and the history of their tribe.

Yolanda Poncho and her husband Clint told the story of how the state of Texas has opposed their tribe having gambling. In 2001 the state closed the Class 3 Casino the tribe ran. However, in 2015 they sought federal authorization to re-open a Class 2 gaming hall, which allows bingo style electronic machines, and card games.

The state of Texas is still opposed to this activity, and a trial is scheduled for later in 2017. If the tribe wins, their ultimate goal is to expand into Class 3 gaming, which is Las Vegas style games.

Presently the Casino is open 24/7 and thousands make the 75 mile trip from Houston every month.

The reservation consists of about 10,000 acres, and the tribe has 1200 members, of which 600 live on the reservation.

The gaming is seen as an important revenue stream for the tribe, and also for the Livingston community. Naskila Gaming, as it is known, employs about 200 persons, of which half are tribal members. Payroll for these totals about \$8 million.

The Alabama-Coushatta is a self-governing nation, providing education, medical services, police, and housing. The reservation is alcohol free.

The Ponchos asked everyone to help support their cause, by visiting the reservation and emailing your support, at www.supportnaskila.com.



Yolanda and Clint Poncho, members of the Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas, spoke at the Highlands Rotary about the re-opening of their Gaming hall and life on the reservation.



The National Indian Gaming Commission has authorized electronic Bingo at the reservation.



The Alabama-Coushatta Indian Tribe opened their gaming building in June 2016, a 14,000 square foot rustic building.

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John 7:38

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Pride only breeds quarrels,
but wisdom is found in
those who take advice.

God is our refuge
and strength, a
very present help
in trouble
Psalm: 46:1

AVOIDING LUNG CANCER

Saved By The Scan

(NAPSI)—So, you've stopped smoking. Congratulations! Take a deep breath and thank yourself for reducing your risk of lung cancer, the No. 1 cancer killer of both men and women.

What To Do Now

Take the next step. According to the experts at the American Lung Association, for some quitting is only half the battle. Speak to your doctor to see if you might qualify for lung cancer screening. A low-dose CT scan is key to finding lung cancer early, when more treatment options are available and the chances of survival are higher.

In fact, survival rates are five times higher when lung cancer is detected early, but most cases are not diagnosed until later stages. The new availability of screening for those at high risk can save lives and turn the tide against lung cancer. Approximately half of those considered high risk for lung cancer are former smokers, but many former smokers don't realize they may still be at

risk. It's important for both smokers and former smokers to speak with their doctor about screening options.

New Campaign Seeks to Save Lives

To help current and former smokers learn more about screening, the American Lung Association's LUNG FORCE initiative and the Ad Council created the "Saved By The Scan" campaign. "Saved By The Scan" aims to raise awareness of the benefits of early detection through lung cancer screening and drive high-risk individuals to take an online lung cancer screening eligibility quiz. After all, if only half of the high-risk population were screened, more than 15,000 lives could be saved.

Those eligible for screening include anyone age 55 to 80 who is a former smoker and who quit in the last 15 years, and who has at least 30 "pack years" smoking history (that is, smoked a pack a day for 30 years, two packs for 15 years, or any combination of years and packs that comes to

30).

The campaign features a television spot directed by Academy Award nominee Rodrigo Prieto and shows a person climbing an enormous mountain of cigarettes, symbolic of the effort it took to overcome smoking addiction and the hundreds of thousands of cigarettes smoked. After conquering the addiction, the protagonist has proactively taken the extra step to get screened for lung cancer, which is punctuated by the tagline: "You stopped smoking. Now start screening."

The American Lung Association has been improving lung health for more than 110 years and is the No. 1 organization associated with the fight against lung cancer.

Learn More

To take the quiz, go to www.SavedByTheScan.org. For additional facts on healthy lungs, including tips on how to quit smoking and information on how to help others, visit Lung.org or call (800) LUNG-USA.

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ROMANS 8:18

All of them were filled with
the Holy Spirit and began to
speak in other tongues as the
Spirit enabled them. Acts 2:4

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Be alert. Continue strong in
the faith. Have courage
and be strong.
1 Corinthians 16:13

Rise in the presence of the
aged, show respect for the
elderly and revere your God.
Leviticus 19:32

ASK THE EXPERT

Diamond Jim: "Have you ever heard of a group called the Patriot Guard Riders”?

Interesting that you should ask...One day in August 2013, I attended my weekly North Shore Rotary Club meeting. Our speaker was Tom Berleth. At that time he was an Asst. Deputy State Captain for the Patriot Guard Riders in Texas. He presented a program that touched me deeply and that I will remember for the rest of my life. The Patriot Guard Riders started back in early August of 2005 with

the American Legion Riders chapter 136 from Kansas. They were appalled to hear that a fallen hero's memory was being tarnished by misguided religious zealots who were protesting at funerals. They decided to do something about it. At the ALR 136 August meeting, Director: Chuck "Pappy" Barshney appointed members, Terry "Darkhorse" Houck, Cregg "Bronco 6" Hansen, Steve



ASK DIAMOND JIM

"McDaddy" McDonald, and Bill "Wild Bill" Logan to form a committee to strategize and form a battle plan to combat Fred Phelps and the Westboro Baptist Church. When they heard that the WBC was going to protest at the Funeral of Sgt. John Doles in Chelsea, Oklahoma, they established a Mission Statement, which included getting the families' permission and contacting law enforcement and other Motorcycle Groups in Oklahoma. They agreed that their ultimate goal was to get veterans and motorcycle organizations involved in every state so that each state could handle the situation internally and not rely on other states to do the job. They were very successful in mustering riders to honor Sgt. Doles and limiting the intrusion by the WBC. After the Chelsea Mission the Kansas American Legion Riders wanted all Motorcycle Groups/ Organizations to be recognized. On the 18th of October 2005 the Patriot Guard name was established and was announced on the 27th of October 2005 to the 100 + motorcyclists present at the Tonganoxie Mission to Honor Spc Lucas Frantz. Following the missions in South Haven, KS and a later ride in Edmond, OK, Jeff "Twister" Brown, from Broken Arrow, OK, decided to do more than just ride. He saw a need to get a strong nation-wide communications and recruiting program in place. He contacted

the original AL riders in Kansas and told them of his plans. They openly shared their experiences, suggestions, and encouragement. Within a matter of days, Brown had formed the Patriot Guard Riders and began a nation-wide campaign to garner support. Similarly, after a mission ride in Greeley, CO, Hugh Knaus and Jason "Waldo" Wallin answered the call of the newly formed Patriot Guard Riders, becoming the national webmaster and communications director, respectively. Within a matter of days, a mission statement was refined and a website was built, rebuilt, and launched. A call immediately went out to individual riders and groups across the nation to join and ride with the PGR. State Captains were recruited to work more closely with the members in their area. The growth has been phenomenal. Within a week their membership included many riders from associations like the VFW, American Legion, Rolling Thunder, ABATE, Combat Vets Motorcycle Association, Intruder Alert, Leathernecks Motorcycle Club, and almost five hundred individual riders. To the credit of Hugh and "Waldo", the PGR website had received almost 566,000 hits in the first two weeks! Patriots from all over America and several foreign countries responded. Emails were pouring in from people wanting to support and join the newly formed PGR.

So, that's a pretty concise picture of where we came from and where we are today. A great deal of credit goes to that small group of Kansas American Legion Riders, but none of this could have ever been accomplished without the patriot member who takes time out of their life to honor a fallen soldier and their family. I joined Patriot Guard Riders on that very day, and I want to share this with each of you. Please read the following Mission Statement and Vision Statement: Mission Statement: "The Patriot Guard Riders is a 100% Volunteer, Federally registered 501(c)3 non-profit organization which ensures dignity and respect at memorial services honoring Fallen Military Heroes, First Responders and Honorably Discharged Veterans." Vision Statement: The Patriot Guard Riders is a diverse amalgamation of riders from across the nation. We have one thing in common besides motorcycles. We have an unwavering respect for those who risk their very lives for America's freedom and security including Fallen Military Heroes, First Responders and Honorably Discharged Veterans. If you share this respect, please join us. We don't care what you ride or if you ride, what your political views are, or whether you're a hawk or a dove. It is not a


requirement that you be a veteran. It doesn't matter where you're from or what your income is; you don't even have to ride. The only prerequisite is Respect. Our main mission is to attend the funeral services of fallen American heroes as invited guests of the family. Each mission we undertake has two basic objectives:

1. Show our sincere respect for our fallen heroes, their families, and their communities.
2. Shield the mourning family and their friends from interruptions created by any protestor or group of protestors. We accomplish the latter through strictly legal and non-violent means.


To those of you who are currently serving and fighting for the freedoms of others, at home and abroad, please know that we are backing you. We honor and support you with every mission we carry out, and we are praying for a safe return home for all. If you would like to become a Patriot Guard Rider... as I did on that special day... then go to www.patriotguard.org and join. Freedom Isn't Free... But Membership Is. I did purchase a patch on the website... the patch pictured above...for only \$10...to honor those who risk their very lives for America's freedom and security. Take a look... I think you'll want one too...

Diamond Jim is a diamond dealer and precious metals broker of NTR Metals. See more at: www.pineforestjewelry.com. If you have questions pertaining to jewelry, watches, diamonds, precious stones, precious metals, and other questions related to the jewelry industry, email jmills@pineforestjewelry.com.

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Lulac Council hosts Annual Scholarship Awards



On Sunday, July 30th, LULAC Council 4703 (Galena Park) held its Annual Scholarship Awards Banquet at Don Chile' Mexican Restaurant. LULAC awarded over \$11,000.00 in scholarships to 23 students from North Shore & Galena Park High Schools, San Jacinto College North and University of St. Thomas.

Funds were raised by the council's Annual Roast & Toast held last year honoring Dr. Brenda Hellyer. This year's honoree will be Dan Mims, Chairman of the Board of Trustees, San Jacinto College.

North Channel Chamber welcomes new member



North Channel Chamber of Commerce ribbon cutting for Wee Kare Pediatrics was on July 12, 2017. Dr Angel and Missy Munoz is pictured with Kamela Whittaker, office manager; Melisa Hernandez, Administration; Jennifer Taylor, PA; Reene Douglas, MD; Staff: Lydia Gonzalez, Emma Torres, Stephanie Hoagland, Keren Castillo. Wee Kare opened their doors and started seeing patients on June 22, 2017. Wee Kare is located at 14630 Woodforest Blvd, Houston, Texas 77015. For more information call 281-540-5437.

Channelview FFA attends State Conference



Members of the Channelview Future Farmers of America attended the State FFA Conference in Corpus Christi recently. Channelview FFA officers participating in the conference were, from left, Madisyn Beach, Student Advisor; Bailey Fingleman, Treasurer; Jessica Rivera, Vice President; Colton Taylor, President; Hilary Hutchins, Secretary; Madison Hall, Sentinel; Allen James, Reporter and Deariya Benoit, Chaplain.

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