

NORTH CHANNEL★STAR

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AREA FIGHTS AGAINST SPREAD OF VIRUS

Number of Cases rises to 57; Officials close Schools, cancel Public Events

UPDATED - March 18, 2020 - Health Officials confirmed the 57th case of coronavirus in the Harris County region.. Officials said that they recorded 10 cases in Houston, 23 cases in Harris County, 12 cases in Fort Bend County, 3 cases in Brazoria County, 4 in Galveston County, 7 in Montgomery County, and 3 in Matagorda County, where a 90 year old man died. There were 12 new cases reported in one day. (NOTE: This number will change as days go by.)

HOUSTON – With 57 coronavirus (COVID-19) cases reported in the Houston and Harris County areas, the city and the county are on high alert. Most of the cases can be traced to either



Harris County Judge Lina Hidalgo with Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner and County Health Director Umair Shah, at press conference on Coronavirus.

a vacation cruise on the Nile River in Egypt, or attendance at the Houston Rodeo cook-off. However, several cases have not been identified with these causes, and are being investigated.

Actions have been taken to prevent the virus spread, such as closures of the Rodeo, schools and colleges, athletic events, and entertainment. This week the closure of all restaurants and bars was added and groups were limited to less than 50 persons. The scope of closures is unprecedented in modern times.

In East Harris County, school districts were closed, and hot meals were being distributed at various schools. Colleges and many public facilities, parks and libraries, were also closed.

A call center has been opened to answer questions from the public. Houstonians can call the center at 832-393-4220 to speak to Health department staff and obtain information about the disease or get their questions answered.

The call center will open weekdays from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. and Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. It will return voice messages left after hours the following day on a first call, first served basis.

Federal action is expected later this week, with test centers and financial relief for those unable to work. The government has been criticized for a slow, late re-

See Coronavirus ,
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Mike Parrott inducted into Softball Hall of Fame

North Shore's favorite son, and retired Judge, was honored in January at the Texas USSSA Hall of Fame Banquet and Induction Ceremonies held at the Dallas Marriott South Hotel.

Mike Parrott was recognized as being in the Top 100 Greatest Softball players nationally by the USSSA softball association. His career in adult amateur softball competition spans from 1975 to 1983, and then two returns from retirement in 1987 and 1990.

Parrott's awards are many, including in 1980 leading the nation in Homeruns, with 323. In his career he garnered 61 awards for his homerun prowess and in tournament play.

Parrott attended Galena Park High School, and was an outstanding athlete in Football, Basketball, and Baseball. He also was a University of Houston graduate, where he played football. But he only played Softball after a friend asked him to fill in at a game, in 1975. As he told it, "I could play baseball so I thought I could also play softball, even though I never had."

His abilities with a home run earned him honors in at least 8 All-Star teams over the years. He still holds the record in the Coca Cola Classis, played in Georgia, with 25 homeruns in one weekend.



Mike Parrott with Commemorative Bat, Award Plaque, and Souvenir Ring.

Over his career Parrott played for teams in Houston, Pasadena, Oklahoma City, North Caroline, Miami, and Lufkin, Texas.

Parrott worked for Harris County for 43 years, first in the Pct. 2 Parks Department, and then in 1992 was elected as a

See PARROTT, page 8

Community members opposed construction of The Hollows Apartments in Channelview

Channelview Health & Improvement Coalition Meeting Minutes

By Carolyn Stone

PART II

During December research of The Hollows found this \$37,811,161 182 unit subsidized housing apartment complex was to be funded with \$11,000,000 of Harris County Community Development Grant Disaster Recovery (CDBG) funds along with mortgage revenue bonds and 4% tax credits for the investors. Community members were opposed to this project and began preparing a petition in opposition to present to Pct. 2 Commissioner Garcia, Judge Hidalgo and the other Harris County Commissioners. On or about December 4, 2019 community members learned the

developer, LDG Development, was holding a public meeting at Harvey S. Brown Elementary on Wallisville Rd. on Saturday Dec. 21st to announce The Hollows Apartments to the community. Despite this meeting being held four days before Christmas several hundred community members attended the meeting and were very vociferous in their concerns related to and in opposition to the proposed project. In response to the community concerns and opposition to the complex Horace Allison from Housing & Urban Development lectured community members informing them they should be better people, but the most telling statement came from the developer, Mr. Dru Childre of LDG Development, who informed the community members "You need to

understand this is not housing for hard working individuals like yourself." Mr. Childre's statement was applauded by the community members and taken as confirmation this complex would be a burden upon the residents of Channelview. At the December 21, 2019 meeting Pct. 2 had representatives, Nelson Espitia Community Relations, Mercedes Sanchez Housing Policy, and Cindy Miller Channelview Liaison present to hear the concerns of community. Pct. 1 Commissioner Rodney Ellis, whose precinct is literally directly across Dell Dale from the proposed site did not have any of his Pct. 1 representatives present.

Following the October,

See Channelview
Health & Improvement
Coalition, Page 3

List of cancellations, postponements in area

The containment of the Coronavirus has caused the following cancellations or postponements: Harris County and the City of Houston had adopted States of Emergency for one week, that have been extended to the end of March with the probability of longer.

EDUCATION:

The following School Districts have cancelled classes thru April 10: Aldine, Channelview, Crosby, Dayton, Deer Park, Galena Park, Goose Creek, Houston ISD, Huffman. Sheldon said they cancelled classes through March 20, subject to review. Free meals will be served by most districts on the days off. Many daycare facilities are starting open, with limited access.

Houston ISD, cancelled all classes and events until April 10th.

The Texas Education Agency and Governor Abbott have suspended the STAAR tests for this school year.

Lee College and San Jacinto College cancelled classes until April 23 at which time they will hold online classes, Lone Star College extended their break until March 25, Houston Community College extended cancelled classes through April 27, and the University of Hous-

ton will start remote classes April 23.

EVENTS

Houston Rodeo cancelled. Most city sponsored events are cancelled for March.

Crosby Fair & Rodeo has cancelled the Rockin C Round-Up and the BBQ and Steak Cook-off.

East Aldine District Ground-breaking cancelled.

Highlands, Crosby, and North Houston Little League Parade and Opening Day Postponed. Reset for April 6th or later.

St. Patrick's Day Parade cancelled. Also, the Art Car Parade is cancelled for this year.

Any public event with over 250 attendees.

San Jacinto Battle and Festival cancelled.

BAA workshop cancelled.

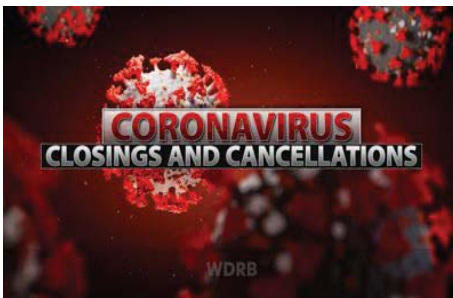
Judge Stephens Teens Rock camp postponed and will be rescheduled.

Pilot Club Bunco evening in Channelview has been cancelled.

Crosby Chamber has cancelled it's March luncheon.

Dayton has cancelled the Mudbug Festival.

Galena Park/Jacinto City Community-Industry Partnership meeting has been cancelled



PUBLIC FACILITIES:

Pct. 1 and Pct. 2 Community Centers closed through March.

Houston Libraries and Harris County Libraries are closed indefinitely.

Harris County Clerk's office is closed downtown and at the branches.

Houston Parks Events cancelled for March.

ENTERTAINMENT: Houston Zoo, Space Center Houston, Discovery Green events, Houston Ballet, Alley Theater, Disneyland, Disney World closed for March.

Alley Theater, Houston Symphony and Houston Ballet, cancelled through March.

SPORTS:

Astros season opener moved to April.

Soccer, basketball rescheduled or cancelled, check with your team.

UH Men's Basketball, AAC tournament cancelled.

RESTRICTIONS:

Access to most hospitals and VA Med Ctr. are limited. Supermarkets have limited their hours to 8am to 8pm.

Most shopping malls have changed their hours, from noon to 7pm. However, the Galleria and Katy Mills Mall are closed through March 29.

Note: this list is changing daily, check with your event prior to attendance.

Yuroba Harris receives St. Hope Award

By Allan Jamail

At the St. Hope Award Ceremony Honoree Yuroba Harris, District Director for Congresswoman Sylvia Garcia received the COMMUNITY EXCELLENCE AWARD.

The award stated, "Presented to Yuroba Harris' in honor of her exemplary efforts to advance community health leading to life impacting outcomes for many disproportionately affected members of our Community."

St. Hope Foundation Inc. is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) community health care organization that was established in November 1999. St. Hope was created in response to the growing need for innovative, effective health care solutions designed to reduce health disparities within Houston and rural counties.

St. Hope has five Houston area locations, for more information visit: <https://www.sthopefoundation.com>



Harris County Jail suspends inmate visitation to prevent Coronavirus outbreak

Last week, Harris County was placed under a public health disaster declaration due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. To prevent the potential spread, the visitation to Harris County Jail will be suspended until further notice. The measures are being put into effect to protect our staff and inmates.

The suspension will be effective, Saturday, March 14, 2020.

Attorney-client interviews and other essential visits will not be affected. In order to assure family and friends are being able to communicate with their love ones, a free calling program will be implemented for our facilities.

- Securus will offer each inmate two free calls per week for the next 30 days.

- The phone platform would re-set each week.
 - The calls will be the same standard length that inmates have now.
 - To set up an account with Securus you need to know the inmate's SPN number, you can also visit www.harriscountyso.org/JailInfo/inmate_info_inmate_phonecalls.aspx or call Securus at 1-800-844-6591.
- Inmates housed at the Joint Processing Center (JPC) will have the option to do video visitations – this service is only available for inmates housed at the JPC.
- The public can do it from home using a home computer and a webcam, from Monday thru Friday from 4 p.m. until 9 p.m. and Saturdays and Sun-

days from 8 a.m. until 9 p.m. To obtain more information about the off-site video visitation please visit www.harriscountyso.org/JailInfo/inmate_info_inmate_visitation.aspx.

The Harris County jail system has experienced epidemics in the past and that experience has prepared the jail. "We are screening all new inmates in the booking process at the JPC, which counts with a full clinic. The jail has COVID-19 test kits to screen inmates in-house. We have also set aside four quarantine tanks," said Sheriff Ed Gonzalez. "We apologize for the inconvenience this may cause, but the health of our staff, inmates and community is our priority."

NEWS FROM THE CAPITOL

Governor Abbott waives STAAR testing requirements

Is Requesting Suspension Of Federal Testing Requirements For 2019-2020 School Year

AUSTIN - Governor Greg Abbott announced that he has waived the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) testing requirements for the 2019-2020 school year. Additionally, Governor Abbott is requesting that the Department of Education (DOE) waive federal testing requirements for the 2019-2020 school year.

Governor Abbott is working closely with the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to ensure that schools continue to deliver instruction to students while students are absent or while schools are closed due to COVID-19. This in-

cludes tailoring instruction for students with special needs so that they have access to the same education as other students in the district. Governor Abbott will continue to work with the TEA on developing additional methods to ensure that students are learning and ready to succeed at the next grade-level. These discussions are ongoing and more information will be provided as it develops.

"Your health and safety are top priorities, and the state of Texas will give school districts flexibility to protect and ensure the health of students, faculty, and their families," said Governor Abbott. "We will empower schools to make the best decisions to protect their communities from COVID-19."

The move to waive testing requirements reflects the Governor's emphasis on public health over all other priorities at this time. In normal times, Texas' assessment system provides educators and parents with reliable information on whether or not their students have mastered grade-level content. The Governor remains committed to ensuring parents, students, and school districts have access to this information in future years.

Superintendents should continue to prioritize the health and safety of students, faculty, and their families. Their leadership is an important part of our statewide efforts to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 and protect public health.

METRO expands public safety efforts, adjusts some service, encourages social distancing on system

METRO is continuing to expand its public service efforts to protect against the spread of the coronavirus COVID-19. Later this week, the Authority will begin adjusting some services to encourage responsible social distancing on its local bus routes, light rail and Park & Rides.

During morning and evening rush hours, more buses will now be put in service on heavily traveled local routes in order to lessen crowding. To that end, seating will be reduced by approximately 50 percent to allow more space between passengers. As buses fill, operators will turn on the electronic destination signs advising patrons waiting at stops to "please take the next bus."

Those utilizing METRORail, Park & Rides and METROLift should also expect reduced capacity to mitigate close contact among riders.

These additional safety measures may result in delays on certain routes and riders should plan accordingly, including adjusting travel schedules. Also, METRO's TRIP app and Next Bus Arrival Texting may not be accurate. Customers should stay informed by subscribing to real-time, route information through METRO's service alert system and monitoring the agency's



METRO recommends social distance while using its service.

- social media accounts, Twitter, Facebook. Customer service can be reached at 713-635-4000.
- For those who are symptom-free and not part of a high-risk group, these are additional safeguards to consider when using public transportation:
- Consider commuting during off-peak hours
 - Where available, take a seat instead of holding onto poles and handles
 - When you get to your destination, wash hands or use sanitizer
- The Authority is also:
- Putting an even greater emphasis on disinfecting surfaces frequently touched by the public during our daily bus and rail cleaning
 - Displaying posters
- along the system reminding riders of public health officials' recommendations to stop the spread of germs
- Communicating safety messages on service alerts
 - Remaining in close and continuous communication with local public health and emergency management officials to monitor developments
- While METRO uses an antibacterial disinfectant to clean vehicles and facilities, self care is still the best protection. It is important that the public relies on credible sources for information and follows the guidance of health officials who encourage:
- Proper hygiene
 - Frequent hand washing
 - Stay home if you're sic

Governor Abbott waives certain vehicle registration, titling, and parking placard regulations in Texas

AUSTIN - Governor Greg Abbott has announced that Texas is waiving certain rules relating to vehicle registration, parking placards for persons with disabilities, and titling to aid the state's efforts to combat COVID-19. These suspensions will allow Texans to avoid penalties for failure to timely title or register a vehicle, or renew a parking placard. The waivers fall within the actions the Governor is taking under the State of Disaster he declared last week, and are part of Texas' efforts to reduce in-person contact among Texans and slow the spread of COVID-19.

"The State of Texas con-

tinues to implement a comprehensive plan to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, and that includes strategies to reduce preventable in-person contact," said Governor Abbott. "By suspending these rules, Texans can avoid unnecessary crowds and in-person contact without fear of being penalized. We encourage all Texans to continue practicing social distancing and to take preventative actions to protect their health and the health of those around them."

The Governor will work with the Texas Department of Motor Vehicles to ensure law enforcement officers throughout the

state are aware of these waivers. The Department of Motor Vehicles will also continue to provide registration renewal services online at renew.txdmv.gov. For additional information, Texans should contact the Texas Department of Motor Vehicles at (888) 368-4689.

The following regulations and rules are suspended under the Governor's Disaster Declaration:

- Registration and Title Requirements
- Renewal of Persons with Disabilities Parking Placards
- 30-Day Temporary Registration Permits

Governor Abbott activates National Guard in response to COVID-19

AUSTIN - Governor Greg Abbott today activated the Texas National Guard to be prepared to assist with response efforts for COVID-19. This preparative measure will ensure that the Texas National Guard can assist in various forms throughout the state when needed. Healthcare workers and first responders who are

members of the Texas National Guard are excluded from this activation so that they can continue serving the people of Texas in their respective fields.

"By activating the Texas National Guard, we are ensuring Texas is prepared as we continue to mitigate the spread of COVID-19," said Governor Abbott. "I am grateful to the men and

women of the National Guard for their dedication to serving their fellow Texans, and want to assure the public that this is a precautionary measure to make sure the Texas National Guard has the capability to serve at a moment's notice where they are needed most."

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COMMUNITY NEWS

★

CHANNELVIEW HEALTH & IMPROVEMENT COALITION

Meeting Minutes by Carolyn Stone



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

November and December updates further discussion was held in relation to The Hollows. Shared with the attendees was following the developer's meeting some of the statements community members had heard made by the developer were researched with the following results:

1. Nelson Espitia Pct. 2 Community Relations stated Commissioner Garcia had no say in the approval of this complex. - On the Harris County Commissioner's Meeting Agenda for 07/30/19 approval was provided for the submittal to the TX General Land Office the Harris County Affordable Rental Development projects using 2017 Hurricane Harvey Texas CDBG-DR round one funding in the total amount of \$42,560,000 for four projects (two in Pct. 1 & two in Pct. 2), one of which was for LDG Development LP for The Hollows in Precinct 2. This approval was provided by Pct. 2 Commissioner Garcia, Judge Hidalgo and the other Commissioners. This approval also was provided following a series of community meetings Commissioner Garcia held after being elected to determine what his constituents concerns and needs were. His meeting held in Channelview was on 06/30/19 and was designated "Housing". Attendees at that meeting informed the Commissioner's representatives the residents wanted more people who were of permanent nature and vested in the community, they wanted infrastructure such as a hospital, more law enforcement and neighborhood street lights to support the existing residents. The residents did not want people who were temporary in nature who had no true investment in the community. Commissioner Garcia's approval of the submittal to the TX GLO was in direct contradiction to what his Channelview constituents had told him just one month previously. Harris County also has input into the COH Planning & Development Commission's approval of any project development application which lays within the City of Houston's 5 mile Extra Territorial Jurisdiction. Harris County is also the entity who is in control of approving and issuing any construction permits.

2. The developer LDG Development stated they had not yet purchased the land the complex was proposed to be built on. - Property records reflect the lot "Reserve A, Block 1 Wyndham At Sonoma Ranch" is currently divided into two portions. One portion, 7.54 acres, is owned by WCTCB and the other portion, 4.88 acres, is

owned by Pari Investments.

a. WCTCB is believed to stand for Westdale Capital Texas Community Bank. Westdale Capital is the parent company of WCTCB who purchased the entire original 12.42 acre lot from Texas Community Bank on 01/04/2017. WCTCB sold 4.88 acres of Res A, Blk 1 plus another 5.45 acres of TR 38E Houston Farms (property along Wallisville Rd.) which WCTCB also owned to Pari Investments on 09/05/2018. Westdale Capital is a multi-family apartment complex development company.

b. Pari Investments LLC is the property owner of the new "Plaza at Wallisville" retail development at the corner of Wallisville and Dell Dale adjacent to the where The Hollows is proposed to be built. The Hollows developer refers to the Plaza at Wallisville as an integral part of The Hollows development.

c. If LDG Development is not the current owner (HC property records reflect WCTCB as owner) of the lot The Hollows is proposed to be constructed on, why is Harris County and/or TX General Land Office providing taxpayer funds to LDG for LDG's project to be developed on property LDG does not own?

3. LDG representative Dru Childre stated the complex was not required to have a retention pond instead it would utilize an existing drainage easement that runs along the property. Per Mr. Childre HC Engineering & HC Flood Control had informed them this easement could accommodate the runoff from the complex. Review of the 06/18/2008 recorded Wynhaven At Sonoma Ranch plat map for where The Hollows is to be built shows a drainage easement created to accommodate flood drainage of the Sonoma Ranch subdivision. At the time the easement was created 11 years ago it was sized to handle the expected drainage from the completed subdivision. Since The Hollows was not a part of the planned Sonoma Ranch subdivision drainage from The Hollows could not have been calculated into the creation of the required size of easement. Mr. Dru Childre also supplied the development was utilizing a flood study created shortly after Hurricane Harvey, this study reflects there is not flooding in the area. The Sonoma Ranch subdivision continues to grow and residents from Sonoma Ranch and Rancho Verde are already reporting drainage issues; the area which did not flood during Harvey during Imelda had flood waters requiring residents to park outside of the area and wade in to the subdivisions and their homes.

Following the sharing of findings, further discussion was held between the C.H.I.C. meeting attendees regarding if the use of flooding disaster funding was even being appropriately used to build The Hollows, a new complex, the funds were to be used to aid existing residents, to rebuild damaged structures and alleviate future flooding. The Texas General Land Office is the governmental agency in charge of the disbursement of the federal disaster monies. The purpose of the GLO's CDBG Mitigation plan did not seem to be accomplished by The Hollows project. According to the Texas GLO the CDBG Mitigation Action has seven criteria which should be accomplished through the use of the CDBG funds: 1) Community Resilience, 2) Public Information Warning, 3) Long-term Vulnerability Reduction, 4) Operational Coordination, 5) Planning, 6) Threats & Hazards Identification and 7) Risk & Disaster Resilience Assessment. In the opinion of the community it appeared Harris County officials had not adhered to the CDBG Mitigation Action Plan. C.H.I.C. meeting attendees questioned why disaster funding was being used to create new development when, to date, so little had been provided to those in need of funding to recover from the Harvey and following flooding events. Shared with the attendees was a copy of the 2020 Commissioners Court Meeting Schedule and information on how to contact each of the four Harris County Commissioners and Judge Hidalgo to voice their concerns and/or opposition. The discussion regarding The Hollows development was concluded with the attendees given the opportunity to sign the petition in opposition to the development, being informed final approval of The Hollows development would be discussed and voted on at an upcoming Commissioners meeting and when the item appeared on the agenda notice would be sent to allow those who could attend the Commissioners meeting the opportunity to attend and oppose the development.

In attendance to hear the attendees concerns were Lone Star Legal Aid - Samantha Salas EJ Paralegal and Heejin Hwang EJ Fellow, Harris County Pct. 2 - Kristen Lee Environmental Policy and Cindy Miller Channelview Liaison, Harris County Sheriff's Department - Charlotte Jackson, City of Houston Councilman District B - Jerry Davis, and Houston Responds - Tammi Scott.

The Channelview Health & Improvement Coalition will hold its' next meeting Thursday February 27th from 6:30 - 8:00 p.m. at the Channelview Fire Department Station #3.

NCACC welcomes new member



The North Channel Area Chamber of Commerce (NCACC) held a ribbon cutting was held for Preferred Care at Home of East Houston on January 9. Preferred Care at Home has been providing care since 1984. They have been dedicated to providing reliable, compassionate and affordable home care and are now providing service to all East Houston. They are located at 2007 Commerce St., Houston, TX 77002. Visit their website at www.preferhome.com/texas/east-houston/ for more information.

Coronavirus vs. Influenza:
The differences and what we need to know

As physicians, other medical experts, and the public learn more about the 2019 Novel Coronavirus, or COVID-19, scientists are learning more about the similarities - and differences - between COVID-19 and influenza. Both viruses cause respiratory disease, yet the World Health Organization (WHO) reports there are important differences between the two and how they spread.

First, COVID-19 and influenza viruses have similar disease symptoms and a wide range of illness from mild to severe disease, and even death. Second, both viruses are transmitted by contact, droplets (from sneezes and coughs, for example), and contact with surfaces that can carry the infection, such as clothes, utensils, and furniture. As a result, common public health measures, such as cleaning high-contact surfaces such as door handles and handrails, washing hands, and coughing into your elbow or a tissue (and immediately disposing of the tissue), are important actions to prevent transmitting the disease to others. Doctors also recommend staying home if you are sick.

While the symptoms appear the same, there is a big difference between patients suffering a severe case of COVID-19 and influenza. The flu has a shorter incubation period from infection to diagnosable symptoms and can take 3 days to spread from person to person. The flu spreads faster than COVID-19, which can take 5 to 6 days to spread person to person. Also, flu can be transmitted before someone has symptoms, a major factor in the spread of influenza. As a result, children, pregnant women, elderly people, patients with chronic medical conditions, and those with compromised immune systems are most at risk to catch the flu.

The WHO reports a COVID-19 carrier can shed the virus 24 to 48 hours prior to symptom onset, reducing the threat of transmission to other people. Pre-symptomatic transmission of the flu is 3 to 5 days. However, when COVID-19 symptoms appear, the range of illness severity is proportionately different than the flu. WHO data suggests that 80% of COVID-19 infections are mild or asymptomatic, but 15% are severe infections requiring oxygen

and 5% are critical infections requiring intensive care.

So, who is most at risk? Medical experts say people who are elderly, especially those with preexisting conditions, have an increased risk of getting sick from COVID-19. So far, the WHO says children, from newborn to age 19, are less likely to catch COVID-19. Additional studies in China also suggest that children who do catch COVID-19 are more likely to catch it from adults, rather than vice-versa. However, children play a major role in the spread of the flu.

Scientists are currently developing more than 20 COVID-19 vaccines, but there are currently no licensed vaccines or therapeutics available. In contrast, antivirals and vaccines are widely available for influenza. While the influenza vaccine is not effective against COVID-19 virus, it is highly recommended to get vaccinated each year to prevent the flu.

To help Texas physicians defend Texans against COVID-19, TMA has established - and continuously updates - an online Coronavirus Resource Center. Visit textmed.org/Coronavirus.



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by AMAC Certified Social Security Advisor Russell Gloor
Association of Mature American Citizens

Social Security Matters

Ask Rusty – About the Dreaded “IRMAA” Provision

Dear Rusty: About a month or two ago I was notified that my Social Security was being reduced from \$1,583 a month to about \$1,283 a month - a \$300 deduction! They said it was because my income was over the limit on my last return. I filed my taxes “married - filing separately” because my wife has her own income. If we had filed jointly, I would not have had the reduction. My question is why wasn’t this told to us when we filed our Income Tax last year instead of a last-minute thing? I am a 77-year old and a 100% disabled veteran, which probably has no effect on this, but wanted to add that information. Any light you can shed on the matter will be very much appreciated.

Signed: Irritated Senior

Dear Irritated Senior: First, I want to thank you for your service to our country. Allow me to explain what I believe happened. Your net (not gross) Social Security benefit payment was probably reduced as a result of a rule known as “IRMAA” - the “Income Related Medicare Adjustment Amount.” This is a supplement added to your Medicare Part B premium as a result of higher income, and a higher Medicare premium would mean a lower net Social Security payment.

Although filing your taxes separate from your wife does mean a lower income reported to the IRS for you, it also reduces the clip levels at which the IRMAA rule kicks in. For those who file income tax as an individual, IRMAA applies if your “provisional” income from all sources, including IRA or 401(K) withdrawals and half of your SS

benefits for the tax year, exceeds \$87,000. For those who file taxes jointly as a married couple, IRMAA applies if your combined income is more than \$174,000. Incomes above those clip levels result in corresponding higher IRMAA premiums, up to a maximum of \$491.60 (for 2020). So apparently your income for your filing status exceeded one of the higher IRMAA clip levels, which resulted in your monthly Medicare Part B premium going from the standard \$144.60 to an IRMAA premium about \$300 higher. Note that if your income in a subsequent year falls below the IRMAA clip levels, your Medicare premium will also go down to the level appropriate for your more recent income level.

As far as why you weren’t told this in advance, neither Medicare nor the IRS (nor any other Government agency) will advise you in advance on such matters; the onus is upon you (and your tax preparer or financial advisor) to understand the implications of your income on your Medicare premium as well as your income tax obligation. You may want to speak to your tax advisor to see if there is a tax-filing option for eliminating the IRMAA. Once again, thank you for your service to our country, and I hope the above clarifies what happened to your Social Security benefit.

This article is intended for information purposes only and does not represent legal or financial guidance. To submit a question, visit our website (amacfoundation.org/programs/social-security-advisory) or email us at ssadviser@amacfoundation.org.

CAPITAL TALK

By U. S. Congresswoman
Sylvia Garcia



Dear Editor,

Starting March 16th, my office will begin serving constituents remotely and our physical office locations will be temporarily closed to visitors in an effort to protect the public health and prevent the further spread of coronavirus in our community.

The members of my team will be working remotely during normal business hours. The office is implementing continuity of operations procedures (COOP) to ensure constituent services are not interrupted during this time.

Constituent correspondence is always welcome. However, to ensure a prompt reply, I recommend for you to use email or phone in place of physical mail whenever possible. If you call, please leave a message to ensure a timely response. Constituent services representatives will continue to work diligently on behalf of the residents of the Texas

29th Congressional District.

My team is here to work on existing and new casework issues involving the federal government - including navigating travel restrictions announced by the President and newly enacted legislation to help tackle the coronavirus outbreak. Most scheduled meetings will now take place over the phone or web conference.

This announcement applies to my offices in Washington, DC and Houston, TX. Please call our office at 832-325-3150 or email via our website at sylvia.garcia.gov/contact if my team or I can be of assistance.

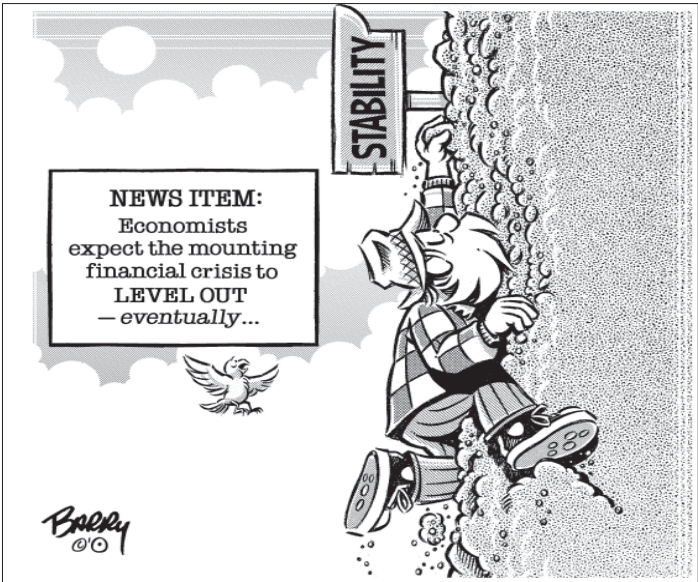
For additional information, make sure to follow me @RepSylviaGarcia on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram for regular updates about coronavirus and other issues important to our community.

Sincerely,
Senator Sylvia Garcia

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Governor issues statewide disaster declaration

STATE CAPITAL HIGHLIGHTS

By Ed Sterling

AUSTIN — Gov. Greg Abbott on March 13 declared a state of disaster in all Texas counties and listed actions agencies are taking to contain and minimize the spread of the COVID-19 novel coronavirus, a contagious flu-like respiratory disease.

Abbott said agency actions would include:

—Provide immediate ability to move resources around the state, including resources obtained through the Strategic National Stockpile, an emergency supply of pharmaceuticals and medical supplies;

—Restrict visitations at nursing homes, state-supported living centers, hospitals, daycare facilities, prisons, jails and juvenile justice facilities, while allowing limited exceptions for situations such as end-of-life visitations;

—Direct state agencies to take any action necessary to facilitate telemedicine and to provide flexible work and tele-work policies; and

—Empower the Texas Attorney General to pursue cases of price-gouging and ensure that offenders are prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.

health insurers operating in Texas to enhance our state’s proactive approach to addressing any potential outbreaks of COVID-19,” Abbott said.

Hegar: Economy is strong

Texas faces current weaknesses in financial, commodity and energy markets but the fundamentals of the Lone Star State’s economy remain strong, Texas Comptroller Glenn Hegar said on March 9.

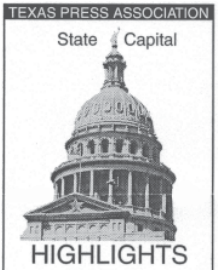
Texas has exposure if oil prices remain depressed for a sustained period of time, and slowdowns in economic activity related to the COVID-19 outbreak could also be a headwind, Hegar said. However, he added, it is now only six months into the state’s current budget cycle, so it is too early to tell how current fluctuations might impact long-term economic performance and state revenues.

Hegar also pointed out that the Texas economy is less reliant on oil and gas severance taxes to fund the day-to-day functions of state government than it has been historically. Additionally, the state leadership has numerous financial management tools that allow the state to react to and contend with economic pressures.

“Having said that, we will continue to monitor the economy and state revenues closely and will provide updates to lawmakers and the public as conditions warrant,” Hegar said.

Revenue to be distributed

Comptroller Hegar on March 11 announced he would send cities, counties, transit systems and special purpose taxing dis-



tricts \$766.2 million in local sales tax allocations for March.

The dollar amount is 7.7% more than in the amount distributed in March 2019.

The allocations are based on sales made in January by businesses that report tax monthly.

Details may be found online in the comptroller’s monthly sales tax allocation comparison summary reports at comptroller.texas.gov.

Agency conducts exercise

Comptroller Hegar on March 11 said his office conducted an agencywide telework exercise on March 10.

In the exercise, some 1,800 employees representing the majority of the comptroller’s staff worked regular hours from home. Critical operations of the agency functioned normally, including call center agents who handled normal call volumes while teleworking.

“I want to stress that this was a scheduled business continuity exercise designed to simulate a scenario in which comptroller employees were required to work from home. This exercise will allow the agency to identify and address any weaknesses in our continuity plan under controlled conditions,” Hegar said.

Texas joins consortium

The Office of the Secretary of State on March 9 announced that Texas will become the 30th state to join the Electronic Registration Information Center (ERIC), a non-profit consortium that assists member states in increasing voter participation and improving the accuracy of voter rolls.

Governed and managed by member states, ERIC was formed in 2012 with assistance from The Pew Charitable Trusts. During its 2019 session, the 86th Texas Legislature appropriated \$1.5 million for Texas to join the consortium.

Participation in ERIC will assist Texas elections officials in identifying and conducting outreach to eligible but unregistered voters to encourage them to register to vote, according to the Secretary of State’s Elections Division.

THE POSTSCRIPT

By
Carrie Classon

“Smelling Like Dog”

It’s a very gray day. Today is exactly the sort of day I am most grateful for dogs.

Walking in my neighborhood, everyone feels the need to share the latest dire news. Meeting in the street, we almost feel irresponsible if we don’t express our concern and our dismay and our confusion. The people with dogs, however, have it easy.

Because dogs don’t care.

Nearly every day, I encounter dogs. There is Graham, the black lab, who is supposedly being trained as a service dog. Graham does not appear to have acquired a service mentality quite yet. He is far more interested in finding bits of disgusting animal remains and running around with bones in his mouth.

There is Teddy, an all-white malamute. He is terrified of my hiking poles and starts to make noises that sound like singing whenever I approach.

But lately, the dog I get the biggest kick out of is Snoopy, a sixty-pound plus Bernese Mountain Dog. Snoopy is only four months old. His owner, Monica, a slim woman with an Eastern European accent is trying to teach Snoopy manners. Snoopy might be learning—but he is not learning nearly as fast as he is growing.

I learned Snoopy’s name the first time we met and now, when I see him coming in the distance, I holler, “Hey! Snoopy!” Snoopy stops dead in his tracks. He looks up. He recognizes me. Then he begins to run, his oversized front paws pounding the pavement in unison, dragging poor Monica behind him. (I always realize I shouldn’t have done that the moment after I do.)

Poor Monica arrives breathless and Snoopy does all the things you’d expect a four-month-old puppy to do—but in a sixty-pound plus package. It is exhausting and exciting and totally delightful.

The bad news for Monica is that Snoopy will be 120 pounds before he’s done growing and he will still be a puppy. Monica can train him every day for the next year, but he will still totally lose it at regular intervals. I pity Monica. And I envy her.

Because, when you are walking Snoopy, there’s nothing else you can do. You can’t worry too much about the economy or even the pandemic when you have sixty pounds of slobbering enthusiasm on your hands. No one is at a loss for words when they meet Monica and Snoopy. Everyone says, “Hey! Snoopy!” Because dogs don’t care.

Dogs are living in this moment, excited about the person in front of them, smelling whatever is in the air at that moment. Worries about tomorrow don’t exist for Snoopy.

I know I can’t live like Snoopy. I know there is a lot more I have to think about—a lot more I am responsible for. But right now, more than ever, I wish I had a dog. Because, no matter what happens, a dog needs a walk. A dog needs to be talked to and petted and cared for. A dog keeps us tethered in the here and now and reminds us that we are living in this moment, and that every moment in the future is imaginary.

I reluctantly say goodbye to Snoopy and Monica. “You have friends, Snoopy!” Monica tells her giant puppy as they walk away. I try to remember what I was thinking about before I saw Snoopy, and the thought is gone. It will return, I am sure. But right now, I notice how deeply blue the sky is, how signs of green are starting to appear, and how my hands are smelling like dog.

Till next time,
Carrie

Carrie Classon’s memoir is called, “Blue Yarn.” Learn more at CarrieClasson.com.

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COUNTY TALK

Harris County Judge
Lina Hidalgo



5 things you can do to help us save lives

Dear friend,

Yesterday, we joined together with City of Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner, Fort Bend County Judge KP George, and public health officials from across the region to provide important regional community guidelines to help contain the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19). The guidelines are below.

Our goal is to make sure that we stay ahead of the spread of this virus as much as possible so that we slow the spread enough to allow our healthcare systems to keep up with an expected increase of patients. In the meantime, we are working locally to develop more access to testing, despite limitations at the state and federal levels.

Since the global outbreak began, we have been working in close coordination with regional jurisdictions to take proactive action to protect the health of our community by preparing for and responding to the spread of this virus. However, preventing the spread requires a strong partnership between government, the private sector, and individual residents like you. Below is a summary of the guidelines we are asking you to help us follow:

1. Immediately cancel or postpone events over 50 people

We strongly urge the organizers of any events over 50 people to cancel or postpone such events.

2. Cancel all gatherings in which people will be in close contact

Beyond large events, we are also strongly encouraging organizers of gatherings of any size in which people will be in close contact to cancel or postpone such events, if possible. If you cannot avoid bringing a group of people together, please make sure that anyone who is sick does not attend. Additionally, those who are at higher risk for severe COVID-19 illness should not attend and organizers should increase the frequency of sanitizing common touchpoints.

3. Severely restrict access to senior living, nursing homes, and assisted living facilities

Older adults are at highest risk of dying from this virus. Senior living facilities, assisted living facilities, and other facilities with populations at higher risk for severe COVID-19 illness should limit interactions with the general public as much as possible. These facilities should implement social distancing measures, reduce large gatherings (e.g., group social events), and limit programs with external staff. Residents' exposure to the general community should be limited, and visits should be limited and restricted to residents' rooms. Attendees, staff, and visitors should be screened for temperature and respiratory symptoms. Frequently touched surfaces should be cleaned daily, and directors should implement short-term closures as needed.

4. If you're at higher risk, stay home

People at higher risk of severe illness should stay home and away from large groups of people as much as possible, including public places with lots of people and large gatherings where there will be close contact with others. Those at higher risk include people 60 and older, people with underlying health conditions (e.g. heart disease, lung disease, diabetes), people who have weakened immune systems, and pregnant women. Anyone who has questions about whether their condition puts them at increased risk for severe COVID-19 illness should consult with their healthcare provider. Those without a healthcare provider should contact Harris Health's Ask A Nurse line at: 713-634-1110.

5. Manage a business? Urge your employees to work from home if possible

Employers should take steps to make it feasible for their employees to work in ways that minimize close contact with large numbers of people, and allow flexibility in sick leave benefits. Frequently touched areas in workplaces (doorknobs, tabletops, countertops, phones, keyboards, etc.) should be cleaned and disinfected regularly, while protective ac-

tions should be taken to protect employees who are at higher risk of severe illness.

We respect and support individual school districts' decisions about closures or postponement of activities. It is important for schools to limit potential spread of COVID-19 because infected students may still come into contact with those who are at higher risk for severe COVID-19 illness outside the school setting. If schools do remain open, they should implement social distancing measures, reduce the frequency of large gatherings (e.g., assemblies), and limit the number of attendees per gathering. Additionally, we recommend that schools alter schedules to reduce mixing (e.g., stagger recess, entry/dismissal times), limit inter-school interactions, and consider distance learning and/or e-learning in some settings. Schools may also conduct regular health checks of students, staff, and visitors, if feasible.

For more detailed information, read Harris County Public Health's complete updated regional community guidelines here. These guidelines will remain in place until March 31, 2020 or until otherwise noted.

I also encourage all Harris County residents to visit the Ready Harris website for the latest information and to sign up to receive text updates, which are sent in real time to subscribers. Finally, if you or anyone without healthcare need access to coronavirus-related care, the County's Ask My Nurse hotline can help assess symptoms and refer you to appropriate care and testing if necessary. To reach a nurse, call 713-634-1110.

If I have learned anything as Harris County Judge, it is that ours is a strong, resilient community -- we will make it through this! In this time of uncertainty, let's be sure we take care of one another.

Abrazos,
Lina Hidalgo

Harris County Pct. 2 facilities and event cancellations/ Closures due to COVID-19

Harris County, TX — Following guidance issued by Harris County Public Health (HCPH) to take

necessary steps to prevent further spread of the Coronavirus (COVID-19), Harris County Precinct 2 Commissioner Adrian Gar-

cia announces the following closures of Precinct 2 facilities and cancellation of community events:

EVENT (Date if relevant)	FACILITY NAME & LOCATION	STATUS
ALL Precinct 2 Community Centers	Multiple sites, please visit https://www.hcp2.com/facilities/empowerment-centers for full list of locations	CLOSED, BEGINNING MONDAY, MARCH 16th
V.V. Ramsey Veterans Center	16003 Lorenzo Street, Channelview, TX 77530 Call Veterans Office Main Number – 713.274.9570	CLOSED, BEGINNING MONDAY, MARCH 16th
ALL Youth Sports Organized Activities (Games and Tournaments)	Multiple sites, please contact individual league associations for more information.	SUSPENDED UNTIL MARCH 31st
Senior Olympics (3/17/2020 – 3/20/2020)	East Harris County Activity Center 7340 Spencer Hwy., Pasadena, TX 77505	CANCELED EFFECTIVE IMMEDIATELY
Movies in the Park (Multiple Dates)	Multiple sites, please visit: https://www.hcp2.com/facilities/list-parks for a full list of locations	CANCELED EFFECTIVE IMMEDIATELY
Hometown Opry (3/27/2020)	East Harris County Activity Center 7340 Spencer Hwy., Pasadena, TX 77505	CANCELED EFFECTIVE IMMEDIATELY
Senior Bingo	Multiple sites, please visit https://www.hcp2.com/facilities/empowerment-centers for full list of locations	CANCELED EFFECTIVE IMMEDIATELY
ALL Precinct 2 Parks	Multiple sites, please visit: https://www.hcp2.com/facilities/list-parks for a full list of locations	OPEN
ALL Precinct 2 Courthouse Annexes	Multiple sites, please visit https://www.hcp2.com/facilities/annexes for a full list of locations	OPEN

In addition, all Senior bus trips originating from Precinct 2 Community Centers will be canceled until further notice. The Meals Program from Precinct 2 Community Centers will be redirected to a

delivery or pickup program to get meals to individuals that usually receive them at Community Centers. The Meals on Wheels Program will continue operate on a normal schedule. For additional information on

potential event cancellations or facility closures, please check Harris County Precinct 2 Social Media accounts or visit <https://www.hcp2.com/facilities/empowerment-centers>.

Prayer for a Pandemic

May we who are merely inconvenienced

Remember those whose lives are at stake.

May we who have no risk factors

Remember those most vulnerable.

May we who have the luxury of working from home

Remember those who must choose between preserving their health or making their rent.

May we who have the flexibility to care for our children when their schools close

Remember those who have no options.

May we who have to cancel our trips

Remember those that have no place to go.

May we who are losing our margin money in the tumult of the economic market

Remember those who

have no margin at all.

May we who settle in for a quarantine at home

Remember those who have no home.

During this time when we cannot physically wrap our arms around each other,

Let us yet find ways to be the loving embrace to our neighbors.

*Author Unknown

IN THE STARS

BIRTHDAYS

Mar 19–Yvonne Browder
Isabell Daniels

Annie Mari-e Herron
Chris Scott
Jett Sherwood
Mar 20–Josh Kimberlin
Mar 21–Crystal Burton
Jerry Eversole
Kathy Townsend
Mar 22–Craig Gross
Lisa Strouhal

Laura White
Mar 23–Jackie Thompson
Charolotte Wotipka
Mar 24–Lindsey Bell
John Townsend
Mary Helen James
Mar 25–Tara Barron
Mike O'Conner

HOUSTON SYMPHONY EXTENDS PERFORMANCE CANCELATIONS

HOUSTON (March 16, 2020) – In response to recent Center for Disease Control (CDC) recommendations, the Houston Symphony announced that it is extending its concert cancelations, canceling all remaining concerts and community activities through May 10, 2020 in order to protect the health of audiences, orchestra and chorus members, and staff.

“The CDC is recommending a ban on gatherings of more than 50 people for the next eight weeks,” explained Executive Director, CEO, and holder of the Margaret Alkek Williams Chair John Mangum. “We want to do everything we can to protect our audiences, musicians and chorus, and staff, so we’ve made the difficult decision to move forward with these cancelations. We are working to reschedule upcoming concerts and programs whenever possible during the summer and in future seasons.”

The concerts affected

by the cancelations are:

- Swing to Rock with Dave Bennett, March 20, 21, and 22, 2020

- Mozart’s Piano Concerto No. 20, March 26, 28, and 29, 2020

- Chamber Music Series Concert with Cedric Tiberghien, March 27, 2020

- Andrés Conducts Mahler 7, April 3, 4, and 5, 2020

- Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince, April 10 and 11, 2020

- Aretha: Queen of Soul, April 17, 18, and 19, 2020

- Heroes and Adventures (Family Concert), April 18, 2020

- Symphonie fantastique, May 1, 2, and 3, 2020

- The Music Critic with John Malkovich, May 7, 2020

- The Music of Whitney Houston, May 9 and 10, 2020

The Houston Symphony is a key contributor to Houston’s nonprofit arts and cultural community, which is a vital part of Houston’s economy. The un-

expected loss of event-dependent revenue and related decline in charitable contributions is still being felt in the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey just three years ago, and is expected to grow as a result of this health crisis. The Houston Symphony is currently reaching out to ticket-holders for the canceled concerts via email, phone, web, and social media to ask that they:

- donate the cost of the tickets to the Symphony. The Symphony will provide a donation form for the ticket value for tax purposes.

- exchange their ticket(s) for another scheduled performance in 2020 or for a voucher for the value of their purchase, allowing the ticket-holder more time to decide on another performance later on, or

- The Symphony’s Patron Services Center is available by phone to answer any questions or help with exchanges at 713.224.7575 during operating hours: Monday–Saturday, 12 noon–6 p.m.

The Journey of a thousand miles begins with one step
-LaoTzu

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ROMANS 8:18

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PHILIPPIANS 4:13

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LOVE NEVER FAILS
I Corinthians 13:8

ASK THE EXPERT

ASK DIAMOND JIM

Diamond Jim: "What types of metals are used to make jewelry?"



Metal Types
There are a variety of metals choices available for jewelry. Whether you like the allure of platinum or the range of options with the classic gold, you will find a number of stylish pieces, sometimes even combining the two metals. Today, alternative metals like sterling silver, titanium, and stainless steel give you additional options in look, strength, price, etc. Each choice has its own qualities, so base your choice on the ones that you value most.

Platinum
Platinum is generally 95% pure and does not tarnish or lose its rich white luster. Platinum is the heaviest of all the precious metals weighing approximately twice as much as karat gold. Its purity makes it hypoallergenic, perfect for people who are sensitive to the alloys used in gold. Platinum is also known for its strength and pliability, just one gram of platinum can be drawn into a fine wire over one mile long.

Gold
Pure 24 karat gold is rarely used in jewelry because it is too soft for frequent wear. Gold is mixed with alloys like copper, silver, nickel, and zinc to give different colors, strength, and durability. Gold's purity is measured in karats, which indicate out of 24 parts how many parts are gold. For example, 18kt gold contains 18/24 gold and 6/24 alloy, while 14kt gold contains 14/24 gold and 10/24 alloy. Gold is traditionally seen in yellow and white colors but, can also be available in rose or green on occasion.

Sterling Silver
Sterling silver is usually 92.5% silver and 7.5% copper. Silver is much more plentiful than platinum or gold and is much less expensive. It takes on a much higher polish than any other metal, but it does tarnish. The tarnish can be removed, but silver requires much more care than other metals.

Titanium
Titanium is a light, strong, and corrosion-resistant metal. Titanium offers you seven times the strength of platinum at about 1/3 of the weight. It is the hardest natural metal on earth and therefore offers more scratch resistance than gold or silver. In addition, titanium is also hypoallergenic. When ordering titanium rings, be extra sure about your ring size. The biggest drawback of titanium rings is that they cannot be sized up or down by traditional ring sizing methods.

Stainless Steel
Stainless steel is a low-cost alternative to traditional metals. It is naturally hypoallergenic and will not rust or tarnish. Stainless Steel will not break or bend under normal usage and is stronger than any other alloy.

Cobalt Chrome
Cobalt has a similar look to platinum, with great strength and light weight. Because of its temperature stability, cobalt alloys are often used in engine turbines and surgical implants.

Zirconium
Zirconium is utilized in nuclear reactors and explosive wartime applications. It is very resistant to decay and heat. While most commonly mined from South Africa and Australia, zirconium has also been found in meteorites and moon rocks. It is naturally a silver-grey color with a darker oxidized layer.

Thank you for reading the "Ask Diamond Jim" column and for supporting the North Channel Star Newspaper!

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.

CHARLOTTE'S WEB



Learning to Live Differently

As I awoke at 2 a.m., I began to replay conversations from the past few days. Perhaps for the first time in years, I was wishing I did not live alone. If things go the way many are speculating, it might be weeks or even months until we get the next hugs.

Hugs have always been an important part of my life, at least during my adult life. When attending the University of Texas in Austin, I took my first of many psychology classes and learned that research has shown that if you get or give at least three hugs a day, your mental state is most often "happier" and that you will learn to have many more days filled with opportunities to share optimism than if you stay to yourself.

I have often joked that when I get to Heaven, that St. Peter will have to go enjoy something new, as I was going to take his place at the pearly gates and be the official greeter. And anyone who has been around me knows that greeting comes with a hug. Yet now, just days before my 58th birthday, I am being told that we cannot hug, we should not be in groups larger than 10 and that we should avoid any social activities. Can you imagine? For decades, I have been greeting at church services, Chamber luncheons, meetings and many public events. And now, I guess I can wave and smile to the few people I will be seeing.

Being a single mother who has lived alone the majority of the time since my youngest entered the Army in 2011, my life has been blessed to be a part of many groups and organizations that work in the community. Everything from comforting a young mom in prison, to offering my cell phone to a homeless person to use has provided opportunities to hug them, to pray with them and to try to brighten their lives.

Suddenly, I find myself more thankful than ever to have a position where I can reach out to senior adults and check on them via the phone. So many of them have stories to share and by the time you hang up, you cannot help but be thankful for the time you chatted with them. In these "different" days that we are living in, pick up your phone, look through your contacts and make a call or two. Brighten up the day of someone you have not talked to lately. Reach out to those parents who are "homeschooling" right now and see if you can assist in any way. Take the time to turn off all electronics and listen as you read a book. Start making that bucket list for your next vacation. Learn to enjoy the time with yourself.

Coronavirus,

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

sponse to what the World Health Organization now calls a Pandemic.

Last thursday, Mayor Turner updated the public on the city of Houston's response to containing and mitigating the spread of COVID-19 at a press conference.

Harris County Health Officials recommend the following steps for people at higher risk. These steps are recommended until March 31, 2020 or until otherwise noted.

GUIDANCE FOR PEOPLE AT HIGHER RISK FOR SEVERE COVID-19 ILLNESS

People at higher risk of severe illness should stay home and away from large groups of people as much as possible, including public places with lots of people and large gatherings where there will be close contact with others. Gatherings of seniors or other people at higher risk of severe illness should be canceled or postponed. Those at higher risk include:

- People 60 and older.
- People with underlying health conditions (e.g. heart disease, lung disease, diabetes)
- People who have weakened immune systems.
- Pregnant women.

Anyone who has questions about whether their condition puts them at increased risk for severe COVID-19 illness should consult with their healthcare provider. Those without a healthcare provider should contact **Harris Health's Ask A Nurse line at: 713-634-1110**.

GUIDANCE FOR WORKPLACES AND BUSINESSES

Employers should take steps to make it more feasible for their employees to work in ways that minimize close contact with large numbers of people.

- Employers should:
- Maximize telecommuting options for as many employees as possible.
 - Urge employees to stay home when they are sick and maximize flexibility in sick leave benefits.
 - Consider staggering start and end times to reduce large numbers of people coming together at the same time.
 - Clean and disinfect frequently touched areas (door-knobs, tabletops, countertops, phones, keyboards, etc.).
 - Prioritize protective actions for employees who are at higher risk of severe illness.

EVENT AND COMMUNITY GATHERING CONSIDERATIONS

Authorities strongly urge the organizers of any events over 250 people to cancel or postpone such events. Additionally, we strongly encourage organizers of events of any size in which people will be in close contact to cancel or postpone such events, if possible.

If you cannot avoid bringing a group of people together, we recommend the following guidelines:

- Anyone who is sick should not attend.
- Those who are at higher risk for severe COVID-19 illness should not attend.
- Increase the frequency of sanitizing common touchpoints.
- Try to find ways to give people more physical space so that they are not in close contact as much as possible.
- Ensure an adequate supply of hand soap, disinfectants, tissues, and paper towels.
- Encourage attendees to follow increased hygiene, such as:
 - Washing their hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds
 - If soap and water are not available, attendees should use alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
 - Avoid close contact with other people
 - Avoid touching their eyes, nose, and mouth
 - Covering their cough or sneeze with a tissue - if available - or into their elbow

GUIDANCE FOR SENIOR AND ASSISTED LIVING

Senior living facilities, assisted living facilities, and other facilities with populations at higher risk for severe COVID-19 illness should limit interactions with the general public as much as possible. These facilities should:

- Implement social distancing measures:
- Reduce large gatherings (e.g., group social events)
- Alter schedules to reduce mixing
- Limit programs with external staff
- Consider having residents stay in facility and limit exposure to the general community
- Visits should be limited and restricted to residents' rooms
- Implement temperature and respiratory symptom screening of attendees, staff, and visitors.
- Implement short-term closures as needed (e.g., if cases are identified among staff, residents or clients who live elsewhere) for cleaning and contact tracing.
- Clean frequently touched surfaces daily.

FOR PEOPLE WHO ARE SICK

- Stay home when you are sick.
- Do not go out in public when you are sick.
- If you are ill in any way, call your doctor's office first before going in.
- Do not go to the emergency room unless you are experiencing a medical emergency. Emergency rooms need to be able to serve those with the most critical needs.
- If you have symptoms like cough, fever, or other respiratory problems, stay home and self-isolate until you have contacted a healthcare professional.

FOR THE GENERAL PUBLIC

- Wash hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use hand sanitizer when you cannot wash your hands.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands. Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue and throw the tissue away. If you don't have a tissue, use the elbow of your sleeve. Don't use your hands to cover coughs and sneezes.
- Even if you are not ill, avoid visiting hospitals, long-term care facilities or nursing homes to the extent possible. If you do need to visit one of these facilities, limit your time there and keep six feet away from patients.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick, especially if you are at higher risk for severe COVID-19 illness.
- Get plenty of rest, drink plenty of fluids, eat healthy foods, and manage your stress to keep your immunity strong.
- Clean household surfaces with standard cleaners.
- Stay informed. Information is changing frequently. Visit ReadyHarris.org frequently for updates.

MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES

The outbreak of COVID-19 may be stressful for people throughout the community. Fear and anxiety about a disease can be overwhelming and cause strong emotions in adults and children. Accordingly, we suggest the following recommendations:

- People with preexisting mental health conditions should continue with their treatment plans, stay connected with their healthcare provider, and monitor for any new symptoms.
- Call your healthcare provider if stress reactions interfere with your daily activities
- Call the Disaster Distress Helpline at 1-800-985-5990 if you are experiencing emotional distress related to COVID-19.

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SYMPTOM	COLD	FLU	CORONA-VIRUS
Fever	Rare	Yes, often high	Yes
Cough	Mild to moderate	Yes	Yes, typically dry
Shortness of breath	Rare	Yes	Yes
Fatigue, weakness	Mild	Yes	Yes
Headache	Rare	Yes	Sometimes
Muscle aches	Slight	Yes, often	Yes
Sneezing	Common	Sometimes	No
Sore throat	Common	Sometimes	Sometimes
Stuffy or runny nose	Common	Sometimes	Rare

Source: World Health Organization, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

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TO ALL INTERESTED PERSONS, THE CITY OF JACINTO CITY HAS RECEIVED A VARIANCE HEARING APPLICATION FOR 11201 VERANO STREET. MR. FIDENCIO MORENO IS REQUESTING A HEARING FOR PERMISSION TO USE 4 FEET OF THE CITY RIGHT OF WAY FOR HIS FENCE THAT HE HAS BUILT. THE BOARD WILL HEAR THE PETITION ON MARCH 24TH, 2020 AT 6:00 P.M. AT THE CITY HALL ANNEX, 10301 MARKET STREET. ANY INTERESTED PERSON MAY ATTEND.

(We weren't sick at all last winter...)

...but this year some of us caught the flu!

Kids: color stuff in!

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I feel achy, feverish and crabby.

Achooo!

Feel Sick? Get Well!

Ooops, good thing I've got a tissue handy! I'll toss it into the wastebasket, and will wash my hands too. We thought this might be an allergy, but we checked with our doctor, who said I have a common cold. She sent medicine to help me feel better, and told me to rest and drink lots of fluids. Sometimes when I visit, the doctor lets me try that cool instrument she uses to listen to sounds in my body. If you read the clues and fill in this puzzle with words about health care, you will find the name of the instrument under the arrow:

Hey, I don't have anything to do with your chicken pox!

Read the clues to fill in the crossword puzzle with medical terms.

If you don't feel well in class, ask to visit the school nurse.

1. person trained to help doctors and take care of sick people

2. treatment of medical problem by using surgery

3. pill or liquid used to treat a disease or relieve pain

4. person licensed to treat diseases or injuries

5. medicine injected into the body with a needle

6. instrument used to take temperature

7. sleep, relax

8. ill, not healthy

9. common sickness: sneezing, runny nose, coughing

10. building where doctors, nurses take care of sick or hurt people

11. tiny living thing that can cause disease

thermometer nurse germ cold hospital

1. to clear your throat

2. high body temperature

3. virus, short for influenza

4. pain where you hear

5. discover what is wrong

6. to become healthy

7. pain in the top of your body

8. a strong uncomfortable feeling

9. a sign of what is wrong

10. to give medical care

Doctor, What Have I Caught?

Everyone feels sick from time to time. Thanks to shots and vaccines, doctors are able to help us avoid many diseases. Medicines may help us feel better too.

Can you find and circle these illnesses and medical problems?

pneumonia
sore throat
food poisoning
athlete's foot
ear infection
diarrhea
stomach ache
influenza
cold
mumps
rabies
polio
measles
chicken pox

Forest has a "little frog in his throat" that makes his voice sound froggy...er...funny. Can you help him get to the chicken soup that may comfort him?

Healthy Expressions

Have you ever heard someone say "I feel blue?" You know that they are not really colored "blue," but that they feel a bit sad. An expression that people use to mean something different from the actual words they say is called an "idiom" ('id' ē em). It is almost like a secret code. The English language can be hard to learn because it has a lot of idioms. Match these 2 groups of "health" idioms to their meanings:

1. sick as a dog

2. catch a cold

3. fit as a fiddle

4. under the weather

5. head is spinning

A. someone in good shape

B. not feeling 100% well

C. very sick

D. feeling of dizziness or confusion

E. get sick with the common cold

1. on the mend

2. in the pink of health

3. just what the doctor ordered

4. have a "frog" in one's throat

5. there's a bug going around

A. in perfect health

B. getting better after an illness

C. something keeps you from speaking clearly

D. a cold or virus that everyone seems to have

E. exactly what is needed

Parrott Softball,

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Justice of the Peace. He retired in 2016, and with his wife Deby has two children and four grandchildren. He is well known in North Shore for the number of civic organizations he has headed, or been involved with, including the 100 club, PTA, Chamber of Commerce, Optimist Club, Boy Scouts, YMCA, Shrine Club, 33rd degree Mason, Masonic Builders Award, twice a Rotary Paul Harris honorary fellow, and chairman of the board of the HCA Hospital-South-east.



3 Generations of Parrotts were at the Award Ceremony. L to R, Jonathan, grandson; Mike; John, son.

Right, Mike stands with Inductee Paul Drilling, Mike's brother; USSSA NTX state director and emcee Arnie Burke; and 2020 HOF inductee Mike Parrott with award ring.



Left, Class of 2020 USSA NTX Softball Hall of Fame Inductees.

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