

# NORTH CHANNEL★STAR

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Serving all of the North Shore -- Channelview, Cloverleaf, Sheldon, Galena Park, Jacinto City  
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## CHANNEL CURRENTS

### THURS. JUNE 10 EPA holds Virtual Meeting for Waste Pits

The EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) will hold a Microsoft TEAMS Video and Call Conference on Thursday, June 10 from 6:00 pm to 7:30 pm.

Topics for discussion include: Changes to Remedial Design Schedule, Upcoming Design Investigation Sampling, and Overall Remedial Design Update.

The public is invited to join, at the Web Address <https://www.epa.gov/tx/sjirwp>. Or you may join by calling in by telephone. SEE MORE DETAILS on Page 2.

**PUBLIC may use the group VIEWING SITES:**  
**San Jacinto Community Center Highlands, and**  
**Channelview Fire Department, Dell Dale.**

### SAT. JUNE 12 Jacinto City Market by Night

Monthly Market by Night will be held this Saturday, from 5pm to 9pm at Town Center, 1025 Oates Road in Jacinto City (exit Mercury off I-10). Artisan Vendors, Blue Orange World Cuisine, food trucks, music by Piano Vibes School of Music. Free Admission, Free Parking, Family Friendly, Pet Friendly.

Not to be missed. See you there.

### SAT. JUNE 12 Jacinto City Market by Night

Monthly Market by Night will be held this Saturday, from 5pm to 9pm at Town Center, 1025 Oates Road in Jacinto City (exit Mercury off I-10). Artisan Vendors, food trucks, music by Piano Vibes School of Music.

Free Admission, Free Parking, Family Friendly, Pet Friendly.

Not to be missed. See you there.

### SAT. JUNE 19 Community Day Out Parade

Sponsored by the Harris County Cultural Arts Council, everyone is invited to participate in the 4th Annual Community Day Out Parade. Starting at 12:00 noon (Line up starting at 10:30am) at 13334 Wallisville Road, at the HCCAC.

Parade Route heads east down Wallisville, turn right on Dell Dale, turn right on Woodforest, turn right on Normandy, turn left on Wallisville ending back at the Harris County Cultural Arts Council building.

A \$50 cash prize if offered for the best decorated vehicle.

Info text PARADE to 832-883-6982.

## San Jac offers Free tuition for Class of 2021

Private donation to fund tuition  
*Funds to pay for up to three years at San Jacinto College*

By Amanda Fenwick

PASADENA, Texas — The San Jacinto College Foundation has received a private donation to fund up to three years of tuition for the high school class of 2021.

“On behalf of San Jacinto College, our Board of Trustees, and the students who will benefit from this generous gift, I say thank you,” said Dr. Laurel Williamson, San Jacinto College Deputy Chancellor and President. “This last year has been a challenge for so many students, and the ability to remove the

financial burden for thousands of high school graduates will allow them to attend college and earn their workforce certificate or associate degree. We are incredibly grateful for this thoughtful and transformational gift.”

The funds will be used to create the 21 Forward Scholarship. All high school graduates that live within the San Jacinto College taxing district at the time of their high school graduation are eligible. The scholarship is good for up to three years at San Jacinto College (through December 2024). Students must begin classes at San Jac this Fall, take a minimum of six credit hours each semester, and must apply for financial aid annually.



The school says its new “21Forward” scholarship is a gift to the class of 2021. Students’ entire tuitions are being paid by a generous private donation.

It’s a three-year scholarship, so students may attend full- or part-time with a six-credit hour minimum.

You can earn an associate degree or workforce certificate with the scholarship, but there are a few eligibility requirements.

Eligible students must have graduated from high school during the 2020-2021 academic year. The school says students must begin San Jac classes in the fall 2021 semester.

Students also must live in the San Jac taxing district upon graduating high school, including the following school districts and schools:

**CHANNELVIEW ISD**  
Channelview High School  
Endeavor Alternative School

**DEER PARK ISD**  
Deer Park High School

**GALENA PARK ISD**  
Galena Park High School  
North Shore High School  
Early College High School

**LaPorte ISD**  
LaPorte High School  
Viola DeWalt High School

**PASADENA ISD**  
Career & Technical High School  
Dobie High School  
Pasadena High School  
Pasadena Memorial High School  
Sam Rayburn High School  
South Houston High School  
Tegeler Career Center

**SHELDON ISD**  
CE King High School

Homeschool, private school and GED graduates are also eligible for the scholarship.

Additional information about eligibility and links to apply to San Jacinto

CONTINUED. SEE PAGE 8.

## HEROIC GP FIREFIGHTERS STOP A CATASTROPHE

By Allan Jamail

GALENA PARK, TX — May 8, 2021 early Saturday morning according to Tom Ehlers, Galena Park’s (GP) fire Chief his department responded to a report of a vessel on fire at Andersons Mills in the Port of Houston in the 1500 South Main Street.

Andersons Mills is grain storage and exporting facility used to load ships with various types of grain. Grain dust is highly combustible and when the micro-particles reach a high density level a small spark can set off a gigantic explosion.

Chief Ehlers said when his Fire Engine 1 arrived the crew found heavy smoke coming from a grain loader which takes grain from the storage silos via a conveyor where its dumped into the ship’s cargo hull. On the dock is a tall crane with a large hose attached that extends out over the ship’s deck where the grain is fed into the hull openings. It appeared the fire was coming from the hose, the smart quick thinking crane operator swung the crane and burning hose away from the ship’s open cargo bays preventing the fire from spreading into the ship.

“GP firefighters pulled 500 feet of 3 inch hose down the dock and used additional 200 feet of 1 3/4” hose to attack the fire from the central tower nearly 5 stories above the



May 8, 2021 photo of the fire and smoke of what the Galena Park Firefighters saw upon arrival at the Andersons Mills grain storage and export facility, 1500 S. Main (near Clinton Drive).

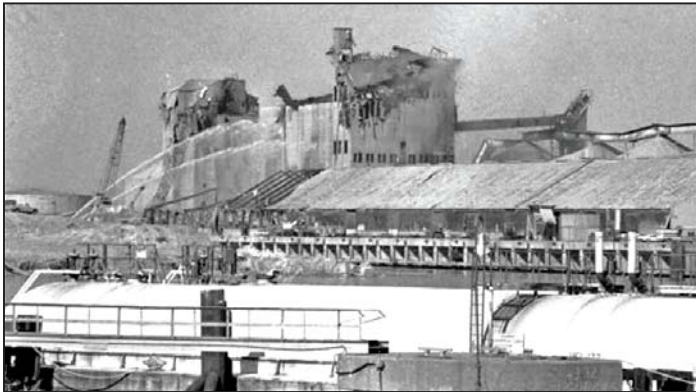


Photo from February 23, 1976 the site known then as Goodpasture Grain where it had a massive explosion killing 7 and injuring 25 workers.

water. Their efforts kept the fire from reaching the dust collection system on the central tower. These efforts prevented what would have been a catastrophic explosion. One Galena Park firefighter injured his leg and was transported to the hospital. He is expected to make a full recovery. The City of Houston Fire Department responded with a full box assignment and the Port of Houston Fire Department responded with two fire boats”, Chief Ehlers said.

North Channel writer Allan Jamail recalls on February 23, 1976 the same facility known then as Goodpasture Grain had a massive explosion killing 7 and injuring 25 workers. I and my family were in Jacinto City coming home from Sunday morning church services when I

heard the blast and felt the car shake. I saw a huge mushroom cloud towards GP. I knew my help would be needed so I rushed to the scene and had my wife drop me off 2 blocks away and take my kids home. I stayed at the site and worked nonstop three days helping other first responders recovering the injured and deceased victims. To this day I still have vivid memories of the victims mangled and burnt bodies.

Most all of the windows in GP’s businesses were knocked out. The explosion and fires threatened briefly the numerous petroleum and chemical plants along the busy Houston Ship Channel. Two fireboats went to the scene to quench pier fires.

“We worked through the night, wading knee deep through spilled grain and pouring water on stubborn but contained fires. Heavy equipment was moved into the area to remove rubble so we could locate victims,” Jamail said.

The force of the explosion gouged out chunks of concrete and steel, heaving them into smaller storage tanks nearby which burst into flames. The main grain elevator was approximately 500 yards long and 100 feet tall. About half of it was destroyed.

SEE ADDITIONAL PHOTO ON GRAIN TRANSPORTATION, PAGE 5

## Pct. 2 programs win 4 national awards

WASHINGTON, DC — Harris County Precinct 2 has been recognized with FOUR Achievement Awards from the National Association of Counties (NACo). The awards honor or innovative, effective county government programs that strengthen services for residents. According to a NACo database, no Harris County entity has ever won multiple NACo awards in the same calendar year.

NACo recognized Precinct 2 for the following programs:

— Health Services for the innovative SmartPods Access2Health, a partnership with Baylor

— Veterans Services for the work with Operation Yellowbird alternative PTSD treatment

— Partnership with the American Chemistry Council for a grant to fund air monitors

— Parks Dept. for the innovation and design of James Driver All-Inclusive Park



HARRIS COUNTY PCT. 2 COMMISSIONER GARCIA

identified by NACo as being worthy of national distinction,” Harris County

Precinct 2 Commissioner Adrian Garcia said, “NACo Achievement Awards are very prestigious, and we are so grateful for the recognition. While each of these programs deserves acknowledgment on their own, our work is not done for awards; our only goal is to serve the Precinct 2 Community the way they should have been treated in years’ past but unfortunately had been looked over. These awards confirm that these communities are not being forgotten. I want to thank

our partners in these efforts for their support — we share these awards with them. Finally, I would also like to thank my staff for all they are doing to make Precinct 2 the best place to live, work, play and raise a family.”

NACo President Gary Moore said, “Over the past year, county officials and frontline employees have demonstrated bold, inspirational leadership. This year’s Achievement Award winning programs illus

Continued. See page 5



## Jacinto City's Singer Vianey Torres reaching for the stars

By Allan Jamail

Jacinto City, TX. May 8, 2021 at the Jacinto City's 75th anniversary I met the talented Jacinto City resident and singer entertainer Vianey Torres. She volunteered to entertain and sing at the city's anniversary. She's a graphic designer by trade for HISD, she donated all the graphic designs used in the city's event. She surprised me by how much talent she had and her ability to sing in either English or Spanish. A few days later I interviewed her and she said she has a passion for performing and wants a chance to sing at some of the national talent show like The Voice or American Idol. She told me her late father is the driving force behind her goal of becoming a national talent in the singing industry.

She grew up and still resides in Jacinto City with her tight-knit family, living a few blocks away from the city's town center where she regularly performs at the city's Market by Night events.

It wasn't until she was 11 years of age when she gained the courage to sing at a family gathering, a performance requested by her late father.

"I remember seeing a tear roll down my dad's cheek and he didn't wipe it



SINGER VIANEY TORRES PERFORMS AT LAST MONTH'S JACINTO CITY MARKET BY NIGHT  
Photo by Allan Jamail

away. I've never seen him cry until that day. His deep focus on me gave me so much comfort because I was very shy when it came to singing, especially in large crowds. I sang a full song that night and afterwards, he embraced me and said, NEVER STOP SINGING" she said.

Vianey's father passed away a few short months after that, she's never stopped singing since then. From school choirs to restaurants and private event performances, Vianey's passion for music has taken her throughout multiple singing competitions

throughout the Houston area, including the Rodeo Rockstar Competition for the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo.

She said her aspirations of becoming a widely recognized singer-songwriter are highly attainable and life is too short not to try. In 2022 she plans on releasing her own music. You can keep up with her through Instagram and Facebook; @SingerVianey. She'll perform at restaurants, birthday and anniversary parties etc, and can be reached at 832-755-9841.

## Jacinto City Police promotes Nieto & Seydler to Sergeant

By Allan Jamail

Jacinto City Police promotes two Corporals, Cynthia Nieto and A. J. Seydler were promoted after years of continuous service to the city to the rank of Sergeant. At the promotion ceremony Chief Ayala said both of them is well deserving of their new rank.

Sgt. Nieto is the daughter of former Jacinto City's officer Raymond Nieto. Her dad passed away in the line of duty while serving as a Deputy Constable. Police Chief Joe Ayala worked with her dad and said he had fond memories of their working relationship.

She has over 14 years of experience with the JCPD and a graduate of Houston Community College Northeast. She holds an Advance Peace Officers certification with the state. The chief said she's an asset to the CITY AND department.



May 18, 2021 Jacinto City Police Chief Joe Ayala promoted Corporals Cynthia Nieto and A. J. Seydler to the rank of Sergeant. L – R: Sgt. A. Seydler, Police Chief Joe Ayala & Sgt. C.Nieto. (Photo by Allan Jaail).

She's preparing to study in the Law Enforcement Management Institute at Texas A & M.

Sgt. Seydler has 8 years with the JCPD and is the handler/trainer of the department's K9 Detail. Sgt. Seydler is an undergraduate with Texas A & M and a graduate of the U of H Criminal Justice Training Law Enforcement Acade-

my. He has an Intermediate Certification with the state and is now working on Advance Peace Officers certification with the state.

Sgt. Seydler's K9 partner is named Fly and is used to help in the removal of hard-core narcotics from the city Chief Ayala says. Ayala said Officer Seydler is an asset to the department and community.

## JC native on TV "Wheel of Fortune"

Tajj Badil-Abish, born and raised in Jacinto City, Texas, was a contestant on Wheel of Fortune Monday, May 24, 2021. Tajj started DJing almost nine years ago while studying at Duke University and has since balanced his passion with his professional career as a creative copywriter in the advertising industry. He currently lives in San Francisco, but his family still resides in Humble, Texas. Tajj claims to own over 50 pairs of sneakers and his guilty pleasure is watching reality television. He started watching Wheel of Fortune at the age of seven with his grandmother and still watches every weeknight with his housemates. He was selected to be a contestant after uploading a video application at WheelofFortune.com and participating in a virtual audition. He hopes to take home enough cash winnings to book a trip and pay off some student loans.



## SCENES FROM MAY'S NIGHT MARKET



SPECTACULAR FIREWORKS SHOW TO END THE 75TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION.



JACINTO CITY 75th Anniversary's Market by Night scenes included:  
UPPER LEFT: The Jacinto City Tent with the Mier Family, Rudy, Rebecca, Jada.  
ABOVE: City Manager Lon Squyres couldn't resist the Crawfish and fixins.  
LEFT: Crowds visited the tents, with lots of artisan crafts, food, clothing accessories, and specialties made by skilled local craftsmen. Come this Saturday for more fun.



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Jacinto City Market by Night

Jacinto City Market by Night

FAMILY FRIENDLY

PET FRIENDLY "PLEASE LEASH"

BUY LOCAL

SHOP LOCAL

SATURDAY JUNE 12

5PM - 9PM

1025 OATES RD

Blue Orange WORLD CUISINE

Artisan Vendors

MUSIC TRANSFORMS LIVES

FREE ADMISSION

FREE PARKING



# For His Eyes Only

## How much do you know about your health?

### Take this quiz!

Enough with the dirt-splattering off-road truck commercials. Want to know how to be a true man of action? Take charge of your health. This quick quiz will help you discover what you know about the top health risks for men.

1. Men between the ages of 30 and 50 are most likely to have:
- A. Hip bursitis
  - B. A herniated disk in the lower back
  - C. A midlife crisis

**Answer: B.** According to Dr. Mohammad Ahmed, a board-certified family medicine physician with Houston Methodist Primary Care Group in Baytown, risk factors for a herniated disk include improper lifting, being overweight, repetitive activities that strain the spine, a sedentary lifestyle and smoking.

**What you can do:** Develop a relationship with a primary care physician to live your healthiest life.

“As a family medicine physician, I am passionate about patient education. I look forward to partnering with my patients and working together to achieve their health goals,” said Ahmed, who sees patients for routine immunizations, thyroid concerns and diabetes management.

2. After skin cancer, \_\_\_\_\_ cancer is the most common cancer in men.
- A. Prostate
  - B. Bone
  - C. Lung



MOHAMMAD AHMED, MD  
FAMILY MEDICINE

**Answer: A.** Prostate cancer strikes one in six men and is the second most prevalent cancer in men. But only about one in 36 men diagnosed with prostate cancer will die from it.

**What you can do:** Talk with your doctor about the risks as well as the potential benefits and limitations of PSA (prostate-specific antigen) screening.

3. Nothing is less manly than an enemy that won’t show its face — and that’s exactly what type 2 diabetes is. How many men in the United States have this “silent killer?”
- A. 7 million
  - B. 13 million
  - C. 79 million

**Answer: B.** Additionally, an estimated 79 million Americans have prediabetes, a condition in which blood glucose levels are higher than normal.

**What you can do:** Know your numbers. Ahmed recommends having your blood glucose tested to see whether you have type 2 diabetes or prediabetes — and get active.

“Annual examinations are a great way to ensure that you stay in good health and maintain your well-being,” Ahmed said.

*Houston Methodist Primary Care Group physicians welcome new and established patients to take the next step toward better health. Visit [houstonmethodist.org/baytown-pcp](https://houstonmethodist.org/baytown-pcp) to schedule a virtual or in-person appointment with a primary care doctor in Baytown.*

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COUNTY CONNECTION

Harris County Judge Lina Hidalgo




# Get Vaccinated; let's move the Threat Level to Green

Since the COVID-19 virus was first detected in Harris County, we have been working non-stop to beat it. We stayed home, wore our masks, maintained social distance, and sacrificed many, many moments with friends and family. When safe, effective vaccines became available, Harris County Public Health rushed to acquire and distribute them equitably, establishing over 100 vaccination sites, including a mega distribution site at NRG stadium that has become a model for the nation. Many of our residents are getting vaccinated, moving us closer to a place where COVID-19 is no longer a major threat to vulnerable populations and our hospital capacity. Thanks to all of this hard work, we have made substantial progress in turning a corner against this virus.

Last week, based on this progress and the meeting of the relevant thresholds, I moved the county's COVID-19 Threat Level from Level 2: Orange to Level 3: Yellow, the system's second-lowest threat level. We should all be proud of reaching this significant milestone. Under the Yellow threat level, unvaccinated individuals should continue to mask and social distance. Fully vaccinated individuals, however, may resume activities without wearing a mask or physically distancing, except where otherwise required.

We are making considerable strides, but our success is fragile. From the beginning of this crisis, data and public health expertise have driven our policies and the guidance we provide the community on how to stay safe. And the data tells us our numbers are still high, that people are still getting sick and dying. While we have come a long way, this is not a mission accomplished moment. But we should feel encouraged that vaccinations are safe, effective, and are preventing deaths, hospitalizations, and the spread of the virus.

So don't wait. Go get vaccinated. And if you've already gotten your shots, help us by getting anyone you know who hasn't to NRG Park. Come by Tuesday thru Sunday between noon and 7 p.m. — there's no need for an appointment. You can find more information at ReadyHarris.org or contact us at 832-927-8787. Let's continue to pull together to persuade friends, family members, and others to do their part and get vaccinated. Let's make it to Green and beat COVID-19 once and for all.



with Slim Randles

# Papaya? Ha! There's glory in that.

Like a doctor removing something important, Herb Collins gently peeled the wrapper back from the root ball and tenderly placed the baby tree in the hole. Then he stood and walked around it to see which way he should align it. Actually, looks pretty good just the way it is.

So he took his bucket of mixed sand and compost and began sprinkling it down onto the roots and then packing it in gently with his fist.

Every few minutes he'd stop and read the directions again. When he ordered the tree, the nurseryman had written back "Are you sure?" Well, that made ol' Herb laugh. Yes, he was sure. He's always sure this time of year.

He was still chuckling to himself when Janice Thomas walked along the sidewalk.

"Hi Herb," said the high school art teacher. "What is this year?"

"Papaya, Janice. Nice healthy one, don't you think?" Janice took a close look at the little dark green tree. Papaya.

"Isn't that a tropical tree?"

"Sure is," he said, tucking more dirt around the roots. "I have to read the instructions carefully to get this right."

Janice thought carefully before speaking. "Papayas sure taste good, Herb."

"Sure do. Wouldn't it be nice if this lives long enough to produce fruit?"

"But you're not expecting ..."

"Of course not. The first nippy day in autumn will turn this little guy belly up."

He looked up and smiled at Janice's consternation.

"You know that banana tree almost made it to Christmas last year. That was my best so far. We'll see how this little guy makes out."

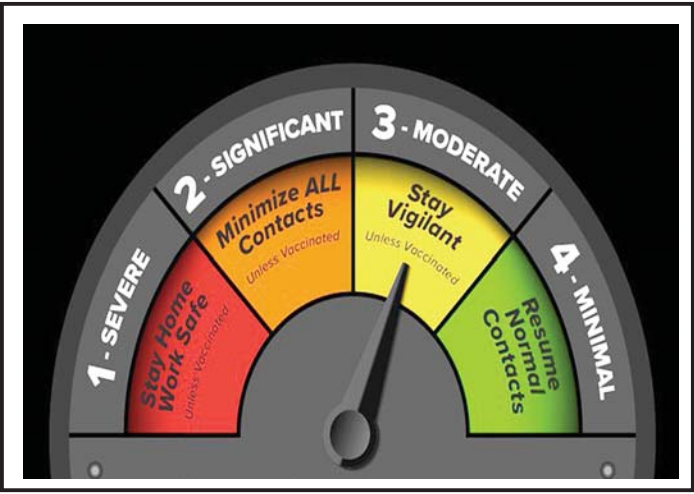
Each year Herb plants something in the front yard that has no chance at all of being there the following spring. He's done it for years. It gives the neighborhood something to look at and talk about, and it's fun.

"You know, Herb, if you're looking for fruit, a cherry tree will produce ..."

"I'm not looking for fruit, Janice," he said, gently. "I'm looking for glory. Glory!"


He laughed. "Where's the glory in planting something that will grow here? Anyone can do that. But a papaya? Ha! There's glory in that."

Brought to you by yourself ... and me, as we take off our hats to the brave men and women of our medical and emergency services. Thank you.



STATE CAPITAL HIGHLIGHTS

By Gary Borders



# Population gains and losses in Texas announced

The U.S. Census Bureau has released its sub-county population estimates from April 2010 to July 2020. That includes population estimates for the 1,200 incorporated places in Texas.

Nine additional Texas towns were incorporated in the past decade, while 13 additional cities surpassed a population of 50,000.

The Texas Demographic Center reported that of the 71 Texas cities with populations of more than 50,000, only two lost population — continuing the trend of smaller towns and areas in the state losing population to larger cities. More than 55% of the state's population growth has been in cities with more than 50,000 residents.

Small and mid-sized cities surrounding major metropolitan areas, such as Dallas-Fort Worth, Austin and Houston, saw the fastest growth rates, while many of the cities in West Texas and the Panhandle were among the 372 Texas cities that lost population, according to TDC.

**EMERGENCY FOOD BENEFITS EXTENDED**

Benefits for families under a federal nutrition plan have been increased through September, the Texas Health and Human Services Commission announced last week.

Under the American Rescue Plan signed by President Biden in March, states can provide eligible families up to \$35 per month to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables. Clients of the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program are eligible.

"Texas WIC provides foods that have great nutritional value — providing key nutrients at key stages of development," Texas WIC Director Edgar Curtis said. "This nutritional support early in life builds stronger, smarter, healthier and happier children and Texans. Fresh fruits and vegetables, which are loaded with vitamins and



other plant-based nutrients, are at the forefront of that strategy."

The HHSC also announced it is providing roughly \$208 million in emergency food benefits under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, extending the maximum SNAP benefits allowable through June. All SNAP recipients will get a minimum of \$95 in emergency allotment, in addition to the 15% increase that continues through September.

The program is funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and administered by HHSC.

**STATE TO RELEASE \$5 BILLION IN SCHOOL FEDERAL AID**

Months after congressional action on a coronavirus relief package, the Texas Education Agency announced Friday that school districts may begin applying for their portion of \$5 billion in aid.

According to the Austin American-Statesman, how much each district will receive varies. Districts that saw large enrollment declines because of the pandemic will likely not receive as much money, because TEA will divert some of the funds to make up for funding provided at pre-pandemic levels.

Much of public-school funding in Texas is based on average daily attendance. However, during the 2020-2021 school year, dis-

tricts were not penalized when students stayed home.

**EXPERTS: WEATHERIZATION BILL FALLS SHORT**

The Texas Legislature passed Senate Bill 3 in response to February's deadly storm and widespread failure of power plants. The package addresses the problems that threaten electric reliability, but public radio's Texas Standard reports that many electric grid experts and policy analysts say not enough has been done to prevent another blackout disaster.

One section of SB3 allows regulators to determine what portions of the natural gas supply must be weatherized. Since it only applies to equipment that directly connects to power plants, experts say it might not be enough.

Dan Cohan, civil engineering professor at Rice University, told the Standard that "whoever has those direct lines into the power plants and winterizes those is going to point upstream and say 'well those upstream people couldn't get us enough gas.' So yeah, it's hard to see how this is going to provide us full coverage."

In addition, critics say the penalties of \$5,000 a day for not doing the required weatherization amount to little more than a rounding error for non-complying oil and gas companies.

**GOP CHAIRMAN RESIGNATION SPARKS SPECULATION**

Texas Republican Party chairman Allen West resigned Friday, sparking speculation he is considering a statewide race.

The Republican party issued a statement that West "will take this opportunity to prayerfully reflect on a new chapter in his already distinguished career." West has not ruled out challenging Gov. Greg Abbott, who last week touted a re-election endorsement from former President Trump.

**COVID-19 CASES DROPPING; 36% FULLY VACCINATED**

The number of new COVID-19 cases in Texas continues to drop, with 9,534 reported as of Sunday for the previous week — a small fraction of mid-January's record high of nearly 159,000.

In the past week, 210 deaths from COVID-19 in Texas were reported, according to the Johns Hopkins University Coronavirus Resource Center. That is also a decrease.

The number of Texans fully vaccinated stands at 10.5 million, according to the Texas Department of State Health Services, or about 36% of the state's population. The number of lab-confirmed COVID-19 patients who are hospitalized dropped nearly a fifth from the previous week, to 1,504, according to DSHS.

THE POSTSCRIPT

By Carrie Classon

# The Homes of Dead People

A cousin of mine reportedly said, "I can't imagine living in a house where other people have lived!"

I don't know if she really said this, as I heard the story secondhand. But it stuck in my mind because every home I've owned has been lived in by other people, and a few people have died in them as well. So far, this has not bothered me in the least.

I'm used to living in the homes of dead people.

The first house I bought was owned by a woman named Ruby. She was still living when I bought it, but she wasn't doing very well. She had outlived two husbands in the house, so I suppose there's a better-than-even chance at least one of them died there.

Ruby finally had to move to a nursing home after she showed up at the neighbor's door a few times without clothes. As she had no children, the responsibility for finding her more suitable accommodations fell to her niece. I have no children, so I expect my niece, Isabelle, might be performing this duty for me sometime in the future. (She recently turned 18 and has that to look forward to.)

My only other real home is the one I've been living in with my husband, Peter. The neighbors say "three witches" lived in the house before the man we bought it from. I don't know if this is true, and no one seems to know much about them.

But now we are moving into a new condo, and I know much more about it because it had only had one other resident. Her name was Elizabeth and, like Ruby, she lived there alone, although unlike Ruby, there is no record of any husbands, dead or alive.

Elizabeth bought the condo when it was built, more than 40 years ago, and she died in it. I know this because I looked up her obituary, and it said she "died at home," so I have to suppose she died in the home we now own.

Elizabeth seems like a lovely person, judging from her obituary. Of course, most people sound nice in their obituaries. I'm going to have to ask Isabelle to say something nice about me when she gets around to writing mine. (A person doesn't turn 18 without acquiring some responsibilities.)

I've been thinking about Ruby and Elizabeth as Peter and I work to renovate this new condo. The walls had been painted and some new flooring put in, but pretty much everything else was as Elizabeth left it. The appliances are old. We've already replaced the countertop and had the cabinets repainted and put in shiny new sinks. I don't think Elizabeth would recognize the place. But I hope she'd be pleased.

Because, unlike my cousin, I very much like the idea of Elizabeth living in my home before me. I like that she was so happy here that she never chose to leave. I'm glad she didn't show up at the neighbor's naked and have to find another home. (Although I don't know this for sure. It's possible she just didn't have a dutiful niece like Ruby did and I do.)

And even without the yellowing 1980s bath fixtures and the chipped countertop, I would like to think there is a little of Elizabeth around. It makes me feel as if I have an invisible friend, looking at the same sun shining in the same windows, seeing the same view, living our overlapping lives without ever getting the chance to meet.

Till next time,

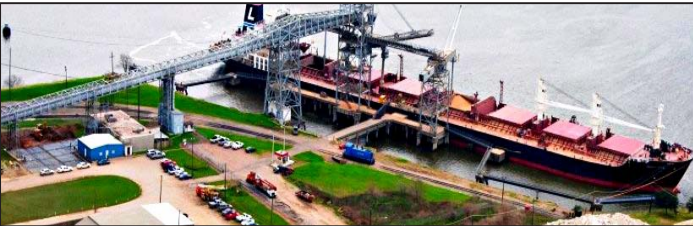
Carrie

Carrie Classon's memoir is called "Blue Yarn." Learn more at CarrieClasson.com.



## Galena Park Grain Fire,

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1



A grain carrying cargo ship loading up at the Andersons Mills grain storage and export facility at the Port of Houston. Photo is from this year, 2021.

## Levi Gaston, Director for GPISD Custodial Services, named a KPRC 2 May Hero



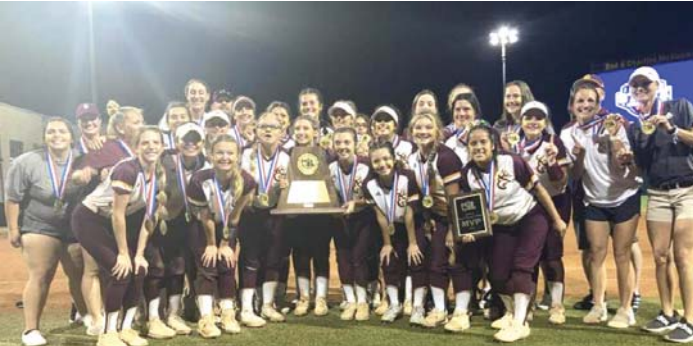
Congratulations to Mr. Levi Gaston, Director for Custodial Services, for being named a KPRC 2 May Hero.

KPRC 2 opened nominations for school districts to submit the names of standout teachers, administrators, custodial, and support staff who deserve recognition for going above and beyond to inspire students through the pandemic.

GPISD submitted the names of many deserving individuals, and we are proud to announce that KPRC selected Levi Gaston, Director for Custodial Services, as the KPRC 2 May Hero. Mr. Gaston has led the charge to keep the District safe during the COVID-19 pandemic. He hosted many trainings to teach the staff how to properly clean and sanitize classrooms while also implementing state-of-the-art cleaning equipment.

Thank you, Mr. Gaston, for all of your hard work! We are very proud to have a KPRC 2 May Hero in GPISD!

## Deer Park takes third state 6-A championship



Deer Park finished the season 40-8 under the first season of Coach Amy Vidal-Bush. She toughened up her team before she let them touch a softball. By June 5, the Varsity girls were winning their neutral play-off game against Judson of Converse with her team manufacturing a single run to a shut-out pitched by Hannah Benavides. Deer Park scored in the sixth inning as Reanna Nieman came in after a fielder's choice, and two singles ( by Hardcastle and Perez) sent her home. In their final bats Judson would drop their tying runs to a couple of fly-outs.

Benavides it seems is dynamite on a pitcher's mound proven by her accomplishing two shut outs in a row, the state semi-final and final. She had 19 innings without a single run score on her pitching. She was named MVP of the Class 6-A tournament. Her pitching had deprived Judson of a single tying run although they had had six in scoring position including a bases loaded one out tense moment. Her coach says she is about 5 foot 10 inches tall but is champion because of work ethic. She threw 109 pitches, put the K on six, walked two and allowed six hits. She has now signed with Abilene Christian University.

This is the third championship for Deer Park in a decade but 2014 was the last one.

## SHELDON ISD SCHOOL NEWS

### Sheldon Summer Scramble brings in thousands for Education Foundation

The inaugural Sheldon Summer Scramble brought in more than \$55,000 to support the Sheldon ISD Education Foundation. The scramble was held on Thursday, June 3 at the Golf Club of Houston and hosted more than 130 golfers. Dollars raised will support the foundation's mission to provide teachers with funding for innovative teaching grants each year. To date the foundation has supported Sheldon educators with more than \$120,000 to support innovative teaching grants. To learn how to get involved with Sheldon's Education Foundation, go to [www.sheldonisd.com/sef/](http://www.sheldonisd.com/sef/).



SCRAMBLEWINNERS Education Foundation Board of Directors President Julie Rodriguez (far left) and Director of Communications and Community Partnerships Emily Conklin (far right) are pictured with the first place team from the Sheldon Summer Scramble. The first place team was from HTS Houston and members include Freddie Brooks, Landon Viewing, Gary Driskel, and Jeremy Latrip.

### Summer Hours in Sheldon ISD

Beginning the week of June 14, Sheldon ISD will operate on summer hours. Buildings and offices will be closed on Fridays. Sheldon administration will be open Monday through Thursday from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. Normal operating hours will resume beginning the week of August 2.

### Graduation set for June 11 for Class of 2021

Sheldon ISD graduates are set to walk on at 7:30 p.m. on Friday, June 11 at Panther Stadium. Each student is given a set amount of tickets for family and friends; however, the ceremony will be streamed live. A link can be found on [www.sheldonisd.com](http://www.sheldonisd.com).

### Register for Pre-kindergarten in Sheldon ISD

Pre-kindergarten registration is now open for new students to Sheldon ISD entering pre-kindergarten. To learn more and to register, go to [www.sheldonisd.com/register/](http://www.sheldonisd.com/register/).

## Pct. 2 wins 4 national awards,

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

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Nationally, awards are given in 18 different categories that reflect the vast, comprehensive services counties provide. The categories include children and youth, criminal justice and public safety, county administration, information technology, health, civic engagement and many more. Started in 1970, NACo's annual Achievement Awards program is designed to recognize county government innovations. Each nominee is judged on its own merits and not against other applications received.

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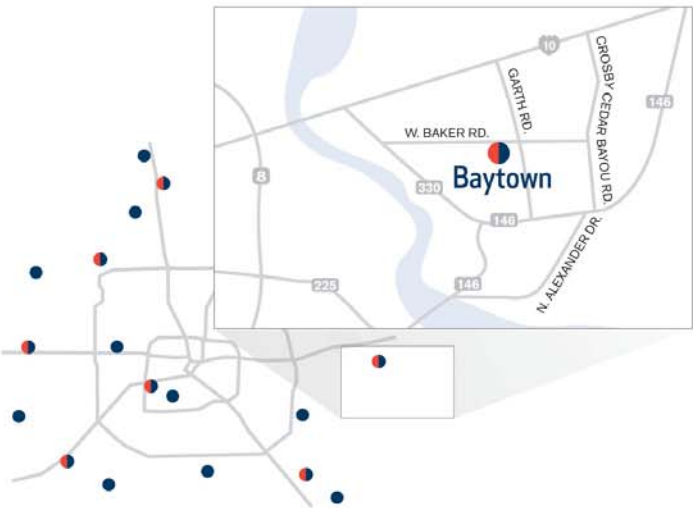


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# ASK THE EXPERT

CHARLOTTE'S WEB



## Blessings or Curses

One look at that title and it should be obvious which we would choose. Yet often we see people living on a road to self-destruction. And unfortunately, when they are on that road, they affect many other lives.

I first met Ms. Billie in 1997 when she was volunteering with a parenting class. Those in the class had middle school and high school children who were in trouble at school and ended up in the courtrooms of the local Justices of the Peace. In an effort to help families save money, the Judge gave the student a choice of attending the classes or paying fees. If the parent chose to take the parenting class, the remainder of the fees were removed.

She shared that she had been down a road of challenges with her own two children. At some point, they turned to drugs, alcohol and other destructive choices. Her son was in prison and her daughter caught up in a very abusive relationship. Within the next year, her son was out of prison and had gained custody of his two very young children. People from the church tried to reach out and help him, yet at the end of the day, his temper and lack of self-discipline led him back to prison.

By the time the children were teenagers, his daughter was dating a much older guy who was into drugs. The father threw his arms up and withdrew her from public school at 16 so she would get her GED. (Now at 28, she still does not have it.) The father had always bragged on his daughter until this point. Her younger brother was so much like their mom that the father constantly told him that in his eyes, he was worthless.

Arrest after arrest, failed relationship after failed relationship and pain on top of pain were constant in his life. There were automobile accidents, lawsuits, a homosexual relationship and more lost jobs. Through the years, I kept in touch with the daughter as she needed a positive role model.

In the meantime, the daughter had married and had two children. Her husband continued to be involved in drugs and crime. He went to prison in 2016, only to be paroled in 2020 and to break his wife's nose within a week of his parole. Like too many women, she was abused yet wanted her children to have a better life that she did, or even than her parents had when they were young. After months of illegal activities from him, she decided it was time to leave him for good. Unfortunately, he took a gun to her head and a knife to her hand. The gun jammed and he was unsuccessful with cutting the thumb completely off of her hand. He finally was arrested and is awaiting trials for both the broken nose, the cut hand and possession of a firearm as a felon.

Throughout the years, the father shared that maybe if his parents had not sexually and physically abuse him and his sister in the late 1960's, these curses would have been passed along to his children and now grandchildren. He wanted a "normal" life but never could seem to find it.

On Monday, he took his life while his grandchildren were in the other room. Unfortunately, he left behind written words that cut to the heart of his daughter. Please take the time to not just pray for this family but to reevaluate your life to see if you are passing along blessings or curses.

## Bicyclist dies in hit-and-run accident in northeast Harris County

HARRIS COUNTY, Texas (KTRK) — A driver is on the loose after hitting and killing a man with a bicycle in northeast Harris County, according to deputies.

It happened around 4 a.m. along C.E. King Parkway near Tidwell.

Family identified the victim as 37-year-old Alex Cerda. They say he was on his way home from a friend's house when the crash happened.

Deputies said Cerda was picking up his bike in the outside lane when the driver struck him. The driver drove off, leaving him to die at the scene.

Cerda's mother, Zenaida, said her son was mentally disabled and used a bike for transportation, although she said he has always had a love for bicycling. A witness reportedly followed after the car that



struck him but lost it heading eastbound on Green River Drive, according to family. They were told it was a larger, dark-colored SUV. They want that person to come forward and accept responsibility for what they did.

"You hurt me in my heart really bad leaving the scene like that. And I want you to come forward and admit what you did to him," Cerda's mother said. "That's my son that I lost and I can't have him back anymore. I love him so much and now I can't hear his voice anymore or talk to him anymore, because his life was taken. Please come forward and identify yourself, because I want justice for my son."

If anyone knows anything about the incident, they're asked to call the Harris County Sheriff's Office at 713-274-7400 or Crime Stoppers at 713-222-TIPS.

## Free Tuition at San Jac College,

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

College can be found on the San Jacinto College website at [sanjac.edu/21Forward](http://sanjac.edu/21Forward).

**About San Jacinto College**

Surrounded by monuments of history, evolving industries, maritime enterprises of today, and the space age of tomorrow, San Jacinto College has served the people of East Harris County, Texas, since 1961. San Jacinto College is among the top 10 community colleges in the nation as designated by the Aspen Institute for Community College Excellence, and was named an Achieving the Dream Leader College of Distinction in 2020. The College serves approximately 45,000 credit and non-credit students annually, and offers more than 200 degrees and certificates across eight major areas of study that put students on a path to transfer to four-year institutions or enter the workforce. San Jacinto College's impact on the region totals \$1.3 billion in added income, which supports 13,044 jobs. The College is fiscally sound, holding bond ratings of AA and Aa2 by Standard & Poor's and Moody's.

For more information about San Jacinto College call 281-998-6150, visit [sanjac.edu](http://sanjac.edu) or join the conversation on Facebook and Twitter



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## ASK DIAMOND JIM

### Diamond Jim: “Does the Chlorine in swimming pools harm jewelry?”

Summer is here with hot, sultry days that lead to lounging at the pool. For jewelry lovers, all this pool time poses a question: “Is it safe to wear your treasured jewelry at the pool, especially since your diamond ring sparkles so beautifully in the sun?” Sparkle aside, the answer is NO.

Pools and hot tubs usually contain copious quantities of chlorine to kill bacteria, viruses and more. Chlorine does a great job of keeping the water clean for swimmers, but what's good for the water you swim in isn't so good for your jewelry.

Your high school chemistry may be years behind you, but you probably remember the phrase “chemical reaction.” Well, chlorine is a chemical and it reacts with metals, including silver, nickel and zinc. And, since gold is often alloyed or combined with other metals - including silver, nickel and zinc - to strengthen it, your gold jewelry will also react with the chlorine you are soaking in, doing damage in quick order.

When chlorine is in contact with your jewelry, the chemical reaction will leave behind microscopic holes in the jewelry and will cause disintegration. This weakens the metal, which in time can cause it to break. And if your prongs break, you can lose the beautiful stone they're holding. The chemical reaction with the metals can also cause your jewelry to turn black, which is probably not the look you wanted! Finally, while diamonds and harder gemstones are not susceptible to direct damage, softer gemstones and doublets can be dulled or pitted by contact with chlorine and other chemicals.

In addition to avoiding chlorine in pools and hot tubs, similar damage can come from using cleaning products with chlorine. So, it is best to remove your jewelry when cleaning as well. And because it's so easy for jewelry to slip off in the water, not wearing jewelry at the pool or beach is a good rule on many fronts.


If you simply must accessorize your bathing suit or caftan, consider wearing fashion jewelry, which if damaged or lost will not cause such an emotional or financial hit. And remember, any jewelry you do wear in the summer is likely to get coated in sun-block, BBQ sauce or sand, so be sure to give it a proper cleaning to keep it sparkling. Check with your jeweler for professional products that are safe for the piece of jewelry in question. Most jewelers carry a line of professional jewelry care products designed especially for the task. And if you are traveling, consider packing a jewelry cleaning cloth or wipe, which are easy to tuck into your luggage and beach bag.

*Diamond Jim is a master jeweler, diamond dealer and precious metals broker of NTR Metals. Pineforest Jewelry has been a proud member of the IJO for many years. See more at: [www.pineforestjewelry.com](http://www.pineforestjewelry.com).*


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

*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](mailto:jmills@pineforestjewelry.com).*

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