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Rep. Ana Hernandez' 2022 Holiday Open House

'Tis the season! Thank you so much to everyone who came by our District Office Holiday Open House and for your generosity supporting our toy drive! May you have a happy and safe holiday season! (Photo by Allan Jamail)



North Shore cruises into state championship over Westlake

Semi-Final Playoff: Mustangs 49 – Chaparrals 34

By Allan Jamail

Saturday, December 10, 2022 - the District 6A Division I state championship semi-final football playoff took place on a neutral field, at Houston Rice Stadium. Galena Park ISD North Shore Mustangs victory over the Austin Westlake Chaparrals gave Coach Jon Kay's Eastside Boys and himself a chance to make 6A high school championship history with four consecutive state titles. The state championship game will be played at the Dallas Cowboy Stadium, Saturday, December 17th at 7PM.

This will make the 4th consecutive time the Mustangs will faceoff with the local Dallas area Duncanville Panthers. The Panthers lost all three past contests and are determined not to lose another, which would put them into the records of suffering four consecutive loses to the Mustangs. Both are undefeated, the game is a part of the "2022 UIL Texas Football State Championships - 2022 Football Conference 6A D1" tournament.

Saturday's game was hard fought; the Mustangs "doomsday defense" kept the



LEFT: NS Rashaad Johnson burst through defenders scoring one of his 3 TD's (Photo by Allan Jamail) .



RIGHT: #28 D'Andre Hardeman stretching out to get the ball across the goal. (Photo Allan Jamail)



LEFT: Mustang Rashaad Johnson gallops 75 yards for a TD. One of his 3 TD's. (Photo by Allan Jamail)



RIGHT: NS punt returner Evan Jackson sprints 65 yds. for a TD. (Photo by Allan Jamail)

Chaparrals quarterback rushed so often to where many times he threw an uncatchable ball for his receivers. Their running game very seldom got through the NS steel curtain and when they did the NS linebackers man-handled them.

Coach Jon Kay's offense was clicking, scoring in every quarter for seven touchdowns (TD's). They scored passing and running and with Special Teams making a TD on a 65 yd Evan Jackson punt return.

TD's were made by Rashaad Johnson (3) David Amador (1) D'Andre Hardeman (1), Christopher Barnes (1) & Evan Jackson (1). Extra points were kicked by Carlos Dominguez and kickoffs by Jonathan Soto. Linda Jamail, Statistician.

The State Championship game will be televised on Bally Sports Southwest. AT & T 772/1772, Direct TV: 675/692, Xfinity 637/1250

Scoring by quarter:					
	1	2	3	4	Final
NS	7	14	21	7	49
WL	7	5	15	7	34

CONTINUED. MORE PHOTOS ON PAGE 8

Jacinto City tradition of Santa on the Fire Truck returns

By Allan Jamail

Saturday, December 10, 2022 – Jacinto City's long tradition of Santa on the fire truck combing the city at Christmas time giving candy to kids returned. It had been sidelined two years because of the deadly contagious pandemic virus.

Mayor Diaz said, "As a child I remember the excitement I experienced seeing Santa and getting candy. My grown sons have their childhood memories of this event too. It'll be something these kids will remember for a lifetime. As mayor I'm proud our City Council was able to make it happen for the city's children again."

Former Mayor Allan Jamail said, "This is great for the city. I remember my kids and my grandson greeting Santa on our curb. I was excited as much as they were."

Mayor Ana Diaz, City Secretary Joyce Raines,



Jacinto City Fireman Mike Bodak drives Santa on the fire truck giving candy to excited kids. (Photo by Linda Jamail)

Bookkeeper Kathy Greiner, Councilmen Mario Gonzales, JJ Rivas and Gregg Robinson along with a group of city workers met early Saturday morning preparing for the citywide Christmas candy distribution.

There were over 50 Galena Park High School (GPHS) students joining up with firemen, policemen, city workers and citizens for the event. See

photo.

Mayor Ana Diaz gave safety instructions (see photo) to everyone before they left for the 5 hour journey. They went to every street (3,000 residences) giving candy to the kids as they came out to the curb getting candy and Santa's wave.

On November 19th the city began preparing for

Continued on Page 8



Mayor Ana Diaz and GPHS student volunteers preparing to embark on Santa's city wide candy give-away. (Contributed Photo)

Letters to Santa

Letters to Santa

Dear Santa,
I been a good girl this year and I didn't want much this year, but what I want is aqua beads and bell bottom and that's it. -Valerie- 9 yr.

Dear Santa,
I know that I been nice including how I been sending my time on Jesus and stuff, but you make my day like. When Crt got eliminated from foot boll, but all I want is a Crt forgive and for him to come back. - Brandon- 9 yr.

Dear Santa,
What I want for Christmas is some new tune shoes. How do I deserve that is helping my mom with my baby sister and help clean my house. - Madelyn- 8 yr.

Dear Santa,
If I am on the good list, then I really want a Squish mellow and a Sushi Squishy. You and your elves are awesome , they make day better and I make sure there okay everyday. I really want to get a Rolex cube for maybe me and my uncle. Thank you so much for reading my note. I wish you and my three elves a Merry Christmas. -Jazlyn- 8 yr.

Dear Santa,
If you have not got my Christmas, I don't want anything specific, so you can surprise me. But I do want one thing,I want my mom to get a big gift from everyone. Merry Christmas Santal. -Cooper- 8yr.

Dear Santa,
I have been good this year. For Christmas I would really like to help the people that are in need. I want to give them ____ and I would want to have a watch, Astros earrings, Pusheen and a necklace. I love soccer and volley ball. I am in third grade. -Avery- 9 yr.

Dear Santa,
I have been good this year. I love gymnastics and I am in 3rd grade this year. For Christmas I would like slime

Dear Santa,
I love christmas I want a lol house and a hachmals fly and lols pig and barbed, Kinley.

and candy, but I don't know what else. Forn my little sister, she likes cocomelan toys, baby dolls and I don't know what else for us. -Karlie- 9 yr.

Dear Santa,
I have been good so far. I would like a stopwatch two bags of marbles and a neff gun. -Yani- 8 yr.

Dear Santa,
I have been good at school this year. For Christmas I would like a lava lamp for my room. Something I like is soccer and I want a FGTEEV book. The one say switcher rescue and that's all I want. And also give my brother a toy car. -Liam- 8 yr.

ear Santa,
How are your ranger?
I was a lettuce SoDr for cosmos: I sow at sis mostcus. Luke,

Dear Santa,
I have been really good this year. For Christmas I want a Apple Pencil and a lot of I survived books. I love Gyuousticks and I am in 3rd grade, my favorite holiday is Christmas. -Emma- 9 yr.

Dear Santa,
I like a dog, & bar dos and long 5. I have been good all year. Thank you, Sasha 7 years old.

Dear Santa,
How have Rudolph been? I hope I am on the nice list. If I am on the nice list, can you get me a iPhone & puppy, Disney mini brands, paint part, paint brushes. Thank you. - Mia- 9 yr.

Dear Santa,
Hi, I just want to say thank you for for sending singles this year, and I am sure I am on the nice list, because I help my mom, dad and my brother and I get some gifts from you.And I hope everything is going good at the North Pole. Love Bryan - 8yr.

Dear Santa,
How are you? You are wanting to know how I am I think. I maybe on the middle of the list, but I am doing my best. Me and my brother are fighting as you know, but I have one wish - I really really want a dog. How is Rudolph doing? -Henley- 9 yr.

Dear Santa,
I have been really good this year. I have been good with my family; I have been good with my friends. I want a PS5, a tank that can play outside, with an \$100,000,000 and \$5,000,000 for Mrs. Guy. -Case- 8 yr.

Dear Santa,
I would like a telescope skateboard, and a dirt bike and play station. I have been good all year! Thank you. London, 7 years old.

SEASON'S GREETINGS

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*From Our Family to Yours,
Best Wishes for the New Year*

Joe Stephens and family

Wishing you a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

State Representative Ana Hernandez

Wishing you the Merriest Christmas and a Happy and Productive New Year

JERRY & JULIE Fallin

Sheldon ISD wishes everyone a Merry Christmas & Happy New Year

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Every Child, Every Day

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and a Prosperous
New Year!

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CHARLOTTE'S
WEB

By Charlotte Jackson



Make An Impact

As we are quickly moving into the final days of 2022, I want to thank the many residents of our communities who make an impact daily. Before I walk out of my apartment each day, I have already been greeted by multiple text messages from individuals who without living in this community, I probably would not know. I can count on Deborah, who I met through the Channelview Ministry Team to share a word of encouragement. It is typically followed by a message from Doc, who became my children’s pediatrician in 1993.

As I drive to work, I pass by the local elementary and see a smiling Deputy from the Constable’s team. He started with the department after me so I most likely have never seen him outside of the morning traffic, as we work at different locations. When I arrive at McDonald’s, I am greeted by Mrs. Irene or another smiling face from Melissa’s crew. Even the utility man, Mr Will, is quick to speak and smile.

During the next ten minutes, I will see familiar faces and places along Woodforest Boulevard. I smile as I realize that while much has changed, there are those some spots which will always hold a special place in my heart. Some people may see the North Shore Ninth Grade Campus or perhaps the Zotz Education Center. I instead see where on May 29, 1980 I participated with over 360 classmates in our High School Graduation. When I see the Zotz Center, I smile because of the impact that Joyce Zotz has had on generations. If I were not driving and could close my eyes, I could hear Robert Cloud, Ray Kilgo, Sue Allman, Walter Lilly and Charles Chesnutt speaking life into me when I was just a preteen.

Continuing down the street, I see houses that represent my former classmates’ childhood homes as well as the one yard that has been beautiful for decades, that of the late Dr Norris and his precious wife Linda Norris. Another block down the road and you see the childhood home of a man who kept us, as in the City of Houston and countless sports fans safe for more decades while serving with the Houston Police Department and working extra jobs with the Astros and others.

As I get to North Shore Elementary, I smile thinking about the friendships that started there in 1971 when I first moved to Houston. Again, my life has been impacted by those classmates who share memories that will never be forgotten.

It was here at a PTA Meeting that I first Heard Dr Gerald Cobb speak. To this day, I share stories with others about his life. Seems like just yesterday that they cleared the woods where we now sit at the traffic light looking at the Beltway. So many people I have been blessed to meet and develop relationships with over the decades. As I get to my office, I smile knowing that today, I will talk to senior adults who have so much to share. I love to hear them tell me about their lives.

On the way home, I will pick up a young person needing a ride and it will be my opportunity to share with them about how important people are. How important it is to be involved and to make an impact. This particular young lady is one who I have great faith in, that no matter what life throws, she is an overcomer.



Letters to Santa



Dear Santa,
I would like a PS5 and I would like a head set and a 4wheeler and I would like a phone, and a RC car want go 30 mg. And I want a bike. I have been good all year! Isaiah, 8 years old.

Dear Santa,
I wanna bunch of LOL dolls and I went Barbie doll and I want that rainbow collection. Paisley.

Dear Santa,
I want for Christmas is LOL surprise dolls a barbie house and A pretty pink bike and a LOL play home and that’s it. Parker.

Dear Santa,
This is With. I want for Christmas Jessica. Twins baby dolls, stroller, play laptop, prissce dress-up kit, baby close, baby toy high chair, baby shoes, baby diaper bag with lotto room, kids fake nail not glue on, a reborn toy box, 10 baby bottles, hanger for a baby close

Dear Santa,
I have been good most of the year. Can I have a some hot wheels pleas and a among plashy, please.

Love Credenec. Love Santa.

Dear Santa,
How are you doing? I have been a good boy because I help my mother cook in the kitchen. I also clean with my mom. For Christmas I would like a PS5 please. Thank you, Chrisian.

Dear Santa,
Hello, how are you? I have been a good girl because I do my chores, I also help my dad wash the car. For Christmas I would like a computer or iPad please, Love, Maria.

Dear Santa,
Hello, how are you? I have been a good girl because I help to my mom to take care of my baby sister. I also help my dad wash the car. For Christmas I would like a barbie accessories, dresses, omg LoL surprise barbie. Love, Kennia.

Holiday Gifts for Seniors Who Have Everything

By Matilda Charles
Seniors have acquired so much istuffi over the years that we have nearly everything we need ... and more. If you’ve held off buying a gift for a senior in your life because you don’t know what to get someone who already has everything, here are a few gift ideas that would be most welcome.

- Coupons for cab rides or gift certificates for restaurant meals, laundry services, auto detailing, spa day or hair salon services.
- Gift basket created especially for your seniors, such as gourmet food, cheese, jams or chocolate. Or, consider a subscription to a quarterly or monthly gift club. Options range from fruit baskets or flowers to bacon, coffee and cigars.
- Pay for a year of cable TV, the daily newspaper, magazine subscription or Netflix.
- Two tickets to a play or other event where you’ll accompany your senior or a pair of movie passes so your senior can take a friend.
- Pay for a senior’s lifelong learning class, either at the senior center or nearby university, and arrange for transportation.
- Put together a box of useful things, like stamps, note cards, address labels, batteries, razor blades and calendar with large print. Include a list of important phone numbers printed out in a large font that can be taped to the inside of a cupboard door. (Keep the file and make changes whenever your senior needs to update it.)
- Make single serving meals for the freezer.
- Don’t leave out your own participation and that of your children. A small coupon book full of services you can do year-round, such as cleaning, painting a room, weeding the garden, raking leaves and checking expiration dates on food in the cupboard -- all will be appreciated.

What do seniors really want most? The gift of your time.
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ASK DIAMOND JIM

Diamond Jim: “How to spot a fake Rolex bezel”



Rolex bezels come in several different styles, colors, and materials. Styles of Rolex bezels vary from smooth to fluted, rotating to fixed, and marked to unmarked. Having some basic knowledge about Rolex bezels, especially for the watch(es) in question, will prove to be useful when checking for authenticity. For example, all fluted bezels on authentic Rolex watches are made of 18k gold. Therefore, using this info, you can determine that any Rolex watch you find a watch with a fluted bezel made of platinum or stainless steel is indeed inauthentic.

Watches from the GMT-Master and GMT-Master II collection feature a characteristic two-tone bezel in various color combinations. Any Rolex watch with a two-tone bezel will have a distinct line separating the two colors as if dividing the face of the watch horizontally, through the numbers 6 and 18 on the bezel markers. If the two colors aren’t split by a clear and distinct line, if the colors look like they bleed into each other, and/or if the colors split anywhere else on the bezel besides at the numbers 6 and 18, then that watch is surely a fake Rolex.

Below you can see some other notable discrepancies between the bezel of the real Rolex Submariner and the counterfeit:



- **Size**
 - The size of the bezels – more specifically the width of them – is comparably different. The bezel on the counterfeit watch is noticeably skinnier in width than the bezel on the genuine Rolex.
- **Insert font**
 - The font on both bezels is also visibly different when looking at the numbers on each bezel. The numbers on the bezel of the replica are thicker and more bolded than the numbers on the real Rolex bezel. This discrepancy is most noticeable when comparing the numbers 2, 4, and 5 between both bezels.
- **Pip or Pearl**
 - The lume pip at the 12 o’clock on the real Rolex bezel has a distinct silver lining around it and also fits perfectly within the borders of the triangle marker around it. Whereas the pip on the counterfeit Rolex’s bezel has a bigger and thicker border around it that breaks outside the border of the triangle marker. It is also not made of lume material, which would not glow in the dark like the pip on the real Rolex bezel.
- **Engraving on bezel**
 - The numbers and markers on the authentic Rolex’s bezel are engraved and have a very clear groove in the bezel’s surface, whereas the bezel of the replica has no groove and is a smooth surface all the way around.
- **Engraving on rehaut**
 - On the inner ring of the bezel, or the “rehaut”, of the real Rolex you can see engravings of the word “ROLEX” five times along both the right and left side, a tiny Rolex crown logo at the 12 o’clock, and the watch’s serial number at 6 o’clock. On older Rolex watches, these details are laser-etched and not engraved. Rolex first started engraving them in 2005 to make this feature harder to duplicate. Either way, it’s a safe bet that if the rehaut of the bezel has either nothing or something else engraved/etched on it, it is likely a fake. For instance, the rehaut of this replica has zero engraving/etching on it and is merely a reflective mirror-like surface all the way around.

Credit to The Watch Standard for these articles.

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.

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.

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OPINION PAGE

☆

Yes, Virginia, There is a Santa Claus

By FRANCIS P. CHURCH,
First published in The New York Sun in 1897

We take pleasure in answering thus prominently the communication below, expressing at the same time our great gratification that its faithful author is numbered among the friends of The Sun:

Dear Editor—
I am 8 years old. Some of my little friends say there is no Santa Claus. Papa says, “If you see it in The Sun, it’s so.” Please tell me the truth, is there a Santa Claus?
Virginia O’Hanlon

Virginia, your little friends are wrong. They have been affected by the skepticism of a skeptical age. They do not believe except they see. They think that nothing can be which is not com-prehensible by their little minds. All minds, Virginia, whether they be men’s or children’s, are little. In this great universe of ours, man is a mere insect, an ant, in his intellect as compared with the boundless world about him, as measured by the intelligence capable of grasping the whole of truth and knowledge.

Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus. He exists as certainly as love and generosity and devotion exist, and you know that they abound and give to your life its highest beauty and joy. Alas! how dreary would be the world if there were no Santa Claus! It would be as dreary as if there were no Virginias. There would be no childlike faith then, no poetry, no romance to make tolerable this existence. We should have no enjoyment, except in sense and sight. The eternal light with which childhood fills the world would be extin-guished.

Not believe in Santa Claus! You might as well not believe in fairies. You might get your papa to hire men to watch in all the chimneys on Christmas eve to catch Santa Claus, but even if you did not see Santa Claus coming down, what would that prove? Nobody sees Santa Claus, but that is no sign that there is no Santa Claus. The most real things in the world are those that neither children nor men can see. Did you ever see fairies dancing on the lawn? Of course not, but that’s no proof that they are not there. Nobody can conceive or imagine all the wonders there are unseen and unseeable in the world.

You tear apart the baby’s rattle and see what makes the noise inside, but there is a veil covering the unseen world which not the strongest man, nor even the united strength of all the strongest men that ever lived could tear apart. Only faith, poetry, love, romance, can push aside that curtain and view and picture the supernal beauty and glory beyond. Is it all real? Ah, Virginia, in all this world there is nothing else real and abiding.

No Santa Claus! Thank God! he lives and lives forever. A thousand years from now, Virginia, nay 10 times 10,000 years from now, he will continue to make glad the heart of childhood.

Francis P. Church’s editorial, “Yes Virginia, There is a Santa Claus” was an immediate sensation, and went on to become one of the most famous editorials ever written. It first appeared in the The New York Sun in 1897, almost a hundred years ago, and was reprinted annually until 1949 when the paper went out of business.

Virginia O’Hanlon went on to graduate from Hunter College with a Bachelor of Arts degree at age 21. The following year she received her Master’s from Columbia, and in 1912 she began teaching in the New York City school system, later becoming a principal. After 47 years, she retired as an educator. Through-out her life she received a steady stream of mail about her Santa Claus letter, and to each reply she attached an attractive printed copy of the Church editorial. Virginia O’Hanlon Douglas died on May 13, 1971, at the age of 81, in a nursing home in Valatie, N.Y.



☆

STATE CAPITAL HIGHLIGHTS

By Gary Borders

Patrick Lays Out Legislative Priorities

Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick outlined his goals for the upcoming legislative session, calling them “general concepts,” according to the Austin American-Statesman.

With an estimated \$27 billion surplus, the Legislative Budget Board voted last week to boost the Legislature’s spending capacity by 12.3% — the largest increase allowed under the state constitution. But that still leaves the Legislature having about \$14.5 billion in the piggy bank above its spending limit.

Consequently, property tax reduction is one of Patrick’s priorities. He is calling for a hike in the homestead property tax exemption from \$40,000 to \$60,000, as well as an expansion of personal property exemptions for businesses, the Statesman reported.

Other priorities include strengthening the state’s power grid, boosting border security and law enforcement measures, such as increasing pay for sheriffs and a 10-year mandatory minimum sentence for anyone who uses a gun while committing a crime.

Patrick stressed that the Legislature has the ultimate say.

“So much of what I’m laying out today is not specific, because it’s really up to the members to write the bills in the Senate and the House,” Patrick said. “It’s good that the Legislature is back. We have an extraordinary opportunity, like we have never had before, to chart the future of the state of Texas.”

RAINY DAY FUND, HIGHWAYS GET BOOST FROM OIL, GAS REVENUES

A significant amount of the state’s current surplus is coming from oil and gas industry tax revenues, with the latest contribution being \$7.3 billion split equally between the Rainy Day Fund and the State Highway Fund. A 2014 constitutional amendment mandates that 75% of oil and gas tax revenue that exceeds the amount collected in 1987 be split evenly between the two funds.

“Revenue from the oil and gas industry is what’s in the Rainy Day Fund, accounts for billions to the State Highway



Fund, and contributes to state funds that pay for schools, universities, and first responders,” Texas Railroad Commission Chairman Wayne Christian said.

REPORT: PRIVATE BORDER WALL COULD COLLAPSE

A U.S. Department of Justice report kept secret for more than a year and produced by the global engineering firm Arcadis concludes a private border wall along the Rio Grande in Hidalgo County is in danger of collapsing if the area receives extreme flooding.

The report, obtained by ProPublica and The Texas Tribune, concludes the wall built by Fisher Industries doesn’t meet basic international building code and industry standards. Its foundation is far shallower than previous border walls built by the federal government.

The feds reached a settlement with Fisher Industries last May requiring that the fence be inspected quarterly, that bollards be removed, and that a gate be maintained to allow for the release of floodwaters.

An attorney for Fisher Industries said the company “strongly disagrees” with the report. However, several civil engineering experts say the settlement ignores the report’s conclusions. Alex Mayer, a civil engineering professor at the University of Texas at El Paso, said the agreement overlooks what he termed the wall’s flawed design, as pointed out by the report.

“It just shows the shoddiness of the whole effort. It worries me even more,” Mayer said.

The two news organizations spent 15 months trying to obtain the Arcadis report, which confirms their earlier reporting about the privately built wall’s potential flaws.

TEXAS TRAFFIC CONGESTION INCREASED IN 2021

Delays on the state’s most crowded roadways grew last year, though they are still below pre-pandemic gridlock levels, according to the latest study by the Texas A&M Transportation Institute. The institute has conducted the study annually since 2009.

This year’s “winner” for most gridlocked stretch is Houston’s West Loop, which held onto the title it garnered the previous year. Rounding out the top five of roadways one might consider avoiding if possible are the Woodall Rogers Freeway in Dallas; Interstate 35 in Austin; and Houston’s Eastex and Southwest Freeways.

Researchers say traffic delays cost a ton of money in lost time and wasted fuel — more than \$3.8 billion on the state’s busiest road sections last year, though that is about 10% lower than pre-pandemic levels.

Delays are not confined to the state’s largest cities. Gridlock affects areas of all sizes, according to the institute, which has compiled a complete list of 1,860 road segments in 23 urban regions across Texas. The list can be found at mobility.tamu.edu

LAWMAKERS SIGN NDAS TO GET UVALDE INFO

A half-dozen Texas lawmakers signed nondisclosure agreements to obtain investigative records from the Texas Department of Public Safety concerning the May shooting at Robb Elementary School in Uvalde that have thus far been kept secret from the public.

The Austin American-Statesman reported that state Sen. Roland Gutierrez, D-San Antonio, whose district includes Uvalde, was one of the six. Others include Sens. Royce West, Juan “Chuy” Hinojosa and Paul Bettencourt, and Reps. Dustin Burrows and Tracy King, according to the DPS. Most of the agreements were signed in June or July.

Since the shooting, which killed 19 students and two teachers, parents and others have fought for investigative records that might explain the failed law enforcement response at the school. A coalition of media outlets, including the Statesman, have sued seeking the public release of information from DPS.

COVID-19 CASES RISE

The number of COVID-19 cases in the past week in Texas rose to 21,026, with 43 deaths reported by the Coronavirus Resource Center at Johns Hopkins University. That is more than double the number of new cases reported the previous week. There are 1,750 lab-confirmed COVID-19 hospitalizations throughout the state — also an increase, according to the Texas Department of State Health Services.

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THE POSTSCRIPT

By Carrie Classon

Wrong About Papayas

The fruit lady has my number.

One of the things I like in Mexico—and other countries we have visited in the past—is buying fruits and vegetables from a stand, run by a family. I love wandering through the market, looking at all the unfamiliar things and asking questions.

“Is this for today or for tomorrow?” I ask in Spanish, wondering if it is ripe enough to eat immediately. The fruit vendors know when something is ripe. I load up my bags with papaya and little sweet bananas and pineapple and broccoli and cauliflower and carrots and potatoes and avocados and onions and tomatoes. And then I realize my bags are much too full and I have to stop buying things right now.

Then the fruit lady gives me a present.

I don’t ask for a present. But after everything is loaded into my bags and I look like a burro headed home, she finds one perfectly ripe tangerine or apple and pops it into my bag.

“A gift,” she says. I don’t remember this ever happening in a grocery store.

And so, of course, even though there are dozens of fruit stands, I come back to her. She is always happy to see me. And every day, I tell her, “I want another papaya—sweet and ugly!”

She laughs because this is a running joke of ours. No matter what else I buy, I always buy a papaya, and the best papayas are a little disreputable looking. They are dimpled and bumpy and have splotches here and there.

“Is this spoiled?” I wonder. No. It is perfect. I cut it in half and sometimes it is filled with seeds and sometimes there are no seeds. It seems to me there must be a logical explanation for this. But then sometimes there are only a couple of seeds, and this makes no sense at all.

However many seeds there are, I scoop them out before skinning it and chopping it up and putting it in the fridge. I have no idea if this is how experienced papaya eaters do it. Probably, an experienced papaya eater would say, “What the heck are you doing? That’s not how it’s done!”

But I know nothing about papayas. I don’t remember ever eating a papaya before I was 40. On the rare occasion that I did, the papaya was in some sort of fruit salad. I remember it as being pale orange and rather bland. It was the part of the fruit salad that I ate first to get it over with. I had obviously never had a good papaya. Now that I have, I feel as if I have made this amazing discovery.

“Have you tried the papaya?” I say to unsuspecting gringos in the market. “It’s amazing!”

Most of them have had papaya and I’m sure they think I’m a little ridiculous, a freelance papaya booster, roaming the market. But I don’t care. I would feel terrible if anyone didn’t know how wonderful they were. Someone recently told me they were good for me. I really don’t know. They seem as if they must be. They are so deep orange and sweet.

It’s a wonderful surprise to learn that I was all wrong about papayas and, of course, it makes me wonder what else I’ve still got all wrong. It’s wonderful to find out how much I like this sweet and ugly fruit.

Now that I know, I am eating all the papayas I want. I am eating papayas every day—to make up for lost time.

Till next time,
Carrie

Photos from the column and other fun stuff can be found at CarrieClasson.com.

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SPORTS

PAGE

FOOTBALL SEASON WEEK 16:

Chiefs look to put more hurt on Texans:

Cowboys can't let up against Jaguars on road

This season can't end soon enough for the Houston Texans. Two weeks ago, they fell to 1-10-1 with a home loss to the Cleveland Browns and former Texans QB Deshaun Watson. Watson was making his first start in 700 days and his first in a Browns uniform after serving an 11-game suspension for violating the NFL's personal conduct policy.

While Browns fans were hoping for big things from the former Texan, they were sadly disappointed because he played like a guy who hadn't played a game in 700 days. Watson threw for just 131 yards and threw an interception, but that didn't matter because his team was playing the inept Texans offense.

The Browns did not score an offensive touchdown, but returned a punt for a touchdown, a Kyle Allen fumble for a touchdown and an Allen interception for a touchdown on the way to a 27-14 win over Houston.

This week's visitor to NRG Stadium won't have issues on offense as Patrick Mahomes and Co. will take on the Texans in what could be a long afternoon for the Houston defense.

Sure, the Chiefs lost two weeks ago at Cincinnati, 27-24, but that loss should focus Andy Reid's team as they begin their late-season run. They are now in a battle with Buffalo for the best record in the AFC and a first-round bye in the playoffs, so I don't expect the Chiefs to look past the lowly Texans. If you have Mahomes in Fantasy Football, this could be a huge week for you if your team has made the playoffs.

Other interesting games on tap in Week 15 has the 49ers visiting Seattle on Thursday Night Football in a key NFC West matchup. Two weeks ago, the 49ers lost starting QB Jimmy Garoppolo for the season when he sustained a broken foot in SF's 33-17 win over Miami. Rookie quarterback Brock Purdy stepped in and did a nice job, throwing for 210 yards and two TDs.

There's also a big game in the AFC East as the Dolphins visit the Bills. Miami's loss at SF, coupled with the Bills' win at New England two weeks ago put the Bills in first place in the East. Weather could be a key factor in this game as the boys from Miami might have to encounter Buffalo in mid-December. The 10-day forecast for Buffalo calls for a high of 35 with 15 mile per hour winds. Not exactly South Florida weather.

Other key games this week have the Giants and Commanders meeting for the second time in three weeks in an important NFC East game for both teams. Two weeks ago, those two played to a 20-20 tie in the Meadowlands. The NFL has flexed this game to



Sunday Night Football, saving us from having to watch the Patriots versus the Raiders in prime time. Thank you, Commissioner Goodell.

The Cowboys, fresh off their in-state contest against the Texans (oh boy, that one could also get ugly), travel to Jacksonville to face the Jaguars. The Jags will probably treat this game like their Super Bowl, so Mike McCarthy's team should not look past Trevor Lawrence and the Jags.

There's a good intra-conference contest between the surging Bengals and the Bucs in Tampa on Sunday, while the Titans face another tough road test when they take on the Chargers in Los Angeles. Week 15 concludes with sort of a dud, as the struggling defending Super Bowl champion Rams visit Lambeau Field to take on Aaron Rodgers and the Green Bay Packers.

While the College Football Playoffs are weeks away, I'd say the committee got things right. Georgia (No. 1), Michigan (No. 2), TCU (No. 3) and Ohio State (No. 4) are the most deserving teams to make the CFP this year. Although the Buckeyes were throttled at home in their season finale by Michigan (45-23), I don't think a two-loss Alabama team deserved to play in the tournament. Perhaps 'Bama head coach Nick Saban will use the snub as a motivating factor heading into the 2023 season.

Before I go on, I'd like to add a personal note. Last week, we had to put down our wonderful pet Bambi. It was one of the hardest things I've ever had to do. Bambi gave us 18 loving years and was a great companion to me and my wife Sharon, but time took its toll on her little body. The night before I took her to the vet, her eyes said it all. "Dad, it's time. I'm tired and am ready to go." I want to thank the professional and compassionate folks at East Texas Veterinarian Clinic in Humble for their kindness and patience. Bambi passed in my arms. We loved that little dog so much and will miss her, but we know she has crossed over Rainbow Bridge and has been reunited with her buddies. She's no longer in pain and we take comfort in that. We love you, Bambi. Rest well.

Thank you for that.

Before we take a look at this weekend's games, let's review last

week's record. An 8-3 mark upped the season record o 110-54 (67%).

Now, onto this week's games.

NFL

San Francisco at Seattle: Can the 49ers survive without starting QB Jimmy Garoppolo? We are about to find out when SF plays a tough road game at Seattle on Thursday Night Football. Two weeks ago, rookie Brock Purdy stepped in for Jimmy G and led the 49ers to a 33-17 win over Miami. If Purdy just manages the 49er offense, they should be fine because SF has one of the top defenses in the NFL. Look for running back Christian McCaffrey (307 rushing yards, 2 TDs/33 receptions, 282 yards, 2 TDs) to step up his game and get plenty of touches. That should also go for versatile wide receiver Deebo Samuel (50 receptions, 569 yards, 2 TDs). Seattle has been one of the surprise teams in the NFL this year and they are a tough out at home. QB Geno Smith (3,169 yards, 22 TDs) has two quality targets to throw to in Tyler Lockett (66 receptions, 836 yards, 7 TDS) and DK Metcalf (67 receptions, 798 yards, 5 TDs). If rookie running back Kenneth Walker III (649 yards, 9 TDS) is back from an ankle injury he sustained two weeks ago in the Seahawks road win at LA, that will give the 49ers defense one more weapon with which to contend. I think the Hawks take this one at home as the NFC West race gets that much tighter. My pick, Seattle 27, San Francisco 24

Miami at Buffalo: A big one in the AFC East has the Dolphins heading north to take on a Buffalo team that appears to clicking at the right time of the season. Two weeks ago, the Dolphins dropped a 33-17 decision at SF, while the Bills dominated the Patriots in New England, 24-10. Buffalo QB Josh Allen (3,406 passing yards, 25 TDs/ 581 rushing yards, 5 TDs) is playing like an MVP. He's also getting help in the running game from Devin Singletary (603 yards, 4 TDs) and from wide receiver Stefon Diggs (91 receptions, 1,202 yards, 10 TDs) in the passing game. Miami will need a big game from QB Tua Tagovailoa (2,859 yards, 21 TDs) and wide receiver Tyreek Hill (96 receptions, 1,379 yards, 5 TDS). Fellow big-play wideout Jalen Waddle (57 receptions, 972 yards, 6 TDs) injured his knee and ankle in the

SF loss, so he might not be able to go this week against the Bills. If he's out, that will make the Dolphins chance of a road win all the more difficult. My pick, Buffalo 34, Miami 20

Dallas at Jacksonville: The Cowboys should take care of business against the Jags on Sunday. They know they can't afford to lose any more games if they hope to keep pace with Philadelphia in the NFC East race. Two weeks ago, the Cowboys entered the fourth quarter with a 21-19 lead over the Colts and then exploded for 33 points in the fourth quarter to win running away, 54-19. QB Dak Prescott (1,563 yards, 13 TDs) appears to be back in form after missing five games with a thumb injury. Dallas also has a strong running game led by Tony Pollard (852 yards, 8 TDs) and Ezekiel Elliott (654 yards, 8 TDs) and Prescott is making plays in the passing game to CeeDee Lamb (69 receptions, 928 yards, 6 TDs) and Michael Gallup. The Dallas defense continues to be one of the best units in the league. Against the Colts, the defense scored on a pick six and a fumble recovery. Jags' QB Trevor Lawrence (2,834 yards, 17 TDs) had better hope his offensive line protects him on Sunday. Something tells me Micah Parsons and Co. are going to be in a feeding frenzy on Sunday in Jacksonville. My pick, Dallas 31, Jacksonville 16

Kansas City at Houston: This one should be over early. Look for Mahomes (3,809 yards, 30 TDs) to come out attacking a suspect Houston defense as he makes plays to tight end Travis Kelce (77 receptions, 968 yards, 12 TDs), JuJu Smith-Schuster and a host of other play-makers for the Chiefs. Look for rookie running back Isiah Pacheco (521 yards, 3 TDs) to have a big day as the Chiefs look to take out the life out of Texans early. Houston should probably go back to Davis Mills (2,144 yards, 11 touchdowns/ 11 interceptions) because Allen (2 TDs/4 picks in two games) certainly isn't the answer. It doesn't matter who's under center come Sunday because the Chiefs are going to blow out the Texans. My pick, Kansas City 41, Houston 13

Philadelphia at Chicago: Like the Cowboys, the Eagles should be wary of their road trip to Chicago. Sure, on paper this is a mismatch, but the Bears will treat this game like their Super Bowl and would love to pull off the upset. The Bears have a top dual threat QB in Justin Fields (1,896 passing yards, 13 TDs/905 rushing yards, 8 TDs), so the Philly defense will look to keep him in the pocket and me him beat them with is arm and not his legs. The Eagles are loaded on offense with QB Jalen Hurts (2,940 passing yards, 20 TDs/609 rushing

yards, 9 TDs), running back Miles Sanders (924 yards, 9 TDs) and wide receiver A.J. Brown (61 receptions, 950 yards, 9 TDS) and Devonta Smith (61 receptions, 711 yards, 4 TDs). Look for the Eagles to subdue the Bears as they look to keep a grasp on the best record in the NFC. My pick, Philadelphia 26, Chicago 20

Cincinnati at Tampa Bay: The hot Bengals leave the cold confines to Cincinnati for the warm climes of Tampa as Joe Burrow (3,446 yards, 25 TDs) and Tom Brady (3,332 yards, 16 TDs) do battle on Sunday. Two weeks ago, Burrow led the Bengals to a 27-24 home win over the Chiefs, while Brady rallied the Bucs from a 16-3 deficit with 5:31 left in the game with two late TDs to pull off a 17-16 win over the Saints. The TB defense will get a stern test from Burrow, running backs Joe Mixon (605 yards, 6 TDs) and Samje Perrine (327 rushing yards, 1 TD/32 receptions, 262 yards, 4 TDs) and wide receivers Tee Higgins (60 receptions, 861 yards, 5 TDs) and Ja'Marr Chase (54 receptions, 702 yards, 6 TDs). Brady will look to get wideouts Mike Evans (55 receptions, 761 yards, 3 TDs) and Chris Godwin (68 receptions, 648 yards, 2 TDs) more involved in the passing game. The Bengals defense is underrated, so look for them to come up with a play or two to help Burrow and his team pull off the road win. My pick, Cincinnati 26, Tampa Bay 23

Tennessee at Los Angeles Chargers: It's a good thing the Titans play in one of the worst divisions in the NFL, because they are a struggling football team at the wrong time of the season. Two weeks ago, Tennessee lost its second straight game with a 35-10 drubbing at Philadelphia. Things don't get any easier this week when they face a Chargers team that is getting healthy at just the right time. The Chargers have a good, young QB in Justin Herbert (3,339 yards, 20 TDs), a versatile back in Austin Ekeler (589 rushing yards, 7 TDs/85 receptions, 564 yards, 5 TDs) and a big-play wide receiver in Keenan Allen (22 receptions, 308 yards, 2 TDs in just five games), who has returned after missing a majority of the season dealing with a hamstring injury. The Titans need to get running back Derrick Henry (1,078 yards, 10 TDs) going again, or they won't have a chance against the Chargers. In his last two games, Henry has been held to 38 yards against the Bengals and 30 yards against the Eagles. If Henry can't run, then the Titans are stymied on offense. Look for another long day for the big back as the Chargers look to keep their Wild Card hopes alive. My pick, Los Angeles Chargers 30, Tennessee 24

New England at Las Vegas: The Patriots visit the City of Lost Wages to take on a Raiders team that has gotten hot at just the right time. Two weeks ago, the Raiders won their third straight game with a 27-20 win over the Chargers, while the Patriots dropped a 24-10 decision at home to the Bills. NE struggles on offense as QB Mac Jones (1,963 yards, 7 TDs) is suffering from a sophomore slump. Look for Bill Belichick to give running back Rhamondre Stevenson (734 rushing yards, 4 TDs/56 receptions, 383 yards, 1 TDs) plenty of work in this game. The Raiders have a nice thing going on offense with running back Josh Jacobs (1,303 yards, 10 TDs) taking care of the ground work and QB Derek Carr (2,980 yards, 20 TDs) and wide receiver Davante Adams (79 receptions, 1,176 yards, 12 TDs) taking care of things in the passing game. Look for that trio to have another big day as the Raiders pick up another win. My pick, Las Vegas 27, New England 23

New York Giants at Washington: This key NFC East contest has been moved to Sunday Night Football by the league. As mentioned earlier, these two teams played to a 20-20 draw two weeks ago. Washington had a bye last week to rest up for this one. QB Tyler Heinicke (1,444 yards, 9 TDs) has energized the offense, while rookie running back Brian Robinson (563 yards, 2 TDs) has provided stability in the running game. Wide receiver Terry McLaurin (62 receptions, 945 yards, 3 TDs) makes plays in the passing game. Washington has a solid defense, which should make things tough on NY QB Daniel Jones (2,365 passing yards, 11 TDs/522 rushing yards, 4 TDs) and running back Saquon Barkley (1,055 yards, 8 TDs). Look for the Commanders defense to be the difference maker in this one as Washington takes a leg up on New York in the NFC Wild Card chase. My pick, Washington 23, New York 20

Los Angeles Rams at Green Bay: Talk about going from the penthouse to the outhouse! That's been just the case for the defending Super Bowl champion Rams. Heading into last week's game against the Raiders, the Rams had lost six straight games and have suffered a plethora of injuries to key players, such as QB Matthew Stafford, wide receiver Cooper Cupp and defensive tackle Aaron Donald. Look for Rodgers (2,864 yards, 22 TDs), running back Aaron Jones (847 yards, 2 TDs), A.J. Dillon (624 yards, 3 TDs) and hot wide receiver Christian Watson (25 receptions, 401 yards, 7 TDs) to put the Rams out of their misery on Monday. Night Football. My pick, Green Bay 33, Los Angeles Rams 16

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JC Firetruck distributes candy,

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GPHS students stuffed 4,000 give-away bags of candy in just 2 hours. (Photo by Allan Jamail)

the mid December event. Mayor Diaz, City Secretary Joyce Raines, Book-keeper Kathy Greiner and others met with a large group of GPHS students (see photo) who set a record of only two hours stuffing candy in the 4,000 give-away bags. Mayor Diaz said, “I commend the student volunteer staffers for giving their time so kids will have a brighter Christmas.”

North Shore over Westlake,

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

BALL RUNNERS:
North Shore Mustangs Ball Runners responsible for getting the balls kicked for extra points & field goals back to the referees.
Left to right : Jose Guillen-Basurto, Owen Johnson, Kason “KJ” Walker & Torrance Bradford (Photo by Linda Jamail)



QB David Amador dashes 39 yds around the end for a TD. (Photo by Allan Jamail)



Jacinto City Elementary School Choir under the direction of Music Teacher Jueretta Berry. (Contributed Photo)

JC Christmas Celebration & Tree Lighting photos

CONTINUED FROM LAST ISSUE



LEFT: Abigail Guevara, GPHS Choir member performed O' Holy Night, stunned the spectators by her beautiful voice. Abigail singing O Holy Night was a knock out the lights performance... the spectators even wanted an encour performance from the GPHS 10th grader. Her mom & dad was so proud and her dad is a local preacher... (Photo by Allan Jamail)

BELOW: Mayor Ana Diaz presents Mayor's Choice Award trophy to Lori's Dance Studio. (Photo by Allan Jamail)



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