



Houston's Mounted Police Patrol adds security and Pomp to Whitmire's inauguration Ceremony. (Photo by Allan Jamail)

# NORTH CHANNEL STAR

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## CHANNEL CURRENTS

### Constable offers Life Saving Training

By David Taylor  
Managing Editor

With the start of the new year, Pct. 3 Constable Sherman Eagleton's office is providing citizens training with the skills that could save their life if they find themselves in an active shooter event. The training is typically taught at schools, but also relates to citizens and businesses that are also becoming targets in these types of events.

"We also come out to churches and make these same presentations," said Sgt. Craig Berry, patrol sergeant and training coordinator for Pct. 3 Constable's office. Tragically, churches have also been the scenes of active shooter events, including one in Huffman recently.

On Jan. 18 from 5 to 7 p.m. at the San Jacinto Community Center, 604 Highland Woods Dr., Berry will offer the training and take questions during the session.

The C.R.A.S.E. training, or Civilian Response to Active Shooter Events, involves steps that could save the life of civilians in the event of an active shooter.

"When we teach our law enforcement, we train them to go towards the gunfire to stop the threat," Berry said.

He pointed out that a threat doesn't have to always be a gun.

"It could be a knife or a bomb. Literally anything," he said. "We teach how to recognize what's going on and how to react to it," he said.

The older adage of run, hide, fight has changed and now law enforcement is using a different method taught at the nationally recognized Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response training center on the campus of Texas State University.

"The new acronym is avoid, deny, and defend," Berry said.

The reason he said is when there's a gunshot, response is to take off and run, however, not knowing where to run, a citizen is likely to run into the middle of the active scene.

"Instead, we want them to stop and assess and avoid the situation by going away from the threat," he emphasized.

Previously, the wisdom was to hide, but Berry pointed out that in several instances, the shooters walked around, found them hiding, and shot them.

"Instead, we're teaching deny—deny them

Continued. See LIFE SAVING TRAINING, Page 6

## Ford-Fisher named new HCC Chancellor

Visionary and Nationally Recognized Leader Named Sole Finalist

HOUSTON (Dec. 29, 2023) – The Houston Community College (HCC) Board of Trustees has unanimously voted to name Margaret Ford Fisher, Ed.D., as sole finalist to serve as the institution's next Chancellor. Dr. Ford Fisher has served as HCC's Interim Chancellor since Sept. 1, 2023.

Dr. Cynthia Lenton-Gary, the Board Chair, lauded the Board's decision, stating, "Dr. Ford Fisher's deep institutional knowledge, coupled with her forward-looking vision and nationally recognized leadership, makes her the ideal leader to navigate HCC towards a future rich in educational excellence and innovation."



MARGARET FORD FISHER

The Board of Trustees will hold a subsequent meeting to act on the final appointment of Dr. Ford Fisher as Chancellor, no less than 21 days following her selection as sole finalist, per state law.

Dr. Ford Fisher has dedicated nearly four decades to serving HCC in various capacities, more recently as the founding president of Houston Community College Online, established in February 2018. Her tenure at the HCC Online College has been marked by exceptional growth and modernization, earning it the honor of being "One of America's Best Online Colleges" by Newsweek for two consecutive years, 2022 and 2023.

Under her leadership, the HCC Online College launched over 60 fully online degree programs and 70 hybrid courses, significantly enhancing educational accessibility, and registering an enrollment of more than 62,000 students. Prior to this role, she served 20 years as HCC Northeast College president. There she led two successful capital campaigns and garnered community support for an HCC annexation initiative, resulting in greater educational services and in demand programs.

Dr. Ford Fisher holds a Bachelor of Arts in English and a Master's degree in the Teaching of English from Wichita State University, and a Doctor of Education in Curriculum and Instruction from the University of Houston.

Board Chair Lenton-Gary further said, "The governing board's decision underscores Dr. Ford Fisher's unique positioning as a visionary leader, deeply rooted in HCC's culture and history, and ripely equipped to advance the college through fundamental changes occurring in our sector."

"I am deeply honored for the opportunity to lead HCC and thank the Board for the confidence it has placed in me," Dr. Ford Fisher said. "I am committed to a vision of providing a real-world education and look forward to working with the Board of Trustees, and our extraordinary faculty and staff to foster a talent-strong Houston, enriching the lives of all of our students, while elevating our community."

## WHITMIRE INAUGURATED AS HOUSTON'S 63RD MAYOR

A Personal Account of the Event  
By Allan Jamail

Houston, TX. ~ January 2, 2024 ~ At 9:30 am in the Gus S. Wortham Theater Center/Alice and George Brown Theater, North Channel Star writer Allan Jamail lined up next to the media representatives of all the major news organization to bring the NC Star readers his photos along with his account of his friend Houston's Mayor John Whitmire's Inauguration.

The program participants were: Khambrel Marshall, The Master of Ceremonies (Channel two retired), The Houston Symphony (Conductor Gonzalo Farias, Houston Police and Fire Department Joint Honor Guard, Presentation of Colors, Dylan Zhong (Pledge of Allegiance), Ailyn Perez (Principal Artist), Houston Grand Opera, the National Anthem, Reverend Michael Gott, Inaugural Blessing, Kenneth Gayle, Tenor and Reverend Michael Gott, Soloist, You'll Never Walk Alone (song), Mary Griffin and Shaun Smith, Soloists, Up Where We Belong (song)



John Harris Whitmire, Houston's 63rd Mayor gives his Inaugural Address at the Wortham Center. (Photo by Allan Jamail)

and Finale Song, La Charreada, Eduardo Trevino and Mariachi Nuevo Imperio.

The Honorable Victor Trevino III, Harris County Precinct 6, Place 1 gave Mayor Whitmire and City Controller Christopher George Hollins their Oath of Office. Mayor Whitmire then gave the Oath of Office to the City Council.

I want to begin by giving a big shout out to Sue Davis, Whitmire's Communication

Continued. See WHITMIRE , Page 3



Mayor Whitmire takes the Oath of Office with his hand resting on two Bibles held by his daughters Whitney Whitmire Jenkins (left) and Sarah Whitmire. The oath was given by Judge Victor Trevino III. (Photo by Allan Jamail)



Mayor John Whitmire with his daughters on each side of him listening to the song You'll Never Walk Alone at his Inauguration Ceremony. L - R: Sarah Whitmire, Mayor Whitmire, Whitney Whitmire Jenkins and Judge Victor Trevino III. (Photo by Allan Jamail)

## Meet Jacinto City's New Librarian

By Allan Jamail

Jacinto City, TX. ~ January 3, 2024 ~ Ms. Delaney Daly the Branch Manager of Jacinto City's library was born and raised in Central Florida and moved to Houston in August of 2022. She accepted a position with the Harris County Public Library's (HCPL) as Assistant Branch Manager/Youth Services Librarian at the Parker Williams Branch Library.

Later she was promoted as Branch Manager of the Jacinto City Branch Library and she said she's thrilled and honored to serve in that position.

Daly said her goals at the Jacinto City Branch will include facilitating engaging programs and yearly events for all ages,

promoting early literacy, serving youth and their families. And to provide excellent customer service, organizing a reliable and involved volunteer group for our Friends of the Library program and establishing long-term community partnerships.

Prior to working for HCPL, Delaney gained experience at municipal, city, and county public libraries across the country including Vail Public Library in Vail, Colorado as a Library Associate; Osceola Library System in Kissimmee, Florida as a Youth Services Librarian; and Coeur d'Alene Public Library in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho as the Children's Library Supervisor. She also volunteered her time with the Eagle Valley Library Dis-



Delaney D. Daly, MLS Jacinto City's Librarian (Photo by Allan Jamail)

trict in Avon, Colorado.

In December of 2020, she graduated with a 4.0 GPA from the Texas Woman's University School of Library & Information Studies with her Master of Library Science (MLS) degree—her degree track fo-

cusing primarily on public library management and youth services. Prior to obtaining her master's degree, she earned a Bachelor of Arts in English Literature from the University of Central Florida in Orlando, Florida.

Delaney said, "I'm a published poet and essayist, my writing skills and my writing goals include publishing a book of poems, a children's picture book, and a novel. In my free time, I enjoy traveling, spending time with family and friends, reading way too many books at the same time, and being mom to my adorable kitty cat, Abby the Tabby."

Visit: jc@hcpl.net for the library hours and information about a free library card, programs, services, book a meeting room, use of the library's internet with computers and more.

Beginning in 2024 after the New Year, the JC Branch will be offering:

Continued. See Delaney Daly Embarks on a Literary Journey, Page 3



# HCC student team wins national community college Innovation Challenge

Team's plan for device would help firefighters "see through smoke"



HOUSTON – A Houston Community College (HCC) team has won the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) Community College Innovation Challenge.

The HCC team was pitted against community colleges from across the nation, competing to develop ideas for useful and innovative devices using science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM).

The students – Kaitlin Asch, Nyah Lovick and Neeko Phelps – presented their idea known as “Project Eagle Rescue,” a hands-free sensor array that might be attached to gear carried by firefighters to allow better visibility and safety. As envisioned, their hands-free device would allow firefighters to “see through” smoke and haze to observe structural hazards or obstacles that might be a danger to themselves or others.

Each individual team member received a \$3,500 prize in the contest that was held in partnership with the National Science Foundation.

“I think the greatest thing about being a part of this team is affirmation for me about going a non-traditional route: staying home and studying at a community college presents great opportunities,” Lovick said. “I loved my HCC experience and the support of my fellow students and HCC’s great faculty. It was a perfect choice for me.”

Lovick studied in HCC’s Honors College and graduated with highest honors in May with an associate degree in chemistry and will move to the University of Texas at San Antonio this fall to study chemical engineering. Asch is pursuing a Bachelor of Science in computer science and applied physics and plans to go on to obtain a doctorate. Phelps graduated in May with an associate degree in mechanical engineering and will enter Minnesota State University to study mechanical engineering in the fall.

“These are extraordinary students, and we are extremely proud of their work on this project,” said Ravi Brahmabhatt, HCC director of Student Innovation and Entrepreneurship, who served as the team’s mentor. “They showed that developing a STEM-based solution can help to solve a real-world problem in a truly meaningful way.”

The HCC team was among a dozen community college finalists to present their ideas in Washington D.C. There, they attended an Innovation Boot Camp where they learned from entrepreneurs and experts, STEM leaders and congressional stakeholders. The team presented a five-minute presentation to a panel of industry and entrepreneurial professionals who then named HCC the winning team.

“These project ideas showcase the outstanding educational opportunities provided at our nation’s community colleges,” said Walter Bumphus, president and CEO of the association. “On behalf of AACC, congratulations to the team from Houston Community College... the innovation and creativity shown by these students clearly indicates that our future is in good hands.”

**ABOUT HOUSTON COMMUNITY COLLEGE:** Houston Community College is composed of 14 Centers of Excellence and numerous satellite centers that serve the diverse communities in the Greater Houston area by preparing individuals to live and work in an increasingly international and technological society. HCC is one of the country’s largest singly accredited, open-admission community colleges offering associate degrees, certificates, workforce training and lifelong learning opportunities.

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# New CEO named at Baytown Hospital

**Baytown** — Houston Methodist Baytown Hospital announced the appointment of Adrienne Joseph, PhD, as its new CEO, effective January 1. Joseph has more than 30 years of extensive healthcare experience, having worked in academic and community settings. Most recently, Joseph has served as chief operating officer at Houston Methodist Baytown since 2020.

She has played a crucial role in driving positive change and growth within the institution. Her leadership has contributed to several recent improvements at Houston Methodist Baytown including the completion of the five-story Unity Tower expansion project and the impressive rise in patient safety rankings by Vizient, a health care quality organization.

“Adrienne has excelled in multiple roles within Houston Methodist,” said Dr. Marc Boom, president and CEO of Houston Methodist. “Her breadth of experience will be a definite benefit for Houston Methodist Bay-

town and I’m excited to see how the hospital will continue to flourish under her leadership.”

Joseph holds a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration from Louisiana State University, a Master of Business Administration from Tulane University and a Doctor of Philosophy in Public Policy from Southern University. Committed to community service, Joseph is an active board member of the United Way of Greater Baytown Area & Chambers County.

###

**About Houston Methodist Baytown Hospital**

Houston Methodist Baytown Hospital has provided Baytown and east Harris, Liberty and Chambers counties with excellent medical care since its opening in 1948. The hospital continues to grow to meet the health care needs of its growing community through an ongoing construction and renovation program that has seen the opening of a new five-story patient tower, emergency center, outpatient center and medical-surgical units. As a health care leader, the hospital is proud to have a fully integrated residency program focused on educating and inspiring future practitioners. Today, Houston Methodist Baytown provides the most advanced and innovative procedures while never wavering from its focus on compassionate care and providing a safe, patient-centered healing environment.

[Houstonmethodist.org/baytown](https://Houstonmethodist.org/baytown).

**ADRIENNE JOSEPH**  
New CEO at HMB

# Highlands Rotarians preparing for their 49th annual Chili Feast, Raffle and Auction on Feb. 3

By David Taylor  
Managing Editor

The Highlands Rotary Club members are finalizing plans for their upcoming 49th Annual Chili Feast fundraiser set for Feb. 3, 2024.

The Chili Feast chairman this year is Gay Lynn Milliorn, president-elect of the Highlands Rotary Club.

The club members looked immediately to their largest fundraiser of the year, the Annual Chili Feast, Raffle, and Auction.

“This is our biggest fundraiser of the year and it’s pretty significant,” Gay Lynn said. “This money goes to projects we undertake in the community throughout the year and it also funds scholarships we give away to graduating seniors.”

Last year, the club gave away 21 scholarships of varying amounts, totaling about \$37,500.

The fundraiser is hosted at St Jude’s Catholic Church on 808 South Main in Highlands from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. While the date is about a month away, deadlines for sponsorships are quickly coming. The final date for sponsorships has been extended to Jan. 9, 2024. For businesses or individuals looking for a year-end tax donation, they must be in before Dec. 31, 2023.

“We have to set an early deadline in order to get the sponsors names on the banners, posters, and

all other marketing materials for the event,” she said.

Sponsorships range from the top level at Diamond for \$5,000, Platinum for \$2,500, Gold for \$1,000, Silver \$500, and Bronze for \$250. Raffle tickets include two chili dinner tickets and a chance in the drawing to win a 2024 Chevrolet Trax or Trailblazer from Turner Chevrolet or any one of 15 other prizes. The winner is responsible for the payment of all local, state, and federal taxes.

Outside of the top prize vehicle, other prizes include four \$200 gift cards, 32-inch smart television, a 55-inch smart television, air fryer, portable ice maker, shotgun, 28-inch Black Stone Cooker, outdoor propane fire pit, rifle, and more.

Milliorn also pointed to the live auction and silent auction as other exciting items to bid on during the day.

Each meal ticket includes chili, corn chips, rice, diced onion, cheese, and beans (if you dare). Drinks like tea, water, or soda and desserts are sold by the Highlands Horizons Club as part of their fundraiser.

Raffle tickets purchased before January 9 will be entered into the Early Bird drawing with the winner receiving a \$300 gift card.

Tickets can be purchased from any Highlands Club Rotarian for \$100. For more information, please call Milliorn at 832-262-6828.



Last Year Kris Dahlquist won the Top Prize in the Chili Feast Raffle, a 2023 Chevrolet Trailblazer. Pictured with Rotarians Andy Scott and Denise Smith.



Highlands Rotary Chili Cooking team prepares the special Chester's Famous Recipe onsite for the enjoyment of attendees at the Chili Feast. The delicious chili is a secret recipe originated by Rotarian Chester Staney.



CHARLOTTE'S WEB

By Charlotte Jackson



Anticipation

What will the year 2024 bring? Will this be a year for a new family member? Will it be the year for a new home? Will you purchase a new vehicle? Some will start planning their summer vacation this week. With the amazing young people in our area high schools, it will surely bring college plans for many. No doubt, with primary elections in March, there will be plenty of political advertising and challenges. It will be a time for you to research the candidates and make your decision on who to vote for.

One thing to note, is that you are eligible to “vote by mail” you need to visit [www.HarrisVotes.com](http://www.HarrisVotes.com) as soon as possible and fill out the request to have a vote by mail ballot sent to you for every election to be held in 2024. In the past, you registered one time and it happened for the remainder of your life, yet there is a new rule in place that you must register each year. Please take the time to help your parents, neighbors, and any senior citizen you know to do this so there is no confusion later.

We can look around and see new construction of homes and apartment buildings as well as road construction, so anticipate leaving a few minutes early each day to avoid the frustration that sets off road rage with others. We also know that with the changing of the seasons, we can expect more youth outside, so please be careful while driving.

We can anticipate that despite many of us practicing kindness, there will be others who seem to develop a negative attitude and it seems like they are trying to upset you. Anticipate this and say for a prayer that as time marches on, we will return to being a kinder and more compassionate neighborhood.

Take the time to read newsletters, calendars, and invitations we you receive them. Add these events to your calendar. If it is something that you know you will attend, use ink. If it is something that you are not sure about, use a pencil. On the weekend or one night a week, set aside some time to write thank you notes, birthday cards, anniversary, or encouragement notes. Write these in advance so that you are not rushed the day it needs to be mailed. Reflect on your planner as to what is going on for the week and prepare your clothes in advance. Learn to do laundry one day a week instead of at the last minute before you need it. Drop the clothes off at the dry cleaner on Friday morning, so that you have one less thing to do on Saturday. Use that free time on the weekend to visit with loved ones or to take in an afternoon of sightseeing in Houston. Perhaps go to a local museum during the week when it is free. Make a list of needed items from the store and plan that trip as well. Plan and anticipate that your stress level with be less in 2024.

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Daly Embarks on a Literary Journey,

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

One-On-One Tech Help (by appointment only—please email us at [jc@hcpl.net](mailto:jc@hcpl.net) or call at 832-927-5520 to book). ESL Conversation Class every Tuesday at 12:30 PM for 12 weeks beginning January 30, 2024. Citizenship Class every Wednesday at 10:30 AM for 12 weeks beginning January 31, 2024.

The JC Library is currently offering the following programs: After S’Cool Club every Tuesday at 4:30 PM (geared toward children ages 6 and up). Little Readers Story time every Tuesday and Thursday at 11:15 AM (geared toward little ones and their caregivers). Lego Club the first Thursday of every month at 5:30 PM (geared toward

children ages 6 and up). Stitches ‘n’ Stories the last Thursday of every month at 5:30 PM (geared toward children ages 10 and up).

Manager Daly stated she’s hoping to see local residents drop in to say hello and visit the library so they can see and learn about all the benefits the library has to offer them and their children. If you would like to volunteer your time as a Friend of the Library, please contact Ms. Delaney by email at: [delaney.daly@hcpl.net](mailto:delaney.daly@hcpl.net) or visit the library at 921 Akron Street or call (832) 927-5528 and ask to speak with Ms. Delaney. To learn about the other 26 HCPL’s visit: [www.hcpl.net](http://www.hcpl.net).

Whitmire Mayoral Inaugural,

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Director. Davis kept Jamail and all the other media photographers and writers well informed for the past thirteen months of all of Whitmire’s campaign activities including election results and up to today’s inauguration. She’s been an asset to the NC Star and others in the news media. Sue played a major role with her skills in the communications field to help then Senator John Whitmire go to now Mayor John Whitmire.

The NC Star and I covered all of Whitmire’s mayoral candidacy events, his announcement on November 29, 2022, and then his winning as top vote getter in Houston’s mayor’s election first contest on November 7, 2023 which put him in a runoff against second place finisher Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee. And then his being elected as Houston’s 63rd mayor on December 9, 2023 and now today’s inauguration. JW as his friends call him is 74 and the oldest person to be elected mayor in at least 100 years.

Whitmire was actually officially sworn in as mayor in a private ceremony in the mayor’s office at 12:01 a.m. Monday, on New Year’s Day as required by the city’s charter. Immediately afterwards Houston Police Chief Troy Finner took him on a ride in the city so he could see first-hand some of the issues officers face. Today’s swearing in ceremony is for the public to be able to witness it.

Today after the inauguration Mayor Whitmire had his first City Council meeting at 11 a.m. At 2 p.m., Whitmire met and greeted Houstonians in the first-floor rotunda at City Hall, which is something he announced he’d do after he won the runoff election. He said, “As your mayor I’ll have an open-door policy so citizens can come visit me and let me hear their concerns. My first day as their Mayor I’ll personally open the door for citizens to come into their city hall.”

Mayor Whitmire praised the city’s public work’s personnel, police and firemen and others. He was critical of some conditions in the city; he said he’ll give more attention to them than some other administrations have in order for citizens to be able to see a cleaner healthier city. He said you can walk outside the building here and see homeless people and he wants to correct this situation as much as possible.

Public safety again he stated was his top priority. He said we can make improvements in all areas of the city but if the public is not safe then all other improvements don’t mean anything. His tough stance on crime comes from when he was much younger when his wife, kids and himself was robbed at gunpoint after they pulled into their home’s driveway one night.

He said he thought the gunman was going to murder him. “At the time all I could think of was how could I protect and save my wife and kids.”

“We’ve got some serious issues with public safety. We need additional officers,” Whitmire said. He went on to speak about his commitment to holding violent offenders accountable, saying he’ll push for new laws if that’s what it takes.

As a senator, Whitmire stopped those on death row from getting anything they wanted as their last meal. He was angered by convicted murderer Lawrence Russell Brewer’s refusal to eat the expensive last meal he ordered prior to his September 21, 2011, execution. Whitmire said that this was Brewer’s attempt to “make a mockery out of the process.” The senator contacted the Texas Department of Criminal Justice and asked the agency to end the practice of last meal requests or he would get the State Legislature to pass a bill doing so. The agency replied that last meal requests were accommodated “within reason” from food available in the prison kitchen, but it agreed to end the practice immediately at Whitmire’s insistence.

His position on air conditioning in prisons is tough. In 2021, Whitmire stirred controversy by responding to questions about the lack of air conditioning in prisons by saying: “You know, we can talk about this all day, it’s not gonna change. The prisons are hot. They’re uncomfortable. And the real solution is, don’t commit a crime and you stay at home and be cool. We’re not gonna air condition them. One, we don’t want to. Number two, we couldn’t afford it if we wanted to.”

Whitmire was born August 13, 1949 in Hillsboro, Texas, north of Waco, to James Madison Whitmire, the Hill County clerk, and the former Ruth Marie Harris, a nurse. His parents divorced when he was seven years old, and the family moved several times, facing difficult financial circumstances.

In his early teenage years, he moved to North Houston and attended Waltrip High School. Whitmire attended college at the University of Houston to study political science while paying for his education by working for the Texas State Welfare Department, where he interviewed food stamp recipients for compliance.

Whitmire is a member of the Democratic Party, and he was elected to the Texas House of Representatives in January of 1973 and served until January 1983. In 1983, he won the Senate District 15 seat, and recently resigned effectively December 31, 2023 after his election as Mayor of Houston.

ASK DIAMOND JIM

Diamond Jim: “What is an ‘inclusion’ found in Gemstones”

Inclusions or imperfections occur in nearly every type of gemstone. Natural diamonds, for example, are the result of carbon exposed to tremendous heat and pressure deep in the earth. This process can result in a variety of internal characteristics called ‘inclusions’ and external characteristics called ‘blemishes.’ Evaluating diamond clarity involves determining the number, size, relief, nature, and position of these characteristics, as well as how these affect the overall appearance of the stone. While no diamond is perfectly pure, the closer it comes, the higher its value.

The same principals hold true for all gemstones including ruby, emerald, sapphire, and more. But, does a gem with an internal inclusion always diminish its value? No, not always. In rare instances, the inclusion might be so unique that it could add to the gem’s value if a prospective buyer agrees. I remember reading an article that contained a picture of a diamond with a small heart-shaped internal inclusion which, interestingly enough, was red in color. Once this was seen by a couple looking for an engagement ring, they wanted no other diamond, period.

Alexandrite is long considered a “good luck” stone by the people of Russia. This gemstone changes color from violet, to blue, to green, and to red, depending on the type and intensity of the light the stone is viewed under.

Photo courtesy of the Gemological Institute of America

An example of nature imitating nature was seen in a 0.73 carat faceted alexandrite showcasing an inclusion reminiscent of a rain cloud (see above). The “cloud” was composed of white particles oriented as parallel bands that displayed a cloud-like silhouette when viewed at an angle. The “rain” was composed of fine oriented reflective needles commonly referred to as silk. Fiber-optic lighting allowed for a concentration of white light to be seen under the cloud, creating an appearance of lightning. The inclusion scene observed in this gem is an interesting novelty that any gemologist can appreciate and perhaps even a willing buyer. This group of inclusions are truly unique but, do they add to or lessen the stone’s price? Remember, “beauty is in the eye of the beholder”, and so too is the value.

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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).

"Oh honey, this is too big!"



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★

OPINION

By BILL KING



It's Just a Number

Yesterday morning at 11:05, I completed my 72nd trip around the sun. A friend called to wish me a happy birthday and reminded me, “It is just a number, Bill.”

Yeah, it is a number alright. Like the number of pills I have to remember to take every day. Like the number of aches and pains in my knees. Like the number of doctor appointments I have these days. Like the number of times I have to get up in the middle of the night to attend to nature or walk off a cramp. Like the number of funerals of friends and family I have attended recently.

But there are other numbers too.

Like the amazing seven children and six grandchildren Cheryl and I share. Like the hundreds of friends that we’ve shared so many fun times with and who have been there to support us in so many different ways. Like the thousands of great people I’ve met across this great city over my two mayoral campaigns.

Like the thousands of breathtaking sunrises and sunsets I have witnessed. Like the thousands of miles of open seas I have sailed. Like the hundreds of places across the planet I have visited. Like the scores of fishing trips with friends. And so much more.

But the number most on my mind at this particular moment is the number of you who have given me the privilege of regularly corresponding with you about the various topics that pique my interest. I truly appreciate that opportunity and the feedback I receive from so many of you.

It appears that we will have plenty to discuss in 2024, so I am looking forward to continuing our dialogue for another year.



Treasure Christmas

Mabel Adams was sitting in the day room at the Rest of Your Life retirement home when the children came in. She smiled and so did all the others in the room except for two who didn’t know what was going on.

The old-timers in the home knew the kids were coming and had put up Christmas decorations around in the day room and on the doors of their own small apartments and on themselves. Mabel had been reminded several times by the staff that morning that the kids were coming over, this being necessary as Mabel’s memory isn’t what it used to be. And she put a sprig of imitation holly in her hair and tied a red ribbon on the other side.

The little girl smiled and walked over to Mabel. “Are you a grandma?” she asked.

“Why, yes dear, I am.”

“I brought you a present, Grandma,” she said, handing a box to Mabel. Mabel opened it and was delighted at the sandalwood-scented hankies inside.

“Why thank you so much, Honey!” she said. “And what is your name?”

“I’m Candice. I’m four.”

“Well, Candice, merry Christmas to you. Have you been here before?”

“Well ... no, I guess. Mom said this is where the grandmas are and we can have fun bringing presents to the grandmas.”

“I see,” Mabel said. “Well, Candice, come over here, dear and let me give you a hug. There!”

Sometimes, it isn’t the cost of the hankies, or the fun wrapping them up. Sometimes it’s just a child’s smile and a small taste of love that makes us treasure Christmas.



★

STATE CAPITAL HIGHLIGHTS

By Gary Borders



Legal Groups Sue to Stop New Immigration Law

The ink was barely dry on a law signed by Gov. Greg Abbott that makes unauthorized entry into the United States a state crime before a lawsuit was filed by civil rights groups and El Paso County challenging its constitutionality. The Austin American-Statesman reported the suit was filed in an Austin federal court by the ACLU and two immigrant advocacy groups on behalf of the county.

The complaint says Texas Senate Bill 4, passed in the recently concluded fourth special session, is “patently illegal” and that it violates “the federal government’s exclusive immigration powers and the sensitive foreign policy implications of these powers.” The law is set to go into effect on March 5.

SB4 allows any Texas law enforcement officer to arrest people who are believed to have entered the country illegally. Once in custody, they could either agree to leave the U.S. or face prosecution on misdemeanor charges of illegal entry.

“These laws will help stop the tidal wave of illegal entry into Texas, add additional funding to build more border wall, and crack down on human smuggling,” Abbott said after signing the bill.

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“These laws will help stop the tidal wave of illegal entry into Texas, add additional funding to build more border wall, and crack down on human smuggling,” Abbott said after signing the bill.

**BORDER PATROL BANNED FROM CUTTING TEXAS RAZOR WIRE**

An appeals court has ordered the Border Patrol to stop cutting razor wire installed by Texas officials, The Dallas Morning News reported. The 5th Circuit Court of Appeals reversed a lower court ruling that gave federal authorities the legal right to remove the fencing, which federal officials said had been done to prevent injuries to migrants. The state contended, however, that federal agents were removing the concertina wire simply to let migrants enter Texas without notification.

Col. Steve McCraw, Texas Department of Public Safety director, said the state agrees that the wire

**ERCOT CHIEF: GRID IS READY FOR WINTER**

The chief of the Electric Reliability Council of Texas told his board last week that added power generation will



should be cut in cases of emergency.

“We’re doing it to go rescue somebody,” he said. “We’re not doing it to allow a large number of migrants to enter between the ports of entry. We want them to go to the ports of entry.”

**TEXAS HAS LOWEST GAS PRICES IN COUNTRY**

Gasoline prices in the state are at their lowest level in nearly three years, according to AAA. The current average is \$2.57 a gallon — the lowest average gas price in the nation, according to a Texas Standard report. Matt Smith, an energy analyst for Kpler (stet), warned Texans that higher prices are likely during the holiday period.

AAA is projecting 104 million travelers are driving at least 50 miles to their holiday destinations, while air traffic is expected to be the busiest ever, with 7.5 million air travelers this holiday season.

Smith said a number of factors, including unrest in Yemen and the Middle East, could cause oil prices to rise, leading to higher gas prices in the future.

“We’ve seen a lot of bearishness that has pushed these prices to multi-month lows here; we may be at the point now where we’re seeing a bit of a turnaround going forward here,” Smith said.

be sufficient this winter, despite population growth and lower output from wind power turbines because of less wind velocity.

“We are as ready as we have ever been to deal with the challenges of the winter season,” ERCOT chief Pablo Vegas told the board.

The Statesman reported Vegas’ statement of confidence in the grid comes just three weeks after ERCOT warned much of the state could face rolling blackouts starting next month, most likely in the early morning hours before solar generating facilities can be utilized.

“In the wintertime, the peak of the system tends to happen in the early morning hours as people are starting to wake up at 7 a.m., 8 a.m.,” Vegas said. “It’s still cold from an overnight winter cold. And we don’t yet have the resources like solar resources on the system at that point in time.”

Vegas said 800 new projects have been added to the grid in the past year. ERCOT’s chief meteorologist is predicting a milder than usual winter for much of the state.

**AMOUNT OF STATE IN DROUGHT DECLINES**

Drought conditions across Texas are declining, with 43% of the state in some stage of drought at the end of November — down 22 percentage points from the end of October and 42 percentage points from early September.

“Despite the improvements on the landscape, our statewide surface water supply reservoirs haven’t seen a lot of recovery yet,” Mark Wentzel, hydrologist with the Texas Water Development Board, wrote in his monthly report. “That’s not unexpected. Compared to the landscape, our water supply systems take longer to respond to drought.”

The surface water systems most adversely affected are clustered in Central and South Texas, which are still experiencing drought conditions. Also still in severe-to-extreme drought are far West Texas counties and a scattering of counties in Deep East Texas.

**STATE LEADS NATION IN POPULATION INCREASES IN LAST YEAR**

Texas’ population grew more than any other state in the country, up nearly half a million people, according to the recent census estimate. The Texas Tribune reported the population growth is centered in the state’s cities. Nearly 70% of the state’s residents live in the four largest metro areas — Houston, San Antonio, Austin, and Dallas-Fort Worth.

While the state had the largest total increase in population, two other states had higher growth rates than the 1.6% recorded here — South Carolina and Florida. The South accounted for 87% of the country’s population growth in the latest census estimate.

★

THE POSTSCRIPT

By Carrie Classon

Wild Children: A Lesson

The children were in the pew in front of me.

We had not arrived early enough at my sister’s church for the Christmas Eve service to secure a seat in the back, so we were in the fourth row. The first row is never used by anyone; the second row is only for people who arrive impossibly late. The third row is, for all intents and purposes, the front row, and that’s where these two wild-looking children were.

The children were provisioned with colored pencils and drawing paper but, other than that, looked rather neglected. Neither one had seen a comb in a long time. Both were dressed in a combination of outdoor wear and pajamas. Neither was actually sitting on the pew. The girl was sitting on the floor, using the bench as a drawing table. The boy was sprawled out across the bench, arms and legs akimbo. I felt myself making judgments. I get that way sometimes.

“Seriously,” I thought, “is getting out of their pajamas too much to ask?”

The children paid no attention to the service. When the congregation rose to sing, the children remained where they were. When the other kids went up for the children’s sermon, the boy disappeared outside, and the girl remained where she was.

“Where has he gone?” I wondered. These children seemed feral to me. “Probably raised by wolves,” I said to amuse myself. “He’s gone out to hunt squirrels,” I conjectured. “Likely he is eating one now.” The boy returned and lay back down on the pew. “Why are they even here?” I wondered.

I looked at the skirt I had put on for the occasion, the good coat I had brought for wearing to church, the time and effort the other parishioners had taken before leaving their homes. These children (and whoever had transported them to church) had clearly missed the memo.

I was surprised when, as the service was about to end, a man joined the children. The boy suddenly snapped out of his lethargy and went to the man, who wrapped him in a hug. The boy and the man remained that way for a long time, oblivious to the service, enfolded in a hug.

“Did you see the organist’s kids in the front row?” my sister asked her husband after we got home.

“Yeah,” he said. I was about to make some snappy remark about their lack of grooming when my sister continued.

“Her husband left them just a couple of weeks ago. He won’t even answer his phone when the kids call. Her son is autistic, and she is just beside herself.”

“The husband was there,” my brother-in-law told my sister. “He came into church at the very end.”

“Really?” my sister said and shook her head.

I realized what a colossal ass I was.

There are so many troubles I have never known. There is a world of pain I have never experienced. While I was dwelling on a couple of hastily dressed kids with messy hair quietly doodling in the front pew, there were wells of pain and loss and confusion right in front of me that I could not imagine.

I do not like that prissy woman in the nice skirt who sits in judgment of those poor kids. I do not like her, and I don’t want to be her. While I was focused on grooming and decorum, a tired, lost man took his child in his arms and—right in front of me—a Christmas miracle occurred, a miracle I was too blind to see.

Till next time,  
Carrie

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HOLLYWOOD

by Tony Rizzo

Stars We Lost in 2023

HOLLYWOOD — George Clooney has given his stamp of approval for “Barbie” stars Margot Robbie and Ryan Gosling to play his parents in the upcoming prequel of “Ocean’s Eleven.”

\*\*\*

In 2023, we lost many of my favorite stars who I did shootings with or knew. In 1985, while shooting Brian Bloom (Dusty in “As the World Turns”) in Gramercy Park, New York, Italian superstar Gina Lollobrigida had a meltdown over him and said in her sexy Italian accent, “I love watching you on your telenovela.” She kissed both his cheeks and sauntered away. Brian asked, “Who was that?!” I told him that she was an Italian sex symbol who starred with Burt Lancaster and Tony Curtis in “Trapeze” (1955), as well as Rock Hudson in “Strange Bedfellows” (1965), among other films. She left us on Jan. 16, 2023, at 95.

\*\*\*

I remember in 1982 when “Laverne & Shirley’s” Cindy Williams and Penny Marshall crashed a party for David Hasselhoff and hysterically pretended to be huge gushing fans of his. Cindy passed Jan. 25, 2023, at 75.

\*\*\*

I pinched myself following Tina Turner around the post-premiere party for “Tommy” (1975), as she interacted with The Who and Elton John. She was so down to earth! She left us on May 24, 2023, at 83.

\*\*\*

In 1967, at the closing night of Marlene Dietrich’s Broadway show, I mingled with her conductor Burt Bacharach and his wife, “Police Woman” star Angie Dickinson, just before Dietrich was hoisted atop her limo with them inside. She threw little photos to thousands of fans in the street. Burt left us on Feb. 8, 2023, at 94.

\*\*\*

In 1985, I ran into Stella Stevens in Hawaii. She starred with Elvis Presley in “Girls! Girls! Girls!” (1962) and



STELLA STEVENS - One of many Stars we lost in 2023.

with Jerry Lewis in “The Nutty Professor” (1963). She wanted to learn how to surf, so I asked my friend Sam J. Jones (star of “Flash Gordon” in 1980) to teach her. As I shot pictures of them, the out-rigger I rented took on water and almost sank. How we laughed! She died on Feb. 17, 2023, at 84.

\*\*\*

I was devastated when Raquel Welch died on Feb. 15, 2023, at 82. She was the epitome of glamour. She once told me at a party, “I want to thank you for all the encouraging things you’ve written about me in your columns.” I nearly fainted when she kissed me.

\*\*\*

I got to know Matthew Perry when he was filming “Studio 60 on the Sunset Strip.” Every time I covered a shooting of his, he was friendly and nice, and liked it when I called him (what else?) “friend!” It was tragic when he suddenly died on Oct. 28, 2023, at 54. I disagree with the song “Auld Lang Syne” that old acquaintances should not be forgotten. Happy New Year! (c) 2024 King Features Synd., Inc.

ENTERTAINMENT

Amber Waves

WHAT A SIGHT I AM. THREE LUMPS OF SNOW FOR A BODY, AND ROCKS FOR EYES.

NOT TO MENTION THESE STRAIGHT DEAD BRITTLE BRANCHES FOR ARMS...

OH GREAT, AND NOW MY NOSE ITCHES!

by Dave T. Phipps

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TIGER

C'MON, PUNKINHEAD!

IT SNOWED!

COME OUT WHEN YOU GET PRESSED

WHERE'S THE SNOW?

IT MELTED

by BUD BLAKE

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The Spats

THE BEST THINGS IN LIFE ARE FREE.

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by Jeff Pickering

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Weekly SUDOKU

by Linda Thistle

	5		1					7
3			4	2				9
		2			9	6		
	7	3	6			8		
8					1		5	
	9			5				4
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	4				6		8	
		5		8		7		1

Place a number in the empty boxes in such a way that each row across, each column down and each small 9-box square contains all of the numbers from one to nine.

DIFFICULTY THIS WEEK: ♦

♦ Moderate ♦♦ Challenging ♦♦♦ HOO BOY!

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HOCUS-FOCUS

BY HENRY BOLTINOFF

Find at least six differences in details between panels.

Differences: 1. Ottoman is turned. 2. Drawer is added. 3. Phone is moved. 4. Legs are shorter. 5. Hat is turned around. 6. Boy is moved. 7. Almost 71%.

January 1, 2024 Posting Date

King Crossword

ACROSS

1 Melville cap-tain

5 Male swans

9 Luau dish

12 Humorist Barry

13 Med. plan options

14 PC program

15 Barrel bottom bit

16 Concerning

17 Old Olds

18 Voice in an iPhone

19 Half of XIV

20 Rooters

21 Formerly called

23 "Morning Edition" aier

25 Humidor con-tents

28 Salad base

32 Maxim

33 Sean of "Rudy"

34 Bequest

36 Surround with light

37 Judge Lance

38 Approves

39 Iowa crop

42 WWII service member

44 "See ya!"

48 Some

49 "Legally Blonde" role

50 Branches

51 Wish other-wise

52 Intend

53 Harvest

54 Curvy letter

55 "Garfield" dog

56 Catches some rays

6 Hotel chain

7 Ho-hum

8 Away from NNW

9 Brazilian rub-ber

10 Frank

11 Wall St. debuts

20 Clean slate

22 Upright

24 Bit of mischief

25 Baseball's Ripken

26 Chemical suf-fix

27 Joke

29 JFK info

30 Goose egg

31 — -cone

35 Cried in pain

36 Tertiary Period epoch

39 Give a darn

40 Burden

41 Deli loaves

43 Jai —

45 Balliwick

46 Eliot Ness, e.g.

47 Nile vipers

49 Punk rock off-shoot

DOWN

1 Totals

2 Mata —

3 Say it's so

4 2013 Keira Knightley film

5 Sour cream tidbits

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1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18

19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27

28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36

37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45

46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54

55 56

Answer

Weekly SUDOKU


Solution time: 21 mins.

Answers

King Crossword

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Trivia test

by Fifi Rodriguez

1. GENERAL KNOWLEDGE: When is Three King's Day celebrated typically?

2. TELEVISION: In the drama series "Mad Men," what product is presumed to be Don Draper's last advertisement?

3. GEOGRAPHY: What is a chain or collection of islands called?

4. MOVIES: To which city is the McCallister family traveling in the holiday classic "Home Alone"?

5. LEGAL: What is a moot court?

6. LITERATURE: What is the name of the heroine in "The Scarlet Letter"?

7. FOOD & DRINK: What kind of nut is used in marzipan?

8. MUSIC: What is the gift on the 11th day in the song "The Twelve Days of Christmas"?

9. SCIENCE: How much of the Earth's surface is covered with water?

10. HISTORY: What are the two Japanese cities that the United States hit with atomic bombs in WWII?

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# Slow police chase on I-10 ends, driver arrested



CHANNELVIEW, Texas — Police last Wednesday, Dec. 27 ripped apart the cab of a tractor trailer and pulled the truck’s driver out after pursuing him in a slow highway chase that shut down the road for hours.

Texas police ripped apart the cab of a tractor trailer and pulled the truck’s driver out after pursuing him in a slow highway chase that shut down the road for hours.

Sheriff’s deputies and other law enforcement officials used a new battering ram type device to puncture the truck’s cab, in an attempt to reach the driver. The highway chase ended with police ripping apart truck’s cab and pulling the driver out.

The dramatic confrontation on a stretch of I-10 highway east of Houston came hours after sheriff’s deputies began trying to pull over the truck, which could be seen on television news footage crawling along the interstate. The driver’s arrest left questions about what prompted his behavior and the heavy police response.

Deputies finally brought the 18-wheeler to a stop on the shoulder of Interstate 10 in Channelview, using spike strips to puncture its tires.

## Life Saving Training,

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

access to you,” he said by shutting doors, blocking them, turning off lights, or just deny the situation.

Berry said the last letter in the acronym is defend.

“While you’re denying them access or avoiding the situation, make a plan to defend yourself. Do you have a weapon laying around? Is there something you can use to strike with? How will you grab a gun?” he said.

Berry should know. He’s been teaching ALERRT active shooting training to law enforcement with the sheriff’s office since 2007. He began teaching C.R.A.S.E. when it came out in 2010.

Precinct Three resource officers are already teaching the training to teachers in their districts.

“It’s a sit down, lecture type of class with no hands-on type training. It’s mostly about knowledge,” he said.

Berry encouraged attendees to bring paper and pen or pencil to make notes, but more importantly, an open mind.

“I stress muscle memory and role play,” he said. “You have to activate your mind so that when you hear a gunshot, you react immediately.”

# Dog Bites: Enjoy the Outdoors with your Furry Friends Safely!

**Enjoy the Outdoors with your Furry Friends Safely!** Remember Harris County’s Leash Laws and Dog Bite Prevention Tips

**HOUSTON** – As community members and pet owners around Harris County enjoy the fall weather and time outdoors this holiday season, Harris County Public Health’s (HCPH) Veterinary Public Health Division (VPH) reminds residents of important bite prevention methods and local leash laws in Harris County.

The American Veterinary Association estimates that each year nearly 4.5 million people are bitten by dogs, and more than 800,000 require medical treatment for a dog bite incident. Dogs can bite people for various reasons, but bite incidents occur most often when the dog feels stressed, hungry, threatened, sick, or sore.

**How Can You Protect Your Family?**

Generally, dog bites are a preventable public health issue. Here are some safety tips to reduce the chances of being bitten:

- Teach children - and adults - to be careful around pets. Do not approach strange dogs or try to pet dogs through fences.
- NEVER run away from a dog that appears to be aggressive. Remain calm and avoid eye contact.
- Always ask permission from the dog’s owner before petting the dog.
- NEVER leave a baby or small child alone with a dog.
- Always be alert for possible dangerous situations.
- Do not bother a dog that is sleeping, eating, or caring for puppies.
- Report stray animals to your local animal control agency. Harris County residents can call Harris County Pets at (281) 999-3191 for assistance.

For more information on preventing dog bites, contact Harris County Pets at (281) 999-3191 or visit our website at [hcphtx.org/vph](http://hcphtx.org/vph) or [www.countypets.com](http://www.countypets.com).

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- RFP# 2324-007 – Combi Ovens
- RFP# 2324-008 – Tiny Home – Base Model

Bids will be received until 9:00 a.m., Friday, January 05, 2024, at the Channelview ISD’s E-bidding website. Please visit the electronic bidding website at <https://cvisd.ionwave.net>

All necessary information may be obtained by calling the Business Office at (281) 452-8003, or the district website [www.cvisd.org](http://www.cvisd.org), under Departments → Business Office → Purchasing. The Board of Trustees reserves the right to reject any or all bids.

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## SHELDON ISD NEWS

### Sheldon STEM Girls Shoot for the Moon



For the fifth consecutive year, Sheldon ISD has received a grant to attend the Girls STEM Pathway initiative through Space Center Houston. This grant provides an engaging experience for seventh grade girls enrolled in STEM at Null and King middle schools.

This year, Sheldon STEM seventh-grade girls engaged in innovative and creative applications of science content, conducted research to problem-solve future missions to Mars and the Moon, and experimented with hands-on engineering challenges. During one visit, students conducted flame testing with salts to determine the probability of elements present on Mars.

Our 7th grade Sheldon STEM girls took small steps in this opportunity with Space Center Houston now so that they may take giant leaps as future women in STEM. Sheldon ISD STEM seventh-grade boys will have the opportunity for a field experience at Space Center Houston in the spring.

### More than 740 Sheldon STEM Students Showcase Work



The Sheldon ISD STEM/PTECH Academy held its Fall STEM Project-based Learning (PBL) Showcases at C. E. King Middle School, Null Middle School and C. E. King High School. The showcases provided an opportunity for the STEM teachers as well as 745 students in the Sheldon ISD STEM Academy to show off their learning, creativity and innovative technology skills by presenting their project designs to their parents and guests.

Each PBL starts with a driving question that leads students to design and build a presentation and product that will provide a solution to a real-world problem, all while learning Math/Science/English Language Arts, and Social Studies.

### King High School FFA sets date for Livestock Show

Save the date for the 67th annual Sheldon Livestock Show on January 11-13 and the Buyer's Luncheon and Auction on January 13. Sponsors and buyers are needed. Those interested may contact [robynjones@sheldonisd.com](mailto:robynjones@sheldonisd.com) or 346-378-7099.

On December 11, students held a Winter Showcase featuring their projects and a hot cocoa bar. The event was open to the community.

Save the Date

Sheldon FFA Livestock Show

Support Needed

January 11-13, 2024

Live Auction January 13th

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DECORATED CAKES

DESSERTS

PHOTOGRAPHY

### Sheldon ISD Education Foundation Surprises Teachers with \$58,000+ in Grants



Holiday presents came early in Sheldon ISD this year, and in the form of oversized checks full of surprises for Sheldon educators. On December 14, the Education Foundation Board of Directors, Superintendent of Schools, SISD Board of Trustees and administrators presented 22 teaching grants to Sheldon ISD educators at 10 schools across the district. The Foundation awarded a total amount of \$58,700 to teachers and staff.

The Sheldon ISD Education Foundation is a non-profit organization that exists to raise funds for teachers who apply for innovative teaching grants. Teachers can apply for funding annually by submitting an application for an idea, lesson or project they want to implement in the classroom. To date the Foundation has awarded more than \$200,000 in innovative teaching grants. To learn more, go to [www.sheldonisd.com/seff/](http://www.sheldonisd.com/seff/).

### Sheldon's youngest Learners Celebrate the Holidays with Performances



The Sheldon ISD Early Learning Center held its first Christmas program on Wednesday, December 13. The Early Learning Center is made up of Sheldon ISD employee children and grandchildren and serves birth through four years of age. Students in all of the classes danced and sang for an audience of parents, grandparents, guardians and more! Following the performances, families and their children made crafts, got hot cocoa and took photos!

### Two KHS Students Advance in All-State Choir Contest



Two King High School students will advance to the area auditions after their pre-area choir audition. Congratulations to senior Sara Saeed, alto 1, 1st chair and junior Arielle Monuma-Antoine, soprano 1, 4th chair. The area auditions will determine potential membership in the All-State Choir next year.

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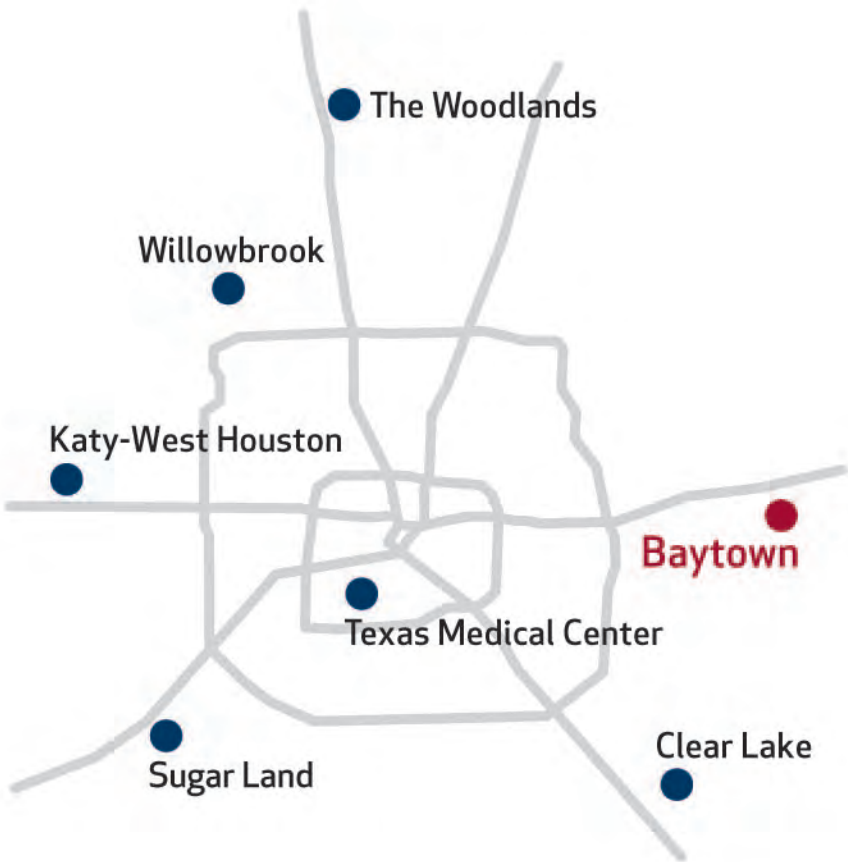




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