



Pct. 2 Constable Jerry Garcia was the guest auctioneer assisted by Chief of Police at Galena Park ISD, Rotarian Bryan Clements.

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BAKED POTATO LUNCH, CAKE AUCTION A TASTY FUNDRAISER

Galena Park/Jacinto City Rotarians raise over \$10,000 for Scholarships

By David Taylor
Managing Editor

It is possible to have cake and eat it too.

The Galena Park-Jacinto City Rotary Club used some 32 baked delicacies to raise more than \$10,000 in money that will go directly to their scholarship fund.

Every year, the club hosts two major fundraisers," said Galena Park-Jacinto City Rotary Club president Maria Cortez said. "We've been doing this one as long as I have been in the club which is more than 25 years."

This is her second time to serve as president of the club, the first being in 2013-2014.



ABOVE: Pct. 2 Constable Jerry Garcia and Galena Park-Jacinto City Rotary Club president Maria Cortez award Ernesto Cantu and José Francisco Vázquez a certificate thanking them for their steadfast contributions to the Rotary Club baked potato sale.

RIGHT: Culinary Arts students made their creations, sponsored by someone in the community, and the cakes were auctioned off at the Galena Park-Jacinto City Rotary Club Baked Potato Luncheon. PHOTOS BY DAVID TAYLOR. SEE MORE ON PAGE 5.



Cortez explained she came into the club in 2007 and were already doing the cake sale.

"It used to be the kick-off for the carnival when we hosted that in Galena Park," she said.

This fundraiser is used to honor Galena Park High School graduates each year with scholarships. This year, 15 of the 32 cakes were made by the culinary arts students and decorated beautifully.

"This gives them the opportunity to bake, and they are also excited to see how their cakes do during the auction," Cortez said.

At least one of the schol-

Continued. See ROTARY BAKED POTATO LUNCH, Page 5

Galena Park ISD presents Media Awards to 3 recipients

By Allan Jamail

NORTH CHANNEL – The Galena Park Independent School District recognized and awarded Cathy Hernandez of Houston's KPRC TV, Channel 2. Also receiving awards were Gilbert Hoffman, Publisher of the North Channel Star and Allan Jamail a freelance photojournalist.

Their recognition was for their outstanding dedication and support of the school district. Both Hernandez and Jamail are products of the district.

Cathy Hernandez is an anchor and reporter at KPRC2 in Houston.

The Houston native grew up in Galena Park and graduated from Galena Park High School in 2005. She earned her bachelor's degree in broadcast journalism from the University of Houston in 2009.

Continued. See MEDIA AWARDS, Page 3



L - R: Awardee Cathy Hernandez, daughter Olivia Diosdado, husband Eric Diosdado, Norma Hernandez (Trustee & mother of Cathy), daughter Andrea Diosdado, Superintendent Dr. John Moore and Raul Hernandez (father of Cathy). (Photo by Allan Jamail)



L - R: Trustee Ramon Garza, Allan & Linda Jamail & Superintendent Dr. John Moore (Awardee Gilbert Hoffman not in photo)

EPA okays PRP to continue waste pits work at North site

THEA Activists unhappy with decision; prefer EPA takeover

NORTH CHANNEL – On April 18, EPA issued a letter to the potentially responsible parties (PRPs) for the San Jacinto River Waste Pits Superfund site following EPA's January 5, 2024, notification to the PRPs of serious deficiencies in the remedial design for the site.

Today's letter provides notice that after reviewing the PRP's plan for addressing these deficiencies, EPA decided the plan and other information provided by the PRPs are sufficient for them to continue performing required work at the site.

The PRPs are required to continue working to address all deficiencies and comments and submit a full remedial design within 90 days for EPA's approval, with strong



provisions in the Administrative Settlement Agreement to enforce these requirements.

The PRPs are required to submit incremental design deliverables to ensure that the remedial design stays on track and achieves the removal of the waste in compliance with our record of decision. Please see EPA's letter and comments for more details.

After EPA issued their letter of decision, THEA president Jackie Medcalf issued the following statement:

Greetings San Jacinto Community,
I write to you today with

disappointing news regarding the San Jacinto River Waste Pits. The EPA recently communicated via email that it would not proceed with the previously warned takeover of the Superfund process for the Northern Waste Pit.

In January, the agency issued a "Notice of Deficiency" to the Waste Pits' responsible parties, International Paper Company and Waste Management subsidiary McGinnis Industrial Maintenance Corporation. The companies responded to the EPA and in the letter linked below, the agency explains their response is satisfactory enough to allow the responsible parties to continue the design process. In my opinion, the companies' response was a plan to make a plan, which they have failed to do in the past 7 years.

Continued. See EPA OKAYS PRP TO CONTINUE WASTE PITS WORK, Page 3

Annual Reenactment of San Jacinto Battle

Historic Event recalls critical battle leading to Independence of Texas from Mexico

Texans celebrate independence at San Jacinto Monument

By David Taylor
Managing Editor

For 20 years, Mark Hegman has been dressing up as a member of the Texian Army and fighting the Battle of San Jacinto every April out at the site of the San Jacinto Monument and battlefield in LaPorte, Texas. The former Channelview resident almost didn't get to participate this year fighting off pneumonia, but even that and his wife's knee surgery didn't keep either of them from being a part of the great history of Texas and her independence.

"Linda has been joining me for the last 15 years," he said.



Mark Hegman, former Channelview resident, is fully dressed in military attire as Gen. Sam Houston, as the crowd watches with interest.

Hegman got swept into the re-enactment culture after obliging his son-in-law wearing a period costume for him at an event at Sam Houston State University.

His son-in-law, Mike Sproat, is the curator of collections at the Sam Houston Memorial in Huntsville, Texas and was already enthralled in the re-enactment culture

when Hegman joined. Now it's a family affair, and from Opah (Hegman) down to his grandchildren, all pitch a tent and camp at the San Jacinto Monument site during the weekend

celebration of the battle.

The Hegmans, as reenactors, interact with the public as they show them living history from the early days by cooking food, checking weapons, and the

simple life of daily routines during the days leading up to the battle.

"There were crafts and

Continued. See SAN JACINTO BATTLE, Page 7



Hegman, who played the role of Gen. Sam Houston, lies up against a tree on the battlefield after being shot in the ankle and wounded. Despite his wounds, Houston was later elected as the president of The Republic of Texas.

SHELDON ISD NEWS

Sheldon ISD students across 10 grade levels compete in C-STEM Challenge Day



Saturday, April 18 was the annual Sheldon ISD C-STEM Challenge Day. Approximately, 172 students from grades 3-12 representing 10 Sheldon ISD schools were competing against each other in the areas of Innovation, Mural, Sculpture and Robotics. C-STEM teaches Communications + STEM (C-STEM) skills to students.

It was a great day full of winners representing our district after-school STEM program. This event would not be possible without the support of the C-STEM coaches, vol-



unteers and parents for all of their support. C-STEM is sponsored by the Sheldon ISD After School Program and is a partnership with cstem.org.

50+ students Participate in Sheldon ISD's White Coat Ceremony



The Sheldon ISD STEM/P-TECH Academy recently marked a significant milestone as 57 students successfully completed their biomedical mid-program exam, a testament to their dedication and academic progress. During this annual special ceremony, these accomplished individuals proudly donned their white coats, symbolizing their commitment to the field of Biomedicine and their readiness to embark on promising career paths by continuing their efforts in the Biomed program of study.

Garrett Elementary named Top Volunteer Campus of the Year



Sheldon Independent School District Partners in Education named Garrett Elementary as the 2023-24 Sheldon ISD Partners in Education (PIE) Campus of the Year. Volunteers were presented a trophy for their hard work and dedication this school year at a surprise celebration during National Volunteer Week on April 26. The campus has logged approximately 2,267 volunteer hours from August 2023 to April 2024. The district also recognized Christina Caballero as the top volunteer for Sheldon ISD with more than 263 hours. Ms. Caballero is a volunteer at Garrett Elementary.

am deeply grateful for the invaluable contributions of our dedicated volunteers and the unwavering support of our parents," said Garrett Elementary Principal Chad Davis. "Their involvement not only enriches the educational experience but also fosters a sense of unity and belonging within our school community. Together, we nurture an environment where every child can thrive and reach their full potential."

The current estimate for the value of a volunteer hour is \$31.80, according to Independent Sector, the nation's largest non-partisan coalition of nonprofit organizations. The volun-

teers of Garrett Elementary have contributed the equivalent of roughly \$72,090 to Sheldon ISD. Sheldon ISD volunteers across the district worked more than 8,200 hours throughout the 2023-24 school year, equating to \$260,760.

The Sheldon Partners in Education program creates school-support opportunities for parents, businesses and the community by offering a Families in Action volunteer program. Volunteers can donate their time and service to Sheldon ISD classrooms at any campus and all grade levels. To learn more, visit www.sheldonisd.com/pie.

King High School Celebrates Top 10% at Annual Dinner

On Thursday, April 25, King High School celebrated the Class of 2024 students graduating in the Top 10% with dinner and an awards presentation at the Humble Civic Center. This year, there are 88 students in the Top 10% of the graduating class. King High School's graduation is taking place Friday, May 31 at 7 p.m. at Panther Stadium.



Pre-kindergarten Registration Now Available

Sheldon ISD is now accepting enrollment for pre-kindergarten and kindergarten students for the 2024-25 school year. Sheldon ISD's mission to provide a personalized learning experience to

equip students with the skills needed to be successful in college and/or a career begins as early as pre-kindergarten. Skills like literacy development are critical to begin at an early age. Sheldon offers

full-day pre-kindergarten for children four years of age at two early childhood facilities. To register, go to www.sheldonisd.com. The first day of school is Monday, August 12.

GALENA PARK ISD NEWS

GPISD Thanks Its Student Advisory Board for Their Service



By Dr. Tommie L. Smith

Galena Park ISD recognized the Superintendent's Student Advisory Board for their leadership and dedicated service to their schools and community. Students selected to serve on the advisory board meet with Dr. Moore and other district leaders throughout the year to provide feedback related to important student, school, and community concerns. Superintendent Student Advisory Board members are respected campus, community, and peer leaders with valuable perspectives who serve as campus ambassadors for Galena Park ISD. They provide suggestions for continuous improvement of the services and programs the district offers to students, are re-

quired to participate in one community service project each year, and participate in a yearlong book study that supports their post-secondary readiness.

Members of the Superintendent's Student Advisory Board include:

- *CTE Early College High School - Danielle Barraza, Alonzo Castaneda, Shamari Dupree-Jefferson, Gareth Forbis, Jorge Gomez, Jose Padron, Mia Pena, Meanie Perez
- *Galena Park High School - Adam Alvarado, Mia Balderas, Lorenzo Delgadillo, Isabella Espinoza, Kayla Ramiez, and Jonathan Shields
- *North Shore Senior High Ninth Grade Center - Lynel Hunter and Sofia Rodriguez
- *North Shore Senior High 10th Grade Center - Kaylah Eckford and Jase Tapiz
- *North Shore Senior High School - Dulce Bonilla, Luke Melendez, Chance Smith, and Kaliyah Smith

This year's service was concluded with an appreciation luncheon for the Student Advisory Board. Graduating seniors were celebrated and continuing advisory board members readied themselves for next year's service project and student representation. The Student Advisory Board members received medals of service, certificates of appreciation, and spent a bit more time sharing concerns and suggestions with Dr. John Moore, Superintendent of Schools.
Photo Credit: Christopher Gause

CHARLOTTE'S WEB
By Charlotte Jackson 

Charity vs Dignity



A lady asks a poor egg seller: "How much for your eggs?"

The man replies "50¢ an egg." The lady says, "I'll take 6 eggs for \$2.50, I will not pay more."

The man says "Yes, I will give you a \$.50 discount you demand because I haven't sold a single egg today - I need to help my family."

She paid \$2.50 and left feeling that she "won".

She got into her expensive car and went to an expensive restaurant to meet friends. They ordered several expensive items. They ate half their dinner, and threw the rest away.

The wealthy restaurant owner brought \$150 bill. She paid the owner \$200 and told him to keep the \$50.

This might seem normal to the wealthy restaurant owner, but unfair to the poor egg seller - the wealthy woman demanded a 20% discount for the eggs.

The question is:

Why would a wealthy person demand a discount from poor people - a small discount we don't need. But they do. The discount benefits the wealthy who don't need it?

I read an article by a boy about his father when he was young. His father, would buy things from poor people - and usually paid more money than they asked for.

Many of these items he did not need. And later would donate these items to charity.

The boy has his father "Why are you doing this Dad?"

His father replied.

"Some people need help. But they want to keep their dignity and don't want charity.

So take a small part of what you earn and buy from them at slightly higher price. It's charity wrapped in dignity, son."

I remember the story often. And reminds me often to always try to do more for others who were not as lucky. Charity with Dignity.

I challenge everyone, to always find small ways to help others in a way that helps them keep their dignity. It's amazing the more you give it seems like the more you always receive.

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GPISD Media Awards,

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

After graduation, she started her career as a producer at KPRC2. She then moved to El Paso and Denver to pursue her reporting career, before returning home to KPRC in 2015.

While in college, Cathy developed her passion for cheering on our city. She was a member of the UH Cougar Dolls. After graduation, she joined the Houston Texans Cheerleaders.

Cathy said she's honored to work in the community she loves and share stories that impact families in our city!

Gilbert (Gil) Hoffman born November 19, 1939 in Stillwater, Oklahoma and later moved to Pennsylvania at a young age and grew up in New Castle, a town just north of Pittsburgh.

Even as a boy, he was interested in printing presses and newspapers. He got his two younger siblings Cheryl and Richard to help him and had them collect news from around their neighborhood, which Gil would write up into stories that he typeset and printed on a small letterpress in their basement. Then he sent Cheryl and Richard back out to deliver these bulletins.

Gil got his Master's degree from the University of Pennsylvania and was employed at a series of firms in Pittsburgh and Philadelphia. He gained experience and climbed the ladder, from draftsman to model builder to designer to project architect. He's traveled all over the world

and held many prestigious positions.

He fathered 3 children, Susan and Trisha with Carol his first wife and later Kristan with his wife Mei-ing Liu Hoffman. He and Mei-ing both architects and having graduated from the same university were working together and began dating and were married. Mei-ing is an accomplished artist.

The 84 year old Gilbert and Mei-ing own several companies. They devote lots of their time to covering the news in several Houston area communities, including Aldine, Channelview, Crosby, Highlands, Jacinto City, and many more.

Allan Jamail a freelance photojournalist who recently celebrated his 80th birthday was raised in Galena Park and later moved to neighboring Jacinto City where his daughter Yvette and son Allan Jr. were raised. He and his wife Linda reside in Jacinto City.

Jamail entered into Jacinto City's politics and was first elected to the city's council in 1973. Since then he's served as Mayor, Chief of Police, Emergency Management Director and volunteer fireman.

Jamail said, I enjoy photojournalism in letting the communities know what's happening in their neighborhoods and recognizing both students and professionals for their achievements by supporting a local newspaper to get the news out.

EPA okays PRP to continue work on waste pits,

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Although the EPA possesses the legal authority to assume control of the Superfund Site, it has chosen to grant the parties an additional 90 days to finalize the design for remediation. The design, a pivotal aspect of the Superfund process, encompasses crucial details ranging from the remediation timeline and worker safety protocols to the methodology for site sampling to ensure comprehensive cleanup.

Today is a day that communities worldwide celebrate Earth Day, and our

communities near the San Jacinto River are grappling with a disheartening announcement from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). It's essential that during this time, the community remain engaged and vigilant to ensure our ultimate goal - full removal of the Waste Pits Superfund Site.

Please do not hesitate to contact me or THEA's team with questions or concerns.

Best regards,
Jackie
THEA Founder & CEO

THEA: EPA Decision disappoints on Earth Day

EPA Declines Takeover of San Jacinto River Superfund Site Cleanup

By Jackie Medcalf

EAST HARRIS COUNTY - As communities worldwide celebrate Earth Day, residents living near the San Jacinto River are grappling with a disheartening announcement from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Despite mounting concerns and efforts by local stakeholders, the EPA has decided not to take over the cleanup of the nation's most notorious Superfund Site, the San Jacinto River Waste Pits.

On April 18, 2024, at 7:00 pm CST, the EPA communicated via email that it would not proceed with the previously warned takeover of the Superfund process. In January, the agency had issued a "Notice of Takeover" to the responsible parties, International Paper Company and Waste Management subsidiary McGinnis Industrial Maintenance Corporation. This notice came after the EPA identified serious deficiencies in the companies' re-



mediation plan and demanded a response within 20 days. However, according to THEA's Founder, the response received amounted to nothing more than a plan to create a plan, yet it inexplicably satisfied the EPA's requirements, allowing the irresponsible parties to continue their work at the site.

This disappointing development follows seven years during which the responsible parties labored over a design that ultimately failed to meet the EPA's criteria for remediation, as outlined in the 2017 Record of Decision by EPA Headquarters.

The January notice had given hope to the communities along the San Jacin-

to River, hinting at the possibility of the EPA removing the cost-driven parties and appointing a neutral entity to oversee the cleanup. However, distrust within the community regarding the responsible parties' intentions, particularly their agenda to contain the Waste Pits within the river, remains deeply entrenched.

Although the EPA possesses the legal authority to assume control of the Superfund Site, it has chosen to grant the parties an additional 90 days to finalize the design for remediation. The design, a pivotal aspect of the Superfund process, encompasses crucial details ranging from the remediation timeline and worker safety protocols to the methodology for site sampling to ensure comprehensive cleanup.

Harris County Precinct 3 Commissioner Tom Ramsey, standing in solidarity with THEA, has joined the call for the EPA to take over the Superfund process for the Pits. As a professional engineer, Commissioner Ramsey expressed dismay,

stating, "I've never witnessed a more glaring display of incompetence than what I observe at the Waste Pits... The people in this area deserve better."

The EPA's choice not to take over the cleanup process has left communities surrounding the San Jacinto River in a state of limbo. Despite ongoing advocacy efforts, the lack of intervention prolongs the anxiety and fear felt by residents who live in the shadow of the Superfund Site. The urgency for action cannot be overstated. With each passing day, the risk to public health and the environment looms larger. The longer the waste persists, the greater the potential for catastrophic consequences in the event of a severe storm.

As Earth Day serves as a reminder of our collective responsibility to safeguard our planet and its inhabitants, the communities along the San Jacinto River urge the EPA to prioritize their concerns and act swiftly to address this environmental crisis.

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OPINION PAGE

OPINION By BILL KING



Metro's proposed BRT would be biggest Taxpayer Boondoggle

Author's Note: Much of the information included in this post I have recently received directly from Metro. Under the new leadership team there has been an openness in terms of answering questions and providing documents to a degree I have never seen in my 20+ years of following Metro. It is a refreshing change and should be applauded.

Metro's previous leadership proposed the construction of two bus rapid transit ("BRT") lines. At an estimated cost of over \$3 billion, these two projects, if constructed, would be the most colossal waste of taxpayers' money in the history of the City.

If you are not familiar with the term "bus rapid transit", it is the construction of dedicated lanes for buses. The only example we have in Houston is the disastrous Silver Line in Uptown. After spending about \$200 million to construct the project, and who knows how much to operate, it is attracting about 800 riders per day, just over 5% of the 14,000 Metro had projected. The ridership is so bad that Metro recently announced it intends to reduce the service. Based on this rousing success, Metro has proposed to build these two additional BRT lines.

The "University Line" would begin at the Westchase Transit Center and travel along Westpark to Edloe, then turn north to Richmond. It would then run east along Richmond to the Wheeler Transit Center. From there it follows a circuitous route through midtown to intersect with Lockwood and then follows Lockwood north to the Tidwell Transit Center. The estimated cost is \$2.43 billion.

The "Inner Katy Line" would begin at the Northwest Transit Center where it would connect to the Uptown Line and travel along the south side of Katy Freeway to downtown and make a loop using Capitol and Rusk to EADO. The estimated cost is \$735 million.

The Ridership Projections

Metro originally did preliminary ridership projections for about 130 potential projects in 2019, as part of their planning for the MetroNext program. Both the University and Inner Katy Lines were included. This report estimated that the University Line would add about 30,000 new daily riders and that the Inner Katy line would add about 8,200 new riders by 2040. These projections are for ridership increases across the entire Metro system assuming the construction of these projects.

However, in July, 2022, Metro in a filing with FTA lowered its ridership projection to 15,000 on completion and 19,400 by 2040. Then last August, Metro updated the projections for the University Line again. That projection (p.26) is that the line would increase systemwide ridership on completion by 7,536 by 8,248 by 2040!

Let me pause for a moment to comment on ridership projections. Generally speaking, transit ridership projections are almost always too high. But Metro has been in a category of its own when it comes to overestimating projected ridership. This 2020 FTA study, comparing projected costs and ridership to actual results on about 20 projects around the country, found Metro's ridership projection for the Purple Line to be, by far, the worst of any project they studied. The Purple and Green light rail lines are carrying about 25-30% of their projected ridership. And, as I mentioned earlier, the Silver is running a little over 5% of its projections today. So, we certainly have every reason to be skeptical of any ridership projection just based on Metro's history.

When you look at the assumptions in the projections, there is even more reason to be skeptical. First, the projections are based on HGAC's outdated population projections for the region. Metro also used 2019 as the base case for actual ridership. Of course, 2019 was the last year before transit ridership collapsed due to the pandemic. The implication is that projection is assuming that ridership will quickly return to pre-pandemic levels, an assumption that many question. In 2023, Metro's ridership was 86% of the 2019 ridership.

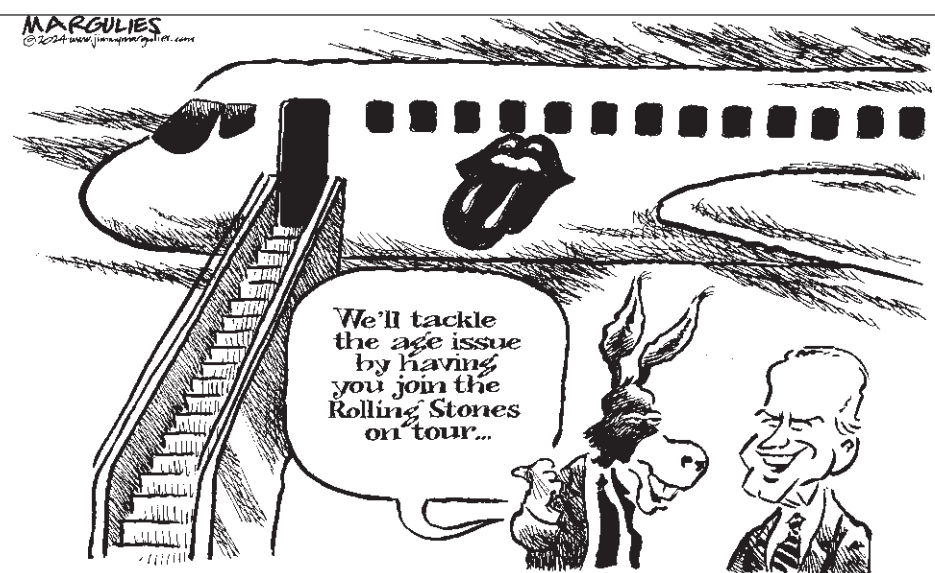
But there are other weird anomalies as well. For example, the Inner Katy projection shows that the base case, which is supposed to be the actual ridership in 2019, for the Silver Line to be 1,800 per day. Last year, the number was half that.

For the balance of this article, I am going to use Metro's ridership projection to analyze these two projects, but keep in mind that it is quite likely they may turn out to be too high. I am particularly skeptical of the Inner Katy projections.

Table with 2 columns: Project Name, Cost, Ridership, Cost per new rider. Rows include University BRT and Inner Katy BRT.

PART 1. SEE PART 2 NEXT WEEK

EDITOR'S NOTE: Opinions expressed here are not necessarily that of this newspaper or its staff. YOUR OPINION is welcome. Send a letter for possible publication to Grafikpress Newspapers, 5906 Star Lane, Houston TX 77057 or an email to GRAFIKSTAR@aol.com. Please limit your words to about 200. Letters will be subject to editing. Thank you.



STATE CAPITAL HIGHLIGHTS By Gary Borders



Early Voting Underway in Local Elections

Early voting began Monday, April 22 for municipal, school board and various bond elections. It ends on April 30 with Saturday, May 4 being election day. What is on the ballot depends on where you live.

There are various ways to learn what is on the local ballot. One way is by going to the following link: https://tinyurl.com/nhbyhnyu. This takes you to the Texas Tribune's election center, where voters can type in their address to find out what is on their ballot.

In addition, most local newspapers and county election websites post notices of local elections.



with book vendors who push pornography on unsuspecting children in our public schools," he wrote in a statement posted on social media.

BOOK-BANNING LAW GUTTED BY APPEALS COURT

The key provisions of a law signed by Gov. Greg Abbott requiring booksellers to rate books for sexual content were gutted after the full 17-member court 5th Circuit Court of Appeals declined to reconsider an earlier decision, the San Antonio Express-News reported. The vote was 9-8 to let the earlier decision stand.

A group of independent booksellers joined with book associations to challenge the law, passed in the 2023 regular legislative session. The booksellers contended the law violated the First Amendment and would cause considerable harm to their operations. One owner said the law already has caused a chilling effect and resulted in lost orders.

"The damage to us is mitigated by the fact we don't have to review every book and rate every book that we've sold to the school library," Valerie Koehler, owner of Houston's Blue Willow Bookshop and a lead plaintiff, said of the court's decision. "But the damage has been done in terms of the libraries across the entire state have changed their policies in a way that makes it hard for new books to get in."

State Rep. Jared Patterson, R-Frisco, sponsored the bill and disagreed with the court's decision.

"It's incredibly disappointing that a majority of the 5th Circuit Court of Appeals sided

TAX-FREE HOLIDAY FOR EMERGENCY SUPPLIES COMING UP

A wide range of emergency preparation supplies will be exempt from sales tax April 27-29, the Austin American-Statesman reported. The total cost of the items must be less than \$75 for most items on the list, such as batteries, first aid kits, flashlights, tarps, and fire extinguishers. Higher amounts are allowed for portable generators (less than \$3,000) and emergency ladders and hurricane shutters (less than \$300).

Supplies that do not qualify for tax exemption include face masks, cleaning supplies, gloves, toilet paper and tents.

For a complete list of what qualifies for tax exemption and what doesn't, go to the state comptroller's website: https://tinyurl.com/2c6fn4kp.

\$100K DAILY FINE FOR STATE TEMPORARILY HALTED

A \$100,000 daily fine levied against the state for failing to implement fixes to the state's foster care system ordered by a federal judge was temporarily halted by the 5th Circuit Court of Appeals, the Statesman reported.

U.S. District Judge Janis Jack levied the fines last Monday after finding the state Health and Human Services Commission repeatedly failed to fully investigate abuse allegations in the foster care system.

Jack issued a 427-page rul-

ing that listed dozens of cases where mistakes or delays in investigations resulted in children going without treatment for physical and sexual abuse.

Houston attorney Paul Yetter, who has represented the plaintiffs since the case was filed in 2011, condemned the state's appeal.

"Rather than certify safe, timely investigations of reports of child abuse and neglect, the state seems determined to avoid responsibility," Yetter wrote to the Statesman in an email Tuesday. "This appeal sends a terrible message to Texas children that state leadership just doesn't care about their safety."

The stay means the fines will not be levied until the 5th Circuit Court considers the merits of the state's appeal.

BIDEN ADMINISTRATION AWARDS SAMSUNG \$6.4 BILLION FOR TEXAS CHIP FACTORIES

The Biden-Harris administration announced last week that it would grant \$6.4 billion in direct funding for Samsung Electronics to expand its computer chip manufacturing and research cluster in Texas, the Associated Press reported. The money comes from the CHIPS and Science Act signed by President Joe Biden into law in 2022.

"The proposed project will propel Texas into a state-of-the-art semiconductor ecosystem," Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo said on a call with reporters. She predicted the project in Taylor will create at least 17,000 construction jobs and more than 4,500 manufacturing jobs.

The funding will also expand an existing Samsung facility in Austin. The two factories being built in Taylor, about 45 miles northeast of Austin, are expected to become operational in 2026 and 2027.

Senator John Cornyn commended the measure in a statement Monday.

"By investing in leading-edge semiconductor manufacturing, we are helping secure this vulnerable supply chain, boosting our national security and global competitiveness, and creating new jobs for Texans," Cornyn said.

AUTO INSURANCE CONTINUES TO SPIKE IN TEXAS

Auto insurance rates in Texas rose an average 25.53% in 2023, according to the Texas Department of Insurance. It's largest annual increase in at least a decade and more than double average increases across the country, according to the Express-News.

Among the factors driving the increase are increased prices for new and used vehicles; increased costs of labor and parts; and the volume of accidents in Texas. The number of serious injury crashes in 2022 was up 18.5% from 2019, while the number of vehicle traffic fatalities increased 23.6%.

Ware Wendell, executive director of the consumer advocacy group Texas Watch, recommended that customers go to the Office of Public Insurance Counsel's website to compare policies from different companies. That website is opic.texas.gov.

THE POSTSCRIPT By Carrie Classon

Waiting for Estefan



I ordered the sofa cover as soon as we adopted our new cat, Felix.

The sofa in the little apartment my husband, Peter, and I rent in Mexico has seen better days, but we didn't want to be responsible for ushering it into an early retirement due to cat scratches. So I bought a beautiful turquoise handloomed bedspread from a woman across the street to use as a throw. And the job would have been done right then and there if I'd kept my mouth shut.

Instead, I asked the woman if she knew anyone who could hem the cover to the appropriate size, and she said she had just the man for me. Her husband told me to follow him down the street, and we stopped at a tiny grocery store and met Estefan.

Estefan is an older gentleman with a broad smile, and he was sitting at a sewing machine in a tiny spot behind the beverage cooler. Estefan said he would be delighted to sew a sofa cover for us. He came to look at the sofa. He borrowed a tape measure from Peter, and he wrote a lot of numbers down on a pad of paper. Then he left with Peter's pen in his pocket.

A couple of days later, Estefan returned. He needed more measurements. And he returned Peter's pen. At this point, the fabric had some cuts in it, but he measured some more and left. We didn't see him for a week.

"How is the sofa cover coming?" I asked one day as he was minding the store.

"I need more measurements," he told me in Spanish. I would have liked more details, but Estefan does not speak a word of English, and I know very few sewing terms in Spanish.

When Estefan returned, he brought two pin cushions and the cover, which now had some stitching on it. Then he began to pull out stitches and pin pieces together. I honestly could not tell what he was doing, but there were obviously some problems. Then he was gone for a long time.

"Is the sofa cover ready?" I asked.

"It is a very big job," he told me.

Two weeks went by, and I saw him on the street.

"How is the sofa cover?" I asked.

"Oh, good, good!"

In the meantime, we learned that Felix had no interest in scratching the sofa and, more surprisingly, he didn't mind having his nails trimmed with the fancy clipper I had ordered while we were waiting for Estefan.

A month passed.

"How's the sofa cover?" I asked every time I came into his store.

"It will be ready soon!"

More weeks passed, and Estefan came a couple more times. Each time, he brought the fabric and took more measurements.

"We will never see that sofa cover," Peter predicted.

Then I got sick. One day, I felt so bad I stayed in bed, and I heard Peter talking to someone at the door. When I got up, I saw we had the sofa cover—almost two months exactly from when we ordered it. Estefan had run out of fabric for the back and sewed on some gray-and-red plaid, which showed a little. It is quirky, like the rest of the apartment, and I love it.

"You were sick!" Estefan said when I was well enough to make it back to his store. He sounded very concerned.

"I am better now," I told him. "And the sofa cover is fabulous!"

Estefan smiled. It was worth waiting for.

Till next time, Carrie

To see photos, check out CarrieClassonAuthor on Facebook or visit CarrieClasson.com.

Advertisement for Star Courier newspaper, including contact information for Barbers Hill, Dayton, and North Channel stars, and subscription rates.

Rotary Baked Potato/Cake Benefit Lunch,

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

arships is offered to a graduating student from the culinary arts department.

“At least \$6,700 was raised by the cakes, and other funds came from our sponsors and donations,” she said.

Jennifer Ledwith is the chairperson for scholarships and Cortez said they will be going over the applications in the next few weeks.

She estimated that between 13-15 students would be honored with scholarships with varying amounts depending on need and where they are

going to school.

One by one students took a cake as it was being auctioned and walked around the room showing off the creations.

Students also created their own baked potatoes that were also auctioned off and the money used for international projects.

“Last year, we partnered with the North Shore Rotary Club and the Torreon Club in Mexico to purchase an instrument that identifies three different kinds of cancer,” she said.

Since 2017, they have also been sponsoring an organization that supports kids with spina bifida. “This year, we were able to donate dental equipment to help the kids,” she said. “It will also be very helpful for them since the medication they take affects their teeth.”

The Rotary Club is a charitable 501(c) organization and can take tax deductible donations from anyone who wishes to support their programs. Visit their website at <https://portal.clubrunner.ca/3929>.



Congratulations to the students who were selected by their principal or counselor to receive service awards and a \$20 gift card for their efforts. The awards are given every year for the last three years consecutively.



The culinary arts students at Galena Park High School helped serve the baked potatoes and condiments at the club fundraiser.

Commissioner Garcia: Who We Are in Pct. 2

Letter From Commissioner Garcia

Every day, I wake up excited to continue our transformation across Precinct 2.

Together, we have accomplished a lot these past five years. As a lifelong public servant, I enjoy hearing from the community I serve. When a Precinct 2 resident shares how they've been asking for community improvements for years or even decades, I get to work.

Like Linda from Denver Harbor, who used a wheelchair and shared how she wished for a sidewalk to access a Metro stop in her neighborhood, my team and I got to work. We were able to apply for a grant to install a sidewalk. Linda told me how “free and normal” she felt because of the new sidewalk, now easily accessing the Metro stop.

In the Castlewood subdivision in Aldine, residents needed an updated drainage system after storms flooded homes. After two years of construction and a \$15 million investment, in October 2022, we unveiled a transformed neighborhood with a robust underground drainage



system, new sidewalks, and street lights.

Another project I often think about is James Driver Inclusive Park—an award-winning, nationally renowned space where everyone, regardless of ability, can play. This \$8 million investment was a labor of love. More people come to enjoy the park than ever before, and it's even drawn visitors from around the world to East Aldine.


During the spike in violent crime during the pandemic, I created the Violent Persons (VIPER) taskforce—a unique law enforcement collaboration to immediately bring to justice those charged with serious and

violent crimes in Harris County. With \$6 million dollars in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds, the taskforce cleared 2,248 warrants in 2023.


As a kid from the near Northside of Houston, I never imagined having the opportunity to create so many impactful projects. I am proud of our progress. However, this is just the beginning. Real change that improves lives for generations takes community engagement, careful planning, and meticulous execution. We are building on our momentum. We are ready to get more work done in 2024 and beyond.

WHO WE ARE


Precinct 2 is home to the following:




NASA



Houston Spaceport



San Jacinto Battleground Monument




Houston Ship Channel

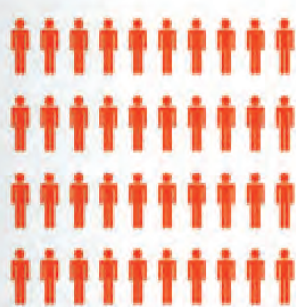
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SQUARE MILES

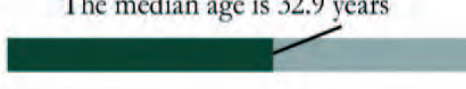
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San Jacinto Battle Reenactment,

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

daily life that included cartridge box making, Yellow Rose, Quill and Ink that showed how letters and orders were written, bullet making, battlefield medicine, and battle beats which was the music that inspired and lifted the spirits of the soldiers," said Andy Smith, site manager for the historic battleground site.

Smith estimated the crowd for the day's activities reached more than 5,000.

This year, the battle with reenactors happened twice, once at 11 a.m. and again at 3 p.m.

"Everything went off safely and exciting," he said, "and just a spoiler alert, Texas won again both times."

The smell of gunfire from period muskets and the cannons revved up the crowd. More than 100 reenactors participated.

"We also had our school day on Friday, which we added a few years back just to spread it out and we had over 800 students come out," he said.

The official ceremony on Sunday boasted more than 400 in attendance.

This year was also the first annual lecture series, four talks held throughout the day in the theater.

"Those were supported by the Humanity's Texas grant that allowed us to pay speakers to come and be a part of the program. It was an exciting addition and we hosted over 400 for those talks," he said. It's something they'll revisit for next year's event.

Scattered throughout the battlefield was the living



Hegman, bottom left, says he enjoys being a reenactor and loves researching the history of Texas then reliving it on the battlefield.

history zones, the Mexican camp, the Texian camp, run-away scrape camp and groups from the Alamo, Washington on the Brazos, the Barrington Plantation, San Felipe, and others out here to tell the story leading up to San Jacinto," he said.

Visitors walk through the encampments and then head out to the battlefield to see the Battle of San Jacinto.

The drama is split into four scenes: the runaway scrape, the skirmish on April 20, the Battle of San Jacinto on April 21, and it ends with the capture of General Santa Ana on April 22.

On Friday, they hosted another first—representatives from the Alabama-Coushatta Indian Tribe including their chief.

After all the volleys of gunfire have ended and the tourists have all left for the day, nightfall comes, and Hegman says that's his favorite time out on the battlefield.


"You get chills when


you're out there on the battlefield doing the reenactment. You know you are a part of history," he said. He ascended the ranks and played the part of General Sam Houston and counted that a big privilege and honor.

But for Hegman, it's the quiet time in the dark that holds special meaning.

"You look across the battlefield and you see the campfires glowing, the chatter of people preparing for bed or having fun, and then you look up and see that monument that's lit up. It does give you chills remembering history and then being a part of it," he said.

On Monday, after the crowds were gone and the celebrations over, Smith said he and the staff were finalizing the numbers and had one final thing to say, "Book it for next year!" he smiled. They will host the school day again on Friday, April 18, 2025, and the battle reenactment on Saturday, April 19, 2025.


PET MATTERS
In Memory of
Susan Hoffman



The Great Uniter: How Pets Foster Connections and Bring People Together

In the hearts and homes of nearly 70% of American households, pets hold a cherished place as integral family members. Dogs lead the pack, claiming the title of the most popular pet in the U.S., closely followed by cats and a diverse array of other animal companions. Beyond their roles as sources of joy, relaxation, and comfort, pets play a remarkable role as social catalysts, bringing people together in unexpected ways.

TripsWithPets.com recently conducted a survey that delved into the profound impact of pets on social connections. The survey, reaching pet parents across the United States, uncovered the invaluable role of pets in fostering not only companionship but also friendships and robust social networks.

Pets as Protectors Against Social Isolation

The findings underscore that pets, beyond being lovable companions, act as protectors against social isolation. A significant 60% of pet owners, particularly those with dogs, displayed a higher likelihood of engaging with their neighbors who also have pets, dismantling potential social barriers.

Public spaces, such as breweries, parks, hiking trails, outdoor cafes, and neighborhood strolls, have become vibrant hubs of connection for pet parents. Dogs, with their friendly demeanor and approachability, emerged as effective social magnets, instrumental in initiating interactions and creating a shared ground for conversations to flourish.

Beyond Physical Spaces: Pets and Digital Camaraderie

The survey expanded its scope beyond physical spaces, delving into the role of social media in connecting people through

their pets. Nearly 50% of participants noted that they've not only formed friendships but have also made notable connections with other pet parents via digital platforms due to their common love of pets.

Interestingly, almost 20% of these connections extended beyond the online realm, leading to in-person meetups for walks, play dates, travel, and more, fostering enduring bonds fueled by their shared affection for animals.

Kim Salerno, CEO of TripsWithPets, highlights the power of pets to forge connections: "We've witnessed pet parent followers who have met through our social platforms because of their pets. They've not only formed friendships but have also made plans to travel together with their pets, creating lasting memories ignited by their shared love for their pets."

Multifaceted Connections: A Network of Support

The survey underscored the multifaceted nature of these connections, revealing that approximately 45% of participants received various forms of social support—be it emotional, informational, appraisal, or instrumental—through relationships formed because of their pets.

The Takeaway

Pets go beyond being companions; they emerge as great unifiers, forging connections that enhance the lives of their human counterparts. From lively encounters in physical spaces to digital communities bonded by shared experiences, the influence of pets in fostering social connections is undeniable. As we celebrate the joy and companionship they bring, let's also acknowledge their role as the glue that binds us together, creating a network of support, friendship, and shared memories.

Article contributed by TripsWithPets

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THE BOARD WILL HEAR THE PETITION ON MAY 7TH, 2024 STARTING AT 6:00 P.M. AT THE CITY HALL ANNEX, 10301 MARKET STREET. ANY INTERESTED PERSON MAY ATTEND.

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Notice to Vendors

Sheldon ISD is accepting bids for the following until May 31, 2024: General Office Supplies & Equipment; Band Repair, Sheet Music, Supplies & Equipment; Instructional Supplies and Equipment; Library Books & Media Supplies; Student Athletic Insurance; Technology Supplies & Equipment; Maintenance Supplies & Equipment; Custodial Supplies & Equipment; Transportation Supplies & Equipment; Fuel and Lubrication Services; Waste Collection Services. BID documents will be available beginning May 6, 2024, on the district website: sheldonisd.com (Departments, Finance, Purchasing, Request for Proposals/Bids), or via email to purchasing@sheldonisd.com.

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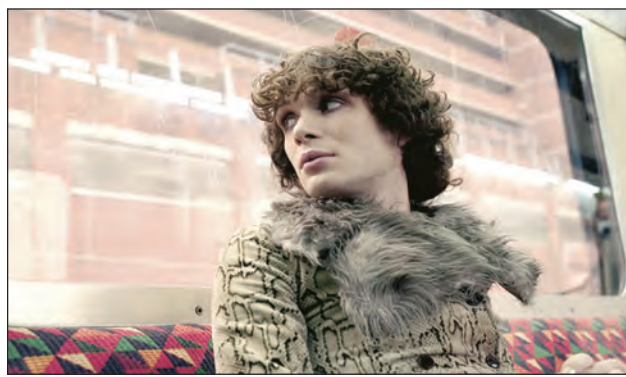
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Cillian Murphy stars in the 2005 comedy-drama film "Breakfast on Pluto."

"Breakfast on Pluto"

"BREAKFAST ON PLUTO" (R) — Before Cillian Murphy ever donned a brimmed hat to play J. Robert Oppenheimer and win an Oscar, he once played Patricia "Kitten" Braden in this peculiar comedy-drama film from 2005. Born Patrick, Patricia lives in the fictional Irish town of Tyrellin during the 1970s and causes havoc because of her choice to come out as transgender. After years of getting in trouble at school and never feeling like she belonged, Patricia decides to run away from Tyrellin and see where the world takes her.

As she tries to find her footing in the dodgiest of places, she meets an unusual array of individuals, like Billy Hatchet and the Mohawks, magician Bertie Vaughan, and the singing/dancing Wombles, who all eventu-

ally push her closer to realizing and accepting her truth. This film will leave you astounded with Murphy's range as an actor. Out now. (Amazon Prime Video)

"DUNE: PART TWO" (PG-13) — The sequel to the 2021 sci-fi film "Dune" is officially out now to rent after garnering more than \$685 million worldwide in its box-office release. Starring our modern-day movie stars Timothee Chalamet ("Wonka") and Zendaya ("Euphoria"), "Part Two" picks up right after the events of the first film that left Paul Atreides (Chalamet) and his mother, Lady Jessica (Rebecca Ferguson), in the hands of the Fremen troops on the planet Arrakis. Paul and Lady Jessica begin learning the ways of the Fremen, while Baron Vladimir

Harkonnen remains relentless in his plans to take over the desert planet. The Baron recruits his bloodthirsty nephew, Feyd-Rautha (Austin Butler), to assist him in conquering Arrakis. With much more action, an excellent ensemble cast, and visuals that will give you goosebumps, this incredible film will make you want to stay in the worlds of "Dune" forever. (Apple TV+)

In Case You Missed It "QUIET ON SET: THE DARK SIDE OF KIDS TV" (TV-14) — This five-part docu-series isn't an easy watch, whether you grew up watching Nickelodeon's shows or not, but it's monumental for shedding light on the brutal behind-the-scenes world child actors deal with. Featuring interviews from child actors who worked for shows like "All That," "Zoey 101," "The Amanda Show" and more, the first four episodes detail the horrific work environment they had to endure at the mercy of producers like Brian Peck and Dan Schneider. Drake Bell ("Drake & Josh") explains the crimes that were committed to him by Peck, a sex offender who continued to work in Hollywood following his conviction. The series also highlights the subtly inappropriate jokes that Schneider would slide in for unknowing young actors like Ariana Grande and Jamie Lynn Spears. The fifth and final episode includes extra, in-depth interviews led by journalist Soledad O'Brien. (Max)

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Q: How is Celine Dion doing since she was diagnosed with a neurological disorder? Will she ever sing in front of an audience again? — N.G.

A: Two years ago, Celine Dion was diagnosed with stiff-person syndrome, a neurological disorder with an unknown cause and an uncertain prognosis. In an interview with Vogue France, she said that she undergoes physical and vocal therapy five days a week and hopes to sing again.

In February of this year, Dion presented a Grammy Award to Taylor Swift. She looked happy and radiant, leaving her fans hopeful that they'll hear her angelic voice on stage again someday.

Q: Is it true that Garcelle Beauvais is leaving "Real Housewives" because her acting career has taken off? She's the only levelheaded one in the bunch, so I wouldn't blame her if she quit. — T.S.

A: There have been several firings and voluntary exits among Bravo's "Real Housewives" lately, but Garcelle Beauvais is not one of them — at least not yet. The popular cast member of "The Real Housewives of Beverly Hills" began her career in front of the cameras as a model for the Ford agency before getting bit by the acting bug. She appeared in the Eddie Murphy film "Coming to America" and its sequel, as well as "The Jamie Foxx Show" and the short-lived Aaron Spelling primetime soap "Models Inc."

After her career lagged a bit, she joined "Real Housewives" in 2020. While most actors look at reality television as a step down, this had the opposite effect on Beauvais' career. Viewers were charmed by her wit, levelheadedness and beauty, and her career in Hollywood was reborn.

In 2023, Beauvais produced and starred in a hit movie for the Lifetime network called "Black Girl Missing." She recently inked a deal to produce two more telefilms under this franchise, which will "continue the imperative conversations about systemic inequalities where missing girls and women of color are ignored."

She'll also star in another Lifetime movie, the first of what hopes to be many with the introductory title "Terry McMillan Presents." If that name sounds fa-



Singer Celine Dion

miliar, McMillan is the novelist behind some bestselling books that were adapted into hit movies, like "How Stella Got Her Groove Back" and "Waiting to Exhale."

With all this success, don't be surprised if Beauvais does leave the bickering "Housewives" behind her, but as of now, she's expected to return next season.

Q: Is "Russian Doll" ever coming back to Netflix, or has it been canceled? — K.S.

A: According to TVLine, the Netflix drama "Russian Doll" was originally intended to take three seasons to tell its story. However, it's been two years since the second chapter ended, but the writers' and actors' strikes last year played a role in its delay.

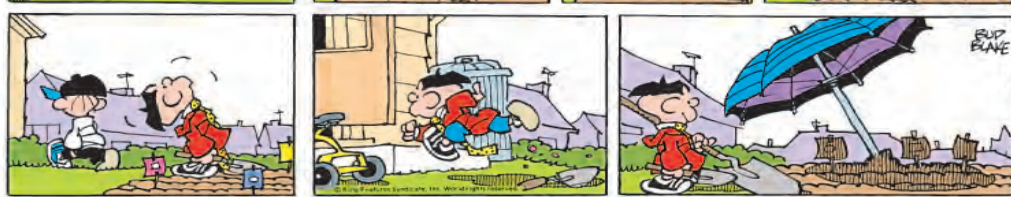
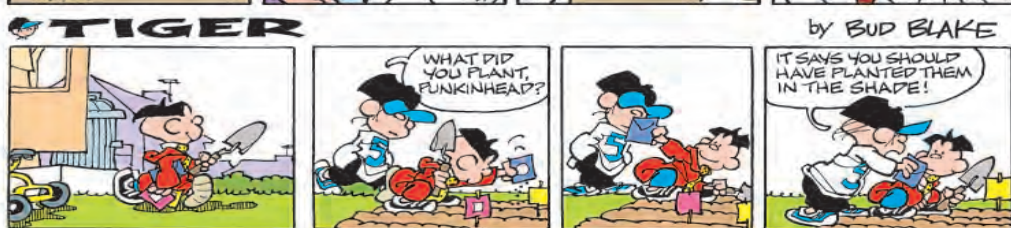
In the meantime, the show's star Natasha Lyonne found herself with a new hit show on her hands, "Poker Face," which streams on Peacock. Will she have time to star in both shows? According to Lyonne, there are "potentially more adventures" for "Russian Doll's" Nadia, but "it's gonna take some time."

Send me your questions at NewCelebrityExtra@gmail.com, or write me at KFWS, 628 Virginia Drive, Orlando, FL 32803.

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ENTERTAINMENT

Amber Waves



Weekly SUDOKU by Linda Thistle. Includes a 9x9 grid and difficulty level: Moderate, Challenging, HOO BOY!

HOCUS-FOCUS by Henry Boltinoff. Includes two panels of a man painting a fence and a list of differences to find.

April 29, 2024 Posting Date King Crossword. Includes crossword grid, clues (ACROSS, DOWN), and answers.

Trivia test by Fifi Rodriguez. Includes a list of 10 trivia questions and answers.

Trivia Test Answers: 1. Lake Ontario; 2. "Cheers"; 3. The knee; 4. Mr. Boddy; 5. Goliath frog; 6. Atmospheric pressure; 7. Sancho Panza; 8. "Groundhog Day"; 9. The spits; 10. "Cowboy Carter".



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