

Charlotte's Web: Get Involved in the New Year, Page 3

ESD#12 Firefighters rescue Infant from Fire, Page 8

BJ Johnson Honored for 51 Years of Leadership & Service



BJ Johnson and his wife Joetta were both on hand to help with the packing and delivery of 300 baskets to the needy See Page 1

NORTH CHANNEL STAR

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VOLUME 13, NO. 1 (#549) THURSDAY, JANUARY 2, 2025 www.northchannelstar.com

CHANNEL CURRENTS

EPA meeting on Waste Pits Tuesday Jan. 7

The EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) has scheduled a public meeting to update persons on the status of the remedial work at the Superfund Site. Meeting is Tuesday, Jan. 7 from 6:00pm to 7:45pm at the Highlands Community Center, 604 Highland Woods Drive, Highlands 77562. More information on Page 5.

North Channel Chamber 48th Annual Gala

North Channel Area Chamber of Commerce presents its 48th Annual Gala on Friday, January 31, 2025 6:30pm Reception, 7:00pm Dinner. Attire: Cocktail Masquerade. Awards and Installation Gala Banquet, at the Hyatt Regency Baytown Houston Hotel. Tickets \$100. RSVP 713-450-3600 or yesenia@ncchamber.com.

BJ Johnson Inducted into NS Rotary Wall of Fame

By David Taylor
Managing Editor

It's no secret that the success of the North Shore Rotary Club in Houston as a leading club in District 5890 and across the state comes for two reasons: great community support and great leadership. On Thursday, Dec. 19, 2024, the club honored another long-time foundational member and great leader in BJ Johnson at the North Shore Rotary Pavilion on Wallisville in Houston.

A stunned BJ Johnson could hardly speak as he heard his name read as the honoree and stood to accept rousing cheers and applause.

"I knew everybody that's on that wall there. I am totally surprised," he said reflecting on those he'll join on the wall.

The honor comes as no surprise to club members who know of Johnson's leadership and commitment for 51 years and he's still going.

Current NS Rotary President Danna Nino said Johnson was on the wall "because he deserved it."

"Just because you've



BJ Johnson was honored with a place on NS Rotary Wall of Fame. BJ Johnson stands next to his plaque.

been in Rotary for 50 years doesn't put you on the Wall of Honor," she said. "We have certain criteria that candidates must meet for consideration."

The committee, made up of the board of directors, reviewed Johnson's qualifications last year under President Lee Brown and approved the solemn honor.

It took nearly a year to get the new plaque created and installed before the honor could be revealed on Dec. 19.

It was fitting that the honor be presented on that day as Rotarians gathered early in the morning to do their normal distribution of Christmas baskets to take



North Shore Wall of Honor with Johnson's plaque recently added

to the needy. Johnson and his wife were there front and center to help.

"You really have to be on another level. You must bring ideas, you really work your tail off," Nino said.

It was also a little nod to history for both Brown and Johnson since Johnson was the one who brought Brown into the club.

"BJ was the person that vetted me into North Shore Rotary in 2009 by making sure I knew the financial commitment, Thursday lunch expectations, and manual labor commitment required," Brown said.

He also said Johnson had a way of setting his jaw that let you know he meant business.

"I left a little scared but not defeated. Later, when I started getting greeted with 'How are you doing young man?' I knew I had the attention of a great Rotary leader," Brown shared.

The club has high expectations, according to Nino.

"He's not just a Rotarian," she said, "and there's a big difference. There's a financial commitment, personal and spousal commitment, you need drive to do the things necessary to get things accomplished."

Part of that work for Johnson came when he was president and took the club to another level in giving to the Rotary Foundation. Rotary's top philanthropic priority is eradicating polio. Since

Continued. See BJ JOHNSON HONORED, Page 5

CVHS Students Seeking Community Input for Next Environmental Project

By David Taylor
Managing Editor

Following the successful completion of their own rain garden campus project at Channelview High School, students are now focused on a larger footprint in the community in partnership with the National Wildlife Federation and are seeking input from their friends, family, neighbors, and business leaders on the type of project they would like to see.

The meeting was hosted by the National Wildlife Federation and the Channelview Health and Improvement Coalition (C.H.I.C.) and attended by students from the original project and other community members.

Kate Unger, resilience



Carolyn Stone and Kate Unger listen and answer questions from the community members gathered to hear a presentation on the possibilities of a new rain garden, bio swale, pocket prairie, or more trees to beautify the area and help reduce flooding.

in schools coordinator with the National Wildlife Federation, led the meeting.

"I'm not here to decide what goes in the community, I am here to guide you along that journey," she said.

The project will closely mirror the school year time

frame so students can be involved during the actual school year.

"We will come back in January 2025 to host another meeting and decide on the project, in February

Continued. See CHANNELVIEW STUDENTS PARTNER WITH, Page 5

Texas Silver-Haired Legislature Appoints North Channel's Charlotte Jackson

By Allan Jamail

Jacinto City, Texas ~ On December 23, 2024 State Representative Ana Hernandez gave the Oath of Office to Charlotte Jackson as East Harris County's first representative on the Texas Silver-Haired Legislature (TSHL).

Thirty-Nine years ago when Mark White Jr. was governor of Texas the Texas Senate recognized the fast growing segment of Texas's older citizens and realized the need for a better understanding and participation of them in helping to develop state policies through the legislative process.

In 1985 the Senate passed Senate Concurrent



State Representative Ana Hernandez (right) gives the Texas Silver-Haired Legislature's Oath of Office to Charlotte Jackson. (Photo by Allan Jamail)

Resolution 37 which officially acknowledged the TSHL. Since its inception more than 200 laws have been directly initiated, debated and influenced by their recommendations that affect their peers.

I know of no one other than Charlotte Jackson who could better serve the needs for the East Harris

Continued. See CHARLOTTE JACKSON'S SWEARING INTO OFFICE, Page 6

GP/JC Rotary partners with Houston CCS Alliance to Give away 550 Trees, and Promote Sustainability

Galena Park, TX – The Houston CCS (Carbon Capture and Storage) Alliance, in collaboration with the GP/JC Rotary and Harris County Constables Precinct 2, made a lasting impact on the community this week by giving away 550 trees to residents. This initiative marks the beginning of what the organizations hope will become a long-term partnership aimed at fostering environmental awareness and sustainability in the region.

The tree giveaway event, held in the heart of the community, saw families, students, and residents come together to receive their new greenery while learning about the benefits of carbon capture technology and its critical role in combating climate change. The collaboration highlights the importance of uniting organizations with shared goals to address pressing environmental challenges.

"We are thrilled to partner with the GP/JC Rotary and Constables Precinct 2



to not only beautify our community but also educate the public about the potential of carbon capture technology," said Lindsay Muñoz a spokesperson for the

Houston CCS Alliance. The event served as an opportunity for the Alliance to share information

about how carbon capture can help reduce emissions in local industries and improve air quality. Attendees were given flyers and other literature which explained the science behind carbon capture and its positive effects on the environment.

The GP/JC Rotary and Constables Precinct 2 played a vital role in organizing and supporting the event. Their outreach to local families ensured a broad impact, with trees being distributed to households eager to contribute to the community's green canopy.

Rotary Club President, Juan C. Ramirez ex-

pressed gratitude for the partnership, stating, "This is more than just about planting trees. It's about cultivating a culture of environmental stewardship and ensuring that our community understands the importance of sustainable practices."

This event is a testament to what we can achieve when organizations come together for the greater good. We're proud to be part of this initiative that not only beautifies our neighborhoods but also educates and empowers our residents."

Continued. See HOUSTON CCS ALLIANCE PARTNERS, Page 6

SHELDON ISD NEWS

Give a Little, Gain a Lot: Volunteering in Schools for a Brighter Tomorrow

Give a Little, Gain a Lot: Volunteering in Schools for a Brighter Tomorrow Sheldon ISD appreciates our more than 1,000 registered volunteers. Our dedicated parent and community supporters at Royalwood Elementary spent time at the campus making the holidays special by decorating and spreading holiday cheer. If you're interested in volunteering in our schools, please go to www.sheldonisd.com to apply for our Sheldon Families in Action volunteer program.



King HS FFA hosts winter Showcase to Support Livestock Show

On December 9, FFA students held a Winter Showcase featuring their projects and a hot cocoa bar. The event was open to the community. Save the date for the annual Sheldon Livestock Show on January 13-18. Sponsors and buyers are needed. Those interested may contact at the following email: robynjones@sheldonisd.com or 346-378-7099.



2 Sheldon ISD Employees Recognized for Outstanding Customer Service



Sheldon ISD recognized two employees as part of its CARE Award honoring employees for exemplary customer service. CARE stands for Caught Acting and Responding with Excellence and is in partnership with Chick-fil-a Summerwood. On December 11, administration surprised Jai Anderson, nurse assistant at King Middle School and Patrick Robertson is a football coach at King High School. Both honorees were nominated by their peers and community members for their dedication.

GALENA PARK ISD NEWS

Nine Stars, One Dream: North Shore Senior High School Mustangs Shine Bright on Signing Day



Pictured: North Shore Senior High School Football Signees and Head Coach Willie Gaston. (Photo Credit: Photographer, Vivian Ponce)

By Dr. Tommie L. Smith

December 4, 2024, marked a momentous occasion for nine of North Shore Senior High School's senior athletes. These celebrated Mustangs football players participated in NCAA's National Letter of Intent Football Early Signing Day. Signing letters of intent marked a significant milestone in the young athletes' careers as they took the first steps toward fulfilling their dreams of playing college football.

Each of the nine plays, who had contributed to the Mustangs' winning legacy, took turns at the signing table, accompanied by their proud coaches and

family members. The ceremony was a testament to their hard work, dedication, and passion for the sport. Here's a glimpse into the future collegiate homes of the talented athletes:

1. **Kylan Darville** - Stephen F. Austin State University
2. **Deion Deblanc** - University of Wyoming
3. **Quanell X Farrakhan II** - University of Colorado
4. **Jordan Fields** - University of Pittsburgh
5. **D'Andre Hardeman, Jr.** - Rice University
6. **Jakoby Isom** - University of Louisiana at Lafayette
7. **Nigel Pringle** - University of Arkansas

8. **Charles Ross II** - Louisiana State University

9. **Devin Sanchez** - The Ohio State University

The signing day highlighted the individual success of these athletes and underscored the strength and unity of the Mustangs football program, led by Head Coach Willie Gaston. With their futures now aligned with prestigious college football programs, the North Shore Mustangs have set a standard of excellence that will inspire future generations of players. As these nine standouts move on to the next level, they carry the support and best wishes of the GPISD school community!

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CHARLOTTE'S WEB

By Charlotte Jackson



2025: Stay safe, vigilant and get Involved

As we prepare to close out the year, I thought of how much has changed since we patiently awaited New Year's Day, 2000. Back then we wondered if our computers would crash or what would happen. Never in our lifetime had we prepared for terrorists to attack New York City and take away that outer layer of perceived security that we had lived with for generations. Now, twenty-five years later we have seen things that we never would have imagined.

We saw riots and protests become way too common. We have seen interest in social media explode. We survived COVID-19 and we witnessed many of our local 24-hour establishments fade away. Now, sadly we are seeing more retailers shutter their doors and seen a large increase in homelessness as well as crime.

Somehow it seems a larger number of our neighbors do not know each other. Many of the families that have been in our area have moved away. We are seeing multiple generations of new families move in. We have bumps in the roads with adjusting at times. Yet at the end of the day, I still consider the unincorporated area of east Harris County the best place to live, work and volunteer.

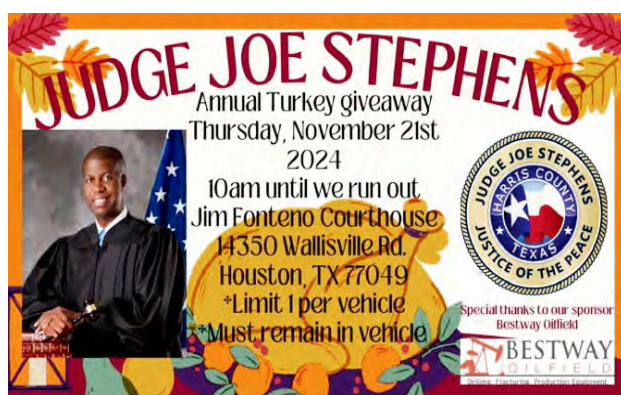
We have needs, yet we have more opportunities than ever to be a blessing to our neighbors. Not only do we have local ISD Superintendents who are committed to strengthening our school systems, but we have School Board Members who are reflections of the families they serve.

Youth sports suffered a few years after the death of Howard Fontenette, Founder and Commissioner of Wallisville Road Athletic Club. For years, WRAC produced strong athletes for the area school districts and after his death, there was a loss for many of our families. Fortunately, Kelly Simon and others picked up the torch and Pride Sports have helped fill in the gaps. It is with anticipating that Eastside Youth Basketball will be tipping off soon with their Inaugural Season. (I was in Gueydon, Louisiana this weekend for the Season Opener of NBL-US Basketball and I told Kevin Williams and the team, I was glad they were playing in Louisiana, so I did not have to split Saturdays between youth basketball and their exposure league.)

We have many large businesses leaving the area, but let's take the time to shop locally and support our neighbors. I remember years ago when we had just a few choices for fast food and now when you look around the choices are plenty. While I encourage you try out Einstein's Bagels, let's be sure to visit the faithful places like Gatti's Pizza, Bonfire Wings, and China Ko, as they have carried us through years of hunger while actively supporting our youth sports programs and PTA groups.

Take the time to become active in the community. You have an opportunity as early as January 2, to participate in online classes to become a Volunteer Deputized Voter Registrar. There are amazing workshops being offered through Harris County Public Health as well as our County Commissioners to learn about what is happening and how you can get involved. Let's agree that in spite of what others find wrong, we can and will make a difference in 2025.

Judge Joe Stephens Annual Turkey Giveaway



Judge Joe Stephens helping the community



Volunteers helped distribute the turkeys



Volunteers, Judge Stephens, and staff helpers



A large line of cars at the Wallisville Courthouse

ASK DIAMOND JIM

Diamond Jim: "A Diamond's Value & the 4 C's... Carat weight"

The world is your oyster

When it comes to buying an engagement ring, diamond price is determined by the quality of the 4 C's combined, and not the least of these is Carat weight. What is a "carat" anyway? Why not measure a diamond's weight in grams or another better-known unit of measure? Those are good questions.

In the jewelry industry, a carat is "one metric carat" and is referred to as 1.00ct (ct is the abbreviation for carat). One carat is equal to 100 points or 200 milligrams (0.2 grams). In basic terms, a 1 carat diamond weighs about the same as one half of a small paper clip.

Many people wonder why a diamond's weight is measured in terms of carats. The use of grams, kilograms, or other commonly known units of measure might be more familiar to most people. The carat has a very interesting and unique history. The word carat actually originated from the word carob which refers to a locust tree that produces edible pods. Carob seeds, being even in weight, were used as weighing references by traders in the olden days, going back as far as the Roman Empire.



Without electronic scales, seeds were used as measurements

As recently as the 1890s, if you bought a "one-carat" diamond, the weight could actually vary anywhere between 0.94 to 1.06 metric carats! Standardization of measurement has been something of a challenge over the centuries. That's a huge amount of uncertainty considering the big sums of money paid for a single stone. Much has changed since ancient times and the old days. While highly sensitive electronic weighing equipment has replaced the carob seeds, the industry stuck with the terminology of using carats to describe the weight of a diamond.

If you read our past 'Ask Diamond Jim' column on Cut, you'll remember that an "ideal cut" allows the best return of light in a diamond. The ideal cut also helps to ensure the relatively consistent size of a diamond. A one carat shallow cut diamond may appear bigger than one carat ideal cut; however, it will not return the light properly. A one carat diamond cut too deep will appear smaller and it too will likely disappoint the owner with a lack of fire and scintillation.

No matter what size diamond you're interested in owning, take the time to consider all of the 4 C's....Cut, Color, Clarity, and finally...Carat Weight.

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

Diamond Jim is a master jeweler, diamond dealer and precious metals broker. Pineforest Jewelry has been a proud member of the Independent Jewelers Organization (IJO) and the Retail Jewelers Organization (RJO) for many years. See more at: www.pineforestjewelry.com.

If you have questions pertaining to jewelry, watches, diamonds, precious stones, precious metals, and other questions related to the jewelry industry, email jmills@pineforestjewelry.com.

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OPINION PAGE

OPINION By John Hryhorchuk, Texas 2036

Looking Ahead: Texans Ready to Shape a Stronger Future

As 2024 comes to a close, Texans are turning the page to a new year — and a new chapter of opportunity.

Texas has long been a symbol of immense opportunity. Last year, nearly 612,000 people moved to Texas, while about 478,000 moved out, according to the latest Census Bureau numbers.



The poll results show that Texans are ready to work toward practical solutions to these pressing issues. Our future depends on more than data identifying problems; it's about envisioning and embracing pragmatic solutions that protect our quality of life and create greater opportunities for all Texans.

Take water supply, for example. Texans understand that water is life — essential not only for families and communities but also for industries and economic growth.

Or consider education and workforce readiness. More than 90% of voters believe high school students should have access to the training or certifications that will allow them to graduate ready to compete for good-paying jobs.

The same forward-thinking approach extends to issues like housing affordability and child care availability. Voters want solutions that ensure everyone has the chance to thrive in our rapidly growing state.

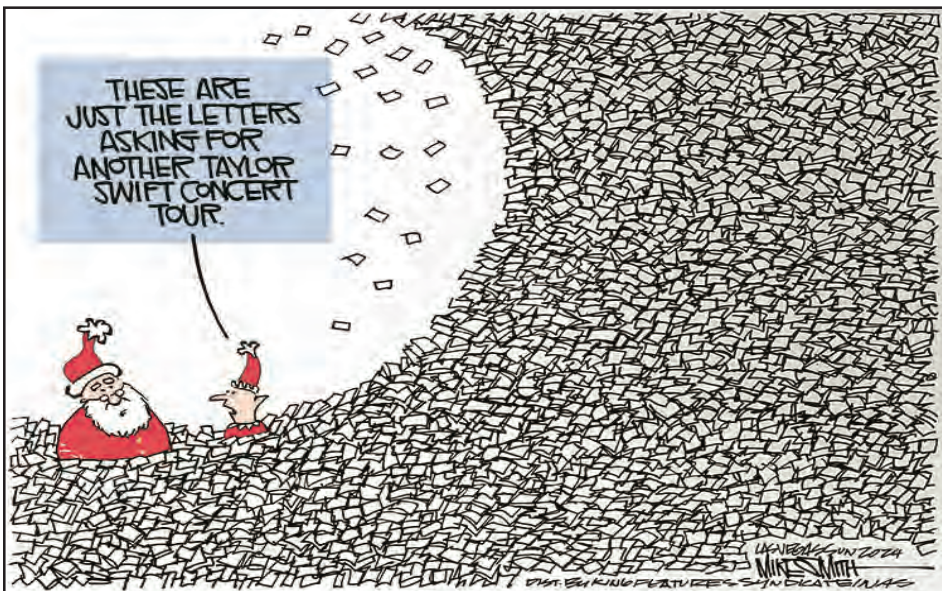
Many Texas voters also remain hopeful — maybe because they are ready to tackle the issues head on. The number of voters who told us they were extremely or very concerned about Texas's future is down significantly from last year and down to numbers not seen since before the pandemic.

The combination of optimism and pragmatism is a deeply Texan trait, which reflects our resilience and belief in solving big problems together. That's why the 89th Texas Legislative session offers a critical opportunity to translate these proposed solutions into action.

As we step into 2025, let's seize this moment to unite and approach our challenges with determination and hard work — the Texas way.

To learn more about the Texas Voter Poll and the work Texas 2036 is doing to address these challenges, visit www.texas2036.org/poll.

John Hryhorchuk is senior vice president of policy and advocacy at Texas 2036.



THE POSTSCRIPT By Carrie Classon

The Scale



"It's not what you eat between Christmas and New Year's that counts, it's what you eat between New Year's and Christmas."

I've had this mantra in my head because my husband, Peter, and I have been trying to keep our weight in check. Peter is doing it for sensible reasons. His cholesterol and blood pressure have been high.

In response, Peter has been terrifically disciplined and has avoided sweets for more than two months. He has gotten a lot slimmer. I have gotten slimmer, too. But I have no sensible protocol.

Peter's sensible portion control method is very slow and reliable. My method of "just don't eat until I'm ready to fall over" is probably not as medically sound, but also works.

Peter and I share the same scale. He weighs himself first and, when I get up a bit later, I weigh myself. Sometimes we compare notes. Sometimes we commiserate.

But now is the season that everyone frets about, and there are going to be days when eating too much is pretty much inevitable.

"Oh, no," I announced to Peter one morning after a particularly decadent dinner. "I don't think I want to see the scale today!"

Peter replied, "Even the scale deserves a day off." We both glanced at our little digital nemesis with a mixture of emotions, none of them good.

And sometimes, a little denial can go a long way. I have that found my weight fluctuates wildly from one day to the next. I started weighing myself in kilograms for a while, just because the numbers represented larger chunks of weight.

In the U.K., many folks still use stones as a measurement of weight and, while I'm not a fan of getting too much information, this seems like taking it a little too far. A stone is equal to 14 pounds.

But it is the season for big meals and cheese and crackers and cookies and rice pudding, and I honestly can't see myself missing any of it. I know Peter will keep being disciplined and avoiding sweets.

I'm thinking avoiding the scale sounds easier. Till next time, Carrie

STATE CAPITAL HIGHLIGHTS By Gary Borders



Abbot Unveils New Border Strategy

Gov. Greg Abbott said last Thursday the state is initiating a billboard campaign across Central America and border cities in northern Mexico to discourage migrants from attempting to enter Texas.



The billboards are in multiple languages, including Spanish, Chinese, Arabic and Russian. They tell stories of migrants being sexually assaulted while trying to enter the United States.

"This is tough medicine," Abbott said. "But we want no more rape trees in Texas. Do not make the dangerous trek to Texas." He was referring to the ashes of a tree where migrant women were sexually assaulted by human traffickers and left to die, according to the Statesman.

Abbott is seeking another \$3 billion in the next legislative session for Operation Lone Star. Since launching in March 2021, the state has spent \$11 billion to deter migrants and fortify the border.

tion in Texas is gas stations, which make up a third of all cases. A map of groundwater contamination cases can be found on the TCEQ site by going here: https://tinyurl.com/375xrerk.

NEW SPACE INSTITUTE IS UP AND RUNNING

The Texas A&M Space Institute, to be located next door to NASA's Johnson Space Center in Houston, recently broke ground on a 400,000-square-foot facility.

Institute Director Dr. Nancy Currie-Gregg, a former astronaut and an engineering professor, noted the U.S. and Texas face competition from many other nations with their own space programs.

Currie-Gregg added the long-term goal is traveling to Mars, but first "we really need to return to the lunar surface."

INVESTIGATION: BIG TRUCK OVERSIGHT HAS WANED

An investigation by the Austin American-Statesman indicates commercial vehicles are being stopped for safety inspections far less than they used to be, even as commercial traffic has increased.

The reasons include staffing at state and local law en-

forcement agencies failing to keep pace with the state's growth and thousands of Department of Public Safety troopers being sent to the border for Operation Lone Star and other immigration-related issues.

DPS spokeswoman Sheridan Nolen acknowledged that the border assignments have hamstrung commercial vehicles oversight operations.

The Texas Department of Motor Vehicles reported the number of commercial vehicles operating solely within state lines rose to 459,000 last year from 340,000 in 2013.

At least one Republican elected official is critical of the decrease in safety inspections.

"With the safety concerns that we have, I think that pulling officers off for Operation Lone Star or any other gimmick is just bad governance," Ector County Judge Dustin Fawcett, from Odessa, said.

SCHOOL DISTRICTS ASKED TO REFUND \$16 MILLION TO FEDS

Federal officials are asking Texas schools to return \$16 million they say was billed incorrectly to Medicaid, The Tribune reported.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services sent an email recently to 572 school districts in the state asking them to return anywhere from \$100 to \$800,000 for services billed in 2011.

The state has already paid the \$16 million and now is required by law to recoup its costs from the districts, many of which are struggling financially.

"Because this comes in the middle of a budget year, it makes planning for schools virtually impossible," said Brian Woods, director of advocacy at the Texas Association of School Administrators.

More than 40 schools owe more than \$100,000 while more than half owe less than \$10,000.

RRC ADOPTS NEW OIL AND GAS WASTE MANAGEMENT RULES

The Texas Railroad Commission has adopted a "significant overhaul" of rules and regulations for oil and gas waste management facilities in Texas.

"The oil and gas industry has evolved dramatically since the 1980s. After a years-long process, and with thoughtful and thorough deliberation from the public, agency experts, and industry stakeholders, I am proud to report the Railroad Commission has passed its first overhaul of waste management rules in 40 years," said Chairman Christi Craddick.

The new rules can be found on the RRC's website: rrc.texas.gov.

Gary Borders is a veteran award-winning Texas journalist. He published a number of community newspapers in Texas during a 30-year span, including in Longview, Fort Stockton, Nacogdoches, Lufkin and Cedar Park.

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BJ Johnson honored for his 51 years of leadership and service,

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

1979, Rotary and its partners have reduced polio cases by 99.9 percent worldwide. In 1985, Rotary launched the PolioPlus program, which mass vaccinated children to tackle global polio eradication. Rotary's contributions to the global polio eradication effort have exceeded \$2 billion.

Johnson hasn't slowed down and continues to serve in the Rotary including service on the board for Nino.

"I grew up in Jacinto City. My daddy was very civic-minded. He and Dr. Thompson got all that recreation equipment donated from Wilke and that's how baseball got started in Jacinto City. He was in the volunteer fire department. As a kid, I watched all the civic things he was involved with, and it was instilled in me to do the same," he said.

He and his wife Joetta were also happy he was still alive to see the award.

"Heck, I never thought I'd live this long," he laughed.

"Every one of those guys up there on that wall was good in the community and did a lot of things in Rotary. They were leading the community when I came into the club. It wasn't something I planned, but opportunities came up and I reacted to them. I had a lot of help," he said including his wife of 64 years.



BJ Johnson was stunned and speechless following the realization he had been nominated and approved as a candidate for the North Shore Rotary Wall of Fame. Johnson stands among his friends taking his first look at his likeness and image on the wall.

He was in the life insurance business for 55 years and knew the community well.

Some of the requirements that Johnson had to meet according to the committee was service as a past president, past board member or lane chair, service at District 5890 level, club tenure, years of perfect attendance, club fundraiser participation, multi-Paul Harris Fellow, major donor status, personal donations to the club and Rotary International, and be a Rotary Benefactor.

Johnson met his wife Joetta at the Arthur Murray Studio where they were both dance instructors. They married in 1960. Johnson joined the Ro-

tary Club on November 1, 1973, and was sponsored by Jerry Dominy, another Wall of Fame inductee.

He earned the infamous notoriety for being the only fish fry chairman that supervised his fundraiser lying down. Johnson was hospitalized at the time for back issues.

He became Rotary president in July of 1980.

"It's a great honor and I'm proud to be up there with the people who are already on that wall," he said.

Other inductees on the Wall of Honor include Mark Mulloy, Frank Nadolney, Dr. B. J. Westbrook, Jerry Dominy, Frederic Saunders, and Thomas Earl Middleton.

CVHS students partner with National Wildlife Federation for Community Green Infrastructure project,

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1



National Wildlife Federation's Unger leads the discussion alongside Carolyn Stone of C.H.I.C. and a community resident offering input.

we will talk budget, the plants and the nitty gritty of the project, and in March or the spring of 2025 we are looking to install a similar project to the high school at a community location," she explained the timeline.

The project budget is currently set at \$5,000, all funds provided by the National Wildlife Federation.

"The money is housed with the Channelview ISD Foundation and that will be available in perpetuity," she said. "It can be used for implementation, maintenance, and any other project related expense."

Any other groups or individuals can contribute to the non-profit fund to assure future maintenance or expansion of the project.

Unger explained the different options.

"A rain garden, bio swale, pocket prairie, or even tree planting has become very feasible and popular for Houston," Unger described them.

The project is particularly a green infrastructure project versus a gray infrastructure.

"So gray infrastructure is concrete, roads, sidewalks, that sort of thing. Green infrastructure is anything that mimics nature, so using plants, trees, type of recreating what was here before Houston

was here," she said.

With the advent of the massive city with lots of non-permeable surfaces that have kind of exacerbated the issues of flooding, extreme heat, those sorts of things, Unger encouraged participants not to consider this as a giant fix for a big problem, but small and scalable solutions that could be implemented across the city and across various communities, all doing their part.

"Think of them as lots of little sponges around the Houston area that help to soak up flooding. One little sponge isn't going to do much, but y'all are joining a vast community of schools and other areas that have put these in and are doing these little green infrastructure projects in their area," she explained.

Rain gardens, she said, are the type of project used by the vast majority of schools.

"They use native plants, native I mean as found in Houston, Harris County and adjacent counties. We source our plants from very specific growers, not necessarily Home Depot, Lowe's, or Walmart," she explained.

"Rain gardens are often found in areas where water is ponding for a long period of time. A low spot where it's con-

sistently wet, or like muddy, where water just tends to land," she said. The whole purpose of the rain garden is to hold and absorb excess water.

"Envision an iceberg. They're real pretty above ground, but the real function is going on below ground."

Rain gardens can have amended soil, piping, gravel, edging plants, and more. The size of rain garden for the \$5,000 budget would require 300 square feet, which seems not very big, but it's an example of what can be done throughout the community.

"It can also be used by wildlife, butterflies, monarchs, and insects as well," Unger said.

Another option would be bio swales, something used by Harris County precincts, the Houston Parks and Recreation Department, and other large organizations.

"Think of a rain garden like a pond of any geometric size, kidney bean shape or just amorphous blobs, circles, or triangles," Unger described it. "A bio swale is used like a channel-to-channel water to a specific point. The intent of the bio swale is to slow the water down so it doesn't do as much damage to the infrastructure, green or gray," she said.

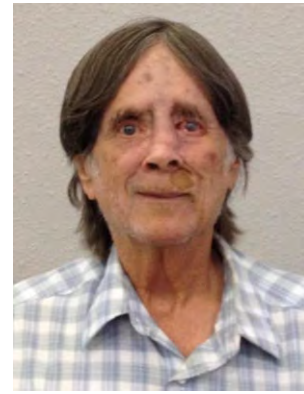
OBITUARY

GARY DEAN CLARK

Gary Dean Clark, born on March 15, 1954, in Houston, Texas, passed away peacefully on December 10, 2024, in Houston, Texas at the home of his sister.

Gary was preceded in death by his parents, W.B. and Charlene (Cooksey) Clark, and his sister, Judy Gail Spinks. He is survived by his sister, Gaye Franks and husband Daren; his partner of over 40 years, Paige Oliphant, whom he loved dearly; along with two nephews, two nieces, and numerous other family members and friends who will miss him greatly.

Gary was a member of Watters Road Church of Christ in Pasadena, Texas and attended when his health allowed. As his health declined over the past year his persistence and desire to be at church was an inspiration to many.



One of Gary's last statements before leaving the hospital was "I just want to go to church" and he was able to listen to service online the Sunday before his passing.

Gary had a passion for collecting antiques. He loved going to estate sales, antique auctions, and garage sales looking for items of interest. He was also an avid sports fan, with a love for professional football and basketball.

While Gary faced various health challeng-

es daily, his life was a testament to his desire and determination to live an independent, content and simple life. His memory will live on in the hearts of those who were fortunate enough to know him and will be cherished forever.

The family held a visitation at Carter-Conley Funeral Home on Monday, December 16, 2024 from 11:00 A.M. to 12:00 P.M. Graveside services followed at San Jacinto Memorial Park Cemetery at 1:00 P.M. at the South Pavilion under the direction of Carter-Conley Funeral Home.


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A third option is a pocket prairie.

"All the Houston region used to be a very specific type of prairie called a gulf coast prairie that was very good at absorbing water," Unger said. "It had high spots and low spots where you would see all these different species of plants mixed over three to 400 different species of flowering plants and grasses. These pocket prairies serve to emulate a piece of that ec-

osystem," she said.

It supports pollinators and wildlife, just the same as the other garden options, rain garden and a bio swale, but they tend to require a little bit less digging equipment, infrastructure involved.

Lastly, trees would be another good option.

"They cool the area, provide a lot of habitats for pollinators as well as other wildlife. There is a wonderful group called Trees

for Houston that is a non-profit whose sole purpose is to plant trees in the Greater Houston region," she explained.

The saplings would be free but would require some maintenance until they became stable.

The group will meet again in January and invites the public to come and voice their wants for the community.

Charlotte Jackson Sworn in as County's First Representative on Texas Silver-Haired Legislature,

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1



Attendees witnessing Charlotte Jackson's swearing into office: L - R: Lt. James Stewart, retired Harris County Deputy Sheriff, Charlotte Jackson, Representative Ana Hernandez, Maxine Lane Seals, former HCC Trustee & former NFISD Trustee & David Jones, Assistant Chief, Constable Pct. 3. (Photo by Allan Jamail)

County seniors. She's been an active volunteer in charitable events in the North Channel communities for years. She's demonstrated a lifelong commitment for serving others.

All one has to do is read her weekly column Charlotte's Web in this paper (North Channel Star) to recognize her genuine care for others.

Charlotte is a sixth generation Texan with a sincere passion for helping others. Not only while working with San Jacinto College District for twenty-two years but since 2019 while serving with Harris County Constable PCT 3 as the Program Coordinator for the "RUOk? Senior Program", which includes making over 600 weekly phone calls to seniors living in Harris County, she has dedicated her life to helping others. Building relationships with others comes naturally and it helps her to connect with others daily.

She believes that one

person can make a difference; she's served as both an Election Judge as well as a Precinct Chair since 2008, in addition to being a Harris County Volunteer Deputized Voter Registrar. She's taken many trips to the state capitol in Austin to share her thoughts with legislators of the Senate and House. She said perhaps her love for getting involved began with her first two visits to Washington, DC while in High School with the program Close Up.

Charlotte is committed to volunteering to help others, she's served with many organizations, ranging from previously serving as a SJC Rotaract Club Advisor for seventeen years, to facilitating classes with East Harris County Empowerment Council, as well as NAMI Greater Houston. Her passion for helping others began as early as her Junior High days when she not only volunteered as a CandyStriper at North Shore Medical Plaza, but also at the

Houston Veteran's Hospital. As time went on, she was involved not only with PTA organizations at her children's schools, but also served on the Parent Council of HCDE Head Start Parent Council as well as serving nearly twenty years on the Galena Park ISD Community Leadership Council.

As a member of St. John's Downtown UMC, her love for serving the least, the lost and most often marginalized communities have grown deeply. Realizing how many individuals are impacted by unemployment, incarceration, homelessness, grief, and mental illness continues to motivate Charlotte. She said, "Sadly I encounter weekly an individual facing one of these issues, the number impacted is astonishing."

She's the daughter of Harold and Patricia Oldham, and the proud mother of three adult children, Christopher, Daniel, and Laura "Javy". In addition she's said her grandchild-

dren Kaitlyn, Xaezion and Karleigh continue to shine academically as well as with extra-curricular activities and share her gift for helping and loving others.

The mission of the Texas Silver-Haired Legislature Foundation is to provide the Texas Silver-Haired Legislature (TSHL) with the resources to improve the knowledge and skills of its membership in formulating their public policy recommendations.

The Texas Silver-Haired Legislature Foundation was established in 1985 as a non-profit 501(c)3 to raise funds to support TSHL. Other resources come from grants for special projects and individual members who finance their travel and other expenses. TSHL is an all-volunteer group with no paid staff or office. As a member-driven organization, TSHL is not supported by state funds.

550 Trees provided by Houston CCS and GP/JC Rotary,

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

As the trees take root, the Houston CCS Alliance looks forward to expanding its outreach efforts in the community. The organization envisions future events that combine tree planting with workshops and educational programs to further its mission of promoting carbon capture technology and its transformative potential for the local environment.

For more information on the Houston CCS Alliance and its ongoing initiatives, visit www.houstonccs.com



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Scarlett Johansson, left, and Channing Tatum star in "Fly Me to the Moon."

"Fly Me to the Moon"

"FLY ME TO THE MOON" (PG-13) — This film deemed as a "rom-com drama" tells an intriguing story about marketing specialist Kelly Jones' (Scarlett Johansson) efforts to improve NASA's public image during the Space Race. Kelly moves from New York to Cocoa Beach, Florida, to start work at the Kennedy Space Center, where she meets launch director Cole Davis (Channing Tatum), who disagrees with her marketing strategies. However, their opposing energies cause a romantic spark to develop between them, even though Kelly is hiding the fact that she's also been secretly tasked with creating a fake moon landing just in case the Apollo 11 mission doesn't succeed. Ray Romano and Woody Harrelson co-star in the film, which is out now to stream. (Apple TV+)

("Pretty Little Liars") star opposite each other in this Christmas rom-com out now; although for a Christmas movie, the holiday spirit is lukewarm at best. Focusing more on the amusement of its incredulous story rather than the elements needed to tell the story properly, "Our Little Secret" follows exes Avery (Lohan) and Logan (Harding) who receive the surprise of a century when they bump into each other at their new significant others' family Christmas celebration. Realizing their new partners, Cam and Cassie, are siblings, Avery and Logan agree to keep their romantic past a secret so that they can make it through the holiday without any hiccups. The highlights of the film were the quips made by the supporting cast, specifically Kristin Chenoweth, Dan Bucatinsky and Judy Reyes. (Netflix)

"OUR LITTLE SECRET" (TV-14) — Lindsay Lohan ("Irish Wish") and Ian Harding

"THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF DISNEY: HOLIDAY

"SPECTACULAR" (TV-PG) — Alfonso Ribeiro and Julianne Hough trade the "Dancing with the Stars" ballroom for Disney to host this holiday special out now! In this 1-hour-and-20-minute spectacular, viewers can enjoy performances of their favorite holiday songs and a few new songs from Disney films like "Moana 2" and "Mufasa: The Lion King." Look out for musicians such as Elton John, John Legend and Pentatonix, as well as familiar faces like Auli'i Cravalho, Seth MacFarlane and Leslie Odom Jr. The performances were filmed in Disney resorts located in Florida, California and Hawaii. (Disney+)

"SUPER/MAN: THE CHRISTOPHER REEVE STORY" (PG-13) — This documentary, out now, recounts the life of actor Christopher Reeve, who is known best for his role as Superman in the 1978-1987 "Superman" films. But Reeve's career spanned over 30 years, with many television, theater and directing credits to his name. Unfortunately, in 1995, Reeve suffered a spinal cord injury after falling from his horse, which paralyzed him from the neck down. Fortunately, though, it catapulted him into activism as a result, and he began advocating for disabled people and spinal cord injury research. In the doc, there is ample footage of Reeve and his wife, Dana, as well as his children, Alexandra, Matthew and Will. Actors Jeff Daniels, Susan Sarandon, Glenn Close and Whoopi Goldberg were also interviewed for the film. (Max)

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Q: I just read that Robert De Niro is going to star in a TV series soon. Has he ever done one before or just movies? — K.E.

A: According to TV Guide, two-time Oscar winner Robert De Niro was "pretty much Hollywood's last A-list holdout" when it came to starring in a regular television role. The series that lured him away from motion pictures is "Zero Day," a six-episode miniseries that will premiere on Netflix on Feb. 20, 2025. It also stars Emmy nominee Connie Britton ("Nashville") and Oscar nominees Jesse Plemons ("The Power of the Dog") and Angela Bassett ("Black Panther: Wakanda Forever").

While the conspiracy/political thriller will be De Niro's first contract role in a series, he has guest-starred on a few others, playing himself on the NBC sitcom "30 Rock" and the British series "Extras." In "Zero Day," which he also produces, De Niro will play the former leader of the free world, who faces a global cyberattack.

One of the creative minds behind the series is Michael Schmidt, who won a Pulitzer Prize for his reporting on the sexual harassment case against Bill O'Reilly. He also wrote the book "Donald Trump v. The United States," which was published in 2020. "Zero Day" is his first TV script.

Q: I love watching "A Christmas Story" marathons when they show it every year on TBS. I know the actor who played Ralphie has gone on to do other things in show business, but whatever happened to Ralphie's younger brother? — M.S.

A: Peter Billingsley, who played young Ralphie in "A Christmas Story," is one of the few success stories involving a child actor in Hollywood. As an adult, he's gone on to produce and direct several projects, even making (and starring in) "A Christmas Story Christmas" — the 2022 sequel to the original. Melinda Dillon and Darren McGavin, who were both brilliant as Ralphie's parents, have since passed away, but their characters live on each year when "A Christmas Story" airs on TBS, TNT and Max.

Ralphie's younger brother, Randy,



Robert De Niro (Upcoming in "Zero Day")

who ate mashed potatoes like a "little piggy," was played by Ian Petrella. He continued working as a child actor in the 1980s and most recently worked in animation and puppetry, according to Entertainment Weekly.

Petrella reprised the role of Randy in "A Christmas Story Christmas," along with actors Scott Schwartz as Flick (whose tongue infamously adhered to an icy pole in the original) and R. D. Robb as Schwartz (who laughed at Flick's predicament).

Q: Is "The Night Agent" returning for another season? My wife and I really enjoyed the first one. — K.A.

A: Yes, "The Night Agent," an action-thriller series based on the novel of the same name by Matthew Quirk, proved to be a big hit on Netflix during its first season. Starring Gabriel Basso ("Hillbilly Elegy") as an FBI agent working in the basement of the White House, it's already been renewed for a third season before the second has even premiered. Look for season two on Netflix, beginning on Jan. 23, 2025.

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

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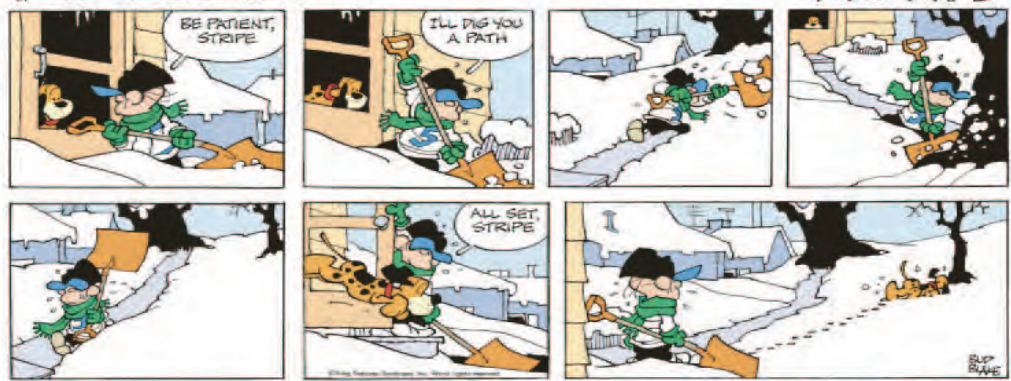
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The Spats



by Jeff Pickering

Weekly SUDOKU grid and difficulty indicators

HOCUS-FOCUS comic strip by Henry Boltinoff

December 30, 2024 Posting Date King Crossword puzzle grid and clues

Trivia Test Answers list

Answers for King Crossword puzzle

Trivia test questions and answers

Harris County ESD 12 - Engine 24 Firefighters Rescue Infant from Stillington Drive Structure Fire



Captain Krim Kashif



Firefighter Jacob Burch



Engineer Sean Peterson



Firefighter Abigail Dittman



Firefighter Daine Grabs

On Wednesday October 23, 2024, Harris County ESD 12 Fire Department District Chief 14, Engine 14, Engine 24; along with automatic mutual aid from Channelview Fire Department and Sheldon Community Fire Department were dispatched to smoke in a house on Stillington Drive in North Shore.

Engine 24 arrived on location reporting a fire on the second floor. Several minutes later District Chief 14 was contacted by radio that an infant was missing and believed to be in a first floor back bedroom. Engine 24 Firefighter Jacob Burch was feeding hose up the stairway with an Automatic Aid crew member. After being advised of the infant being missing, Engine 24 Firefighter Jacob Burch immediately returned to the first floor and proceeded to the back bedroom. Firefighter Jacob Burch located the infant and evacuated the child from the house.

The child was treated and transported by North Channel EMS to Texas Children's Hospital for smoke inhalation.

The following personnel made and extraordinary efforts during this dynamic incident that contained unexpected conditions, to protect lives and property of our community members: District Chief Martin Wenzel; Engine 24 crew members: Captain Krim Kashif, Engineer Sean Peterson, Firefighter Jacob Burch, Firefighter Abigail Dittman, and Firefighter Daine Grabs; Engine 14 crew members: Captain James Marino, Engineer Nicolas Williams, Firefighter Jasiel Cuellar, Firefighter, Cody Hubbard, Firefighter Jay Larios, and automatic mutual aid personnel from Channelview Fire Department and Sheldon Community Fire Department.

In light of the infant rescue incident the Harris County ESD 12 Fire Department encourages community members to practice the National Fire Protection Association national program called EDITH, Exit Drills in the Home, to educate parents and children about how to safely escape a house fire.

As mentioned before, **EDITH stands for Exit Drills in the Home.** This program stresses the importance of preplanning and practicing home exit drills with your family. One of the biggest ways to prepare your family for a house fire is by practicing EDITH and having a plan laid out. It is important to practice your fire escape plan regularly so that your family is prepared in case a home fire ever breaks out.

Below are some tips from the EDITH program about how to prepare your family on what to do if a fire ever breaks out in your home.

- 1. Draw a Floor Plan of Your Home**
Sit down with your family and draw out a floor plan of your home. Make note of all the doors and windows and find at least 2 ways to get out of every room.
- 2. Make an Escape Plan**
Use your floor plan to create an escape plan for if a fire ever broke out in your home. Talk about your exit route and run through different scenarios and change the location of the fire or other potential hazards.
- 3. Practice Your Exit Plan**
Practice your escape plan regularly. The EDITH program encourages having "fire drills" with your family at least twice a year.
- 4. Teach Your Kids What to Do if a Fire Does Break Out in Your Home**
Teach your family other tips for staying safe during a house fire such as how to check a door for heat and that it is important for them to stay low to the floor where the air is cleaner and cooler. It is also important that your family knows to get out as soon as they can without stopping to try to rescue pets or possessions.
- 5. Have a Backup Plan if Escape Isn't Possible**
Sometimes when a fire breaks out in your home it is impossible to escape. That is why it is imperative to teach your family other tips to keep them safe during a fire such as the importance of closing any doors between them and the fires and stuffing the cracks with towels or linens to keep the smoke out. It is also important to teach them to signal to the outside to let people know where they are located in the house. This can be done by flying a sheet out the window or using a flashlight.
- 6. Have a Meeting Place**
When you sit down to go over your floor plan and discuss your exit strategy be sure to pick an outdoor designated meeting place. This can be anything for a neighbor's driveway to a tree or mailbox and will allow you and your family to easily inform the fire department if anyone is still inside.

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Fire Prevention Week

Safe Meeting Place Musts

Once you escape a house fire, head to your family meeting place and stay there.



LOCATION

Everyone knows where the meeting place is located.



STAY PUT

Stay out of the house and at the meeting place.



WHERE TO MEET

A neighbor's house away from the street is a good spot.



HEAD COUNT

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