



New Headquarters for Lynchburg Ferry, Story & Photos Page 5

NORTH CHANNEL STAR

Your News, Your Newspaper

Serving all of the North Shore -- Channelview, Cloverleaf, Sheldon, Galena Park, Jacinto City
VOLUME 13, NO. 15 (#563) THURSDAY, APRIL 10, 2025 www.northchannelstar.com

CHANNEL CURRENTS

THEA holds Cancer Cluster Meetings April 8 and April 21

THEA (Texas Health and Environment Alliance) will hold two informational community meetings to discuss a recent report by the State of Texas that residents in a 250 square mile area of the San Jacinto River floodplain suffer from higher than expected rates of cancer. (THEA) had requested the state cancer study. They are scheduled for:

Tuesday, April 8 at 6:00pm
San Jacinto Community Center
604 Highland Woods Dr, Highlands, TX 77562
Monday, April 21 at 6:00pm
Crosby Community Center
409 Hare Rd, Crosby, TX 77532

The state report covers a large area, 65 census tracts in all, surrounding the San Jacinto from just below the Lake Houston Dam in Atascocita to the point where the river flows into Galveston Bay. It identified four types of cancer that were found at rates that are higher than expected: Cervix Uteri Cancer, Leukemia, Lung and Bronchus Cancer, and Lymphoma.

Let's Get Ready to "Relay For Life" April 25

Mark your calendars and save the date for this year's North Channel Relay for Life sponsored by the American Cancer Society.

This year's event is scheduled for Friday April 25 from 6pm to midnight at the North Shore High School 9th grade track.

Cancer Survivors and Caretakers will be recognized and luminaria remembrances will light up the track.

There will of course be food, games and prizes along with live entertainment as the community raises funds in the fight against Cancer.

North Shore Rotary Fish Fry Saturday April 26

Win a New Truck or Car, and enjoy Crawfish and Catfish dinners

NORTH CHANNEL – The theme for this year's Rotary Fish Fry is "Celebrating 50 Years" and that is very true this year. Saturday April 26th the North Shore Rotary Club will hold their 50th Annual Catfish Fry, Shrimp and Crawfish Boil, and expects a large crowd from the community to come out.

The event is held at the Rotary Pavilion behind the Courthouse on Wallisville Road, from 11am to 3pm. In charge of the event are club president Danna Nino, and Fish Fry chairperson Mini Izabuirre.

Included in the day's activities are a Live Auction, a Silent Auction, and a Raffle for 25 valuable and unique prizes. The top prize in the Raffle is a new 2025 vehicle from Community Toyota in Baytown.

The winner gets a choice of a pickup or a SUV. Food is served from 11am to 3pm or until it runs out (Come Early) and shrimp was added to the menu this year.

The Fish Fry is the major fund raiser for the Rotary Club, that uses the money for worthwhile community projects, scholarships, and international environmental projects. Raffle tickets are \$100,

and include 2 meals. (Only 2500 are sold, increasing the odds of winning). Meal tickets are \$15 each. Both tickets are available from all Rotarians, and the day of the event, at the gate. Or call 713-410-5352 or 832-374-9596 for ticket information.

The Live Auction starts at 12:30 pm. Below are some of the auction items that will be available.

• Multiple Astros



TOP PRIZE in the North Shore Rotary Raffle is your choice of a 2025 Toyota Tacoma SR5, or a 2025 RAV4 XLE. Raffle tickets are \$100 and are available from all North Shore Rotarians, or by calling 713-410-5352 or 832-374-9596.

ticket packages including suite tickets & diamond level

- Multiple hunting and fishing packages
- Multiple concert packages.
- Astros, Texans and UH sports memorabilia items.
- Antique items and collectable firearms.

The largest portion of

the money that is raised is for scholarships. Every year, the scholarship committee interviews students for area districts who apply for the funding and receives varying amounts according to their need.

Money is also dispersed to youth programs, senior citizens programs, veterans, and the annual Christmas food basket giveaways. This year they increased the number of baskets for needy families to 100 for each of the three school districts: Channelview, Galena Park, and Sheldon.

The Rotary Club has for years partnered with other organizations and government to provide amenities throughout the North Channel area in-

Continued. See FISH FRY, Page 5

Galena Park Welcomes New Police Chief

By Allan Jamail

Galena Park, TX. ~ April 8, 2025 ~ A few weeks ago I met Chief of Police (COP) Rob L. Kimmons, the new Galena Park (GP) police chief. He's the eighth police chief for Galena Park in ten years.

Chief Kimmons officially became the COP on February 5th by a unanimous vote of the City Council.

Kimmons was raised in Jacinto City and graduated from Galena Park High School. His parents were Jim and Joyce Kimmons of Jacinto City, I remember they were good responsible citizens, they're both deceased now.

Former Galena Park Chief Richard Wagner, who's been the GP's chief for the past three years since March of 2022 resigned in January in good standing with the Mayor and City Council.

As a former police chief



Rob L. Kimmons, Galena Park Police Chief (Photo by Allan Jamail)

in Jacinto City myself, the new chief and I had lots of similar law enforcement experiences to share with one another. Also we're both dog lovers, he has a Doberman Pinscher named Roscoe for a pet and says it'll become the police department's mascot. As a police officer in Jacinto City I owned the city's first K9 dog, a German Shep-

herd named Susie, we patrolled many nights in JC together.

Kimmons said he feels good about the quality of the police department's personnel; he's learning about them while they're learning his ideals for the department. His main goal will be to deliver to the community the very best in police services they de-

serve.

He and I discussed some of his goals and top priorities. He expressed the need to modernize some of the department's equipment. In particular he wants to usher in new fingerprint technology to replace the antiquated equipment they now have.

Also currently the police officers body camera

equipment has reached the maximum number of cameras it will support; now officers have to pass on their cameras to each other at shift changes.

The current patrol cars are another area of concern for Chief Kimmons. He's wanting a complete new fleet of patrol cars equipped with all the new technologies.

The chief is aware of the political climate in Galena Park, he wants to concentrate on law enforcement and public safety and leave the politics out of his job and the police department.

Chief Kimmons has an extensive background in law enforcement. He has a Master Peace Officer's certification; he's a former Houston Police Officer, a former Houston Fire Fighter, and a retired Re-

Continued. See GP POLICE CHIEF, Page 3

Menefee Criticizes Governor Abbott's Handling of TX-18 Special Election Timeline

HOUSTON, TX — In response to Governor Greg Abbott's comments during an April 3 interview with KXAN regarding the still-unscheduled special election for Texas's 18th Congressional District, Democratic candidate and Harris County Attorney Christian Menefee issued the following statement:

"Governor Abbott's claim that he'll 'announce something soon' about the TX-18 special election is not leadership—it's a failure to uphold his responsibility to the voters of this district. Nearly 800,000 Houstonians are without a voice in Congress, and if the election is pushed to November, they will go unrepresented for nearly 250 days. That's unacceptable."



Harris County Attorney Christian D. Menefee demands transparency from Gov. Abbott on TX-18 Election.

During the interview, Governor Abbott said:

"Listen, there's going to be time to do it. Know this, and that is that election is in Harris County, and Harris County is a repeat failure, as it concerns operating elections. Had I called that very quickly, it

could have led to a failure in that election, just like Harris County has failed in other elections... I will be announcing that sometime soon, but I want to make sure that Harris County has all the opportunity to get this right, unlike what they've done in the past."

Menefee called the Governor's comments a political smokescreen, stating:

"Let's be clear—this has nothing to do with Harris County's ability to conduct elections, which has been praised even by Republican officials in recent cycles. The Governor's excuse is nonsense. This is about politics. It's about helping Republicans maintain a narrow majority in

Continued. See MANEFEE CALLS OUT ABBOTT OVER TX-18, Page 6

Local Pilot Club's Julie Fallin to Lead the State as District Governor



Julie Fallin of Baytown, TX and former North Shore resident has been elevated to District Governor for the Pilot International group as of last Sunday. Current cabinet members are from left, Lt. Governor Brenda Steelman, Treasurer Becky Taylor, Governor-Elect Joanne Patterson, Governor Julie Fallin, Lt. Governor Mary Jane Woods, and Secretary Kathy Floyd.

By David Taylor
Managing Editor

It was the suggestion of Betty Street, another Pilot who was the founder of Betty's Haven, that Julie

Fallin join the Pilot Club organization.

"She asked me why I wasn't in the Pilot Club. I told her I didn't even know what the Pilot Club was," Fallin said that's when she

began to search the internet, which was still in its infancy, and by irony, found out the mission of

Continued. See JULIE FALLIN NAMED PILOT CLUB DG, Page 6

Enroll for Pre-Kindergarten in Sheldon ISD

Registration is now available for families in Sheldon ISD with a pre-kindergarten-aged child. To register, children must be four years old by September 1, 2025. Sheldon ISD is one of the few school districts in Houston that offer free prekindergarten for all students that live in the boundaries of Sheldon ISD and are 4 by September. 1. Sheldon ISD will offer an in-person registration from 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. on Saturday, April 12 at Cravens Early Childhood Academy (13210 Tidwell, Houston, 77044). The focus of pre-kindergarten programs in Sheldon ISD is placed on building social, emotional, physical, and cognitive skills. Academic skills are built through play-based activities, while developing their fluid intelligence and brain executive functions. For information on how to register and required documents needed, go to www.sheldonisd.com/register.

Sheldon ISD Announces KHS Valedictorian and Salutatorian

Sheldon ISD is proud to announce the Class of 2025 Valedictorian and Salutatorian. Joseph Xavier Hernandez, graduating C.E. King High School Valedictorian of his class, is recognized for his outstanding academic excellence, notably achieving the title of "AP Scholar." A dedicated and driven student, Joseph is not only graduating with an Associate Degree in General Studies but has also been actively involved in extracurricular activities such as Cross Country and Track, showcasing his talent in athletics. As a member of the National Honor Society (NHS), Joseph's commitment to his community is evident through his extensive volunteering and community service efforts. Joseph has demonstrated remarkable leadership skills, having held various leadership roles in his school organizations, guiding and in-

spiring his peers. His future plans include attending Texas A&M University, where he will pursue a degree in Engineering. He chose this field due to his passion for problem-solving and innovation. His personal motto, "Strive for progress, not perfection," continually guides his actions and decisions, encouraging him to make meaningful contributions both in academics and his community. Bianca Marin Franco is the Salutatorian for the Class of 2025. Bianca has consistently demonstrated exceptional academic achievement, leadership, and character, distinguishing herself as an outstanding student. She serves as the National Honor Society's president, is a student council member, and represents the Class of 2025 on the Dean's Early College Advisory Committee. In her roles as presi-

dent of both the National Honor Society and the student council, Bianca has successfully transformed the organization's culture by fostering a sense of community and belonging. Bianca will graduate high school with an Associate of Arts degree in Business. She has been accepted to the University of Texas at Austin with a full scholarship, the University of Houston, Rice University with a full ride, and the University of San Francisco, where she has received a \$56,000 scholarship. Bianca plans to pursue a bachelor's degree in Management/Administration and Marketing, aiming to work for and eventually lead a nonprofit organization. The King High School Class of 2025 will graduate at NRG Stadium on June 1. The event will be streamed live on the district's website.

Sheldon ISD celebrates Principals of the Year at Region 4 Luncheon



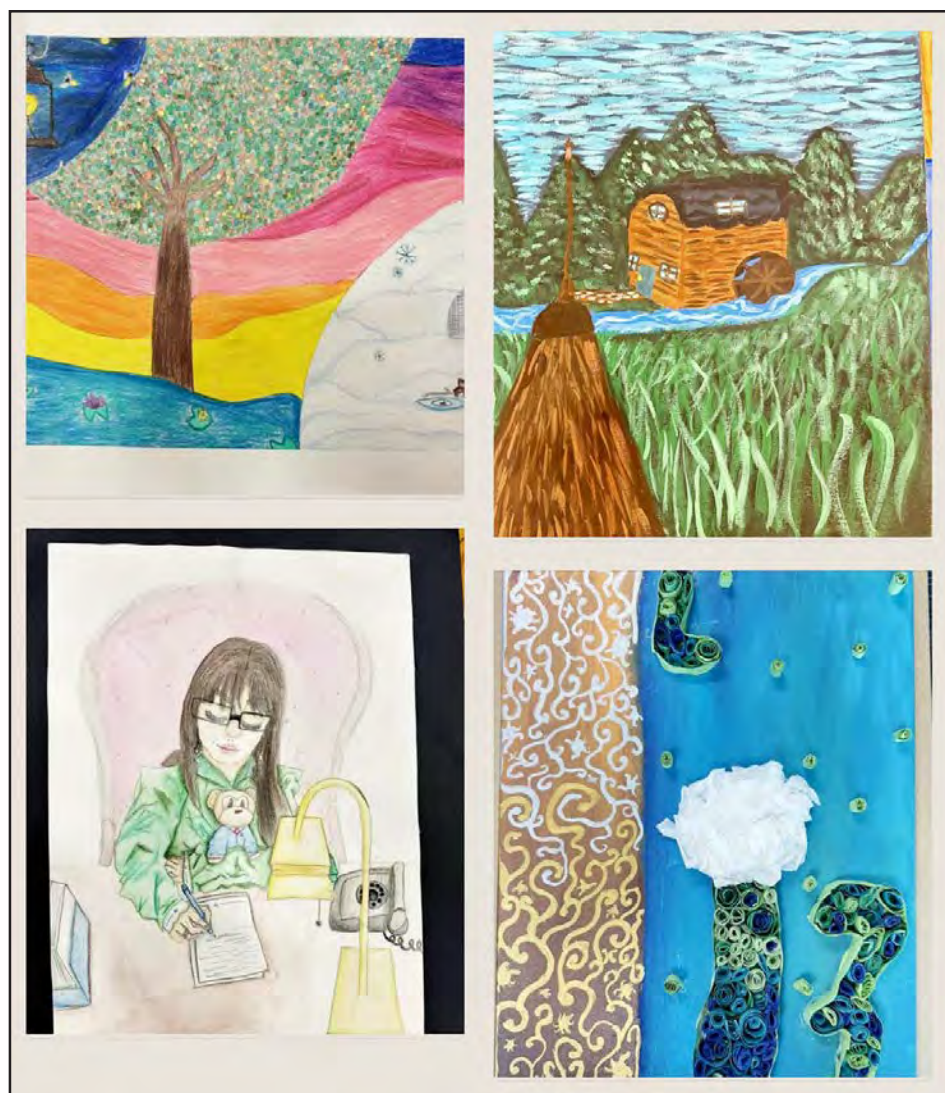
On April 1, Region 4 recognized Principals of the Year at a celebratory luncheon. Congratulations to Sheldon ISD's Elementary Principal of the Year Mrs. Vives from Cravens Early Childhood Academy and the Secondary Principal of the Year Dr. Howard from C.E. King High School. Principals among other educator honorees will be recognized at the district's Star Awards on May 1.

Students and Teachers Honored at Annual North Channel Chamber of Commerce Luncheon



At the April 4 North Channel Area Chamber of Commerce luncheon, three Sheldon ISD educators and three students were recognized and celebrated for their achievements. The following were recognized as Student and Educator of the Month: King High School: Senior and Valedictorian Joseph Hernandez and Criminal Justice Teacher Dr. Stacy Cross. King Middle School: Eighth grader Dayana Quintanilla and AVID Coordinator and Math Teacher Altera Williams. Null Middle School: Eighth grader Laura McCullum and Art Teacher Destiny Barr.

Middle School Art Students Earn Top Ratings



In Sheldon ISD's first-ever participation in the TAEA JrVASE art competition, four Null Middle School visual artists earned medals for top ratings in their classes: Leah Silva ("Money Business") and Hailey McCollum ("The Environmental Domes") of King MS and Arielle Guzman ("A New Flow") and Camila Morales ("The House on the Prairie"). The TAEA Junior Visual Arts Scholastic Event recognizes exemplary student achievement in the Visual Arts by providing art students a program with a standard of excellence in which to achieve. Junior VASE encompasses grades 6 through 8.

In North Shore, nearly everyone reads the NORTH CHANNEL STAR. Your Hometown Newspaper.

CHARLOTTE'S WEB
By Charlotte Jackson 

Be An Example

On Sunday, I went into a men's prison in Beaumont. I was not going to visit anyone that I knew. I was there to share about an upcoming Women's Retreat that is open for any woman over the age of eighteen, that has been impacted by the incarceration of a loved one. The men that I spoke to had just competed a four-day Kairos Men's Retreat.

As we listened to each man share their story of how they ended up incarcerated, my heart broke. Of the fifty men, several mentioned they grew up in a home with only one parent, sometimes they were raised by grandparents, many had been raised within the foster care system and yet there were several who had been in trouble with the law since they were very young and had been raised "in the system".

Several spoke of being involved with gangs as young as age twelve. Too many mentioned that they had been addicted to drugs and alcohol. Several spoke of being molested at an early age. An eighty-four-year-old man shared that he had never been in trouble with the law until the age of seventy. A common theme was that they experience a very unhappy life.

During the Retreat, the men were introduced to volunteers who give tirelessly to make each of the semi-annual events successful. How does that happen? The volunteers meet several weeks in preparation of the Retreat. Each male volunteer takes on certain responsibilities and will oversee certain events of the weekend. The female volunteers organize the meals, the snacks and the clean up of the events. The volunteers, once selected for the team, take on the blessing of praying for a successful event and that the lives of the inmates will be changed. There are also volunteers who work to raise funds to provide the supplies, food, and any additional needs for the weekend.

As their event was winding up, one of the men, in his sixties, shed more than one tear while talking about the unconditional love he felt over the weekend. And then, we he shared that the thing that touched him the most was seeing a homemade placemat under their plates, which local children had colored and added messages to. The placemats that simple messages such as "Jesus loves you." or "You matter" brought tears to the inmates.

When I shared about the Kairos Outside Houston for the women on their lives that are impacted, I mentioned that my own son is incarcerated. I shared I personally know the pain of having someone locked up who must miss so many events in his son's life. I shared how he misses simple things like mowing an elderly person's yard or seeing his siblings. Very few eyes were without tears when I asked them to share the details with their mothers, grandmothers, wife and daughters about the upcoming Women's Retreat.

Some people may think of inmates as the lowest level of society, yet I am sure there was not one man there who as a child said, "I want to go to prison." We each must be an example of how children, adults, friends, family members and strangers should obey the laws and not end up incarcerated. And we must be an example to bring hope to those who made poor choices and are incarcerated. If you would like more information, please contact me.

GP welcomes Kimmons as new Police Chief,

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1



serve Captain with the Harris County Sheriff's Department. He was an active Reserve Captain for the Montgomery County Precinct One Constable's Office prior to coming to Galena Park to become the COP.

The Chief wants the community to work close with the police department

and him. Furthermore he wants citizens to be able to trust the department's officers and to report suspicious activity and or crimes; they can call and report and say they want to remain anonymous. To report GP crimes and suspicious activities call 713-675-3471.

KHS Theater Company Performs One Act Play



On March 29, the C.E. King High School Theatre Company performed their One Act Play, "Pinocchio" and placed 6th. Members earned individual awards for All-Star Cast (Luannie as Pinocchio), Honorable Mention All-

Star Cast (Tioan as Antonio), and Best Technician (Al as Stage Manager). Their show can be seen this weekend at the King High School PAC - Friday, April 4 and Saturday April 5 at 6:30 p.m. and Sunday, April 6 at 3 p.m.

ASK DIAMOND JIM

Diamond Jim: "What Makes Diamond So Beautiful?"

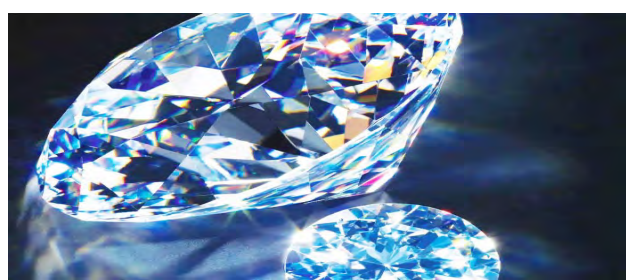


Light My Fire: Understanding A Diamond In Light

When light leaves the sun, it races towards the earth at 186,000 miles per second. When it hits the diamond in front of you, it slows down to 77,000 miles per second. That speed difference is something you can see. Light in diamonds bends, reflects, refracts, and breaks apart into rainbows of color. Light is what gives us a diamond's brilliance, scintillation, and dispersion.

Of course, when I'm talking about light in diamonds, I'm talking about the cut. Each facet that a cutter polishes onto a diamond is designed to reflect light, bounce it around the diamond, and up to your eyes. Even one facet out of alignment can result in light that doesn't perform the way it should. And all light isn't the same. Because light is so essential to understanding the optics and the beauty of diamonds, the type of light matters.

This is the most overlooked part of understanding the quality of diamonds. But you have the perfect instrument to analyze the impact of light on diamond quality: your eyes.



Look and Look Again

Diamond facets are like mirrors: they reflect what's around them. When you look at a diamond from far away, it reflects the room and environment around you. When you look at a diamond close up, you're seeing a reflection of yourself. You'll be able to see the color you are wearing reflected in the diamond's facets. Differences in light are even more important. In direct sunlight, all diamonds look great. They flash and sparkle and throw off rainbows. You can't judge whether or not a diamond is well cut by looking at it in direct sunlight.

The light in an office is efficient but generally not flattering for diamonds (or for people!). Usually, it's diffused light that bounces off the ceiling. With diffuse or scattered lighting, a diamond's brilliance is more visible. Light enters the diamond from multiple directions, downplaying shadows and decreasing fire.

Candlelight and warm home lighting are good for people and for diamonds. You won't see optimum brilliance but you will get sparkle. Diamonds with larger facets like old European cuts and emerald cuts will look especially good in these lower lighting environments.

Daylight or indirect sunlight from a window, especially a north window which provides more consistent illumination all day, is the most important light for looking at diamonds. It's bright enough to assess its brilliance and scintillation without those blingy reflections that blind you to the areas where light is leaking and not being reflected back to the eye. A diamond that's beautiful in daylight will also be beautiful in every other light. That's why diamond dealers sort diamonds only in north light.

Which diamond looks most beautiful to you is personal: you may prefer one facet pattern to another. Diamonds have different rhythms to their scintillation and different personalities. I gravitate to step cuts and you might like the crushed ice look of a radiant cut. There's no wrong answer, it's just a personal choice.

When a piece of jewelry with well-cut diamonds is worn in daylight, in-office light, in candlelight, in sunlight, and even in moonlight, it will be more beautiful, with its diamonds dancing in the light.

Understanding diamonds and light will make you a better diamond buyer. At Pineforest Jewelry, we're proud to offer you large and small diamonds with excellent light performance. We look at all our diamonds to ensure they are ready for the spotlight. Come see our selection of beautiful diamonds in all shapes and sizes. (Credit to K. Rosengart)

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 TxDOT

A mother's plea: Put down the phone, save a life

Distracted driving was the second-most common factor in traffic crashes last year

HOUSTON – Maria Espinoza never imagined a routine walk to school with her 6-year-old son would turn into a life-altering tragedy.

But in an instant, a distracted driver jumped the curb, striking her son and trapping him beneath the vehicle. He spent six months in a coma, with doctors warning he might never walk or talk again.

Years later, Maria's son has defied the odds — relearning how to walk, talk and even eat. He's studying to become a physical therapist, determined to help others recover just as he did. And Maria is on a mission: asking everyone to pay attention behind the wheel.

"We don't want this to happen to any other family. We want to save lives and create responsibility," Espinoza said. "If I take the responsibility and you take the responsibility today, that will make a difference."

The alarming truth about distracted driving

In 2024, distracted driving contributed to more than 91,000 crashes in Texas, leading to more than 370 deaths — all preventable tragedies. That's why the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) is launching its Talk. Text. Crash. campaign this April during Distracted Driving Awareness Month. The goal? To remind Texans that when you're driving, nothing is more important than the road ahead.

"Everyone knows they should focus while driving, but too many people still take their eyes off the road to check a text, fiddle with their dashboard or grab a bite to eat," TxDOT Executive Director Marc Williams said. "We want to make it clear: no text or call is worth a life."

It's not just dangerous — it's illegal

Texting while driving isn't just risky — it's against the law. In Texas, anyone caught reading, writing, or sending a text while driving faces a fine of up to \$200. Many cities have even stricter laws, banning all handheld device use while driving.

Stay safe: simple steps to avoid distractions

TxDOT urges all drivers to follow these safety tips:

- Stay focused — Keep both hands on the wheel and your eyes on the road.
• Put your phone away — Use "Do not Disturb" mode while driving.
• Pull over if needed — If you must send a message, stop in a safe place first.

Experience the dangers firsthand

To drive this message home, TxDOT's Talk. Text. Crash. campaign will be hitting the road, bringing a driving simulator to cities across Texas. This interactive exhibit lets visitors experience just how quickly distractions can lead to disaster.

Talk. Text. Crash. is an important part of TxDOT's Drive like a Texan: Kind. Courteous. Safe. initiative. Drive like a Texan is about embracing the pride, camaraderie and responsibility of being a Texan on the road. By making thoughtful choices, we can all help keep each other safe. Learn more at DriveLikeATexan.com.

The information contained in this report represents reportable data collected from the Texas Peace Officer's Crash Report (CR-3). This information was received and processed by the department as of January 13, 2025.

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.

Americanisms



"I always wanted to be someone better the next day than I was the day before." — Sidney Poitier



THE POSTSCRIPT

By Carrie Classon

Stealth Comedy



The bad thing about living in a new place is that I don't know anyone. The good thing about living in a new place is that I meet new people.

Jade is one of the new people I have met while spending time in Mexico. Jade used to be an eye doctor. But after retiring from medicine in her 60s, she decided to do something a little different. I'm pretty sure—no matter how much time I gave you—you would never guess how Jade now spends her time.

Stand-up comedy. "But how? And why?" everyone wants to know.

To hear Jade tell it, it happened in a moment. Her grown son was watching a well-known comedian on TV. Jade knew almost nothing about comedy. She watched this comedy special and something clicked. A button Jade didn't know she had was activated.

"I decided that was what I was going to do."

Generally, when someone tells me they are going to try a new thing, I imagine it might be a hobby they would like to try once or twice. That would not be Jade. When she decided comedy was her next big thing, she dove in with both feet. She read books about comedy. She watched every working comedian, and some that were long dead. She read interviews and memoirs. She joined clubs and took classes.

But since it was hard to get a lot of time on stage, and getting it meant driving long distances, Jade took to heart the words of Shakespeare when he wrote, "All the world's a stage." Jade started doing her five-minute stand-up routine for total strangers in the park.

I have done some performing in my life, but I have never done anything as brave as that.

Jade calls it "stealth comedy," and people are certainly surprised. No one expects an impromptu comedy set while strolling through the park. But Jade has now done well over 1,000 stealth comedy sets for unsuspecting visitors. I think that is astonishing.

For the last couple of days, I have been a little grumpy. I am living with some uncertainty about my book. Uncertainty comes with life—and certainly with writing—so it's silly to get grumpy about the way things usually are. But I have been anyway.

Yesterday I went to meet with Jade because, in addition to doing stand-up in clubs and in the park, she is turning her material into a memoir, which is naturally very funny. I feel honored to work with her on it. I told my husband, Peter, it was good I was going to meet her. "It's impossible to be grumpy around Jade."

I told Jade I was grumpy because I didn't know what was going to happen next with my book. "What's the worst that can happen?" she asked, and I realized she was right. There was no real downside, just a lot of uncertainty.

Jade embraces uncertainty. She walks up to total strangers and says, "Would you like five minutes of comedy?"

I would be terrified that every one of them would say, "No!" And, the truth is, some of them do. But overwhelmingly, people say, "Sure, why not?" Jade proves, time after time, that the worst thing that can happen is really not that bad.

Jade and I spent almost two hours over a cup of coffee and ginger tea, laughing and talking. When I got home, I thought about how much I admire her humor and her audacious bravery and her solid advice.

Maybe a little uncertainty is exactly what I need.

Till next time, Carrie

STATE CAPITAL HIGHLIGHTS

By Gary Borders



Senate Bill Would Curb Home Insurance Rate without Approval

Lawmakers in the Texas Senate are considering a measure that would require home insurers to get approval from regulators before increasing rates more than 10%, the Houston Chronicle reported.

The bill, sponsored by state Sen. Charles Schwertner, R-Georgetown, would also create a three-member commission to oversee the Texas Department of Insurance. The veteran legislator and others have accused the agency of failing to prioritize consumers.

Homeowner insurance rates have skyrocketed in recent years, up an average 21% in 2023, double the average hikes of previous years. Insurers currently can file rate increases with the state and immediately put them in effect. TDI has not denied a single rate filing out of 22,000 submitted since 2017, according to a Hearst Newspapers analysis.

"That's a question mark I have regarding how aggressively TDI is overseeing rate changes," Schwertner said.

In a recent hearing, insurers defended their rates, blaming the state's extreme weather and saying the present system has enabled Texas to have a "highly competitive market," according to Scot Kibbe, the vice president of state government relations at the American Property Casualty Insurance Association.

ABBOTT: TEXAS ON 'CUSP' OF APPROVING VOUCHER BILL

Gov. Greg Abbott continues to push his top legislative priority, a universal school choice plan that allows public dollars to be spent for private-school tuition, The Dallas Morning News reported.

"We're going to get this across the finish line," Abbott said during a Capitol news conference. "When we do, Texans will see that when it comes to education, it's not one or the other. It's not either public schools or school choice. We can do both."

The Senate version of what is popularly known as a voucher plan passed in February. House Speaker Dustin Burrows, R-Lubbock, said last week that chamber's proposal would likely be approved this week.

Critics point to a similar plan passed in Arizona, which has grown more than 10-fold since being implemented. They also point out private school options are limited in rural areas and for low-income families.

The state's Legislative Budget Board projects costs for an education savings account pro-



STATE CAPITAL HIGHLIGHTS By Gary Borders

gram would increase from \$1 billion in 2027 to about \$4 billion in 2030, a project Abbott said was "based on nothing but fiction."

SENATE PASSES \$336 BILLION TWO-YEAR STATE BUDGET

The Senate unanimously passed a \$336 billion proposed budget last week to fund state government through 2027, the Austin American-Statesman reported. The funding supports a wide array of new investments in education and infrastructure, as well as property-tax relief.

State Sen. Joan Huffman, R-Houston, said the budget will allow the Legislature to use some of the state's \$24 billion surplus to make one-time investments.

"At the same time, we were very careful to craft a budget that is fiscally conservative and sustainable in future years," Huffman said.

The Senate's budget, which will have to be reconciled with the pending House budget, does not include an increase in per-student funding for public schools. That allotment has not changed since 2019, despite pleas from educators who say local districts are suffering financially.

"Even though hundreds of school districts throughout Texas have been cutting back on programs because of inadequate state funding and inflationary pressures, the Senate budget, SB1, doesn't even raise the basic school funding allotment," said Texas State Teacher's Association President Ovidia Molina in a statement Tuesday.

'VOLATILE' HURRICANES EXPECTED IN 2025, FORECASTERS SAY

As hurricane season approaches, meteorologists with AccuWeather are predicting 2025 could bring "volatile hurricanes" similar to those seen in 2017 and 2023, the Statesman

reported. "AccuWeather is forecasting near to above the historical average number of named storms, hurricanes, major hurricanes, accumulated cyclone energy and direct impacts to the United States," said AccuWeather's Alex DaSilva.

Forecasters expect 13 to 18 named storms in the Atlantic, with three to five major hurricanes reaching Category 3 strength or higher. Texas is among states facing higher-than-average risk of direct hits from hurricanes, and storms could rapidly intensify before making landfall.

The state was hit by two hurricanes last year. In June, Hurricane Beryl turned into a Category 5 storm quickly, gaining 95 mph in less than two days before striking Matagorda Island.

FUNDING HAUL TRANSFORMS TEXAS COMMUNITY COLLEGES

A bill passed in 2023 that took effect last year has proved a financial boon for the state's community colleges. The Texas Tribune reported. HB8 sent a record \$683 million to the state's community colleges.

As a result, community colleges have introduced free tuition and are reshaping how they are run and who is attending school.

"HB 8, at its heart, was an attempt for the Legislature ... to say, 'What's the most impactful way that we can ensure alignment between educational outcomes and business and industry needs?'" Ray Martinez III, the president of the Texas Association of Community Colleges, said. "That's why this is so significant ... We have seen tremendous outcomes."

As The Tribune reported, the five ways community colleges have been transformed because of the new funding formula are:

- Dual credit boosting enrollment, especially among low-income students.
• Free tuition expanded.
• Students hired as peer advisers, greatly increasing the number helping classmates register and stay on track to graduate.
• Increase in workforce training.
• Schools form alliances so credits transfer from a community college to a four-year institution.

UPDATE: MEASLES OUTBREAK REACHES 327 AS FUNDING REDUCED

The Texas Department of State Health Services reports 400 cases of measles primarily in the South Plains and Panhandle regions as of Friday, with one fatality and 41 people hospitalized.

Politics continues to infuse the debate, as lawmakers consider several bills that would make it easier to opt out of getting vaccinated, the Texas Standard reported. Virtually all the cases of measles reported — more reported in Texas in three months than in the entire nation last year — were among unvaccinated people.

Meanwhile, federal funding for DSHS to fight measles has been cut by about half by the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), the Statesman reported. DOGE plans to cut \$877 million of a \$1.5 billion federal grant and \$97 million from a \$473 million grant, both from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The grants were used to help state, city and county health departments fight infectious diseases.

"We're evaluating the potential effects of the funding changes," said Chris Van Deusen, director of media relations for DSHS.

Advertisement for Star Courier newspaper, including contact information for the publisher and subscription rates.

County to build new Lynchburg Ferry Operations Building

By GILBERT HOFFMAN
Star Courier Publisher

LYNCHBURG – County officials with Precinct 2, and HCTRA (Toll Road Authority) broke ground last week for a new Operations and Maintenance Building, on the site of the present outdated headquarters building at the Ferry Landing.

Pct. 2 Commissioner Adrian Garcia welcomed guests, and gave remarks about the history of the Ferry, and the need for a new building after aging of the present building through many hurricanes and floods.

The building will replace the current operations building at the ferry landing on Independence Parkway North, and include all the functions currently in several older separate buildings.

The new building is planned as a 3 story structure, 14,000 sf in area. It will have concrete walls and flood gates, since the site frequently floods in hurricanes and storms. It will house offices for operations and maintenance, which are now in older separate buildings.

Garcia spoke of the history and importance of the Ferry. It's origins date back to 1822, when it was a hand-pulled wooden raft accommodating one or two wagons. It charged for a trip across Buffalo Bayou, until Harris County took over operation around 1888 and made it a free passage. About 20 years ago the Precinct gave operations over to the Toll Road Authority, who now operate the ferries.

Also speaking at the groundbreaking was Calvin Harvey, Deputy Director of HCTRA for Public Safety and Operations. He spoke about the importance of serving this part of the county, and that 1000 cars a day use the 2 ferry boats. He noted that there are 1600 plants and businesses within a 5 mile radius of the ferry, with 26,000 employees. Many of these workers use the ferry dai-



County Officials including Pct. 2 Commissioner Adrian Garcia, and HCTRA Deputy Director Calvin Harvey break ground for the new Ferry Building.



The new Lynchburg Ferry Operations Building will be 3 stories tall, 14,000 square feet, equipped with flood walls and gates, and cost \$21 million dollars. (PBK architects).

ly, with 80% of the cars taking someone to work.

Harvey noted that the new building is designed to withstand hurricanes and floods, with flood barriers and flood gates built into the structure. He not-

ed that the current site was covered with 3 feet of water during the last hurricane, Beryl. He said this resilience in essential so that the ferry operation can recover quickly after a weather event.

In his remarks, Commissioner Garcia said "These improvements will ensure the ferry continues to be a vital connection across the Houston Ship Channel for years to come.

He continued: "Modern, more resilient infrastructure means a safer and more prosperous Precinct 2! The ferry is a vital connection across the Houston Ship Channel. It's been in service for

more than 200 years and has withstood many storms. This \$21 million investment for a new facility is long overdue. Thank you to HCTRA for their continued partnership!



An Aerial view of the new Lynchburg Ferry Operations building, with Buffalo Bayou and the San Jacinto Monument in the background. Also seen in this view are two ferry boats docked on the North landing, and the South landing in the distance across the Ship Channel.



Harris County Pct. 2 Commissioner Adrian Garcia welcomed the guests at the Groundbreaking and spoke about the importance of the Ferry to commerce in East Harris County.



HCTRA Deputy Director Calvin Harvey spoke about the History and Operations of the Ferry.



ORIGINAL FERRY 1822



FERRY CIRCA 1888

North Shore Rotary Fish Fry set for April 26,

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

cluding the Rotary Pavilion, the baseball park in North Shore, water park and pavilion in Cloverleaf, park in Channelview, and most recently, the Yellow Bird Park and Trails behind the county courthouse on Wallisville Road. "Often, we have people in the community or businesses who just give us money for the fundraiser and don't want the tickets or any prizes, just to sup-

port the work we do in the community," club president Danna Nino said.

Big shoutout to our Gold, Silver, and Friends of North Shore Rotary Corporate Sponsors for their generous support of our 50th Annual Catfish Fry & Crawfish Boil Fundraiser! Thanks to their sponsorship, we are able to make a greater impact on the community we serve. Your commitment to our club

has been invaluable, and we are incredibly grateful for your partnership. THANK YOU!!

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Baytown's Julie Fallin named Pilot Club District Governor,

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

the organization. Pilot's central focus is on brain-related issues.

"My grandmother was suffering from dementia at the time and eventually passed from the advanced stages of the disease," she said.

It was then that she resolutely decided to join the San Jacinto Pilot Club of North Shore in 2006.

Last weekend, her journey through service in the club reached its pinnacle when she was sworn in as the new District Governor that oversees the 29 clubs around the state and its 700-plus members.

She served last year as the District Governor-elect, and at the 88th Annual Texas District Pilot International convention, her ascension to the governorship was automatic. Pilot Club International was formed in 1921 and at the 2025 Pilot International Annual Convention at Leadership Conference, she will also be installed to the 2025-2026 International Administrative Council on July 23-26, 2025, in Charlotte, North Carolina.

Fallin was raised in Baytown and lived in the unincorporated area of east Houston known as North Shore.

She and her husband were building a home in Baytown, but despite the move, she remained faithful to her original club and focused on socializing with the other numerous clubs in her area.

"At this convention, we vote on our budget for the upcoming year, have officer training, and breakouts for projects, fundraisers, membership and leadership," she said.

Other business included the vote for officers in her



chapter is attached to North Shore Senior High School where they boast more than 100 young ladies in the club.

"They are an active bunch volunteering for numerous projects including the Houston Food Bank," she said.

Fallin will be celebrated and congratulated at her local club on Sunday at their annual Puzzle Party at the Hampton Inn and Suites East Beltway 8 at 14120 Karissa Court, in Houston. The 2025 Puzzle Competition plays into the healthy brain mantra. Competitive teams of at least four, work against other teams solving either 500 or 1,000 piece puzzles in a two-hour timeframe. The money raised will be expended on the community and scholarships. Doors open at 2 p.m. with a competition start time at 3 p.m.

"It's not as hard as it sounds," she smiled. "We had an 8-year-old on the winning team the first year of the fundraiser."

A portion of the funds will be donated to autism research and support to commemorate Autism Awareness Month in April.

Fallin said they will provide snacks for competitors.

Only a few slots remain and competitive teams can register on the club's Facebook page under San Jacinto Pilot Club.

cabinet for the coming year. Fallin will assume the leadership role as governor on July 1.

Those characteristics of Pilot are already in her toolbox.

"I've learned many of those along the way," she said. She served on the board of directors for Betty's Haven, a shelter for abused women,

After being asked to serve as fundraising coordinator for the Texas District, she realized she liked serving on the district level. Since that time, she has served in every officer position in her club, club Public Relations Director, club Membership Director, District Fundraising Coordinator (twice), District Lt. Governor, District Treasurer (2 years), PI Scholarship Committee Chair (twice), serving her second year as a member of the PI Scholarship Committee, and is now serving as District Governor-Elect.

"Pilots also focus on mentoring our youth in leadership and service through our Anchor Clubs," she said. The local

Manefee calls out Abbott over TX-18 special election delay,

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1



Congress. And the people of TX-18 see right through it."

Under Section 201.051 of the Texas Election Code, when a vacancy occurs in a

congressional seat, "the [special] election shall be ordered as soon as practicable."

Congresswoman Sylvester Turner passed away nearly a month ago,

and no election date has been set.

"The law says the election should be called as soon as possible—not whenever the Governor feels like it,"

Menefee said. "There is no reason this election couldn't be

scheduled for June or July. That would give Harris County Elections time to prepare and ensure vot-

ers have certainty. Instead, the Governor is floating vague statements while the residents of this district are left without representation."

"Governor Abbott—I'll be announcing something soon' is not enough. Call the election. The people of the 18th Congressional District deserve better. Democracy delayed is democracy denied.

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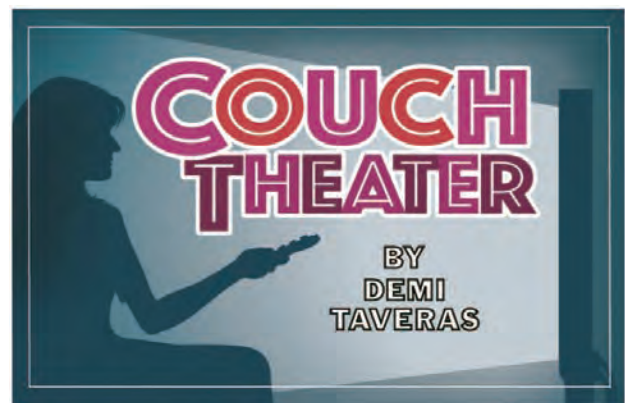
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From left, Viola Davis and Antony Starr star in "G20."

"G20"

"Black Mirror: Season 7" (TV-MA) — Fans of the longtime Netflix anthology series "Black Mirror" will be pleased to binge the next mind-bending season on April 10! The British sci-fi series brings six new stories to viewers, one being a continuation of a previous season four episode titled "USS Callister." Cristin Milioti, a Golden Globe nominee for her recent work on "The Penguin," will reprise her main role as Nanette Cole. Other faces to look out for are comedy actresses Issa Rae and Awkwafina, as well as Rashida Jones ("Sunny") and Academy Award nominee Paul Giamatti ("The Holdovers"). Buckle up for a trippy ride! (Netflix)

"Twilight" saga and "Jurassic World," but she also doubles as a director, having spearheaded a documentary film called "Dads," as well as several episodes of "The Mandalorian." This year, she's back with another documentary focusing on the furry friends we hold near and dear to our hearts. Starring real people from around the world and their dogs, cats, pigs, goats and birds, this doc showcases the bond that makes our relationships with animals so special and irreplaceable. Premieres April 11. (Disney+)

"Magpie" (R) — Daisy Ridley (of the "Star Wars" sequel trilogy) is captivating as the lead in this neo-noir thriller film, co-starring Shazad Latif ("Star Trek: Discovery"). Don't let the previous sci-fi credits of

these two actors fool you into thinking that they can't deliver gritty performances; they are incredibly palpable as Annette and Ben (respectively), a couple with two young children who reach a shattering moment within their marriage. When their daughter gets the opportunity to star alongside a popular actress in a major film, Ben chaperones her on set while Annette stays at home with their newborn. But Ben's priority shifts from watching his daughter to bonding with the actress, leaving Anette's picture-perfect life to crumble before her. Premieres April 11. (Hulu)

"G20" (R) — Academy Award winner Viola Davis will never stop being a badass as long as the grass is green and the sky is blue, and she continues to prove why with entertaining action films like "G20." Out on April 10, the film follows U.S. President Danielle Sutton (Davis) as she prepares for the G20 summit in Cape Town, South Africa. Thinking this will be a great experience for her rebel daughter, Serena (Marsai Martin), Danielle brings her entire family to Cape Town with her. Little does she know that an educational experience for her kids does not await them; instead, what awaits is a terrorist plot to hijack the summit. Luckily for them, Danielle's previous military training comes in handy — very handy! (Amazon Prime Video) (c) 2025 King Features Synd., Inc.

Q: Is "Watson" going to be renewed for a new season? Morris Chestnut has been one of my favorite actors ever since "Nurse Jackie," so I hope this new show lasts. — R.C.

A: According to TVLine, "Watson" is averaging 6.8 million total viewers, making the decision to renew it an easy one for CBS. It's set six months after the death of Sherlock Holmes, Watson's friend and protege, and stars Morris Chestnut in the titular role. Chestnut became a household name after co-starring in the critically acclaimed John Singleton film "Boyz n the Hood." His stint on "Nurse Jackie" as Dr. Ike Prentiss was in 2013, and he followed this with recurring roles on several other series like "The Resident" and "Reasonable Doubt." "Watson," however, is arguably his biggest role yet. Interestingly, Amazon is developing a reboot of "Nurse Jackie" with star Edie Falco, but the premiere date has yet to be announced.

Q: When is the reality show "The Valley" coming back? I surprisingly enjoyed it last year and was happy it got renewed. — M.O.

A: April 15 is the date that the suburban reality-show soap opera premieres on Bravo, and it reairs the following day on Peacock. If you've seen the trailer at BravoTV.com, you'll know that it's filled with even more drama than its debut season, with former "Vanderpump Rules" stars Britney and Jax separating, Jax going to rehab for an admitted drug addiction, and even the seemingly stable couples coping with rumors of infidelity. Other former members of the "Vanderpump Rules" wait and bar staff are also expected to appear on "The Valley," including Lala Kent, Sheana Shay and hubby Brock Davies, and Tom Schwartz. Lala and Sheana have also bought homes in the San Fernando Valley, so they're most certainly hoping to end up being permanent cast members in the future.

As for "Vanderpump Rules," the next season is expected to debut on Bravo with its all new Gen-Z cast this fall. Season two of the other "VR" spin-off,



Morris Chestnut stars as the titular character in "Watson."

"Vanderpump Villa," will launch on Hulu beginning April 24 and will take place in Italy inside a 12th-century castle, relocating from its original location in the south of France.

Q: I've been watching "Ally McBeal" on Hulu. I've seen most of the cast on other shows since then, but whatever happened to the guy who played Billy? — W.W.

A: Actor Gil Bellows has actually worked quite steadily since playing Ally McBeal's (Calista Flockhart) first love. After his character was killed off, he quickly landed another series, "The Agency," on CBS and the Emmy-winning movie "Temple Grandin." His most recent roles have been in the Neil Gaiman fantasy drama series "American Gods," the Syfy horror series "Chucky," and "Alert: Missing Persons Unit" on Fox. He also guest-starred on "The Irrational," a current NBC drama series starring Jesse L. Martin, another "Ally McBeal" alum.

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

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

DIFFICULTY THIS WEEK: ♦ Moderate ♦♦ Challenging ♦♦♦ HOOOY INC!

HOCUS-FOCUS

BY HENRY BOLTINOFF

Find at least six differences in details between panels.

Differences: 1. Tree is moved. 2. Hat is reversed. 3. Window is moved. 4. Glove is missing. 5. Fence is shorter. 6. Window is thinner. 7. Texas. 8. Clownfish. 9. July. 10. 90 minutes.

1. Richard Simmons; 2. When the colored part of the eyes (irises) are two different colors; 3. Archipelago; 4. Foutine (French fries, cheese curds and gravy); 5. 2004; 6. Violet; 7. Texas; 8. Clownfish; 9. July; 10. 90 minutes

April 7, 2025 Posting Date

King Crossword

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	
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ACROSS

- 1 Mediocre
- 5 Church seat
- 8 Greenish blue
- 12 Tor —, Afghanistan
- 13 Noshed
- 14 PETA concerns
- 15 Slight criticisms
- 17 Pear-shaped fruits
- 18 Step
- 19 Hot dish holder
- 21 Oodles
- 24 Log chopper
- 25 Mandatory coll. courses
- 28 Calendar entry (Abbr.)
- 30 Zodiac animal
- 33 Chit
- 34 Concepts
- 35 Swelled head
- 36 Singer
- 37 Proscribes
- 38 Eve's mate
- 39 Born
- 41 Entryway
- 43 Dress designation
- 46 Ignited again
- 50 Shake — (hurry)
- 51 Dropouts

DOWN

- 1 Cookouts, briefly
- 2 LummoX
- 3 Met solo
- 4 Customs
- 5 Bud
- 6 Bordeaux summer
- 7 Left on a map
- 8 Tack on
- 9 Trembled
- 10 Desire
- 11 Celeb's aide
- 16 Buddy
- 20 "Phooey!"
- 22 Zilch
- 23 Shell out
- 25 Estuary
- 26 A gazillion
- 27 Groups of five
- 29 El —, Texas
- 31 Turkish title
- 32 Off-tattooed word
- 34 "A likely story!"
- 38 "Queen of Soul" Franklin
- 40 Skating figure
- 42 Scrap
- 43 Italian cheese, for short
- 44 Sci-fi race
- 45 Iso-
- 47 Boxer Spinks
- 48 Press
- 49 Recipe amts.
- 52 Web address
- 53 Squid squirt

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King Crossword

Solution time: 24 mins.

Answers

ACROSS

1. Mediocre
5. Church seat
8. Greenish blue
12. Tor —, Afghanistan
13. Noshed
14. PETA concerns
15. Slight criticisms
17. Pear-shaped fruits
18. Step
19. Hot dish holder
21. Oodles
24. Log chopper
25. Mandatory coll. courses
28. Calendar entry (Abbr.)
30. Zodiac animal
33. Chit
34. Concepts
35. Swelled head
36. Singer
37. Proscribes
38. Eve's mate
39. Born
41. Entryway
43. Dress designation
46. Ignited again
50. Shake — (hurry)
51. Dropouts

DOWN

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43. Italian cheese, for short
44. Sci-fi race
45. Iso-
47. Boxer Spinks
48. Press
49. Recipe amts.
52. Web address
53. Squid squirt

Trivia test

by Fifi Rodriguez

- TELEVISION: Who had a 1980s workout video series called "Sweatin' to the Oldies"?
- ANATOMY: What is heterochromia?
- GEOGRAPHY: What is a chain of islands called?
- FOOD & DRINK: What is Canada's national dish?
- HISTORY: When was Facebook launched?
- MEASUREMENTS: What is the shortest wavelength in the visible light spectrum?
- U.S. STATES: Which state has the most miles of interstate highway?
- MOVIES: What type of fish is Nemo in the animated film "Finding Nemo"?
- GENERAL KNOWLEDGE: Which month is designated as National Ice Cream Month in the United States?
- SCIENCE: How long does it take for the International Space Station to orbit the Earth?

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