



Sheldon Community Fire & Rescue apparatus represents the department's commitment to maintaining modern equipment as officials plan future fleet upgrades. See Story in page 8

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CHANNEL CURRENTS

Sheldon ISD Back to School Bash 2026

Sheldon ISD is proud to host our **Back to School Bash 2026** on Friday, July 31st, from 4 - 6 PM

at **C.E. King High School's Gymnasiums.**

Our district and community partners are excited to share school supplies, resources, free haircuts, free athletic physicals, games and so much more! Save the date and join us on July 31st!

1st Annual East Houston Human Performance Festival

By Allan Jamail

Galena Park, TX. ~ Saturday, July 25, 2026 hundreds of people gathered at Galena Park's Community Center pavilion where they shopped at the many vendors booths. Vendors were selling lots of different things of interest like jewelry, beefjerky of many different flavors, ice cream of most all flavors handcrafts and sourdough breads and cookies.

The event was organized by Rico Medina the Founder of the 1st Annual East Houston Human Performance Festival. He's the owner of the Galena Park Fitness Center.

I met Mr. Medina at his gym in Galena Park where he told me his roots is from Puerto Rico, he said he was influenced by his dad and uncle to work out and keep in good physical shape as he was growing up. He at-



Galena Park Fire Chief Tom Ehlers is taking home a loaf of Jalapeño Sourdough Bread baked fresh by baker Angelica Torres, The Sourdough Girl. (Photo by Allan Jamail)

tended gyms here in the United States and learned to be a trainer from other trainers he knew. Medina said he enjoys being a trainer and seeing how much people can improve their health in his gym.

Medina said, "The main reason behind this event is to bring our community together through health, fit-

ness, family activities, and local business support. I wanted to create something positive where families could have fun, learn more about their health, and connect with the businesses and organizations serving the East Houston and Galena Park area."

"We have been blessed to receive support from

several local businesses and community partners. Some of the sponsors and partners include La Sabrosa Meat Market, GNC Kahlon Franchise, Ace Hardware, Kwik Kopy, Jones Family Mortuary, L&A Creation, Fuego Security, the United States Marine Corps, and several other local businesses and

fitness organizations who wish to remain behind the scene. I would love for you to recognize all the sponsors and volunteers who helped make the event possible," Medina said.

Medina concluded saying, "My goal is to make the East Houston Human Performance Festival an annual event in Galena Park. This was the first one, and we hope to continue growing it every year and make it something the community looks forward to."

Fitness Revival Center is located at 100 N. Main Street in Galena Park. It's an open-gym where memberships start at \$49 per month. He offers personal training, semi-private training, small-group training, youth programs, senior fitness, massage

Continued. See FITNESS FESTIVAL MAKES LOCAL DEBUT, Page 3

ESD 12 Celebrates Firefighter Milestones and New Ladder Truck



By Gerardo Hernandez
STAFF WRITER

HARRIS COUNTY — Harris County Emergency Services District 12 recently celebrated a day of pride, tradition and commitment as the department recognized

firefighters who completed their probationary period and officially placed a new ladder truck into service.

The department held a formal pinning ceremony honoring firefighters who successfully completed their probationary period, recognizing their dedica-

tion, perseverance and commitment to serving the community.

Department officials said earning the privilege of wearing the HCESD 12 badge represents an im-

Continued. See HARRIS COUNTY ESD 12, Page 2

Galena Park Conducts Sanitary Sewer Smoke Testing to Identify System Issues

By Gerardo Hernandez
STAFF WRITER

GALENA PARK - The City of Galena Park recently conducted smoke testing of its sanitary sewer system as part of an effort to identify potential leaks, damaged pipes and illegal connections within the city's wastewater infrastructure.

The testing was conducted July 24 and July 27, following an announcement shared by Galena Park Mayor Oscar Mireles through social media.

The city said the smoke testing is an important part of maintaining the sewer system by helping identify problems that could lead to future repairs



and increased costs.

During the testing, residents may have seen harmless white smoke coming from roof vents, cleanouts or the ground near sewer lines. The smoke used during the process was described as non-toxic, non-staining, odorless and safe for peo-

ple, pets and plants.

Residents were advised that if smoke entered a home or business, they should notify the testing crew immediately or contact Galena Park City Hall, as this could indicate

Continued. See CITY TESTS SEWER SYSTEM FOR HIDDEN, Page 3

Jude Hidalgo Joins Congressional Leaders in Calling for ICE Reforms



Members of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus lead a congressional public oversight hearing into ICE's use of force against Houston resident Lorenzo Salgado Araujo. [Source: Judge Hidalgo media release]

HARRIS COUNTY TX, - Harris County Judge Lina Hidalgo released the following statement today after the congressional public oversight hearing over Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) use of force in the tragic killing of Houston resident Lorenzo Salgado Araujo:

"I'm so grateful to the members of Congress from around the nation who spent the day at our Har-

ris County Commissioners Court gathering public information about the death of Lorenzo Salgado Araujo — and in particular to Congresswoman Sylvia Garcia, who continues to advocate for transparency and accountability. I join today's speakers in demanding that ICE follow the same standards as every other law enforcement agency in the country: no masks, clear identification,

body cameras, marked vehicles, and full transparency any time an agent uses lethal force. While it's a long road to achieving these reforms, I know that Harris County is resilient and we won't back down until we get justice for Lorenzo Salgado Araujo's family," said Judge Hidalgo.

Continued. See BRUTALITY WITHOUT, Page 2

Man Charged with Capital Murder After NE Harris Double Homicide

By Gerardo Hernandez
STAFF WRITER

NORTHEAST HARRIS - A 19-year-old man has been charged with capital murder following a double homicide last Sunday morning in northeast Harris County that left a teenage girl and her older brother dead, authorities said.

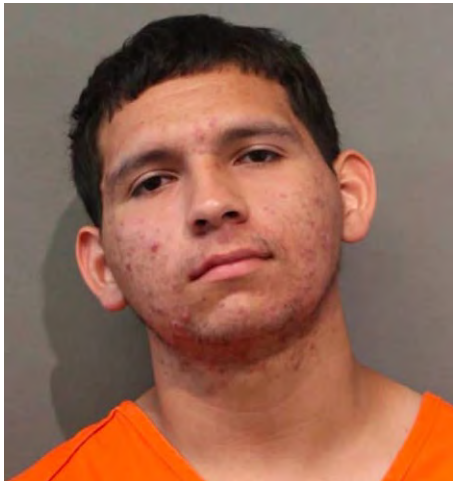
According to the Harris County Sheriff's Office, Angel Javier Rodriguez, 19, was taken into custody and booked into the Harris County Jail in connection with the shooting deaths that occurred in the 200 block of West Canino Road.

Investigators said the shooting happened around 10:50 a.m. Sunday, July 26 during what deputies described as a domestic-related confrontation.

The sheriff's office said the 17-year-old girl was outside her trailer with her toddler when she was preparing to hand the child over to a family member. Authorities said her former boyfriend, identified as Rodriguez, arrived at the scene carrying a firearm.

The victim's 29-year-old brother then came outside and attempted to intervene and calm the situation, investigators said. According to deputies, Rodriguez allegedly shot both siblings before fleeing the area in a vehicle.

The toddler was not injured during the



Angel Javier Rodriguez, 19-Year-Old

incident, authorities said.

A description of Rodriguez and his vehicle was quickly provided to surrounding law enforcement agencies. Deputies with the Harris County Sheriff's Office K-9 Unit and officers with the Humble Police Department later located the vehicle in the 8800 block of Will Clayton Parkway.

Rodriguez was taken into custody without incident, officials said.

Continued. See MAN CHARGED WITH CAPITAL MURDER AFTER DOUBLE HOMICIDE, Page 3

Harris County ESD 12 celebrates firefighter milestones & new ladder truck,

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

portant accomplishment and reflects the professionalism, courage and integrity expected of those who answer the call to serve.

The department also conducted a traditional push-in ceremony to officially place its new ladder truck into service. Rooted in fire service tradition, the ceremony represents more than the arrival of new equipment — it symbolizes the department’s continued investment in protecting the community and providing the highest level of emergency response.

Officials said that while equipment and technology continue to evolve, the foundation of the fire service remains unchanged: dedicated men and women answering the call to help others.

Harris County ESD 12 invited the community to join in congratulating the newly pinned firefighters and celebrating the addition of the new ladder truck as the department continues its mission of service, tradition and



excellence.(Photo Credit: Harris County ESD 12 Fire Department Facebook page)



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Brutality without accountability must stop,

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

thanks all of the congressional leaders and members of the community who attended today’s hearing and continue to fight for justice, transparency, and accountability in Lorenzo Salgado Araujo’s death. Speakers at today’s forum, hosted at the Harris County Administration Building, included:

U.S. Representative Adriano Espaillat (NY-13), Chairman of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus
U.S. Representative Bennie Thompson (MS-2)
U.S. Representative Sylvia Garcia (TX-29)
U.S. Representative Al Green (TX-9)

U.S. Representative Lizzie Fletcher (TX-7)
U.S. Representative Joaquin Castro (TX-20)
U.S. Representative Christian Menefee (TX-18)
U.S. Representative Nanette Barragán (CA-44)
U.S. Representative Andrea Salinas (OR-6)
U.S. Representative Rob Menendez (NJ-8)
U.S. Representative James Walkinshaw (VA-11)
Ronaldo Salgado and Lorenzo Salgado Jr., Lorenzo Salgado Araujo’s sons
Harris County District Attorney Sean Teare

Houston Councilmember Joaquin Martinez (District I)
Juan Proaño, Chief Executive Officer, League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC)
Patricia Cabrera, Director, East End Communities
Rev. Father Salvatore De George, Immaculate Heart of Mary Catholic Church
Representatives from ICE, the Department of Homeland Security, and the FBI did not attend the hearing despite requests from congressional leaders. (Source; Jude Lina Hidalgo press release)

Houston Methodist tips for Recovering From Intestinal illnesses Amid the Cyclospora Outbreak

HOUSTON – Amid this summer’s Cyclospora outbreak, Houston Methodist experts

offered some simple steps to take after diarrhea or vomiting symptoms begin to subside. These

steps can minimize the risk of dehydration, fatigue and digestive discomfort.

While recovery timelines may look different for each person, experts say gradually reintroducing fluids and bland foods can help the body heal while minimizing further stomach irritation.

“The priority is preventing dehydration and allowing the digestive system time to recover,” said Dr. Oluwaposi Omiwade, primary care physician at Houston Methodist Baytown Hospital. “Replacing lost

fluids and electrolytes, while easing back into solid foods can help support recovery and prevent symptoms from worsening. Most people can return to their normal diet within about a week.”

Hours 0-6: Ice chips only
Once vomiting has sub-

sided, start with:

- Ice chips
- Popsicles

Hours 6+: Introduce clear liquids and assess progress

If ice chips are tolerated, begin sipping small amounts of:

- Water
- Apple juice
- Grape juice
- Clear broth
- Avoid carbonated and opaque drinks (soda, dairy products)

You can take small sips every 15-30 minutes as tolerated. Try to drink more as you start to feel better.

After 24 hours: Try bland foods

As symptoms improve, begin eating bland, easy-to-digest foods, also known as the BRAT diet:

- Bananas
- Rice
- Applesauce
- Toast

Other options include:

- Crackers
- Plain oatmeal
- Plain grits

Foods and drinks to avoid

During recovery, tempo-

rarily avoid anything that may further irritate the digestive tract and can

worsen symptoms including:

- Fried foods
- Fatty foods
- Spicy foods
- Alcohol
- Caffeine (unless avoiding it causes withdrawal headaches)

Infants and toddlers, older adults, people with kidney disease and/or poorly controlled diabetes are

most vulnerable to the effects of dehydration and may require medical attention sooner.

Patients should seek medical advice if any of the following occur:

- Symptoms are not improving or continue to worsen
- Inability to keep water or other fluids down
- Signs of dehydration develop (severe fatigue, confusion, dizziness, thirst).

To learn more about prevention or treatment of intestinal illnesses, visit the Houston Methodist OnHealth blog.

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CHARLOTTE'S WEB

By Charlotte Jackson



Even If

Have you ever traveled through a sea son when you just wondered if you were on a hamster's wheel or perhaps already in the middle of the garbage disposal? I am thinking that perhaps that is where I have been lately. Yet in the middle of it, I am reminded that even if there is a storm, I will survive. Why? Because that is how I have learned to live thanks to the many amazing people in our community.

Over the past 54 years that I have lived in 77015, I have seen hurricanes, tornadoes, fires, murders, friends losing children to cancer as well as car accidents. Environmental pollution has impacted on several friends and neighbors as well. Our city was severely impacted when Armco Steel went out of business, and we will never forget the impact of so many businesses impacted in last recession.

We know the pain of losing our community hospitals and how that impacted jobs. We do not even have to travel further than the closest traffic light and we see homeless individuals suffering from the elements. Many have lived lives that led them to their situations due to addictions, yet many are there due to mental health issues. When we take the time to listen to their pleas for food or money, we hear about the poor choices they made which led to incarceration. Many came from broken homes and some from broken dreams.

Yet during all of this, we have many more individuals who have chosen to stand firm and keep on keeping on. We see single parents who have worked multiple jobs to keep a roof over their heads and to find time to volunteer at their children's schools or with the various community activities they are involved with. We see friends taking care of each other's children when one must work. One friend goes to work and the other runs the children to and from school and activities. One father works on a neighbor's car in exchange for the neighbor doing his family's laundry at that friend's home. Grandparents stand in the gap often.

Many readers are aware that my son lives with a dual diagnosis of paranoid schizophrenia and bipolar disorder. Some of them have heard me share that due to life circumstances, when he has gotten off his medications, he has ended up in the prison system. This Sunday while I was at church I received a phone call that no parent wants to receive.

As soon as I walked out of church, I returned her call. Apparently late Saturday night my son suffered a possible heart attack. And as paramedics were working on him, he was begging his cellmate to call his mother and ask her to call me to tell me to pray for him. I hung up the phone and started the procedure to find out what had happened and it was too much to explain but finally on Monday morning, I received verification he was sent to a non-TDCJ hospital and is undergoing tests. Once he returns to the unit, (this week or whenever he is stable), I will receive details. So, all I can say is "Even if... I will still be okay." Thank you for teaching me to persevere and to pray.

Man charged with capital murder after double homicide,

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Harris County Sheriff's Office homicide detectives continue investigating the case and are working to determine the full sequence of events leading up to the shooting.

Anyone with information about the incident is asked to contact the Harris County Sheriff's Office non-emergency line at 713-221-6000 or Crime Stoppers of Houston at 713-222-TIPS. Tips may also be submitted anonymously through Crime Stoppers.

Source: Harris County Sheriff's Office

City tests sewer system for hidden leaks,

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

a plumbing issue that needs inspection.

The City of Galena Park thanked residents for their patience and cooperation as the city continues efforts to improve and maintain its sewer infrastructure.

Final assessment: This revised version stays within the information provided by Mayor Mireles' announcement and does not add unsupported claims. It is ready for a local newspaper community news section.

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ASK DIAMOND JIM

Diamond Jim: "What is the birthstone for August?"

AUGUST BIRTHSTONE

We have a birthday present for those born in August: the stunning spinel has been added to your month's birthstone lineup! August now joins June and December as the only months represented by three gems. The original birthstone for August was Sardonyx, and then peridot was added, becoming August's primary gem. Now spinel adds its multitude of color choices!

PERIDOT OVERVIEW

Though peridot is widely recognized by its brilliant lime green glow, the origin of this gem's name is unclear. Most scholars agree that the word "peridot" is derived from the Arabic *faridat* which means "gem," but some believe it's rooted in the Greek word *peridona*, meaning "giving plenty." Perhaps that's why peridot is associated with prosperity and good fortune. Rarely, peridot is also found inside meteorites.

Peridot's signature green color comes from the composition of the mineral itself—rather than from trace impurities, as with many gems. That's why this is one of few stones that only comes in one color, though shades may vary from yellowish-green to olive to brownish-green, depending how much iron is present. Most of the world's peridot supply comes from the San Carlos Reservation in Arizona. Other sources are China, Myanmar, Pakistan and Africa.

SARDONYX OVERVIEW

Sardonyx combines alternating layers of sard and onyx—two types of the layered mineral chalcedony—to create a reddish zebra-striped stone with white bands. Sardonyx, like onyx, shows layers of parallel bands—instead of the chaotic, curved bands that compose agate, another type of chalcedony.

The finest examples of sardonyx, which display sharp contrasts between layers, are found in India. Other sources include Brazil, Germany, Czechoslovakia, Madagascar, Uruguay and the United States.

SPINEL OVERVIEW

The spinel is often assumed to be other gemstones because it tends to resemble either a ruby or sapphire. In fact, some of the most famous rubies in history have turned out to be spinel. But its distinguishing features, like its octahedral crystal structure and single refraction, are what sets it apart from other gems. Significant deposits of spinel have been found in Cambodia, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, and Thailand. It has also been found in Afghanistan, Australia, Brazil, Madagascar, Nepal, Nigeria, Tadjikistan, Tanzania and the U.S.

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.

Fitness festival makes local debut,

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

therapy, body-composition testing, and other human-performance services. The price depends on the program and how frequently someone wants to train. The name of the gym is Fitness Revival Center; located at:

100 N. Main Street; Galena Park, Texas 77547

Anyone interested should contact Rico Medina, Phone: 832-273-3955, Website: www.fitnessrevivalcenter.com; Instagram and Facebook: @Officialfitnessrevival-center

TikTok: @Fitnessrevivalcenter

Another young upcoming entrepreneur at the event was Angelica Torres (The Sourdough Girl) the owner of the Dosey Dough Bakery in Jacinto City. She was giving free samples of the many different types of sourdough bread and cookies.

Ms. Torres takes orders through her website on Hotplate.com/angelica



Mr. Rico Medina owner of the Galena Park Fitness Center and founder of the human performance center. (Photo by Allan Jamail)



Walter Mejia (left) and Andrew Romo are on the massage tables enjoying their massages. Romo is the founder of Rocket City Run Club, for more info call (713-913-9174). Massagers in the background; L-R: Luz Cantu, Silvia Valle & Melisa Garcia. (Photo by Allan Jamail)

cabakes. There's also an option to get notified via text message when orders go live each week. She offers classic, jalapeño cheddar, and Rosemary garlic sourdough flavors in full-size and mini size. She makes and offers sourdough discard chocolate chip cookies. She said, "I'll have more items coming which are currently being developed and tested in her kitchen bakery."

Massage entrepreneurs were setup giving massages to showcase their new businesses; Ms. Luz Cantu owner of Luz Ma's (713-261-7485) and her assistant Ms. Melisa Garcia (346-774-9938) had people inline waiting to get their massages. Also Ms. Silvia Valle (832-389-4215) was on present and helping; she's the owner of her massage business in the North Channel area. They take appointments by phone.

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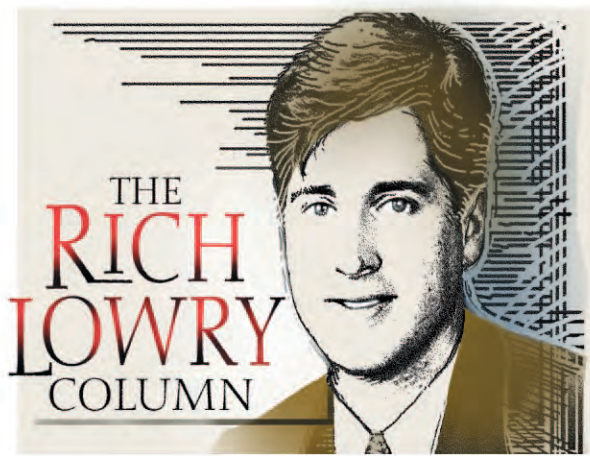
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Workers of the world aren't uniting behind the DSA

What did the country ever do to white college graduates to make them feel so disaffected from its economic and political system? The wave of socialist victories in Democratic primaries is being driven by well-educated white voters who are more extreme than the rest of the Democratic coalition.

The latest evidence is a new poll in the closely watched Democratic primary for a Senate seat in Michigan. The AOC-endorsed, Israel-hating insurgent, Abdul El-Sayed, has had momentum, but is now narrowly trailing the establishment candidate, Haley Stevens. According to a Detroit News survey, Stevens is ahead by about seven points, with demographic advantages that are very telling.

Stevens, a goofy white lady, leads El-Sayed by a 3-to-1 margin among black voters. On the other hand, El-Sayed, a person of color fully vested in the left's Third Worldist agenda, leads among white voters, 51-39%. Stevens, a career apparatchik and politician, leads among non-college-educated voters, 56-34%, whereas El-Sayed, who has been endorsed by the Working Families Party, is ahead with college-educated voters, 48-41.

The respective strengths of the two candidates run against the grain of what you might expect in a race between a conventional Democrat and a radical, yet accord with what we've seen in campaign after campaign.

Socialists may imagine themselves the champions of people of color and of workers, but their movement is, by and large, most attractive to caucasian associate professors of sociology who think they haven't achieved the station in life that they deserve.

It's less a proletarian phenomenon than a project of frustrated Ph.D. candidates and medium-level professionals. Because many socialist candidates have immigrant backgrounds, it can be tempting to consider the movement as fundamentally a function of immigration, when that's not true.

A 2021 survey of DSA members found that they were disproportionately white, at 85%, and disproportionately had college degrees (80%) or a higher degree (35%). This leaves them in a similar predicament to pioneering communists and socialists in Europe who talked up the prospect of a worker revolution, and then looked around the room and saw no workers, only intellectuals and activists like themselves.

The good news for DSA-aligned candidates is that college-educated white people are very reliable voters who can make a big difference in the kind of low-turnout primaries where anti-establishment, left-wing candidates thrive. A recent analysis in The New York Times noted that Zohran Mamdani-endorsed socialist Darializa Avila Chevalier defeated Rep. Adriano Espaillat in a marquee New York City congressional primary while winning high-education and higher-income areas; Espaillat, in contrast, won in majority-Hispanic and lower-income areas.

Another Mamdani pick, Brad Lander similarly wiped up in high-income and high-education areas while crushing Rep. Dan Goldman, whose strong performance in low-income parts of the district didn't save him. Socialistic economics may have appeal to working-class voters in theory, but the DSA couples its economics with extreme views on cultural issues that have very little appeal with non-college-educated voters. Tax the rich? Sure. Transcend the gender binary? No, thanks — whatever that means.

That the average black Democrat is more moderate and pragmatic than the average white Democrat may prove the ultimate check on whether an AOC-type candidate can claim the big prize of the Democratic presidential nomination in 2028. It's one thing to appeal to the so-called Commie Belt in New York City, the young, highly educated, diverse neighborhoods in Queens and Brooklyn that so strongly backed Zohran Mamdani; it's quite another to win over the older, religious African American voters in, say, South Carolina's I-95 Black Belt.

In the 2020 primaries, Bernie Sanders ran a campaign of great verve and ideological energy, while Joe Biden stumbled from one early setback to another — yet, black Democrats decided that the former vice president was the safer choice, and that was the end of Sanders. In short, the workers of the world may one day unite, but not behind a socialist vessel for the grievances of ideologically exotic, college-educated white people.

Rich Lowry is editor of the National Review.
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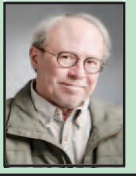
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★

STATE CAPITAL HIGHLIGHTS

By Gary Borders



Flooding Batters Hill Country Once Again

A massive amount of rain once again engulfed the Hill Country, causing widespread flooding in several counties, including Uvalde, Kerr, Kendall and Gillespie. At least two fatalities were reported near Comfort and Uvalde.

More than 270 people were rescued. Damage was widespread from rains bringing as much as 25 inches to parts of Kerr County and 10 to 15 inches in other counties. That is much lower than the toll from last summer's flooding, which killed more than 130 statewide, the San Antonio Express-News reported.

Officials and residents credit improved warning systems, including text alerts and flood sirens, and fewer people clustering on riverbanks, since it was not a holiday weekend — unlike the July 4, 2025, flood.

Law enforcement officials fanned out to campgrounds, hotels and RV parks as the floodwaters began to raise, though this time the flooding built up over a few days.

"We weren't caught off guard by something nobody expected," state Rep. Wes Virdell, R-Brady, said at a news conference Friday. "We had a lot of critical, key people that were in the proper locations that were very instrumental in helping us. Residents were very aware of the possibility of what's going to happen when that river floods."

Gov. Greg Abbott signed a major disaster declaration seeking federal assistance for rebuilding efforts in 28 affected counties.

STATE AGENCIES ASKED TO CUT SPENDING BY 3% IN NEXT BUDGET CYCLE

Abbott, Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick, and House Speaker Dustin Burrows announced their top four priorities for the 2028-2029 budget cycle last week, including requiring state agencies to reduce base spending requests by 3%. Other priorities include addressing affordability concerns, fully funding public education, supporting teachers, and advancing property tax reform.

In a news release, Abbott said the budget guidance "protects our historic investments in public education and teachers, delivers even more property tax relief, and makes the cost of living more manageable for Texas families through strict standards of efficiency and accountability from every state agency."

The 90th legislative session



begins in January.

MORTGAGE DELINQUENCIES UP AMONG FIRST-TIME HOMEOWNERS

First-time homeowners in Texas are increasingly failing to make their mortgage payments on time, the Houston Chronicle reported. Increasing homeowner insurance costs are the primary culprit, according to data from the Federal Housing Administration.

Most FHA borrowers are first-time homebuyers and typically have lower credit ratings and less money for a down payment, making them more vulnerable to rising monthly costs. Roughly 6% of FHA loans in Texas were at least 90 days past due, up from 3.7% a year earlier.

"This unfortunately positions Texas at the epicenter of the national affordability squeeze," Scott Norman, CEO of the Texas Mortgage Bankers Association, told state lawmakers in June.

Home insurance rates have increased by an average of 80% since 2020, according to the Texas Department of Insurance. Compounding the situation, homeowners with low credit scores are paying almost \$3,000 more annually for home insurance than those with high credit scores.

Late payments on conventional mortgages have remained flat, with less than 1% of borrowers seriously behind on their payments.

HOWDEN NAMED TEXAS SECRETARY OF STATE

Abbott has named Robert S. Howden to succeed Jane Nelson as Texas secretary of state, according to the Texas Standard. Nelson left office on July 17.

Howden has served as Abbott's legislative director since

September 2024. He will serve as interim secretary until the legislative session begins in January, when he will need to be confirmed by the Texas Senate.

"His experience in the legislative process and extensive public service have prepared him to protect the integrity of Texas elections and represent our state with strength on the global stage," Abbott said in announcing Howden's appointment.

The office's primary responsibility is overseeing elections and voter rolls. It also oversees business filings, such as limited liability corporations and other entities.

TALARICO HOLDS FUNDRAISING EDGE OVER PAXTON

With less than four months before the November general election, Democratic nominee James Talarico has vastly out-raised his GOP rival Ken Paxton in the U.S. Senate race, the Chronicle reported.

The Austin-area state legislator ended June with a bank balance of \$21.5 million, according to newly filed documents with the Federal Election Commission. After factoring in expenses, incumbent senator Paxton's campaign was left with a balance of just \$1.7 million.

Both candidates are heavily backed by so-called super PACs. The Talarico-aligned PAC has \$21.6 million in the bank, including \$10 million from LinkedIn co-founder Reid Hoffman. The Paxton-aligned PAC, which spent heavily in his successful runoff against incumbent U.S. Sen. John Cornyn, was left with just \$35,000 to start July.

Talarico hopes to break Texas Democrats' 32-year losing streak in statewide elections. He has raised more than \$68 million thus far, the most for any non-incumbent in a U.S. Senate race.

ABBOTT CAMPAIGN PAID \$25K TO RENT ELEPHANT

Gov. Greg Abbott's reelection campaign paid \$25,000 to rent Paige the elephant for the state GOP convention from an exhibitor that failed to register with the city of Houston before bringing the elephant to the George R. Brown Convention Center, according to the Chronicle.

A campaign finance report revealed the amount the campaign paid to East Texas Elephant Experience to parade her at the June convention. The city's regulatory division said it had no record the company registered as a licensed exhibitor at least 20 days before the event as required by city code.

Klayton Rutherford of PETA said the payment rewards an exotic animal entertainment industry that has come under criticism over its treatment of elephants.

"The amount of money that is involved in this industry is staggering," Rutherford said. "The most prominent elected official in the state arranged this exhibit and it was done apparently in violation of the city's ordinances and that's alarming."

The Abbott campaign declined to comment.

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. Email: gborders@texaspres.com



Dose of Dog



I haven't been giving out dog treats for a while. Sometimes, I am the treat lady on my walks, and sometimes I do not carry dog treats. I love dispensing treats, but I hate getting turned down by owners. Getting turned down by dogs is also disappointing, but somehow easier to take.

So lately, instead of bribing dogs with treats, I've been doing my secret whistle, a high-pitched noise that dogs always hear and their owners usually do not, that makes the dog look my way. Then I tell the dog what a beautiful dog they are, and they usually come running over to me, and I delay whoever was trying to take them for a walk while we talk, and almost always, that person does not care.

I rub the dog's ears, and I scratch their nose, and sometimes they throw themselves on the sidewalk and I scratch their belly.

"You are such a good dog! Aren't you just a perfect dog?" I ask them. And the dogs agree that I am correct — they are all perfect dogs.

Sometimes their owners disagree. "Oh, I wouldn't say she's perfect. ..." And they may start talking about some totally inconsequential things the dog has done involving an expensive shoe or a piece of furniture or the cat — something that has no bearing whatsoever on the conversation.

The dog will look at me as I continue to scratch her ears, and she will know that I realize the owner is just being humble. They don't want to claim to be the owner of a perfect dog, and I understand.

"So she's 99.5% perfect," I reply, and usually the owner seems to think this is a little generous, but it's somewhere in the ballpark.

But I have had owners who, when I told them their dog was perfect, agreed wholeheartedly. I think they must have a very good relationship with their dog.

"Oh! Isn't he a perfect dog?" I'll say.

"Yes, he pretty much is," the owner will reply and shrug, as if they are not quite sure how they were fortunate to adopt — out of all the imperfect dogs in the world — the one perfect one. The dog never pretends he is not perfect. What would be the point of that? The dog nuzzles his owner and nuzzles my hand and lets me know that even perfect dogs have time to chit-chat on the sidewalk.

So I have not felt the need to carry treats. Lavish compliments, small talk, and lots of ear scratching seem to do just as well, and I don't run afoul of special diets and concerns that a dog might be "putting on weight," which is a myth that veterinarians spread, probably just so they can get more business.

Eventually, I say goodbye to the dog, and I thank the owner for letting me delay them on their walk, and I head off down the sidewalk. "You have a new best friend!" some of them say. And some of the dogs look back at me, a little disappointed that we are not all continuing the walk together.

I had a dog for years, and I miss having a dog. As much as I love my cat, Felix, there is something about a dog that pulls on my heartstrings. But having a dog is not practical for us right now. And so every day, I get my dose of dog. And while I may be holding things up for a minute or two, I don't think anyone is worse off for the time we spend together.

Till next time,
Carrie

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Mary Steenburgen, left and Jake Johnson stars in "The Dink."

"The Dink."

"Disclosure Day" (PG-13) — Three-time Oscar-winning director Steven Spielberg's ("The Fabelmans") latest directorial feat is now available to rent, following a box-office stint that barely made double its \$115 million budget. Spielberg signed on Emily Blunt ("The Devil Wears Prada 2") and Josh O'Connor ("Wake Up Dead Man") to respectively play his lead actors in the film — an NBC meteorologist (Blunt) and a cybersecurity analyst (O'Connor), who join forces against the government to reveal the hard-kept secret of extraterrestrial life. Colin Firth ("Young Sherlock") portrays a government contractor who attempts to stop the duo in their tracks, while Colman Domingo ("Euphoria") takes on the role of another contractor who switches sides to become an advocate for disclosure.

(Fandango)
"Supergirl" (PG-13) — Another recently released film that didn't do so well in theaters will be available to rent starting on July 28. This superhero flick led by Milly Alcock ("House of the Dragon") follows David Corenswet's "Superman" as the second overall film within the new DC Universe. After Kara Zor-El, Superman's cousin, gets sent to Earth by her father to avoid Kryptonite poisoning, she adopts a new life on Earth as Supergirl with her dog, Krypto. As Supergirl reaches her 23rd birthday and has a party bender on different planets, Superman's concerned that she hasn't yet fully adapted to her life and role on Earth. But perhaps an intergalactic adventure is exactly what Kara needs to appreciate where she's been and where she'll go in the future. (YouTube)

"The Dink" (PG-13) — Jake Johnson ("New Girl") leads this new sports-comedy film that is out now to stream — right on time for it to compete with Will Ferrell's series "The Hawk" (which basically has the same plot but with golf). "The Dink" follows a cocky, washed-up tennis pro Dusty Boyd (Johnson), who suffers a hand injury before a big duel. When his doctor prescribes pickleball as a strategy to ease back into tennis, Dusty's very reluctant to grab a paddle and take his place alongside the older ladies on the court. But as he embarks on his pickleball journey, he also learns some important life lessons - undoubtedly thanks to his kind and wise teammate, Candace (Mary Steenburgen). Look out for former pro tennis players John McEnroe and Andy Roddick to make appearances throughout the film as well. (Apple TV)

"Ride or Die" (TV-MA) — This action-comedy series stars Octavia Spencer ("Smurfs") and Hannah Waddingham ("The Woman in Cabin 10") as two best friends who don't really know much about each other. One friend, Debbie (Spencer), is the wife of a member of Parliament, while the other, Judith (Waddingham), is secretly a deadly assassin. While Judith usually keeps mum about her job, the two besties are forced to go on the run with mercenaries hot on their trail after a hit gone wrong. With no other options but to put her faith — and life — in Judith's hands, Debbie succumbs to being an assassin's accomplice, hoping that she's still in one piece by the end of the mission. All eight episodes are out now to stream! (Amazon Prime Video)
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Q:When are the Emmy Awards, and who'll be hosting this year? I think Conan O'Brien should host them, like he does the Oscars. — S.H.

A:While former late-night host turned podcaster Conan O'Brien has hosted the Primetime Emmy Awards by himself in both 2002 and 2006, he's pretty much locked in as the permanent host of the Oscars. This isn't a guarantee, but we're all assuming that he'll be back to host cinema's most prestigious awards show for the third year in a row.

In recent years, the Emmys have been hosted by comedian Nate Bargatze, father-son duo "Schitt's Creek" stars Eugene and Dan Levy, and sitcom actor Anthony Anderson. Jimmy Kimmel has hosted three times, but there hasn't been a female solo host since actress Jane Lynch ("Only Murders in the Building") introduced presenters in 2011.

New York Knicks fanatic and "Law & Order: SVU" star Mariska Hargitay has been chosen by NBC to be this year's emcee when the ceremony airs live on Sept. 14, at 8 p.m. ET. However, a recent announcement stating that the live telecast would feature five fewer categories to make room for more musical performances and comedy sketches has the Hollywood community in an uproar.

Two of the categories that didn't make the cut are Supporting Actor and Supporting Actress in a Limited or Anthology Series or Movie. According to Variety, the two talents projected to win in these respective categories this year are David Harbour for "DTF St. Louis" and Constance Zimmer for "Love Story."

Q: Is it true that Robert Redford was supposed to star in "Yellowstone"? Was it the role that Kevin Costner played? — L.G.

A: Before "Yellowstone" found its home with Paramount, its creator Taylor Sheridan pitched the show to HBO. He suggested actor Kevin Costner in the lead role of John Dutton, but HBO wanted a "generational talent" of Robert Redford's stature, which Sheridan misunderstood to mean Robert Redford himself. According to the Hollywood Reporter, Sheridan personally visited Redford to make him an offer (which the legendary movie star accepted), only to have to rescind it when HBO clarified that



Host of the 2026 Emmys Mariska Hargitay ("Law & Order: SVU")

they wanted someone of Redford's type but not age.

Costner went on to play Dutton for five seasons before departing the show. Meanwhile, Sheridan went on to dedicate the first episode of his most recent hit series "The Madison" to Redford, in what's felt to be a fitting tribute.

Q:Are they still going to do an American version of "The Traitors" with noncelebrities? If so, when and where will it air? — C.C.

A:Yes, "The Traitors: New Blood" will launch its two-hour premiere episode on NBC on Thursday, Sept. 17, at 8 p.m. ET. This version featuring civilian contestants will also be hosted by Alan Cumming, the two-time Emmy-winning host of Peacock's "The Traitors." It'll be filmed at the Ardross Castle in the Scottish Highlands as well.

Twenty-two contestants, who were chosen from a nationwide search of more than 60,000 applicants, will compete for the \$250,000 prize — and what's sure to be a lucrative career on social media when it airs!

Send me your questions at NewCelebrityExtra@gmail.com.

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ENTERTAINMENT

Amber Waves



Weekly SUDOKU

		2		5				6	8
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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
♦♦♦ HOO BOY!

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HOCUS-FOCUS BY HENRY BOLTINOFF

Find at least six differences in details between panels.

Differences: 1. Dog's leg is moved. 2. Woman's leg is moved. 3. Bush is reversed. 4. Arrows are higher. 5. Dog's ear is different. 6. Fence has more boards.

- ACROSS**
- 1 Photo, for short
 - 4 Senate staffer
 - 8 Scoff
 - 12 Rx overseer
 - 13 Classic the-aters
 - 14 Bohemian
 - 15 Tunes from Trinidad
 - 17 Pinta's companion
 - 18 MSN rival
 - 19 Acapulco native
 - 21 NAACP co-founder W.E.B.
 - 24 Collection
 - 25 — Cruz Kayne of "Barbie"
 - 26 D.C. basebal-ler
 - 28 Serious
 - 32 Overlook
 - 34 Inherited
 - 36 "Little Caesar" role
 - 37 Group spirit
 - 39 Rug cleaner, briefly
 - 41 Buddy
 - 42 Felon's flight
 - 44 Arctic shoe
 - 46 Bitter orange liqueur
 - 50 French mon-arch
 - 51 Unsigned (Abbr.)
 - 52 All-important
- DOWN**
- 1 Cpl.'s subor-dinate
 - 2 Wyo. neighbor
 - 3 Utensil made from a gourd shell
 - 4 Sturdy fabric
 - 5 Billboards
 - 6 Euclidean subj.
 - 7 Relaxes
 - 8 Custodian
 - 9 Rocker
 - 10 Sicilian volca-no
 - 11 Vanna's "Wheel of Fortune" col-league
 - 16 "— -hool"
 - 20 Crosses (out)
 - 21 Title for Judi Dench
 - 22 One
 - 23 Droop
 - 27 "Mazel —!"
 - 29 Scripture-based
 - 30 Beige
 - 31 Castle
 - 33 Singer Knowles
 - 35 Highland hat
 - 38 Pouch
 - 40 Actress Jamie Lee
 - 43 PC shortcut
 - 45 Japanese pond carp
 - 46 Mama — Elliot
 - 47 Golden Rule word
 - 48 Den noise
 - 49 Black-and-white cookie
 - 53 Little rascal
 - 54 Hollywood's Gardner
 - 55 Sass

King Crossword

Solution time: 25 mins.

Answers

King Crossword

Trivia test by Fifi Rodriguez

- 1. GAMES: What is the goal space in the board game Candy Land?
- 2. GEOGRAPHY: How many countries and territories border Spain?
- 3. TELEVISION: What are Captain Picard's two favorite catchphrases in "Star Trek: The Next Generation"?
- 4. FOOD & DRINK: What is brioche?
- 5. CHEMISTRY: Which metal has the highest melting point?
- 6. LITERATURE: Who is credited as the author of "The Odyssey"?
- 7. U.S. STATES: Which state is home to Acadia National Park?
- 8. MOVIES: What is the name of Dottie's team in "A League of Their Own"?
- 9. COMICS: Who is the archenemy of the Fantastic Four?
- 10. SCIENCE: What is the thickest layer of Earth?

Sheldon Community Fire & Rescue Preparing for Major Fleet Upgrades



By Gerardo Hernandez
STAFF WRITER

SHELDON — Sheldon Community Fire & Rescue is preparing for several major equipment upgrades as the department continues planning for the future of its emergency response operations.

According to Fire Chief Webb, an aerial platform truck purchased in July 2013 will soon be reasigned to the department's upcoming Station 5, where it will be designated as

Tower 53.

Chief Webb said a new Tower 53 is expected to arrive between 2028 and 2029. The department is also planning to add another 100-foot aerial ladder truck as part of its long-term fleet improvement plans.

In addition, Sheldon Community Fire & Rescue is expected to receive five new fire engines, with each station receiving a new, high-end designed engine to enhance the department's response capabilities

ties and better serve the community.

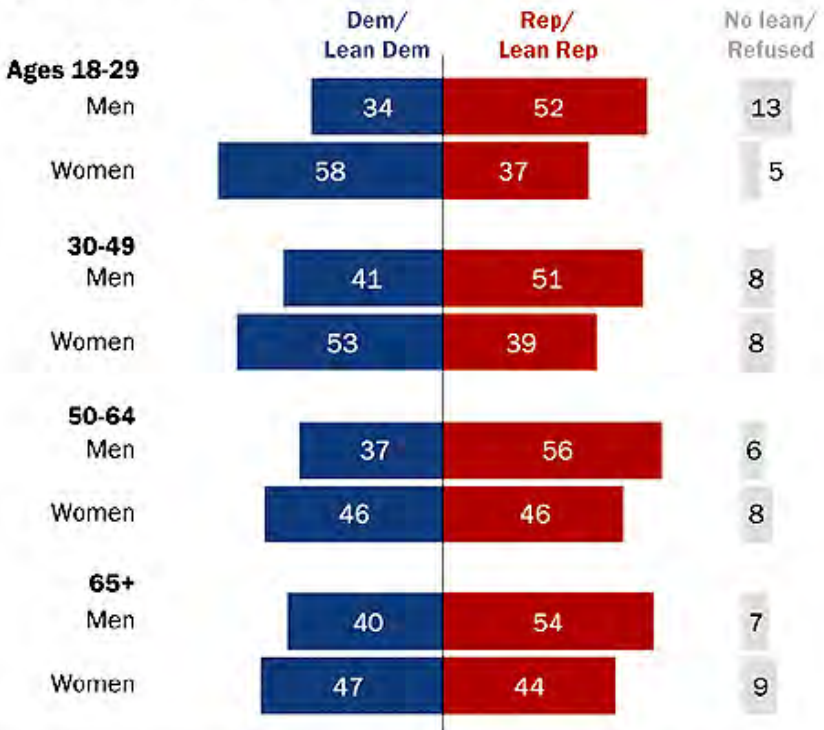
The upgrades are part of the department's ongoing efforts to maintain modern equipment and provide firefighters with the tools needed to respond effectively to emergencies.

Final assessment: This revised version is now fully aligned with Chief Webb's statement and avoids adding details that were not provided, such as construction timelines or specific funding sources.

Breaking Down the SAVE America Act: Voter Registration

Political party affiliation by age and gender, 2025

% of U.S. adults who are ...



Source: National Public Opinion Reference Survey conducted Feb. 5 to June 18, 2025.

By Bill King,

The SAVE America Act includes extensive provisions governing an individual's requirements to register to vote in a federal election. The Act is premised on a simple idea: anyone registering to vote in a federal election should provide proof of U.S. citizenship. On its face, that seems pretty reasonable. But this is definitely a case where the devil is in the details.

The Act requires that a person must present "documentary proof" of citizenship to register. That will generally be either a birth certificate, a passport, or a naturalization certificate.¹ For people with a passport or a naturalization certificate, the process of proving citizenship should be fairly straightforward, although the Act is silent on how the documentary proof is to be "presented." Some commentators have suggested that it must be presented in-person.

According to the State Department, there are currently about 170 million passports in circulation and about 25 million Americans have been naturalized. There are about 235 million citizens who are over 18. So, at least 40 million citizens would have to rely on a birth certificate to register.²

Here is where the details begin getting a bit sticky. The Act requires that the birth certificate must be certified. I don't know about you, but I certainly do not have a certified copy of mine. I recently had to get a certified copy for a probate matter I was helping a friend with, and while it wasn't super hard, it was a bit of a hassle and required a visit to the County Clerk's office. Of course, if someone has moved to Texas and has to track a certified copy from their home state, that would

be even more of a hassle.

But here is the really important aspect of the Act. This requirement applies not only when a person first registers. **It also applies when there is any change in a person's voter registration, such as a change of address or name.** So, whenever you move, you will need to dig out your passport, naturalization certificate, or certified birth certificate to update the address on your voter registration. Most states, including Texas, allow voters to update their voter registration address online.

This burden will fall disproportionately on women, who are much more likely than men to have changed their legal names because of marriage or divorce. A woman whose birth certificate, passport, or other citizenship document is in a prior name may have to produce a certified marriage certificate, divorce decree, or other documentation — or sign an affidavit — to connect that document to her current voter-registration name. I have a feeling that Republicans would regret passing the Act with provisions that are disproportionately burdensome for women, especially considering they are already struggling with women voters. They might want to remember, "hell hath no fury ..."

Documented cases of non-citizens being registered to vote have been very rare. There is certainly no evidence that noncitizens are registered to vote in sufficient numbers to affect election outcomes. Nonetheless, requiring a person to provide proof of citizenship when they first register to vote is not a bad idea, if only to reassure those who believe registration

of noncitizens is widespread. **But requiring a person to prove their citizenship every time they update their address or name is absurd.** This requirement would likely spark widespread outrage across the political spectrum once voters realize the hassles they will face.

The other significant problem is that the Act would impose major new duties on local election officials while leaving many implementation questions for states and counties to work out under tight deadlines. There is simply no way to make contemplated changes to the registration process this late in the election season. If the bill were to pass, it would immediately face multiple legal challenges, almost certainly delaying its implementation well after the 2026 election.

Most Americans support the concept that a person should provide proof of citizenship before being allowed to register to vote. It is a commonsense notion. And it could be implemented rationally. But that is not what these provisions are. Quite the opposite; they are poorly drafted, with little thought given to their practical effect on voters or election administration. That is why it is unlikely the SAVE Act will ever be passed in its current form.

Note 1 — There are some other documents that are acceptable, but they are held by very few Americans.

Note 2 — Because some passports are issued to children under 18, the State Department double-counts passports and passport cards, and because many naturalized citizens have passports, the number is likely quite a bit higher.

HCC Northeast Launches New Aviation Maintenance Technology Program This Fall



Houston City College (HCC) Northeast is helping students take the first step toward a rewarding aviation career with the launch of its new Aviation Maintenance Technology – Airframe Associate of Applied Science (A.A.S.) degree program this fall.

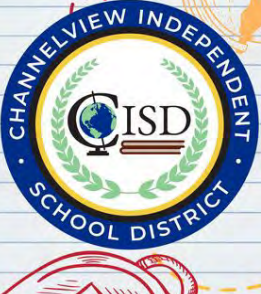
Designed to meet Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Part 147 standards, the program will prepare students to inspect, troubleshoot and repair complex aircraft systems while maintaining the highest levels of safety and airworthiness.

Students can begin completing foundational aviation courses while working on academic and general education requirements, positioning them for success as the full technical curriculum is phased in.

To provide early hands-on experience, Houston City College will also offer a 16-week introductory airframe maintenance course at the North Forest Campus. Classes will be held Mondays and Wednesdays with two scheduling options: 8-10 a.m. or 11 a.m.-1 p.m.

The program is ideal for a wide range of students, including recent high school graduates, military veterans transitioning to civilian careers, automotive, diesel and industrial technology students, career changers, and anyone interested in aviation, aerospace or mechanical problem-solving.

For more information about the Aviation Maintenance Technology program, contact Program Director Nicholas Caines at 713-718-2821 or email hcc.aviationmaintenance@hccs.edu.



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