

# NORTHEAST ★ NEWS

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VOL. 45, NO. 13 TUESDAY, MARCH 26, 2019 HOUSTON, TEXAS www.nenewsroom.com



LITTLE LEAGUE Float 2nd Place was the Houston Bombers team. See MORE page 1, 8

## NEWS NOTES

### Little League season opens in North Houston with parade, games

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NORTH HOUSTON – The Little League officially opened last Saturday, with a parade of teams and community units on a long trip from MacArthur High School, where they assembled, to the Little League fields in Squatty Lyons Park on East Hardy at Cromwell Roads.

Under the direction of Sara Garcia and Virginia Bazan, the parade consisted of 14 units on decorated trailers, and also a fire truck, EMS ambulance, and vehicles from the Sheriff's office and East Aldine District.

Parade units were judged for originality and appearance, with the Lady Bumblebees, a T-Ball team, taking first place. Second place was won by the Houston Bombers, a major league team.

At the park, teams and parents had a Festival with games, food, and exhibits, helping to raise money for the teams.

The games started at 1:00pm and continued all afternoon. A special game opened the season, with the Avengers playing the first ceremonial game. This team is made up of 14 special needs kids, and with the help of adults they played a fun game.



THE LITTLE LEAGUE PARADE started at MacArthur High School, and travelled down side streets until it ended at the Little League fields at Squatty Lyons Park. Floats were judged for their appearance, and the float above, with the LADY BUMBLEBEES team members, won First Place. In all there were 14 floats in the parade, with the 14 teams that competed, and units from the EMS, Westfield Fire Department, East Aldine District, and the Sheriff's office. See MORE LITTLE LEAGUE on page 8. (Photo by Sara Garcia)

### HCC names Dr. Monique Umphrey next President of HCC Northeast

HOUSTON (March 22, 2019) – After a nationwide search, Houston Community College (HCC) has named Dr. Monique Umphrey president of HCC Northeast, pending approval of her contract by the Board of Trustees.

Chancellor Cesar Maldonado says, "Dr. Umphrey shares our bold vision for elevating Houston Community College to new heights. She has a proven record of success as a leader in higher education and has a history of many accomplishments."

Currently serving as Cuyahoga Community College's (Tri-C) Vice President of Workforce Innovation and Dean for Information Technology, Dr. Umphrey is scheduled to begin her duties May 6.

At Tri-C, she provides vision and guidance in integrated academic and workforce programs for the IT Center of Excellence, increasing IT degree completion rates by seven percent.

One of Dr. Umphrey's many accomplishments is establishing Bridge to Bachelor pathways to align college credits for Cleveland Metropolitan School District students between high school and four-year colleges.



Dr. Umphrey will serve as the president for all of the HCC Northeast College campuses that include the North Forest Campus, Acres Homes Campus, Pinemont Center, Northline Campus, and the Automotive Technology Center.

"Tri-C is the connector and navigator," says Dr. Umphrey.

She also led the IT Center of Excellence textbook affordability initiative to utilize Open Educational Resources (OER) materials and established partnerships with the industry, including IBM and Apple. In addition, Dr. Umphrey was a member of the inaugural class of the Aspen Presidential Fellowship for

See HCC Next President, Page 3

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COMMUNITY / SCHOOL NEWS

### League of United Latin American Citizens honors Aldine ISD Board Trustee Dr. Viola M. García

Dr. Viola M. García, Aldine ISD Board Trustee, was the Lifetime Achievement in Education Honoree. The League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) Council 402 honored García during its 90th National LULAC Week Anniversary on Thursday, February 21, at Union Station in Minute Maid Park.

García was recognized as an education champion. She has served on the Aldine Board since 1992. During her 26 years of service, the Board has received numerous accolades including Region 4 Outstanding School Board, Texas Award for Performance Excellence from the Quality Texas Foundation, Magna Award from the American School Board Journal and Outstanding School Board Award from Texas Association of School Administrators. These awards celebrate public school professionals for their leadership and dedication as advocates for children.

García's education activism is not limited to Aldine ISD. She is a retired faculty member of the University of Houston-Downtown. Dr. García has chaired and served on numerous committees at UH-Downtown. She has provided her expertise on a wide variety of topics ranging from academic policy to leadership. She also serves local community entities to develop partnerships with the AISD.

She is active in many organizations. Within these associations, she has taken on responsibilities and chaired numerous committees. Currently, she is a member of Kappa Delta Pi-Omega Chapter, the Texas Association of School Boards (TASB), Gulf Coast Association of School Boards, Mexican American School Board Members Association, Parent Teacher Association, the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO) and the National School Boards Association (NSBA). She served as president of TASB in 2012-2013. Dr. García currently serves on

the NSBA Board of Directors representing the Southern Region. She is director of the Bylaws Committee.

The convention honored other education and community advocates, too. The Honorable Gene Green received the Public Service Award, Carlos Salazar from Sam Houston MS&T Center was the Educator of the Year Honoree, and the Houston Hispanic Chamber of Commerce Emerging Leaders was the Partner in Education Honoree.

Superintendent of Schools Dr. LaTonya M. Goffney, Deputy Superintendent Dr. Selina Chapa, Board Members Rose Avalos, Paul Shanklin, Steve Mead, and Connie Esparza attended the gala to support García. Also present were Able Garza, assistant superintendent of community and governmental relations, and Dr. Christina Gómez, assistant superintendent of elementary schools Region 3. Senator Sylvia García also was present.

### AISD Purchasing Department earns TASBO Award of Merit



Aldine ISD's Purchasing Department was a recipient of the TASBO (Texas Association of School Business Officials) Award of Merit at TASBO's Annual Conference. Pictured are, (l-r): Steve Fisher of BuyBoard, sponsor for the TASBO Award of Merit, Carlotta Nicholas, Aldine ISD's Director of Purchasing, Frances Tucker, Aldine ISD's Purchasing Supervisor, John McGhee, Aldine ISD's Director of Accounting and Business Services, Phillip Ellison, TASBO Award of Merit Committee Chairperson and Auturo Salinas of BuyBoard, sponsor for the TASBO Award of Merit.

Aldine ISD's Purchasing Department was named a recipient of the TASBO (Texas Association of School Business Officials) Award of Merit during TASBO's Annual Conference, held March 7 in San Antonio.

The Purchasing Department earned the Award of Merit after being evaluated and scored in detail in the following categories: purchasing organization and its operation, policies and procedures, contract operations, staff training

and certification, procurement card, use of technology, communication tools, and management of its cooperative programs.

"I am extremely proud of the entire purchasing team and their commitment in demonstrating innovative practices while adhering to public purchasing laws and policies," said Carlotta Nicholas, Aldine ISD's Director of Purchasing. "The Aldine ISD Finance Department, along with all of Aldine's schools and departments

are commended for their support and compliance to the district's financial and purchasing procedures while at the same time keeping Aldine students first."

Joining Nicholas at the conference were Purchasing Supervisor Frances Tucker and John McGhee, AISD's Director of Accounting and Business Services.

This marked the first time AISD's Purchasing Department was named an Award of Merit recipient.

### Aldine ISD Athletic Department honors athletic trainers



Aldine ISD's Athletic Department honored the district's nine high school trainers with a breakfast on Wednesday, March 20 to thank them for their hard work and dedicated service to the district's student-athletes. March is Trainer Appreciation Month and Executive Director of Athletics Dre' Thompson said it was the perfect time to recognize Aldine's trainers. The breakfast was held in the conference room at Thorne Stadium and Superintendent Dr. LaTonya M. Goffney provided each trainer with a jar filled with goodies. AISD trainers work with student-athletes on a daily basis, tending to injuries, assisting in rehab, offering their insights into nutrition, weight training, overall health and they also supervise student trainers at their respective campuses. Pictured, along with Thompson and Director of Athletic Services Sandra Mader are Ray Olivo and Corie Cerda of Aldine High School, Jonathan Ghazal and Kaela Prober of Davis High School, Ricky Nelson and Marshalle Bradley of Eisenhower High School, Travis Perkins and Kendal Massa of MacArthur High School and Xhirley Gonzalez of Nimitz High School.

### Mercer Botanic Gardens April Calendar

**Lunch Bunch:** The Incredible Edibles. Wednesday, April 10 from noon to 2 p.m. Join a casual conversation with Marilyn O'Connor, the Herb Lady, and discuss ways to incorporate herbs into your garden year-round. Enjoy hands-on, scratch-and-sniff fun while exploring the textures and fragrances of various herbs. Then, stroll the Herb Garden at Mercer for more inspiration! Participants should bring a lunch and dress for

the weather. Lunch Bunch is a free program offered at Mercer's East Side Gardens and is recommended for participants ages 12 and older. To register or to receive additional information, contact Mercer Botanic Gardens at 713-274-4160 or [mercerbotanicgardens@hcp4.net](mailto:mercerbotanicgardens@hcp4.net).

**Ongoing Events**  
**North Side Greenhouse Team.** Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays from 9 a.m. to noon. Join a plant committee and grow plants year-round for events and sales or help with various projects from construction to irrigation! Contact Mercer's volunteer coordinator at 713-274-4160 or [mercerbotanicgardens@hcp4.net](mailto:mercerbotanicgardens@hcp4.net).

**Gardening.** Tuesdays from 9 a.m. to noon. Find out what's blooming and learn about plant grooming, pruning, and weeding in the Pollinator and Conservation Gardens. Wear closed-toe shoes, gloves, and hat, and bring sunscreen and water. Contact Mercer's volunteer coordinator at 713-274-4160 or [mercerbotanicgardens@hcp4.net](mailto:mercerbotanicgardens@hcp4.net).

**Gardening.** Thursdays from 9 a.m. to noon. Take part in plant grooming, pruning, weeding, and mulching in the Prehistoric and Shade gardens. Wear closed-toe shoes, gloves, and hat, and bring

sunscreen and water. Contact Mercer's volunteer coordinator at 713-274-4160 or [mercerbotanicgardens@hcp4.net](mailto:mercerbotanicgardens@hcp4.net).

**Cooking Thyme.** Select Wednesdays from 10 a.m. to 11 a.m. Explore fresh food with all five senses during the Cooking Thyme program at Mercer Botanic Gardens. Children will learn the connections between cooking and the plants that grow in the garden and on the farm. This free, hands-on opportunity allows children to prepare and taste foods and equips them with knowledge to make healthy food choices. Cooking Thyme classes for children in kindergarten through second grade are scheduled April 3 and May 1. Classes for children in third grade through fifth grade are scheduled April 17 and May 15. Registration is required, and space is limited. To register or for more information, call Mercer Botanic Gardens at 713-274-4160.

Mercer Botanic Gardens is one mile north of FM 1960 at 22306 Aldine Westfield Road in Humble, 77338. Anyone seeking additional information or requiring special assistance to participate in any program should contact Mercer at 713-274-4160 or [mercerbotanicgardens@hcp4.net](mailto:mercerbotanicgardens@hcp4.net).

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Aldine ISD student teachers receive Letters of Intent to be hired



Aldine ISD Superintendent Dr. LaTonya M. Goffney addresses Aldine's 72 student teachers during a dinner held in their honor on Monday, March 18. Aldine ISD Board of Trustees, along with Deputy Superintendent Dr. Selina Chapa and the Human Resources staff attended the dinner at the Child Nutrition Center.

For some student teachers, stepping in front of a classroom for the first few times can be a bit daunting. That won't be a problem for Aldine ISD's current cohort of student teachers. All 72 student teachers assigned to the district this spring received a little extra practice in public speaking as they were presented to district's Board of Trustees and administrators during a dinner celebrating the conclusion of their placements.

The event held each semester, allows the future teachers to learn more about the district while meeting district leaders and school board members.

Student teachers also receive a letter of intent to hire from the district. The letter is a valid offer for employment contingent upon the completion of de-

grees and certification requirements. Starting salaries begin at \$52,500 per year.

"We work hard to ensure our student teachers receive real-life experience including coaching and feedback while completing their student-teaching assignment. The goal is not only to offer them a robust learning opportunity but to ensure Aldine ISD is their final choice as they consider where they will decide to begin their teaching career," said Aldine ISD Chief Human Resource Officer, Dr. Javier Villarreal.

Dr. Villarreal and several other district administrators including Superintendent Dr. LaTonya Goffney addressed the students.

"It was a teacher who inspired me to succeed and to work in education," Dr.

Goffney said. "I want student teachers like you to see yourselves as future educators and motivators. Your students will be looking to you to learn and for guidance and support. No matter what district you choose, remember that."

Aldine ISD recruits student teachers from the University of Houston, the University of Houston-Downtown, St. Thomas University, Texas Southern University, Prairie View A&M University along with other universities across the state. Our out of state partners include students from Iowa, Indiana, Ohio, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Utah, and New York.

For more information about student teaching opportunities in Aldine, contact Ruby Allen at rjallen@aldineisd.org or 281-985-6304.

Sports Day at Vardeman EC/PK/K Center



The Sports Day at Vardeman EC/PK/K was a success! Students enjoyed egg on a spoon races, tug of war, moonwalk, T-ball, soccer, baseball, golf, and parachute play along with many more fun activities. Thanks to all staff and parents for making it successful!

Family fish camp, BioBlitz, Easter games and more!

**First Saturday Birding:** Saturday, April 6, at 7:45 a.m. Calling all early birds! Join birding expert Claire Moore to learn about basic birding equipment, field guides, songs, and bird calls followed by an outing to catch a glimpse of some of the park's rich bird life. Ages 10 and up.

**BioBlitz:** Saturday, April 6, at 8 a.m. A BioBlitz is a citizen-science community effort to record as many species as possible within a designated location and time. Join local naturalists and staff to generate useful data for science and conservation while connecting with the great outdoors in Jones Park!

**Family Fish Camp:** Saturday, April 27, from 8:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. Spend a day learning basic fishing techniques at the inauguration of Jesse H. Jones Park & Nature Center's Family Fish Camp. Parents and children can visit skills stations to learn how to tie fishing knots, along with proper fish-handling techniques, tackle-box basics, fish identification, and other tips and tricks. The event also covers Texas Parks & Wildlife Department's fishing rules and regulations, angler ethics, water and boat safety, and environmental stewardship. All equipment and bait will be provided, but participants may also bring their own. Participants should bring a sack lunch and wear

closed-toe shoes. Ages 8 and up. Individuals ages 17 and older must have a fishing license if they plan on directly participating. Online registration is required at [www.FishingsFuture.org](http://www.FishingsFuture.org).

**Second Saturday Settlers: Natural Dyes:** Saturday, April 13, from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. Texans have a colorful history, and this program proves it! Participants will dive into the fascinating chemistry of dyeing fibers with Historical Program Coordinator Katrina Yordy. Learn how subtle differences in dye baths, from the temperature to the type of water used, creates endless possibilities in color.

**Second Sunday Pickers:** Sunday, April 14, from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. Join this musical group celebrating more than 30 years of concerts! The Second Sunday Pickers entertain with acoustic music, including country-and-western, bluegrass, folk, gospel, Cajun, and blues. Visitors are welcome to listen to free folk music or bring an instrument to join in the fun.

**Invasives Beware:** Saturday, April 20, from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. Assist Jones Park staff and the Jesse Jones Park Eradicators with the removal of invasive plant species as well as trail clearing and vital habitat restoration within Jones Park. Closed-toed shoes required; gloves

and long pants are recommended. Ages 16 and up or children accompanied by an adult.

**Easter Games:** Saturday, April 20, at 10 a.m. to noon. Spring is in full swing at Jones Park! Enjoy egg-rolling, bunny races, spoon races, and other traditional Easter games in a family-friendly environment. Bring a lunch and blanket for a picnic on the Redbud Hill Homestead's green meadow. Families with children ages 12 and under. Reservations are required and available beginning Wednesday, April 10.

**Nature Hunt:** Sunday, April 21, at 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Spend Easter Sunday appreciating the splendor of nature at Jones Park! Stop by the Nature Center for a scavenger hunt list full of interesting and unique items to find along the trails. A special surprise awaits at the Nature Center for contestants who find every item on the list. Ages 5 to 13.

Jesse H. Jones Park & Nature Center is located at 20634 Kenswick Drive in Humble. Jesse Jones Park Volunteers (JJPV) welcomes applications from interested participants. For more information about the park or any of the activities and programs offered, please call 281-446-8588 or visit [www.hcp4.net/community/parks/jones](http://www.hcp4.net/community/parks/jones).

HCC Next President,

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Community College Excellence, a rigorous executive leadership program led by the Aspen Institute and the Stanford Educational Leadership Initiative.

Prior to joining Tri-C, Dr. Umphrey worked for 20 years in multiple industries and for such companies as Med Solutions, ACS (Xerox) and Bridgestone/Firestone. This experience in leading enterprise projects for Fortune 500 companies has given her the skills needed to lead teams, manage resources, plan projects and adminis-

ter budgets. Such experience also gives her a keen understanding of the factors driving change and innovation, especially as she has applied her knowledge of workforce and academics to her leadership positions in higher education.

"Her education, private sector experience and her broad work in higher education as faculty and administrator, make her a great addition to the HCC Family," says Dr. Maldonado.

Dr. Umphrey's education includes a doctoral

degree in management from the University of Maryland and a Master of Science, as well as a Bachelor of Business Administration, from Middle Tennessee State University. Her memberships include American Association of Community Colleges; Workforce Development Institute and Achieving the Dream.

"We look forward to Dr. Umphrey's leadership as we elevate Houston Community College to an even greater level of success," says Dr. Maldonado.



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**CAPTAIN MARVEL** (PG-13) - 3:10pm, 9:10pm  
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**US** (R) - 12:15pm, 3:15pm, 6:15pm, 9:15pm  
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**US** (R) - 12:30pm, 3:30pm, 6:30pm, 9:30pm  
Stadium Seating

**CAPTIVE STATE** (PG-13) - 12:15pm, 6:15pm  
Stadium Seating

**FIVE FEET APART** (PG-13) - 3:15pm, 9:15pm  
Stadium Seating

**NO MANCHES FRIDA 2** (R) - 12:00pm, 2:30pm, 5:00pm, 7:30pm, 10:00pm  
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**WONDER PARK** (PG) - 2:45pm, 7:15pm  
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**WONDER PARK** (PG) - 3:00pm, 7:30pm  
Stadium Seating

**WONDER PARK** in 3D (PG) - 12:30pm, 5:15pm, 9:45pm  
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**WONDER PARK** in 3D (PG) - 12:15pm, 5:00pm, 9:30pm  
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OPINION PAGE

Social Security Matters

by AMAC Certified Social Security Advisor Russell Gloor Association of Mature American Citizens



Ask Rusty - No Special "extra dollars" for Veteran's Monthly Benefit

**Dear Rusty:** I am within a few weeks of applying for SS. My 70th Birthday is in April and I have stayed in my job for the maximum benefit from SS. I am also a veteran and so am taking my DD-214 with me to apply for the \$300.00 or so extra dollars that is offered per month. Are there any other extra items I need to apply for? I keep hearing about a \$16,000 benefit that I should apply for from SS but of course they never actually give you the specifics. Signed: Veteran Applying for SS

**Dear Veteran:** Please accept my gratitude for your service to our country, and congratulations for choosing a great strategy by waiting until you are 70 to get the maximum Social Security benefit available to you. However, I'm afraid I must clarify something regarding that "\$300 or so extra dollars that is offered per month." What you're referring to is called "special extra earnings" for military service, but that provision doesn't provide you with \$300 in additional monthly SS benefits because of your military service. Rather it is a provision, which adds dollars to your recorded military earnings, with the amount added dependent upon the years during which you served.

Those who served between 1957 and 1977 get \$300 added to their military earnings record for each quarter of active duty service. For example, if their actual military earnings for a given year of active duty were \$2,700, their military earnings for that year for Social Security purposes will be shown as \$3,900 (\$300 per quarter times 4 quarters = \$1200 additional earnings for that service year). Those who served between 1978 and 2001 would also receive an addition to their military earnings record, but it would be computed somewhat differently - they receive an additional \$100 in earnings for every \$300 in active duty military pay, up to a maximum of \$1,200 additional for each service year.

But these credits are not added to your monthly Social Security benefit payment; they are additions to your military earnings record, which may influence the amount of your Social Security benefit if your military service years are among the 35 years used to compute your SS benefit amount. Put simply, your earnings records for each year of active military service are increased by up to \$1200 per year for each year of active duty so that when your SS benefit is computed the higher earnings may increase your benefit amount. You can read all about this at the following link to Social Security's rules on this topic: <https://www.ssa.gov/planners/retire/military.html>. As you will see in this document, if you served between 1968 and 2001 you do not need to do anything to receive these additions to your military pay record; the special extra earnings have already been credited to your military pay records. And no "special extra earnings" are credited for military service after 2001.

As for your question about "any other extra items" you need to apply for, there really aren't any for you. By claiming your SS benefit to start in the month you attain 70 years of age you will be getting a benefit which is



Supplemental funding legislation draws from 'Rainy Day Fund'

AUSTIN — A few of the funding priorities expressed by the executive, legislative and judicial branches are not covered in Senate Bill 2, the state's tentatively approved appropriations bill for fiscal years 2020 and 2021.

So, on March 13, the Senate voted unanimously in favor of SB 500, \$6 billion in supplemental funding to plug many holes. Some \$4.3 billion of the total would be taken out of the Economic Stabilization ("Rainy Day") Fund. Authored by Senate Finance Committee Chair Jane Nelson, R-Flower Mound, the legislation proposes the following allocations:

- \$3 billion for Hurricane Harvey recovery expenses;
- \$2.1 billion to address the Medicaid shortfall;
- \$100 million for school safety, with an amendment that gives districts greater flexibility on the type of safety equipment they can buy;
- \$300 million to improve state hospital facilities;
- \$542 million to address pension liabilities for the Teacher Retirement System and provide retired teachers a "13th check" up to \$500;
- \$211 million to pay obligations of the Texas Tomorrow Fund, a college tuition savings program;
- \$160 million to address the Correctional Managed Health Care shortfall; and
- \$100 million to refill the Governor's Disaster Fund to help rebuild from natural disasters.

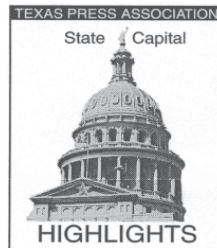
"The supplemental budget provides funding for some of the Legislature's key priorities: Hurricane Harvey relief, school safety and healthcare needs. It provides significant resources to improve the state's flood control infrastructure and helps communities along the Gulf Coast rebuild," Nelson said.

Sen. Brandon Creighton, R-Conroe, said hurricane disaster recovery and flood mitigation "are exact-

32% more than you would have received at your full retirement age of 66, and that is the maximum you can receive.

Regarding what you hear about "a \$16,000 benefit" you should apply for; those advertisements are marketing hype designed to get you to buy something or enroll in some program. If you keep digging (as I have) you will find that they'll finally suggest that you may be able get that much more if you delay claiming benefits until you are 70 years old, which, of course, you have already done. Please keep this adage in mind - "if it sounds too good to be true, it usually is." And once more, thank you for your military service and

STATE CAPITAL HIGHLIGHTS By Ed Sterling



ly what the Rainy Day Fund was designed for" and added that the fund, now at a historically high balance, is projected to reach \$15 billion. The state constitution caps the maximum biennial "Rainy Day Fund" balance at an amount not to exceed 10 percent of certain general revenue deposited during the previous biennium.

Declaration is extended

Gov. Greg Abbott on March 15 extended the state disaster declaration he originally issued on Aug. 23, 2017, to counties affected by Hurricane Harvey.

Thirty counties were named in the original declaration. As reports revealing the extent of the disaster came in, Abbott amended the declaration on Aug. 26, 27, 28 and Sept. 14, 2017, to include 30 more counties.

Abbott has renewed the disaster declaration every month since then, saying that a state of disaster continues to exist in those same counties.

Panel OKs pension bill

The Senate State Affairs Committee on March 14 approved SB 12, legislation to keep the state's Teacher Retirement System fund actuarially sound by increasing teacher, school district and state

congratulations for choosing a Social Security strategy that yields you the highest possible Social Security benefit available.

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contribution rates gradually over the next few years.

Last August, at the end of fiscal year 2018, the fund had \$47 billion in unmet debt obligations and a funding period of 87 years, the time it would take to pay off all of its liabilities under current revenues, according to the Senate News Service.

If nothing is done, unfunded liabilities would increase to \$124 billion by 2050, said Sen. Joan Huffman, R-Houston, chair of the committee. Under her proposal, the active teacher contribution would rise from the present 7.7 percent to 8.25 percent in 2024; state contributions would rise from 6.8 percent of payroll to 8.25 percent over the same period, and district contributions would rise from 1.5 percent of eligible payroll to 2 percent by 2025.

SB 12 next moves to the full Senate for consideration.

Effort targets trafficking

The Texas Department of Transportation, in partnership with the governor's office, law enforcement and industry partners, on March 12 announced the launching of the "On the Road to End Human Trafficking" initiative.

Similar to a neighborhood watch program, the initiative encourages everyone to know, watch for and report signs of trafficking.

TxDOT said University of Texas research showed more than 300,000 people are trafficked in Texas at any given time, including 79,000 youth victims. "These innocent human beings are horrifically abused by being forced into slavery, either in the form of hard labor or sex/prostitution," TxDOT said.

TxDOT is encouraging citizens to use a toll-free, confidential phone number, (888) 373-7888, to report suspected trafficking. Victims are encouraged to call 911.

Report: 11 measles cases

Eleven cases of measles have been reported in the Lone Star State since Jan. 1, according to information posted by the Texas Department of State Health Services.

In all of last year, nine cases of measles were reported statewide, the agency said.

The DSHS and the Atlanta-based U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend children get a dose of measles vaccine at 12 to 15 months of age and again at 4 to 6 years old.

TEXAS SENATE NEWS By Richard Lee

Bill could end use of red light cameras in Texas

(Austin) Cities could no longer use cameras to enforce red light traffic laws under a bill proposed before the Senate Transportation Committee on Wednesday. Officially known as photographic traffic signal enforcement systems, these cameras automatically take a picture of cars entering an intersection after the light has changed and the vehicle owner is sent a ticket. This contradicts the standard of presumption of innocence that lies at the foundation of our legal system, said Edgewood Senator Bob Hall. "This owner, who may not have even been in the vehicle, is presumed to be the person who committed the violation," he said. "The innocent owner has then the burden of proof and often great expense of proving that they did not commit the alleged violation. This turns our judicial system completely and utterly upside down by requiring the accused to prove their innocence." Hall's bill, SB 653, would prohibit municipalities and other local jurisdictions from using red light cameras.

In addition to the violation of judicial rights, Hall doesn't find arguments in favor of red light camera based on increased public safety compelling. The 2007 state law that allowed cities to issue citations up to \$75 based on red light camera evidence also required that cities conduct traffic engineering studies at intersections before those cameras are installed. Hall said that most cities didn't comply with this provision. "Inasmuch as many of these systems were installed illegally without the required traffic engineering studies to determine their need, there is no reliable way to determine if these cameras actually improve safety," he said.

Committee Chair and Jacksonville Senator Robert Nichols added later that the Senate has passed a bill ending red light camera programs three times, but has seen these measures die in the opposite chamber. "We're hoping we get something back from the House this year," he said. With more than two-thirds of Representatives signed on as co-authors to the identical House companion bill,

that seems likely this session.

Thursday, the Senate Business and Commerce Committee considered a bill by committee chair and North Richland Hills Senator Kelly Hancock that seeks to end the practice of surprise billing from health insurance companies. Hospitals and other health care facilities often employ contracted staff who work for companies who participate in different insurance networks. If the patient seeks care at an in-network facility and believes they are receiving care covered through their policy, it can be a shock to receive bills for hundreds or thousands of dollars for care from out-of-network physicians and technicians. This status quo punishes the patient for what is essentially a payment dispute between providers and insurers, said Hancock. "This just is an issue that stinks," he said. "It's an issue between doctors and insurance companies...and patients get stuck in the middle of this argument." Because patients can't choose which physicians and technicians give them care, Hancock argues that a true free market doesn't exist in the healthcare industry.

His bill would prohibit surprise billing when a patient has no choice in who is treating them. If a person receives care from an out-of-network provider at an in-network facility or out-of-network emergency care, SB 1264 would prohibit billing beyond co-pays, deductibles and other expected out-of-pocket expenses. It would settle disputes over payments between insurers and providers through existing mediation procedures at the state Department of Insurance, which according to testimony offered Thursday, has proven very effective in resolving these disagreements. The bill requires that state-regulated insurance companies pay the "usual and customary rate" or an agreed upon rate for out-of-network emergency care or facility providers. Self-funded insurance plans regulated at the federal level could opt in to state protections provided under this bill beginning in 2021.

The Senate will reconvene Monday, March 25 at 10:30 a.m.

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HOUSING & ENTERTAINMENT

# Lawn Equipment: Keep Safety In Mind

(NAPSI)—When spring is on its way, home owners are often eager to get outside and spruce up their yards. It's important when doing so to keep safety in mind.

"Before you use a mower, trimmer, blower, chain saw, pruner or other piece of outdoor power equipment this season, it's important to refresh yourself on handling and safety procedures," said Kris Kiser, president and CEO of the Outdoor Power Equipment Institute (OPEI), an international trade association representing outdoor power equipment, small engine and utility vehicle manufacturers and suppliers. "We're all eager to get outside and enjoy the living landscape after a long winter, but take the time to do basic maintenance now to ensure your equipment operates safely for the season and is ready to get the job done."

These six tips can help:  
1. Read your owner's manual. Follow all guidelines for your outdoor power equipment and familiarize yourself with the controls. If you have lost your manual, look it up online (and save a copy on your computer for easy reference in the future).

2. Inspect equipment. Check for loose belts and missing or damaged parts. Replace any parts needed or take your equipment to a qualified service representative for servicing.



When fixing up your outdoor living space for the season, remember to keep safety in mind.

3. Drain old fuel. Never leave fuel sitting in the gas tank of your equipment for more than 30 days. Untreated gasoline (without a fuel stabilizer) left in the system will deteriorate, which may cause starting or running problems and, in some cases, damage to the fuel system.

4. Protect your power by using only E10 or less fuel in outdoor power equipment. Some gas stations may offer 15 percent ethanol (E15) gas or higher-ethanol fuel blends but any fuel containing more than 10 percent ethanol can damage—and is illegal to use in—small engine equipment not designed for it.

5. Store fuel safely. Label your fuel can with the date of purchase and ethanol content of the fuel. Never put "old" gas in your

outdoor power equipment. If you don't know the date of purchase, dispose of the fuel in the can safely and buy fresh fuel. Always store fuel out of the reach of children or pets and in approved containers.

6. Clean equipment. Remove any dirt, oil or grass stuck to it. Clean equipment will run more efficiently and last longer.

"Now is also a good time to assess your outdoor power equipment needs," adds Kiser. "Whether you're needing battery-, gasoline-, propane-, diesel- or hybrid-powered equipment, there is a product to fit your unique needs that can handle any job."

Learn More  
For more safety tips, go to [www.opei.org](http://www.opei.org).

# 4 Simple hacks to beat seasonal allergies

(StatePoint) Allergies are the sixth leading cause of chronic illness in the U.S. and more than 50 million Americans suffer from them each year, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. When it comes to spring allergies, you don't need to anticipate the season with dread.

There are steps you can take to proactively dodge allergens and mitigate debilitating symptoms, according to the experts at AccuWeather.

### Change Your Routine

Are you a morning bather? Experts say that if you suffer from outdoor allergies, you would be wise to switch to evening showers. This will rid your hair and skin of pollen, so you don't bring it to bed with you. No matter what time of day you shampoo and scrub, you'll want to wash your linens in hot water, to remove as much pollen as possible.

### Stay in-the-Know

From dry winds blowing tree pollen into the air, to wet, rainy days causing dust mites and mold to thrive, weather has a huge impact on the spread of allergens and, subsequently, the way you feel, say experts.

"Spring allergies are driven by trees and grass pollen, and different people will have their own reactions. If you do suffer from

spring allergens, a cold front passing through can bring some relief," says Alan Reppert, AccuWeather senior meteorologist. "But even when the weather seems quiet, allergens can be present and contribute to illness. For example, when rain begins and washes pollen out of the air, mold spores can climb and cause allergy problems."

Get relevant information about weather and allergies in the palm of your hand so you can avoid the worst of it, or make necessary preparations when you can't. One useful tool is AccuWeather's daily allergy index, which is available on AccuWeather.com and on the free AccuWeather app for iOS and Android. Stay-in-the-know by frequently checking the app, which is also a good source of other weather-related tips, educational resources and information.

### Protect Indoor Air

Fresh air may sound appealing, but opening your car and home's windows is a fast-track to a high pollen count indoors. For a breeze, stick to air conditioning, as fans can kick up dust and pollen into the



PHOTO SOURCE: (c) pathdoc / stock.Adobe.com

### Consider Your Wardrobe

For those times when you must be out and about on high-pollen count days, wear a wide-brimmed hat and sunglasses to protect yourself. A scarf or mask over your mouth and nose can be useful when symptoms are severe. When you get home, be sure to remove outerwear, including shoes, in your mud room or foyer so you don't track allergens throughout the house, particularly in areas where you sleep and spend the most time. You can make smart decisions about your wardrobe as well as the best time to venture outdoors by consulting digital apps like AccuWeather before leaving the house.

This spring, don't let sniffles, sneezing and wheezing get the best of you. For a more comfortable season, check the weather often and take proper precautions.

## Amber Waves

by Dave T. Phipps

1. SINCE MOM GOT ME THIS CELL PHONE SHE HAS BEEN TEXTING ME NON-STOP.  
2. MOM, I'M A BIG GUY. NO NEED TO KEEP SENDING TEXTS TO CHECK UP ON ME.  
3. I GET IT. HOW AM I EVER GOING TO BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY WHEN I'M THIS ADORABLE?

by Mike Marland

1. I AM SICK OF WINTER, DAD!  
2. CHEER UP, JUNE—SPRING IS JUST AROUND THE CORNER!  
3. WHICH ONE?!!

by Jeff Pickering

1. IT'S COLD OUT THERE!!  
2. WHAT'S THE THERMOMETER SAY?  
3. "BRRR"

### Weekly SUDOKU

by Linda Thistle

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

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. Towel is missing. 2. Mom's hair is longer. 3. Puddle is bigger. 4. Water in tub is not visible. 5. Snorkel is longer. 6. Soap dish is higher.

Posting Date March 25, 2019

## King Crossword

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	
12			13					14			
15		16						17			
		18			19		20				
21	22		23		24						
25			26		27		28		29	30	31
32		33		34		35		36			
37			38		39		40		41		
			42		43		44		45		
46	47	48			49		50				
51				52		53				54	55
56				57					58		
59					60						61

ACROSS  
1 Jewel  
4 Appointment  
8 Con job  
12 Boxing leg-end  
13 Big story  
14 — Major  
15 Medieval entertainer  
17 Anger  
18 "— lazy river ..."  
19 Extreme  
21 Assault  
24 Heavy weight neckwear  
26 With it  
28 Complete range  
32 Exam format  
34 Illustrations  
36 Soybean paste  
37 Eastern potentate (Var.)  
39 LummoX  
41 Profit  
42 Needlefish  
44 Aplenty  
46 Graham Python  
50 Bay State sch.  
51 Humdinger  
52 Alternatives to station wag-ons  
56 Israeli airline  
57 Carbon compound  
58 Where (Lat.)  
59 Roll up  
60 Almost black  
61 Knock  
62 country  
63 Gator's cousin  
64 Largest continent  
65 Shoppers' mecca  
66 Hot tub  
67 Pooch  
68 Lotion additive  
69 Expression  
70 Sedona automaker  
71 Layer  
72 Expert  
73 Labyrinth  
74 Older spelling for a South American  
75 Humorous hoax  
76 Playground game  
77 Aries  
78 Kin  
79 Japanese noodles  
80 Actress Ullmann  
81 Staff leader?  
82 Streaming video giant  
83 Winged  
84 1492 craft  
85 Penultimate mo.  
86 Cagers' org.  
87 Try the tea

DOWN  
1 Leg, slangily  
2 Yale student  
3 Little details  
4 Break off  
5 Spring mo.  
6 Layer  
7 Brilliance  
8 Older spelling for a South American  
9 Carry  
10 Addict  
11 Carry

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Trivia Test Answers  
1. Shakespeare in Love? 2. Hemmoglobin. 3. Paprika. 4. Sara Jane Moore and Lynette "Squeaky" Fromme. 5. A sander. 6. Neptune. 7. To forbid or prohibit. 8. Bambooz. 9. "The Chronicles of Narnia". 10. William Broad

### Trivia test

by Fifi Rodriguez

- MOVIES: Which film with a literary title won the 1999 Oscar for Best Picture?
- ANATOMY: What gives red blood cells their color?
- FOOD & DRINK: What spice gives Hungarian goulash its characteristic flavor?
- HISTORY: Who were the two women who tried to assassinate President Gerald Ford on two separate occasions in 1975?
- ANIMAL KINGDOM: What is a group of swine called?
- ASTRONOMY: Which planet in our solar system (other than Earth) is known as the "Blue Planet"?
- LANGUAGE: What does the Latin word "veto" mean?
- GENERAL KNOWLEDGE: What is the fastest growing plant in the world?
- LITERATURE: Which children's fantasy series featured a ship called "The Dawn Treader"?
- MUSIC: What was English singer Billy Idol's name at birth?

Solution time: 25 mins.

Answers  
King Crossword

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LIFESTYLE

Programs at Jesse Jones Park

**Jesse Jones Park Volunteers:** Monday, April 29, at 7 p.m. Featuring a new program every month, volunteer meetings include information about upcoming volunteer opportunities and projects with the Jesse Jones Park Volunteers (JJPV). Join Education Programmer John Carey for the April program, Planting for Wildlife. This engaging presentation teaches how simple vegetation management techniques can benefit wildlife habitats. Ages 16 and up, or children accompanied by an adult.

**Tadpoles Club:** Wednesdays, May 1, 8, 15, and 22, at 10:30 a.m. or 1 p.m. This interactive program helps introduce preschool-aged children to nature through stories,

crafts, puppets, short walks, and animals. This staff-naturalist-led program provides a great opportunity for parents and children to learn about and enjoy nature together. Reservations are required and available beginning Wednesday, April 3. Ages 3 to 4 only. Parent must accompany children. No younger or older siblings.

**Nature Photo Contest:** Saturday, May 4, at 1 p.m. Share your love of nature with the community by participating in Jones Park's 2019 Nature Photo Contest! With this year's new 'Mobile' category, anyone with a mobile device or tablet can be a nature photographer — no fancy equipment needed. Categories include: Wildlife, Scenic, Plant/Wildflowers,

People in the Park, and Mobile. In addition to last year's divisions, 'Adult' (ages 16 and older) and 'Junior' (ages 15 and younger), this year there will be a People's Choice division chosen by the public. This contest is open to all amateur photographers except Harris County Precinct 4 employees. Please note, photographs must be taken inside Jones Park boundaries between April 30, 2019, and May 1, 2019. For updated rules or more information, call 281-446-8588 or visit [www.hcp4.net/Community/Parks/Jones/Contest](http://www.hcp4.net/Community/Parks/Jones/Contest).

**Homestead Open House:** Wednesdays and Saturdays from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. Appreciate modern conveniences by taking a step back in time. Enjoy a

look around the park's historically accurate 1830s Redbud Hill Homestead and Akokisa-Ishak Village. Learn about two very different, yet successful ways of life. Self-guided interpretive brochures are available in the Nature Center, so visitors can move at their own pace.

Jesse H. Jones Park & Nature Center is a Harris County Precinct 4 facility located at 20634 Kenswick Drive in Humble. Jesse Jones Park Volunteers (JJPV) welcomes applications from interested participants. For more information about the park or any of the activities and programs offered, please call 281-446-8588 or visit [www.hcp4.net/community/parks/jones](http://www.hcp4.net/community/parks/jones).

Mercer Botanic Gardens Programs

**Lunch Bunch.** Second Wednesday of the month from noon to 2 p.m. Join fabulous speakers at these free presentations covering diverse topics. Participants should bring a lunch and dress for the weather. Lunch Bunch is a free program offered at Mercer's East Side Gardens and is recommended for participants ages 12 and older. For more information, contact Mercer Botanic Gardens at 713-274-4160 or [mercbotanicgardens@hcp4.net](mailto:mercbotanicgardens@hcp4.net).

**Storytime in the Gardens.** Every Monday at 10:30 a.m. In partnership with Harris County Public Library, Mercer presents a unique Storytime in the

natural setting of Mercer for parents and children to enjoy together. Storytime garden locations may vary each week. Call 713-274-4160 to find out the location or to check for cancellations due to weather or holidays.

Mercer Botanic Gardens is one mile north of FM 1960 at 22306 Aldine Westfield Road in Humble, 77338. Anyone seeking additional information or requiring special assistance to participate in any program should contact Mercer at 713-274-4160 or [mercbotanicgardens@hcp4.net](mailto:mercbotanicgardens@hcp4.net). Visit Mercer online at [www.hcp4.net/parks/mercer](http://www.hcp4.net/parks/mercer).

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**Log Homes** - 4 Log Home kits selling for balance owed, free delivery. Model #101 Carolina, bal. \$17,000; Model #203 Georgia, bal. \$19,950; Model #305 Biloxi, bal. \$14,500; Model #403 Augusta, bal. \$16,500. View plans at [www.loghomedream.com](http://www.loghomedream.com).

**Schneider Hiring Party** - March 29 & 30, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., DFW Airport Marriott South, 4151 Centreport Drive, Fort Worth, TX. Prizes, great jobs and more. Contact: Brian at 210-488-1774. RSVP: [schneiderjobs.com/events](http://schneiderjobs.com/events).

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# LIFESTYLE

## BIBLE TRIVIA

by Wilson Casey—  
 1. Is the book of 2 Chronicles in the Old or New Testament or neither?  
 2. In Luke 22, what "Mount" did Jesus go to of which His disciples also followed? Carmel, Zion, Olives, Pisgah  
 3. What future Israelite leader as a baby was described as "exceedingly fair"? Solomon, David, Herod, Moses


4. From Judges 16, how many times did Delilah say Samson mocked her? 1, 3, 5, 7  
 5. According to Ecclesiastes 6, what has already been named? Everything, Stars, Fishes, Great Sea  
 6. The name Lucifer means what kind of "bearer" in Latin? Gift, False, Light, Demonic  
 ANSWERS: 1) Old; 2) Olives; 3) Moses; 4) 3; 5) Everything; 6) Light

THE ILLUSTRATED BIBLE

"Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad."  
 Then the Jews said to Him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?"  
 Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM."

JOHN 8: 56-58

"Diskussion" by Emil Nolde (1913)



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# COMMUNITY NEWS

## NORTH HOUSTON LITTLE LEAGUE OPENING DAY MARCH 23, 2019



The AVENGERS special needs kids were one of 14 teams that played baseball and softball on Saturday.



The AVENGERS team of special needs kids had as much fun as anyone. Adults helped the players even when they were in wheelchairs.



Everyone had a good time with Games and Food and riding the kiddies train.



The HOUSTON BOMBERS took 2nd Place in Floats for this imaginative and colorful piece.



Here are some of the HOUSTON BOMBERS major league team.



The CARDINALS are one of the teams that played on opening day.



Every parade needs a fire truck and flashing lights on the ambulance. Thank you Westfield VFD and EMS #1.



The CUBS look like they know how to play to win. Look at that stance of the player on the right.



These players of the PIRATES are out to steel the winning title.

Photos by Sara Garcia, Julieta Paita, and Gil Hoffman.

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