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# NORTHEAST NEWS

## Aldine ISD Graduation Ceremonies Cancelled

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VOL. 44, NO. 29 TUESDAY, JULY 21, 2020 HOUSTON, TEXAS www.nenewsroom.com

### NEWS NOTES

**TO OUR READERS:**  
The current Covid-19 Pandemic and other economic conditions have caused us to combine some issues every two weeks, and to change distribution to Pick-up locations. See page 7 for 50 locations where you can get a copy of the Northeast News, and page 6 for email subscriptions. We thank you for your continued support.

### COVID-19 RESOURCES

#### CITY OF HOUSTON

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## At least 16 units damaged in massive fire at Aldine apartment complex



A 2-alarm fire destroyed 16 units at an apartment complex on Aldine Mail Rt.

HARRIS COUNTY — At least 16 units were damaged early Monday morning, July 13, in a massive 2-alarm fire at a north Harris County apartment complex.

This happened in the Capewood Apartments located in the 4300 block of Aldine Mail Route. The Aldine Fire Department said they were alerted to the fire shortly before 3:30

a.m. When they arrived on scene there was a large fire at the south end of the apartment complex.

See Massive Fire, Page 8

## 3 COVID-19 testing centers within Aldine ISD

Aldine ISD has three COVID-19 testing centers available to meet the testing needs of the Aldine community.

In May, a testing center opened at Griggs Primary School (801 Regional Park) thanks to a partnership between Aldine ISD and U.S. Congresswoman Shelia Jackson Lee. Testing is done free of charge and begins at 8 a.m. Monday-Friday.

Another testing center is located at the M.O. Campbell Educational Center (MOC) and is a partnership between Aldine ISD, Pct. 2 County Commissioner Adrian Garcia, and the Harris County Department of Health. The testing is free and is held Monday through Saturday, with no testing offered on Wednesdays. The MOC testing center will run until July 25. Testing begins at 8 a.m. and is limited to 200 pre-registered

individuals per day.

Testing will take place at the M.O. Campbell Educational Center, underneath its canopy.

Testing will be done on a drive-through basis, however, individuals must register ahead of time to be tested. Register at the Harris County Health dept website just click on this line: covcheck.hctx.net

The third COVID-19 testing center is located at Bussey Elementary School (11555 Airline Blvd.) and is being conducted by the City of Houston Health Department. This is another free testing location. Testing begins at 10 a.m. Monday through Friday.

District officials said approximately 700 people are tested per day at the three locations (250 a day at Griggs, 250 a day at Bussey, and 200 a day at the M.O. Campbell Educational Center).

## Aldine ISD to start first 3 weeks of school virtually

Aldine ISD's re-entry plan, Return to Learn, will now have all students learning virtually from home for at least the first three weeks of the 2020-2021 school year. The 2020-21 school year begins Monday, August 17.

"We are thankful that the TEA made the decision to allow districts to use virtual learning as an option

for the first three weeks," Superintendent Dr. LaTonya M. Goffney said. "Aldine will take advantage of this option. Regardless of the model families select — Learning At Home or Learning On Campus — the first three weeks of school will be virtual. As we move forward, we must remain flexible as we continue to monitor the condi-

tions in Harris County and Houston. We will open as fast as we can but as slow as we must."

Goffney emphasized that the academic school year begins on August 17. She stressed that the three-week remote learning period would help facilitate and ease the transition of the on-campus, back-to-school process

for staff and families. The time will also be used for teacher training and planning. The district will continue to monitor local health conditions and reassess as needed throughout the school year.

"Teachers are the oil in this machine. Without them, we can't begin to educate students. Their safety has always been top of

mind as we make plans to return to school," said Goffney. "Our Teaching and Learning team continues to improve our online learning processes and is developing training and professional development so that teachers are pre-

See Virtual Schooling, Page 8

## 2020 VISION: BRING YOUR FUTURE INTO FOCUS!

The world looks a little different right now, but one thing is clear; Lone Star College-North Harris is here for you.

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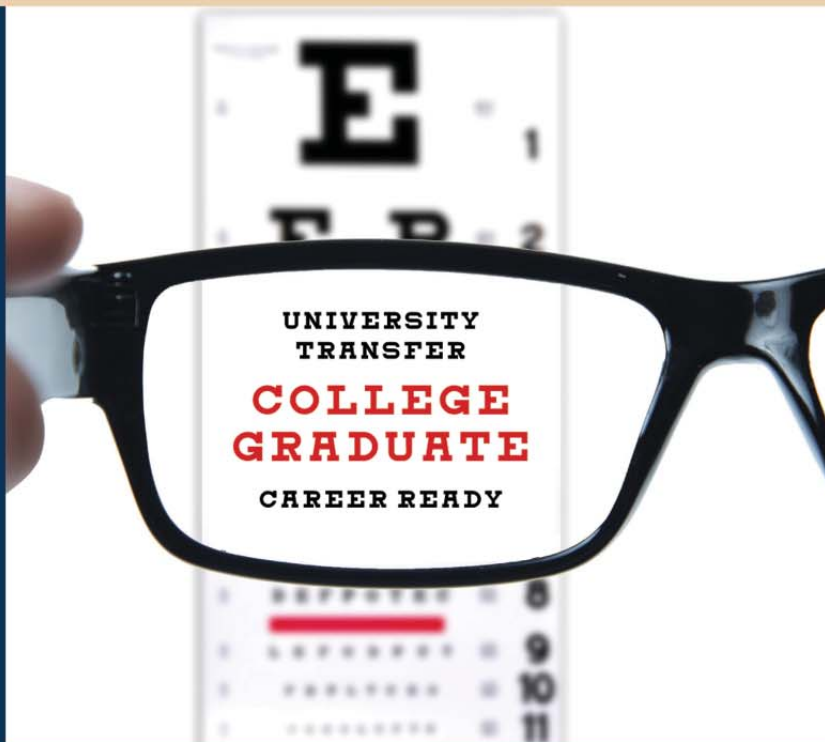
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Get help with financing: [FACC@LoneStar.edu](mailto:FACC@LoneStar.edu)

LSC-East Aldine Center questions:

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Fall classes begin Aug. 24

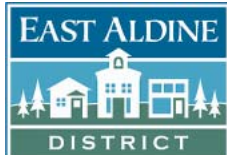


[LoneStar.edu/LearnMore](http://LoneStar.edu/LearnMore)

### CONFESSIONS:

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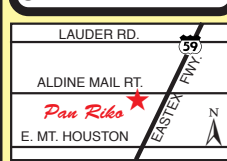
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# SCHOOL NEWS

## Aldine ISD's New Advisory Council for Advanced Academics to Begin Process to Strengthen, Expand Program

The Advanced Academics Advisory Council will begin the process to strengthen and expand the program with initial meetings, known as Design Days, set for July 14 and July 15, with the second session taking place on July 21 and July 22.

Susan Pelezo, executive director of advanced academics, is leading the Council. The Council is a collaboration between district leaders and a diverse group of community stakeholders dedicated to strengthening the Advanced Academics program in Aldine ISD. Members will develop a framework to meet several Aldine ISD strategic plan, A New Way Forward, priorities which include student achievement.

### What exactly falls under Advanced Academics?

Advanced Academics is an umbrella term that encompasses all the differentiated programs and services the Aldine Independent School District offers to its advanced and high potential learners. These programs and services are specially designed to extend, enrich, and accelerate the standard school program to meet students' (K-12) needs.

Programs and services include gifted and talented (GT), advanced-level classes at the middle and high school levels, Duke TIP (Duke University's Talent Identification Program); advanced placement classes, as well as dual credit courses, and dual enrollment in University of Texas (UT) On-Ramps program at the high school level; subject-

or grade-level acceleration at all levels, and college and career readiness (e.g., PSAT, SAT, ACT).

Aldine ISD is expanding its UT OnRamps program from two courses in the 2019-2020 school year to 10 courses in 2020-2021.

The goal is to broaden identified students' knowledge, skills, and experiences beyond their traditional classroom setting. The program emphasizes developing independent, self-directed learners by encouraging and supporting in-depth learning, critical thinking as well as divergent and creative thinking.

The Advanced Academics Program advocates for appropriate academic challenges for all students. It also strives to efficiently educate and support the district, campuses, and parents.

The Texas State Plan for The Education of Gifted/Talented Students requires an Advisory Council for Advanced Academics for every school district that offers these programs and services.

### What is the role of the Advisory Council for Advanced Academics?

The Council reviews the district's advanced academics plan, including revisions. It also determines the extent to which it was implemented for the previous year.

Members of a Council explore successful practices, strategies, and curriculum in K-12 in schools that offer Advanced Academics. The Council proposes a set of school-based actions to increase access to challenging learning experiences at all levels.

### Who comprises the Council?

The Council includes parent representatives of students that have been identified as gifted and talented, the executive director of advanced academics, campus administrators, school counselors, GT coordinators, teachers, including Teaching and Learning Program directors representing every K-12 level. The Council addresses the students' needs in the Advanced Academics program. The AISD inaugural Council plans to meet at least three times during the school year.

Pelezo added that the mission of the Advanced Academics Advisory Council is to enhance the bridge between families and Aldine ISD educators by engaging in the school community through communication to families and honoring the perspectives of families and educators.

"To strengthen our Advanced Academics K-12 Program, we need to hear all perspectives," Pelezo said. "I want to connect diverse voices to inspire action and impact students' opportunities, experiences, and successes."

During Design Days, members of the Advanced Academics Advisory Council will work with a consulting firm in the design thinking process on creating an advanced academics framework, which will advocate for the expansion and inclusivity of GT and Advanced Academics programs.

For more information about Aldine's Advanced Academics Programs, email Dr. Susan Pelezo at [atspelezo@aldineisd.org](mailto:atspelezo@aldineisd.org).

## Cheryl Fontenot retires after 23 years of service to Aldine ISD

The private sector's loss was Aldine ISD and education's gain.

After working in the private sector for a few years, Cheryl Fontenot knew her first love was education.

So, in 1989, she left the private sector and entered the teaching profession, where she remained for the next 31 years. Fontenot spent 23 of those 31 years with Aldine ISD and retired after serving as principal of Jones Elementary School, a campus she opened in 2008.

Fontenot said the career change was an easy one to make.

"I chose education to make a difference in the lives of children," she said. "Although I started in the private industry, I never looked back on deciding to become an educator. Not only have I been a part of opening minds and building self-esteem, but I have learned so much from my students. They have taught me to begin and end each day with a smile. I have also learned to listen more than you talk. Each day was eventful and never boring."

Fontenot earned her bachelor's degree in journalism from the University of Houston and her master's degree in educational leadership from that same university.

She began her teaching career in 1989 at Atherton Elementary School in Houston ISD, and in 1997, she joined Aldine ISD as the math skills specialist at Oleson Elementary School. From 1999-2004 she served as an assistant principal at Oleson before being named principal of Magrill Elementary in 2004. In 2008 she was tabbed to open Jones Elementary School and serve as that school's first-ever principal.

Fontenot said she thoroughly enjoyed her 23 years in Aldine and her 31 years in education, where she had the chance to influence so many young lives.

"The rewards in education are priceless moments," Fontenot said. "Some of the highlights of my career have been when students who once struggled in school reach out. They send me thank-you notes, graduation invitations for medical and law school, or just stopping by the school to say 'hi.' Their presence affirms that I made an impact on their lives. Another highlight of my career was opening Jones Elementary. It was not easy, but as I look back over the years, I am excited about the positive culture and learning environment that Jones



Cheryl Fontenot

Elementary has become."

While she is looking forward to retirement, Fontenot admitted she would miss the daily interactions with her students and staff.

"I will truly miss the students and staff in Aldine," she said. "My experience in Aldine has been so rewarding. I am grateful for the opportunity to work for a school district that believes in equity for all students, no matter what their circumstances may be. This positive mindset leads to endless possibilities for our scholars in the future. I also pride myself on having outstanding attendance during my 23 years in Aldine. I was committed to leading by example and being present every day."

## Lewis Middle School science teacher only Houston-area teacher chosen for Aramco Americas, Texas A&M's Geology Camp

While teachers across the country and Houston prepared for the 2020-21 school year, Lewis Middle School science teacher Michael Arratia went camping.

Well, not literally, but virtually as he participated on-line in Aramco America's and Texas A&M's Geology Camp (GCAMP).

Arratia was one of 31 teachers from 16 states chosen to participate in the camp and he was the only science teacher from Houston selected for the camp.

Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, the camp was held virtually from June 25-July 14. The theme of the camp was "The Geology of North America through the National Park Experience." Arratia and his fellow campers viewed Ken Burns' documentary "Americas Best Ideas: The National Parks," and National Geographic's Geology of North America through the National Parks.

Texas A&M has taken this regional geoscience program to a more national level with teachers at a critical level (middle school and high school) in generating excitement for science, technology, engineering, math and STEM subjects. Aramco Americas supported the program as part of its longstanding commitment to STEM education.

The camp focused on 18 National Parks with distinct geological features such as glaciers, sand dunes, and seashores.

Arratia, who just completed his first year at Lewis Middle School after teacher in Fort Bend ISD, had to submit an application and write an essay on why he should have been



Lewis Middle School science teacher Michael Arratia recently participated virtually in a Geology Camp sponsored by Aramco Americas and Texas A&M University.

selected and how he would use his experience at the camp in his classroom.

Arratia said he thoroughly enjoyed the experience and learned so much more about this country's National Parks.

"I learned that I can incorporate these beautiful national wonders of the park system to my students," he said. "By showing them the geology, I can maybe show them these beautiful places that are actually 'science labs.' Also, by doing this virtual trip with GCAMP, I have learned different strategies that I can use with my students such as Virtual Reality learning. By working with other teachers from across the country, we have shared ideas and strategies for virtual learning. I hope to bring this to my students so that they can enjoy science."

The GCAMP provided Arratia with some strategies and teaching styles he hopes to use this coming school year.

"I have learned how to prepare a Virtual Reality Lesson and actually put the student inside a volcano," Arratia said. "VR is the

next step in teaching because the teacher can actually put the student where he or she wants in order to learn about a certain topic. I was able to walk around the different National Parks without being there.

"In addition, I have gotten many ideas from the other teachers on how they teach a certain topic, or even discuss experiments that can be done with students for a certain geologic topic. I have also learned how geology and other sciences (Chemistry, Biology and Physics) go hand-in-hand."

It took Arratia 10 years to apply for GCAMP and he said the wait was well worth it.

"It took 10 years for me to finally apply to GCAMP because I was working on other programs or I was doing research," Arratia said. "It was a long journey, but I am now on this wonderful journey for the next two years (virtual this year and then in person in the summer of 2021)," he said.

And it appears, Arratia's wait was well worth it for him and his students.

## LSC chancellor named as one of the Most Admired CEO honorees by Houston Business Journal

HOUSTON (June 30, 2020) – The Houston Business Journal named Stephen C. Head, Ph.D., LSC chancellor as one of its Most Admired CEO honorees for 2020. A panel of judges looked for characteristics such as contribution to company success, civic involvement, career achievement and more.

"I have had the privilege of working closely with Dr. Head on a variety of matters to ensure Lone Star College students are given access to a quality education that remains affordable," said Alton Smith, Ed.D., LSCS Board of Trustees chair. "His approach demonstrates the qualities one looks for in a

leader. He values communication, integrity, accountability and a vision toward the future."

In all, the judges selected 31 for-profit leaders and 19 nonprofit leaders for this year's award. The 50 honorees will be recognized in a special section of HBJ's Aug. 21 weekly edition and at a virtual event via a live stage Aug. 20.

"I would like to congratulate all the other recognized honorees who make our community a better place to live," said Head. "It is truly an honor for me to be included among this group of leaders who have given so much of their time and talent."

This year's judges were HBJ Editor-in-Chief Giselle Greenwood; Brian Greene, Houston Food Bank president and CEO; Jonathan Newton, Baker McKenzie LLP partner; and Robert Reedy, Porter Hedges LLP managing partner.

"They say the true test of a leader is someone who can confront adversity and make those around them



Lone Star College Chancellor Dr. Stephen C. Head was named as one of its Most Admired CEO honorees for 2020 by the Houston Business Journal.

stronger," said Smith. "There is no better example of this than the challenge Dr. Head faced as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Thanks to his leadership, LSC increased online courses from 1,624 to 6,825 in just three weeks, a growth of 320%, providing students the opportunity to complete the spring 2020 semester."

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## COMMUNITY NEWS

## Run-off election results hold surprises

HARRIS COUNTY – Tuesday, the Democratic and Republican Parties held their Run-Off Primary elections and the results were different than many predicted.

Substantially more people voted for the Democratic Party in early voting at the Edith Faye Cook Cole Crosby Branch Library. Early voting counts for Crosby were 744 Democratic and 434 Republican most probably due to the hotly contentious local Precinct 3 Constable election and the fact that there were more contests at issue for the Democrats. Over 150,000 votes were cast county wide on the Democratic ticket. The Republicans drew about 60,000 on their ballot.

Voters are no longer designated to specific voting precincts but habitually tend to vote at locations near where they live and with which they are familiar.

Jacinto City and vicinity had a showdown between Precinct 2 Constable incumbent Chris Diaz against challenger Lt. Jerry Garcia. This was a close race, with Garcia winning by only 229 votes of 9,505 cast. This race had been marked with negative

### Winners in Constable Races



**Incumbent Constable Sherman Eagleton won the race in Precinct 3, defeating Ken Jones with 77.5% of the votes cast. Jones had held the office prior to his retirement.**



**Jerry Garcia ran against incumbent Constable Chris Diaz in Precinct 2, and defeated him in a close race, with 51.2% of the votes cast. Garcia was able to declare victory just before midnight.**

charges of unethical practices and favoritism on both sides.

Nearby, at the Kashmere MultiService Center, 1348 Democrats voted early and 48 Republicans. The Martin Flukinger Community Center had 1458 to 145 Republican early voters. Alvin D. Baggett Community Center saw 1051 Democrats early voting and only 122 Republicans. Ripley House Campus had 954 Democrats and 87 Republicans. The John Phillips Courthouse had 346

Democrats vote early with 197 Republicans.

This election had two early news breaks for the Democrats, Diane Trautman resigned due to health issues as Harris County Clerk, her term would lapse in 2022. Andrea Duhon withdrew as Harris County Department of Education (at Large) School Trustee. The

See Election Results, Page 8

## Aldine ISD Graduation Ceremonies Cancelled

Just 11 days ago, Harris County Judge Lina Hidalgo upgraded the COVID-19 public threat level from significant (Orange, Level 2) to severe (Red, Level 1). This is the highest level, and those who live in Harris County are encouraged to follow safety precautions and limit activities outside of their home.

Following this guidance, Aldine ISD has decided to cancel the Class of 2020 outdoor graduation ceremonies, scheduled for July 22-25. District leaders

made the decision after reviewing guidance from the Harris County Department of Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

"Canceling our in-person graduation was a difficult decision to make, but we believe we must act out of an abundance of caution to protect the safety and well-being of our students and families," said Aldine ISD Superintendent Dr. LaTonya M. Goffney. "I want to thank our families for their patience as we

have dealt with this unprecedented situation."

While the traditional ceremony will not take place, the District held a virtual conferral ceremony on June 1, recognizing the senior class as official graduates of Aldine ISD. During this ceremony, the Aldine ISD Board of Trustees and Dr. Goffney officially recognized the completion of graduating seniors' high school diplomas. The graduates of the Class of 2020 are officially Aldine ISD alumni.

## Violent Crimes Investigators need Suspect Identified

Investigators are releasing photos of an aggravated robbery suspect and need the public's help in identifying him.

On Wednesday July 1, 2020, an unknown Hispanic male entered Home Depot located in the 10600 block of the Eastex Freeway in north Harris County.

The male walked to a display area and grabbed boxed power tools.

The male passed all points of sale and did not attempt to pay for the power tools.

Home Depot Loss Pre-

vention personnel attempted to contact the suspect, the male then pointed a black handgun at the Home Depot employee.

The suspect then fled the area in a white passenger car (possibly a Mercury).

He is described as 16-20 years of age, standing about 5'9 to 5'11 in height.

The male weighs around 190 to 200 Lbs.

Anyone with information on this suspect is urged to call the HCSO Violent Crimes unit at 713-274-9100 or Crime Stoppers at 713-222-TIPS (8477).



Suspect

## Lone Star College announces plans for fall semester

HOUSTON (July 8, 2020) – Lone Star College has announced what students can expect when attending fall 2020 semester classes. Fall classes begin Aug. 24.

"We understand there continues to be uncertainty, but it is important for students to know their safety is our No. 1 priority," said Stephen C. Head, Ph.D., LSC chancellor. "We have taken every precaution necessary to ensure students can continue their education in a safe environment."

The fall 2020 semester will consist of approximately 50% of courses offered online; 25% hybrid (a combination of online and face to face); and 25% face to face with most of those classes focused on workforce training.

"These numbers will vary from location to location depending on workforce requirements, facilities, elevators and room sizes," said Head.

Fall 2020 registration is now open. Class start dates are available throughout the year and many students qualify for financial assistance which covers educational expenses including tuition, fees, books

and supplies.

Access to all LSC buildings that have been reopened will be limited only to students who are taking classes that involve face-to-face instruction. Students and instructors will be required to undergo a temperature check and wear a mask when entering a LSC building. They will also be asked to complete a health questionnaire. Personal Protection Equipment will be provided for those who don't have them.

LSC will offer 4,400 online classes in the 2020 fall semester in 128 different subjects (most will be offered in traditional online format and many will be offered with weekly face-to-face meetings on a LSC teleconferencing platform). Last spring, LSC was able to expand 1,624 sections of online courses to 6,825 in the online migration, an increase of 5,201 online course sections.

"We have asked the college presidents to be creative and innovative in their planning by offering block scheduling, afternoons, nights, Friday, Saturday and, where needed, Sunday classes to meet the needs of our students," said

Head. "We are also preparing contingency plans to shift back to 100% online classes if the situation warrants in the fall."

LSC is using stimulus funds to purchase 5,000 computers for students needing assistance during the fall 2020 semester. These computers will be available as loaners (similar to library checkout computers) through the LSC Office of Technology Services.

LSC is also able to provide emergency financial grants to students to help cover expenses related to disruptions due to the coronavirus such as food, housing, course materials, technology, health care and child care through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act (CARES Act). Students can learn more by visiting LoneStar.edu/CARESAct.

"Lone Star College will continue to adhere to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and local governmental agency guidelines and best practices," said Head.

Additional information on the fall 2020 semester can be found at LoneStar.edu/Fall2020.

## Tips to spend less money on cooling your home this summer

(StatePoint) Keeping your home cool and comfortable on hot summer days doesn't need to cost a fortune. These tips can ensure your heating and cooling equipment lasts a long time and operates at maximum efficiency:

- Clean and change filters: Dirty air filters can cause a system to suffer from pressure drop, which can lead to reduced air flow or "blow-out," which can result in no air infiltration at all. When this occurs, your HVAC equipment is working harder, which means increased energy bills and ultimately, more wear and tear. To avoid costly repairs and replacements and enjoy lower utility bills, clean your air filters monthly.

As far as replacing air filters is concerned, one general guideline to follow is to change them every three months. However, the truth is that optimal frequency for this maintenance task depends on a variety of factors, including the type of filter in your HVAC unit, the size of your home, if anyone in your family has allergies and whether or not you have pets. No matter how often

you change air filters, be sure they are properly-sized for your system.

The importance of cleaning and replacing air filters can't be overstated. Dirty air filters won't just cost you more money, they can compromise your home's indoor air quality and aggravate allergies and respiratory issues.

- Get annual service: Your HVAC or furnace technician should service your unit annually in order to check that all its various components are in working order. A service check may actually detect a problem before you notice it, and catching it in time could extend your unit's life. Be sure to schedule this service before it's an emergency (i.e. don't wait until it's the hottest day of the year and your unit is in disrepair.)

- Replace older units: Consider whether it's time to replace your unit, factoring in its age and regularity of service. Newer units, especially those with ENERGY STAR labels, operate more efficiently. Indeed, a properly sized and installed ENERGY STAR air conditioner uses up to 20 percent less elec-

tricity than older models. So, even if your heating or cooling system is properly maintained, you may be spending more money than is necessary each month.

- Do it right: For ultimate savings, it's best to ensure your HVAC equipment is installed and serviced properly. The best way to ensure fast, efficient service done right the first time is by hiring a technician certified by North American Technician Excellence (NATE) for all installations, repairs and maintenance. NATE-certified technicians have demonstrated their knowledge of today's increasingly sophisticated heating and cooling systems by passing a nationally recognized test developed and supported by all segments of the heating, ventilation and air-conditioning industry. To find a NATE-certified technician in your area, visit Nates.org.

If reducing cooling costs, increasing home comfort and helping protect the environment are all important to you, there's good news, with proper HVAC installation and maintenance, these don't need to be competing priorities.

## Governor Abbott announces \$41 million in federal COVID-19 emergency funding for local governments

AUSTIN - Governor Greg Abbott today announced that his Public Safety Office (PSO) will provide \$41 million in federal funds to assist cities and counties throughout the COVID-19 response. These funds come from the Coronavirus Emergency Supplemental Funding (CESF) Program authorized by the federal Emergency Appropriations for Coronavirus Health Response and Agency Operations Act. The first round of awards, totaling \$7 million, will be distributed this week.

"I thank our federal partners for their support and ongoing collaboration as we work to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in Texas," said Governor Ab-

bott. "This funding is a critical to helping local governments protect Texans and combat the spread of the virus in our communities. The State of Texas will continue to work with the federal government to help meet the needs of our cities and counties as they respond to COVID-19."

Funds awarded under the CESF Program will be used by local units of government for first responder overtime and hazard pay; equipment and supplies supporting teleworking technologies, social distancing and personal protective gear; county jail costs associated with the medical needs of inmates as well as reimbursement for holding inmates awaiting transfer to the Texas

Department of Criminal Justice.

The CESF Program provides financial assistance to cities and counties to address the public safety challenges posed by the outbreak of COVID-19. The Governor's Public Safety Office (PSO) is responsible for administering these funds and is moving quickly to release awards.

A list of jurisdictions that have received an award can be found here. The list will be updated as awards are released. Local units of government that are interested in learning more about this program can contact PSO via egrants@gov.texas.gov or at 512-463-1919.

### An Important update on Medicare

Find out how it can affect you.

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- Get **options** that can help limit your out-of-pocket expenses
- Learn about **Medicare benefits** many retirees may not be aware of

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## OPINION PAGE

## NEWSPAPERS

By Texas Press Association

*Help journalism.  
Help yourself. Buy a  
weekly newspaper*

By Helen Sosniecki

You work for GateHouse or Gannett or one of the many groups that have been merging or closing papers right and left across the country.

You've been bought out at one location, gone through a layoff at another and you just aren't sure you want to continue on that treadmill any longer as you anticipate the possibility of another.

If you have an entrepreneurial spirit, maybe now is the time to consider buying a weekly newspaper or starting one in a "news desert," a community that no longer has a newspaper.

It won't be all fun and games. The hours are long. The financial payback may be less than your corporate salary. But the rewards in your accomplishments as a community newspaper owner can overshadow those drawbacks.

Groups buy, sell and trade publications with nothing more than a check of the financials. No one from corporate ever sets foot in most of the communities involved.

You need to approach a potential purchase in much broader terms, because you aren't just buying a weekly newspaper; you are buying into a community and a lifestyle.

You won't be off the clock just because you are out for dinner. At the next table might be the guy who you photographed earlier in the day being taken away in handcuffs in a drug raid. Or an old farmer may ask if you could put a classified ad in the paper to sell his gun, which later turns out to be the murder weapon in the death of his neighbor. Or you might leave the office late at night and have your car stopped and surrounded by deputies on a dark country road by a cemetery after you've written a story about the sheriff's alleged misdeeds. (All true stories.)

But the rewards can be great. So, how do you start if you're an individual or couple ready to make the plunge — or at least explore the option of newspaper ownership?

First, find a newspaper broker who has experience selling weeklies and, better yet, one who has worked at or owned a newspaper. And, contact the state press association(s) in areas where you want to consider buying. Some of the smallest papers may not be listed with a broker but may provide opportunities for seller financing or training with a sweat-equity option.

If you aren't comfortable with financial reports, find someone you trust who can walk you through the process and analyze the P&Ls with you. Look for oddities that could benefit a new buyer. For instance, is the owner paying non-business expenses from the company account? Is the circulation income too low based on the circulation numbers you were provided?

My business partner and husband, Gary, and I always looked at the financials from the standpoint of growth potential. We did not want to buy a paper that was at its peak potential. Financials were only a small part of the decision for us.

Take an objective look at the content of the newspaper. Strong? Weak? Coming from the news side, we always knew we could improve the news product. And, we always operated on the belief that content drives weekly-newspaper revenue. We were local, local, local.

We wanted content that had readers buying at the newsstand rather than by subscription, because they didn't want to wait to get their paper in the mail. We wanted them waiting outside the office on "newspaper day" for the papers to get back from the printer. And, they did. At one location, we even put a bench outside for them.

Does the newspaper have a web presence? If so, is the current owner generating revenue from it?

You've seen the financials. You've checked out sample copies. Now what? For us, with the three times we bought, the next step involved scouting the community both as a potential business location and as our new home. Living there is why individual owners have a chance of succeeding in a community where corporate may claim ownership isn't worth their effort. You'll have more at stake than just the dollars.

So what did Gary and I look for when we scouted out a community?

One of our first stops was the post-office lobby, where we would check the wastebasket. It helped identify the newspaper's direct-mail competition — shopping guides and store flyers — and whether they were popular enough that recipients took them home.

Take a hard look at the storefronts. Are most of them filled? Are they businesses that are — or should be — advertising with the newspaper? Are they well-kept or run down? Are the streets in good shape or crumbling? In other words, is there pride in the business district?

And, a big one: Is there a Walmart in town? A Walmart means the town is a trade center. But if the town doesn't have a Walmart, it's best if one isn't closer than a 30-minute drive.

Do some research on the business owners. Are the majority nearing retirement? (That could mean future sales or closures.) A mix of young, older and middle-age owners is good, because you have both experience and new enthusiasm in the district.

Does the community have an annual festival that brings its citizens — young and old — together to volunteer and celebrate something that connects them?

Are K-12 schools within the city limits? A consolidated district with the school out in the middle of a field miles from town diminishes the community spirit. Look for evidence of school pride around town. If you're in town on a ballgame night, check the parking lot. If it isn't almost full, either the team is having a horrible season or the town doesn't feel connected to the school.

Do the school administrators live in the community? Do the majority of teachers live in the school district?

What's the bank situation? A locally owned bank is the ideal both for a newspaper and the community, but fewer of those now exist.

Find the coffee shop where the locals hang out. Eavesdrop. If it's the day the paper hit the streets, are they talking about "did you see — in the paper?" Better yet, are they calling it "our paper," showing they feel close enough to it share a sense of ownership.

Are people talking from table to table, or is it like a room full of strangers who just happen to be having coffee at the same location? The latter isn't a good sign.

And, when scouting the town, check for news racks — both inside and outside. Do the inside racks look like the papers are selling that week?



## Governor: Hospitals must expand capacity as COVID-19 cases escalate

AUSTIN — Gov. Greg Abbott has again suspended elective surgeries in hospitals in 104 counties located within 11 of the state's 22 trauma service areas.

Each of the trauma service areas has a regional advisory council and a trauma system plan to respond to health crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

Under the proclamation, Abbott directed all hospitals in designated counties to postpone surgeries and procedures that are not immediately, medically necessary to correct a serious medical condition or to preserve the life of a patient, as determined by the patient's physician.

GA-27, a similar proclamation issued by Abbott on June 25, remains in effect and applies to the counties of Bexar, Cameron, Dallas, Harris, Hidalgo, Nueces, Travis and Webb.

"We are freeing up more resources to address upticks in COVID-19 related cases," Abbott said in a news release explaining the July 9 proclamation. "The State of Texas will continue to do everything we can to mitigate the spread of this virus and support our hospitals and health care professionals as they care for their fellow Texans. We must all come together and continue to practice social distancing, wear a face covering in public, and stay home when possible," added Abbott.

On July 10, Abbott extended his March 13 COVID-19 disaster proclamation for all counties in Texas. Cumulative figures posted July 12 by the Texas Department of State Health Services showed some 258,658 people in Texas diagnosed with COVID-19 and 3,192 confirmed deaths resulting from the disease.

When you are to the point of visiting the newspaper itself, check the equipment. It may be "working," but is it up-to-date? Or will new equipment be necessary fairly soon?

Check the circulation numbers through ownership statements for at least the last three to five years. (And, if they are rounded off on all the forms, odds are pretty good they are not accurate.)

When you buy that first weekly newspaper, go into it knowing that one week you'll be loved for what's in the paper and the next week you'll be despised by the same or other readers. You'll have immediate market feedback — both good and bad. You'll have people curse you and threaten you in the morning. Then another reader will drop by with some tomatoes from their garden for you that afternoon.

You live there. You chronicle the town's history. But you're also one of them. It's your town, too. It will fill you with pride when the school basketball team wins that first state championship. It will bring you to tears when you and your neighbors bury that young volunteer fireman with the pregnant wife who died along with another volunteer on the way to a brush fire.

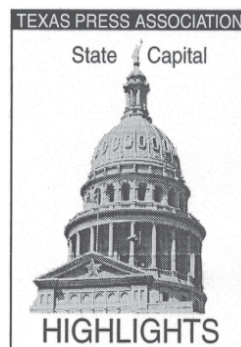
It will be your job, your business and your life — and you'll likely love it more than anything you've ever done.

Helen and Gary Sosniecki of Lebanon, Missouri, are retired from 43-year careers that included owning three weeklies, publishing a small-town daily and serving as vendors to the newspaper industry. They may be reached at sozsez@aol.com.

This article is one of a series distributed by the Texas Press Association for its members. If you wish more information, call 713-266-3444 or email grafikstar@aol.com

## STATE CAPITAL HIGHLIGHTS

By Ed Sterling



Party of Texas said it would file its appeal with the Texas Supreme Court.

### State Fair is canceled

The Texas State Fair board of directors on July 7 voted to cancel the 2020 State Fair of Texas.

Only in rare circumstances has the fair been canceled. The last cancellations occurred in war years: 1942 to 1945.

"While we cannot predict what the COVID-19 pandemic will look like in September, the recent surge in positive cases is troubling for all of North Texas. The safest and most responsible decision we could make for all involved at this point in our 134-year history is to take a hiatus for the 2020 season," said State Fair of Texas Board Chair Gina Norris.

### Hospitals get Remdesivir

Gov. Abbott on July 4 announced that the Texas Department of State Health Services is distributing 448 cases of the antiviral drug Remdesivir to 157 hospitals across Texas.

The drug is being distributed to the states from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. This is the sixth round of distribution from the federal government. The supply is part of a donation from Canada-headquartered drug maker Gilead.

Abbott said Remdesivir "has shown promise in early trials in speeding up the recovery time among hospitalized COVID-19 patients."

### Hegar distributed revenue

Texas Comptroller Glenn Hegar on July 8 announced he would send cities, counties, transit systems and special purpose taxing districts \$744.2 million in local sales tax allocations for July, an amount 2.6% less than the amount distributed in July 2019.

Allocations are based on sales made in May by businesses that report tax monthly.

Widespread social distancing requirements were relaxed across much of the state in May, thus year-over-year declines were not as steep as they were last month, Hegar said.

## THE POSTSCRIPT

By Carrie Classon

### "New Slippers"

I've worn out a pair of slippers.

To be fair, I wear slippers quite a bit under normal circumstances, but over the past four months my slipper use has exceeded previous records. I was reading the news one morning (I imagine you know what that's like). The takeaway for me was that I was going to be wearing slippers for a while. I looked down at my slippers and gave in to the inevitable. I ordered new slippers.

I've actually forgotten what shoes I own. I looked in my closet and it seemed kind of quaint. I had different shoes for different outfits! I had shoes with heels! I had boots of several varieties—even a pair of red boots! They are now stacked up neatly in my closet. I haven't worn anything on my feet but hiking boots and slippers in months.

My husband, Peter, and I have Alexa, the Amazon device that amuses us and annoys us in equal measure. I like her because I can ask questions when I'm baking. "Alexa! How many tablespoons in one-third cup?" "Alexa! When does the sun set tonight?" I can ask questions and play music with sticky hands and this seems to me one of the great advances in civilization made in the last century.

Peter is less sure. He quarrels with Alexa. He asks things in a way she cannot answer and when she says, "I'm not sure I understand your question," Peter takes it personally.

"She's a machine," I remind Peter.

"She's not an intelligent machine!" Peter replies.

Yesterday, Alexa was flashing away like crazy. This, I have learned, means she has something to say.

"Alexa! Do you have a notification?"

"I have one notification." I waited with bated breath. (There really isn't a lot going on at our house right now.)

"The notification is for Carrie: Your slipper has been delivered."

"Oh my gosh! My slipper has been delivered!" I felt like Cinderella. I immediately went out and fetched the box from the stoop. I discovered that Alexa spoke the truth. In fact, it was even better than she said. Two slippers had been delivered—one for each foot!

Since March, the only clothing I have purchased is two pairs of stretchy pants and a nightgown. I've been living in stretchy pants. New slippers were a very big deal.

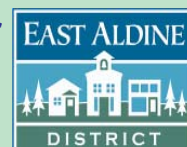
I am amazed by how little I have thought about clothes over the past one-third of a year. I miss wearing shoes but now, glancing into my closet, I wonder how many of them I'll want to wear again once the opportunity presents itself. It seems to me a lot has changed in four months and a lot of these changes have happened inside of me.

I have a much greater appreciation for all the things I miss. I miss sharing experiences and having people I can laugh with. I miss chatting with my 90-year-old gal pal in church. I miss sitting with a group of strangers in a theater when the lights dim. I'd be happy to wear my stretchy pants and new slippers everywhere if I could get together with friends for an evening of fun.

I modeled my new slippers for Peter. He pretended to be impressed. (A marriage relies on a little good-natured acting from time to time.) I'm going to keep all my shoes, although I think I might have to dust them pretty soon. I'm holding out hope that, someday, I might have the occasion to wear a pair of red boots—probably with a pair of stretchy pants.

Till next time,  
Carrie  
Carrie Classon's memoir is called, "Blue Yarn." Learn more at CarrieClasson.com.

Take Pride in our  
Community  
Keep it Clean



SPANISH PAGE

Aldine ISD comenzará las primeras 3 semanas de clases virtualmente

El plan de reingreso de Aldine ISD, Return to Learn, ahora hará que todos los estudiantes aprendan virtualmente desde casa durante al menos las primeras tres semanas del año escolar 2020-2021. El año escolar 2020-21 comienza el lunes 17 de agosto.

“Estamos agradecidos de que la TEA haya tomado la decisión de permitir que los distritos utilicen el aprendizaje virtual como una opción durante las primeras tres semanas”, dijo la Superintendente Dra. LaTonya M. Goffney. “Aldine aprovechará esta opción. Independientemente del modelo que seleccionen las familias (Aprender en casa o

Aprender en el campus), las primeras tres semanas de clases serán virtuales. A medida que avanzamos, debemos ser flexibles a medida que continuamos monitoreando las condiciones en el Condado de Harris y Houston. Abriremos lo más rápido que podamos pero lo más lento que debamos”.

Goffney enfatizó que el año escolar académico comienza el 17 de agosto. Destacó que el período de aprendizaje remoto de tres semanas ayudaría a facilitar y facilitar la transición del proceso de regreso a la escuela en el campus para el personal y las familias. El tiempo también se utilizará para la capacitación y

planificación de maestros. El distrito continuará monitoreando las condiciones de salud locales y reevaluará según sea necesario durante el año escolar.

“Los maestros son el aceite en esta máquina. Sin ellos, no podemos comenzar a educar a los estudiantes. Su seguridad siempre ha sido lo más importante cuando hacemos planes para regresar a la escuela”, dijo Goffney. “Nuestro equipo de enseñanza y aprendizaje continúa mejorando nuestros procesos de aprendizaje en línea y está desarrollando capacitación y desarrollo profesional para que los maestros estén preparados para

enseñar en ambos entornos”.

El plan actual del distrito tiene a todos los maestros de Aldine ISD informando a los campus este otoño, ya sea que estén apoyando el aprendizaje tradicional en el campus o las clases virtuales. Las tareas finales se basarán en la inscripción de los estudiantes y la cantidad de estudiantes que seleccionaron cada modelo de instrucción.

Desde el lanzamiento de su formulario de compromiso el lunes, el distrito ha recibido más de 19,000 presentaciones, con más del 70% de las familias seleccionando apren-

dizaje virtual. Las familias tuvieron la opción de elegir uno de los dos modelos de aprendizaje. El formulario de compromiso está disponible para los estudiantes de Aldine ISD hasta el domingo 19 de julio. Se alienta a todos los padres a seleccionar la opción que mejor satisfaga las necesidades de sus hijos. Cualquier familia que no tenga acceso a Internet o dispositivos para el aprendizaje a distancia también puede solicitar un dispositivo al distrito escolar.

Durante el período de aprendizaje virtual de tres semanas, no habrá actividades de UIL o del campus.

Aldine ISD sigue las pautas publicadas por la Agencia de Educación de Texas (TEA) el 7 de julio de 2020, y también seguirá adhiriéndose a los Centros para la Prevención de Enfermedades y Control y a las medidas estatales y locales, así como a sus creencias fundamentales en todas las decisiones de reapertura.

Las familias pueden mantenerse actualizadas sobre los planes y preparativos del distrito visitando la nueva página de regreso a la escuela de AISD: [www.aldineisd.org/returntolearn](http://www.aldineisd.org/returntolearn).

ENTERTAINMENT



### People Making Movies!

Don't you love to see a good movie? My favorite place to see one is at the drive-in. I like the giant screen and people-watching too. Read my clues to learn about the work of making movies:

- used to highlight areas of the scene, and create a mood
- used to capture sound of actors and effects
- person who chooses camera lenses and angles for shots
- all music and sound effects used in a film
- make-up \_\_\_\_\_ works on actors' faces
- \_\_\_\_\_ designer chooses actors' clothing
- writes the scripts - dialogue and movements
- used to film scenes from very high in the air
- raises funds, hires staff, makes things run smoothly
- combination of a script and shooting directions
- production \_\_\_\_\_ runs all sorts of errands for directors
- single recorded try at a scene; done on "first \_\_\_\_\_"
- metal rigs that hold a camera above the actors
- used to make special effects and 3-D animated movies
- row of drawings to show how the movie will flow
- person who has complete control of filming
- shot taken a short distance from the actor's face
- performer who plays a character
- writes the music for the soundtrack of a film
- person responsible for building the set

Oh, yeah, I'm a star!

### What Kind of Movie?

There are many kinds of movies! Do you like spooky or funny ones? Match each kind of movie below to what it is or does:

- action
- drama
- comedy
- scary
- musicals or dance
- science fiction
- documentary
- animated
- fantasy
- western

- meant to spook you
- uses song and movement
- usually set in the future or space
- set in the American frontier, often featuring cowboys
- about something real, often used to teach about a topic
- wizards, dragons and elves, filled with magic and swords
- hand- or computer-drawn characters
- fast paced: fight scenes, explosions and chases
- with lots of jokes to make us laugh!
- serious; strong characters and story

What do you think it means when someone calls a movie a "cash cow?"

### Check Out These Movies

These movies are based on good books. You can read the book with your friends or family and then watch the movie. When you are done, talk about the differences between the book and the way the movie was made.

Match each movie to its description:

- A girl named Sophie befriends a gentle giant.
- A young boy raised by wolves in the jungle of India is taught by a bear.
- An orphaned boy goes to a school for wizards and learns about a world of magic.
- A live-action film about farmyard animals and one very special spider.
- The son of an Olympian god uses his powers to find Zeus' legendary weapon.
- A girl becomes friends with her neighbor, a zany pilot, who tells her a whimsical story.

Check Out These Movies

- The Little Prince
- Percy Jackson & the Olympians: The Lightning Thief
- Charlotte's Web
- The BFG
- The Jungle Book
- Harry Potter

### Movie Treats

When you go to the movies someone sells you a ticket, and then someone asks if you'd like to buy a treat. Follow the color code to see a favorite movie treat:

R = Red  
Y = Yellow

LIFESTYLE

### Carter Academy's Yvonne Lopez-Taylor one of 3 finalists for Region 4 Elementary Teacher of the Year

Carter Academy art teacher Yvonne Lopez-Taylor has been named one of three finalists for Region 4's Elementary Teacher of the Year Award.

Lopez-Taylor was Aldine's ISD Elementary Teacher of the Year, which was announced at the Educator of the Year Breakfast on March 6.

Lopez-Taylor said she uses her creative talents to help her students hone their own creativity.

"I want to inspire a new generation of thinkers, explorers, artists and designers with their own determination for success," she said. "My students learn to critique constructively. They learn how to express opinions without causing tears. They learn to help one another achieve goals. It is important to let students make mistakes and problem solve."

Lopez-Taylor submitted an online application to Region 4 and had a Zoom interview with the Region 4 TOY Committee on Thursday, July 9. The Region 4 Elementary Teacher of the Year winner will be announced later this month.



Carter Academy art teacher Yvonne Lopez-Taylor is one of 3 finalists for Region 4 Elementary Teacher of the Year Award.

### Free Services at High Meadows Library

The library is closed but we are still serving you! During this time, we are offering the following services:

- Curbside Pickup - You can call us to check out books, movies, and more. We will schedule a pickup time and deliver your items curbside.
- Craft Kits - Pick up a craft kit today for the kid's. Each week we have a new craft that can be delivered curbside.
- Book Bundles - If you miss browsing the shelves, allow us to help recreate that experience with book bundles. We can curate a bundle of books for any and all readers!
- Free Meals - We will be handing out free meals to children and their guardians Mondays-Fridays from 12-2pm.
- Summer Reading - During the summer you can sign up for our virtual summer reading, log books or minutes read and earn prizes! Head over to hcpl.beanstack.org, register yourselves and the family, and start logging books read, minutes read, or activities.

If you have questions or would like a staff member to assist you with signing up or logging books, please call us at 832-927-5540

• Online Programming - We have lots of free and fun online programs to offer you while we are closed. Just head over to facebook.com/highmeadowslibrary and enjoy!

**Curbside Hours**  
Mondays - Thursdays: 10am-6pm  
Fridays: 1pm-6pm  
Saturdays: 10am-5pm

The library is located at 4500 Aldine Mail Rt., Houston, Texas 77039.

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**NORTHEAST BELTWAY 8 News**

**People Making Movies!**

Don't you love to see a good movie? My favorite place to see one is at the drive-in. I like the giant screen and people-watching too.

What kind of movie?

There are many kinds of movies:

1. action - n
2. drama - j
3. comedy - l
4. scary - a
5. musicals or dance - b
6. science fiction - c
7. documentary - e
8. animated - g
9. fantasy - f
10. western - d

**Movie Treats**

A favorite movie treat:

1. The Little Prince
2. Percy Jackson & the Olympians
3. The Lightning Thief
4. The BFG
5. The Jungle Book
6. Harry Potter

**Check Out These Movies**

(based on books)

- A girl named Sophie befriends a gentle giant.
- A young boy raised by wolves in the jungle of India is taught by a bear.
- An orphaned boy goes to a school for wizards and learns about the world of magic.
- A live-action film about farmyard animals and one very special spider.
- The son of an Olympian god uses his powers to find Zeus' legendary weapon.
- A girl becomes friends with her neighbor, a zany pilot, who tells her a whimsical story.

**People Making Movies!**

1. ARTIST  
2. MIKROPHONE  
3. SCREENSEN  
4. COSTUME  
5. DIRECTOR  
6. PRODUCTION  
7. EDITOR  
8. HIGHLIGHTS  
9. PLOT  
10. SCRIPT  
11. CAST  
12. TAKE  
13. CREDITS  
14. TAKE  
15. TAKE  
16. TAKE  
17. TAKE  
18. TAKE  
19. TAKE  
20. TAKE

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# CHURCH PAGE

## BIBLE TRIVIA

by Wilson Casey—

- 1) Is the book of Joshua in the Old or New Testament or neither?
- 2) In the parable of the 10 female virgins, five were called "wise, but why were the other five called "foolish"? Washing stones, Forgot oil for their lamps, Daytime sleeping, Gossiping
- 3) From 2 Kings 9, what creatures ate the carcass of Jezebel? She-

- bears, Dogs, Frogs, Worms
- 4) What was the first bird released from Noah's Ark? Raven, Pigeon, Sparrow, Dove
  - 5) In Proverbs 15, what does "a soft answer turneth away"? Wisdom, Scorn, Wrath, Fear
  - 6) From Joshua 2 who hid two spies on a roof? Hosea, Ezra, Satan, Rahab
- ANSWERS: 1) Old; 2) Forgot oil for their lamps (Matthew 25); 3) Dogs; 4) Raven; 5) Wrath; 6) Rahab

**THE ILLUSTRATED BIBLE**

...We urge you, brethren, that you increase more and more; that you also aspire to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you, that you may walk properly toward those who are outside, and that you may lack nothing.

1 Thessalonians 4:10-12

"Present with a Stick" by Vincent van Gogh (1881)

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## RECENT DEATHS

- Billie Ann Baggett  
John Philip McMinn  
Mary Jane Smikal  
Michael Del Lowry  
Hermelinda Armendariz
- Darrell Dee Dacke  
Mary Christine Pair  
Earl Nicholas Jr.  
Maria Lazo Martinez

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# COMMUNITY NEWS

## Election Results,

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

Harris County Democratic Precinct Chairs vote at County Executive Committee to be held on computer on August 15 to officially replace these two before the November 3 General Election.

In the U.S. Senate race, M.J. Hegar against Royce West to face incumbent Republican John Cornyn. This was a close race, with West winning 50.5% of the vote in Harris County.

For State Representative in District 142, popular incumbent Harold Dutton Jr. was opposed by another local favorite, Jerry Davis. Dutton won with 52.32% of the vote.

Statewide, for Railroad Commissioner Roberto Alonzo opposed Chrystra Castaneda.

Justice Texas High Court of Appeals for Place 7, Tamika "Tami" Craft ran against incumbent Cheri Thomas.

A District Judge 339th Judicial District incumbent Tel'va Bell opposed Candace White.

The contest for District Judge 164 pitted Cheryl

Thornton against Alexa Smoots-Thomas.

For the State board of Education District 6 Michelle Palmer opposed Kimberly McLeod.

The Republican Primary Runoff will determine who challenges Ed Gonzales for Harris County Sheriff. Paul Day and Joe Danna were the showdown most discussed for Republicans. Danna received 51.46% of the vote, and will face Gonzalez in November.

Another closely watched race, with much money spent on campaigning, was for U.S. Representative in District 22. Kathleen Wall defeated Troy Nehls with 61.14% of the votes.

James Lombardino and Terry Adams were contestants for the First Court of Appeals.

US District 18 was a match of Robert Cadena against Wendall Champion.

The Justice of the Peace for Precinct 5 Place one saw Russ Ridgeway and Mike Wolfe.

## Application period opens for Harris County small business recovery fund

**Grants of up to \$25,000 Available; Recipients Will be Selected at End of 10 Day Application Window**

Harris County, Texas - July 13, 2020, Eligible businesses can apply for financial assistance through the Harris County Small Business Recovery Fund through Friday, July 24. The \$30 million grant program, which was unanimously approved by the Harris County Commissioners Court on June 30, prioritizes struggling small businesses that have not yet received funds from other COVID-19 relief programs.

"Small businesses are the backbone of Harris County's economy, and the pandemic has hit them especially hard," said County Judge Lina Hidalgo. "While county government alone cannot make up for all of the loss, we must do all we can to help as many as we can."

To be eligible for grants of up to \$25,000, applicants must meet the following requirements:

- Must conduct business in Harris County, within Precincts 1-4. Businesses located in the City of Houston are not eligible unless located within Precinct 1
- Must employ fewer than 30 employees (including owner(s))
- Must have been in business for the entire calendar year 2019
- Must be in good standing with local, state, and federal governments with no outstanding tax obligations or liabilities
- Must be able to verify negative impact on operations due to the pandemic

After the application process closes on Friday, July 24, at 3:30 p.m., eligible businesses will be entered into a weighted lottery based on the size of their operation. Program funds are limited and only a subset of qualified applicants will receive grants. Those selected will receive 75 percent of the funds upon approval, and 25 percent of the funds in November 2020.

"As the overwhelming demand for the forgivable loan program that I championed shows, far too many of our small businesses are struggling in a big way right now. Small businesses are the lifeblood of our economy and have historically lifted up our community," said Harris County Precinct 2 Commissioner Adrian Garcia. "As we face some of the most difficult challenges in a generation, it's time for county government to continue our support of local small businesses. I thank my fel-



Harris County Recovery Czar Rep. Armando Valle at a news conference on Monday explaining the new Small Business Recovery Fund. Authorities also strongly advised everyone in Harris County to wear a face mask and practice safe distancing.

low commissioners for voting in favor of the \$30 million fund, and I have confidence that HBDI will do an excellent job with the expedient and efficient administration of these funds. Small businesses truly are the backbone of our economy, and this program shows that we have their backs!"

The Small Business Recovery Fund will allocate 60 percent of its total funds to businesses with five or fewer employees. The grants do not need to be repaid, and can be used for a variety of operational costs such as payroll, payments to suppliers, rent/lease/mortgage expenses, and PPE.

"The effects of COVID-19 on our friends and neighbors throughout Harris County are immense and widespread - on our health, our families, our medical community and our economy," said Harris County Precinct 4 Commissioner Jack Cagle. "Harris County's response to this pandemic must recognize the need to address

all these issues. With federal funding from the CARES Act, the Small Business Relief Fund is designed to help alleviate some of the stresses on small businesses throughout Harris County. I encourage those eligible to take advantage of this program."

In early April, more than 7,000 businesses applied for assistance through the Harris County COVID-19 Forgivable Loan Program. Salon owner Naketha Ross was among the first businesses to receive funds, which will be applied to her lease and electricity bills. "It's good to know I have the funds I need for my business to help pay the rent and the largest expenses," Ross said. "This will help to hold me over until things gradually go back to normal."

All business types may apply to the SBRF grant program, including sole proprietorships, partnerships, self-employed individuals, nonprofits, and

independent contractors.

"Helping small businesses survive the economic crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic directly helps the working men and women employed by those small businesses," said Precinct 1 Commissioner Rodney Ellis. "The need in our region is immense, but we will support as many of our vulnerable businesses as possible, fairly and transparently, so that the thousands of families who rely on small businesses continue to have the ability to pay their rent, feed their families, and make ends meet."

During the application window, grant applications can be submitted online 24/7 at [www.harriscountysbrfund.org](http://www.harriscountysbrfund.org). Applicants will need business tax returns for 2018 or 2019; income and expenses for three months; articles of incorporation, business license, or DBA certificate; and W-2 statement, pay stubs, or personal tax return. Call 713-845-2476 for additional information.

## Virtual Schooling,

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

pared to teach in both settings."

The district's current plan has all Aldine ISD teachers reporting to campuses this fall, whether they are supporting traditional on-campus learning or virtual classes. Final assignments will be based on student enrollment and the number of students who selected each instructional model.

Since launching its commitment form on Monday, the district has received more than 19,000 submissions, with more than 70% of families selecting virtual learning. Families were given the option of choosing one of two learning models. The commitment form is available for Aldine ISD students until Sunday, July 19. All parents are encouraged to select

the option that best meets the needs of their children. Any family who does not have Internet access or devices for distance-learning may also request a device from the school district.

During the three-week virtual learning period, there will not be any UIL or campus activities.

Aldine ISD is following guidelines released by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) on July 7, 2020, and will also continue to adhere to the Centers for Disease and Control Prevention and state and local measures as well as its Core Beliefs in all reopening decisions.

Families can stay updated on the district's plans and preparations by visiting AISD's new school Return to Learn page: [www.aldineisd.org/return-tolearn](http://www.aldineisd.org/return-tolearn).

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Published each Tuesday by GrafikPress Corp. Any erroneous statement which may appear will be corrected when brought to the attention of the publisher. Liability for errors is limited to the reprinting of the corrected version. Submissions are encouraged, in person, by mail, by Fax, or by email, to [nenewsroom@aol.com](mailto:nenewsroom@aol.com)

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## Massive Fire,

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

All residents were able to get out on their own. Two pets had to be rescued by firefighters. One resident was seen being treated for smoke inhalation.

That resident, David Haynes, said he was in his apartment playing video games when he heard people yelling from outside. He opened his window and saw that his porch was on fire. He said he only had time to grab his dog and leave.

Jessie Cruz, whose apartment was also damaged due to the fire, said his friend knocked on his bedroom door to alert him on the fire. Cruz said he and his son were fast asleep and didn't hear the smoke alarms going off. Cruz said he and his 10-year-old son walked out of the apartment with only the clothes on their back.

Red Cross is on scene to assist the residents who have been displaced.

One firefighter was treated on scene for heat exhaustion.

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