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# NORTHEAST NEWS



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 VOL. 47, NO. 21 TUESDAY, JUNE 13, 2023 HOUSTON, TEXAS www.nenewsroom.com

**NEWS NOTES**

**JUNE 15, THURSDAY**

**Walle District 140 Town Hall**

Join Rep. Armando Walle and the East Aldine Civic Association for a House District 140 Town Hall next Thursday, June 15 from 6:30-7:30pm. Discussion of the 88th Legislative Session, and other issues. LOCATION: BakerRipley Reunion Hall, 3000 Aldine Mail Route.

**JUNE 22, THURS.**

**Small Business Seminar & Lunch at East Aldine District**

Small Business Free Seminar & Luncheon Series continues, on Thursday, June 22nd from 12pm noon to 1pm at the District Offices, 2909 East Aldine Amphitheatre Drive, off Aldine Mail Route. Speaker: Mark Winchester, Deputy District Director of the SBA. Topics include Sources of Counseling, Access to Capital, Disaster Assistance, and Federal Contracts. RSVP AldineDistrict.org/RSVP or 512-658-4985.

## Governor signs Almendarez Act

*Bill will help curb Catalytic Converter thefts, increase penalties*

By: Sam Stark

AUSTIN (KXAN) – Gov. Greg Abbott signed a bill into law Tuesday afternoon that creates new criminal offenses surrounding the theft of catalytic converters.

State Senator Carol Alvarado, D- Houston, filed Senate Bill 224 – known as the Deputy Darren Almendarez Act – which was designed to address the spike in catalytic converter thefts across the state. Thefts of this kind have increased by 1,200% from 2019 to 2021, per the National Insurance Crime Bureau.

“These catalytic converter thefts have increased substantially in the past few years,” Abbott said. “Catalytic converter thefts have become an organized and often violent crime. So what I’m going to sign today is going to increase criminal penalties for offenses involving catalytic convert-



Governor Abbott signs the Almendarez Act last week, as Deputy Almendarez's widow Flor Zarzoza Almendarez and State Senator Carol Alvarado look on, with other members of the Legislature.

er thefts as well as to create a new criminal offense for unlawful possession.”

The law honors Harris County Deputy Sheriff Darren Almendarez. He was shot and killed while off-duty on March 31, 2022, when he tried to stop three men from stealing the device from his vehicle. Almendarez’s

wife, Flor, was with him when he was shot and stood behind Abbott as the governor signed the bill Tuesday.

Gov. Greg Abbott signed Senate Bill 224, known as the Deputy Darren Almendarez Act, on Tuesday. The bill is aimed to curb catalytic converter thefts with

more severe punishment.

The law bumps up the punishment for stealing a catalytic converter to a felony offense and increases the penalty if the actor uses a firearm when stealing a device.

Further, the bill text states that if someone is in possession of two or more catalytic converters,

law enforcement will presume they were acquired unlawfully unless that person works in a profession where having these devices around is typical – for example, a dealership or an automotive repair shop.

Catalytic converters contain valuable, precious metals – such as rhodium, palladium and platinum – which can be worth thousands of dollars. People saw catalytic converters off of vehicles and sell them to metal recycling entities.

Similar bills were filed this legislative session – including SB 432 by Sen. Mayes Middleton, R-Galveston and SB 465 by Sen. Paul Bettencourt, R-Houston – hoping to target the rise in catalytic converter thefts. Those two bills were combined to make SB 224 in a bipartisan effort to ensure the bill would pass.

## Commissioner Garcia cites progress in reduction of Crime case backlogs

Felony and Misdemeanor backlogs reduced by more than 40%

Harris County, TX — Harris County Commissioner Adrian Garcia has championed the importance of reducing the backlog of cases in the criminal justice system, long before COVID-19. Often saying “justice delayed is justice unserved,” Garcia has often taken the lead in directing Commissioners Court to invest nearly \$40 million in efforts to reduce the backlog.

Since January 2022, the investments have led to both the felony and misdemeanor backlogs being reduced by more than 40%.

At Tuesday’s Commissioners Court, an additional \$25 million in ARPA funds were allocated to reduce the backlog, and Commissioners Court ap-

proved the measure unani-



mously. The new funds are broken down into the following programs:

- \$7.9 million – Case Preparation: Associate Judges and support staff
  - \$4.8 million – Evidence Management: Technology and support staff
  - \$8.3 million – Case Disposition: Emergency Response Dockets District Courts
  - \$2.9 million – Case Disposition: Emergency Response Dockets County Courts
  - \$1.2 million – Case Flow Management & Process Improvements
- The funds will be dis-

tributed among the following departments: District and County Courts, the District Attorney, the District Clerk, the Harris County Sheriff’s Office, Community Supervision (adult probation), the Public Defender, and Pre-Trial Services.

As an example of why these investments are critical, the \$4.8 million dedicated to evidence management includes \$1.8 million to the Institute of Forensic Sciences (IFS). IFS has suffered significant staffing and retention challenges, with over 20% of positions needing to be filled.

“I am proud of our progress so far, but I will

Continued. See Court Backlogs reduced, Page 2

## County approves \$500 monthly anti-poverty payments

‘Uplift Harris’: to provide support for some low-income households

HARRIS COUNTY, Texas – A program designed to help struggling families in the Houston area passed in a vote of 4-1 in Harris County Commissioners Court last Tuesday.

Harris County Commissioner Rodney Ellis and County Judge Lina Hidalgo outlined details about the \$20.5 million Uplift Harris program, aimed at helping low-income residents with rent, food costs, and other issues.

The program is set to begin in September. The initiative is a guaranteed income program, and officials are hoping it will re-



Pct. 2 Commissioner Ellis announces details of the program, with Judge Lina Hidalgo and HC Public Health Director Barbie Robinson.

duce poverty. Uplift Harris would also help people with transportation, housing, utilities, and care.

Under the program, up to 1,500 families living below 200% of the federal poverty line – approximately \$40,000 for a fami-

ly of four – will receive \$500 per month to support their household needs. Uplift Harris will run for 18 months, beginning this fall. It will be administered

Continued. See Anti-Poverty Program, Page 5

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### Court cases Backlog reduced,

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

not be satisfied until we reduce the backlog to pre-Hurricane Harvey levels, eventually eliminating it. Historically, it takes around 200 days to bring a typical case to disposition," said Commissioner Adrian Garcia. "We can't keep delaying justice for victims who deserve a speedy resolution. It's also important that the accused get their day in court in a timely manner."

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## COMMUNITY WATCH

### Office Building Fire in the Greenspoint Area

Houston Fire Department reports an Office building fire, on June 3rd at 10:52 p.m., located at 131 Northpoint Drive, Houston 77060.

There were no reported injuries. HPD estimated that \$341,449 in estimated property saved. Damage was \$45,000 in estimated damage.

The cause is under investigation.

Firefighters arrived on scene within four minutes to find fire coming from the back of a small 1-story office building. They forced entry and conducted a primary search. An offensive attack was made and HPD was requested for traffic control. A void space was found between the ceiling and the roof with fire throughout.

The fire was fully extinguished and HFD Arson investigators were requested to determine the cause and origin. 35 personnel responded to this incident, including crews from Stations 84, 15, 31, 64, 74, 30 and the Aldine Fire Department.

**WEEKEND MARKET DAY**

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### Suspects sought, involved in shooting at bus on 200 Tidwell Road

Houston police are asking for the public's help in identifying two suspects wanted in the shooting of two females that occurred at 200 Tidwell Road about 6:55 p.m. on Sunday (June 4).

The suspects are described only as a black male and black female. Surveillance photos of both suspects are attached to this news release.

The female victims, 29 and 40, were transported to an area hospital with non life-threatening gunshot wounds.

HPD Major Assaults & Family Violence Division Detective M. Deleon reported:

HPD patrol officers were flagged down at the above address after a shooting occurred on a Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris



County (METRO) bus. Witnesses stated the suspects boarded the bus and an argument occurred about bus fare. The two suspects got off the bus and asked one of the victims to also get off the bus. The female did not get off the bus and the male suspect then fired shots into the bus through a window. Both females were struck by the gunfire.

Houston Fire Department paramedics responded to the scene

and transported the females to the hospital.

The suspects fled the scene, however the incident was captured on METRO surveillance video.

Anyone with information on the identities of the wanted suspects or in this case is urged to contact the HPD Major Assaults & Family Violence Division at 713-308-8800 or speak anonymously to Crime Stoppers at 713-222-TIPS.

## AIRLINE LIBRARY NEWS

IN OBSERVANCE OF THE JUNETEENTH HOLIDAY WE WILL CLOSE EARLY FRIDAY, JUNE 16 AT 5P. WE WILL BE CLOSED SATURDAY, JUNE 17 AND MONDAY JUNE 19.

Babies, Kids, Teens, and Adults - win prizes for reading! Also earn prizes for attending programs! Sign up for the **Summer Reading Program on Beanstack**: <https://hcupl.beanstack.org/reader365>. You can also register in person at the library.

**Every day, All month:** This summer we want to focus on Kindness/Friendship/Unity. Let's get together as a community and **make a mural**. Each participant will be given a post-it to create a mini piece of art. Just ask at the front desk.

#### SUMMER READING PROGRAM MOVIE MONDAYS

All together now for movies focusing on kindness/friendship/unity! Monday June 12 at 2pm and Monday June 26 at 2pm!

#### TEAM PUZZLE RACE

Sign up today to participate in our Team Puzzle Race on **June 29 at 4pm!** Four teams will get the same 500 piece puzzle, and the first to assemble it wins a prize!

Teams can be 2 - 5 people, ages 6 and up. All teams will get to keep their puzzle at the end of the event. Only 4 teams will be able to compete in the race, and there are only 3 spots left, so sign up TODAY! Sign up at the front desk.

#### TODDLER TIME

We'll read stories, sing songs, and use our hands (for fingerplays) to help toddlers build their early literacy skills. This program is appropriate for children ages 18 months to 3 years old. **Monday, June 12 at 11:30am - 12:30pm.**

#### TEENS MAKE IT

Make something new with us at Teens Make It! Make something that grows using upcycled candle jars and vases. Make your own custom terrarium while learning what moss and plants need to grow and thrive. All materials are provided courtesy of the Friends of the Aldine Branch Library Extraordinaire (FABLE). Teens Make It! is on **Monday, June 12th** for teens ages 12-18 at Aldine Branch Library.

#### BILINGUAL STORY TIME

Join us in the library for story time in English and Spanish **Tuesdays at 11:00am!**

#### KIDS CRAFTS/MANUALIDADES PARA NIÑOS

Let's get creative! Join us at **6pm every Tuesday** for

our weekly summer crafts at Aldine! (Don't forget, this is a great opportunity for kids to work on essential life skills like sharing, reading instructions, cutting, gluing, and working in a group.)

¡Seamos creativos! Están invitados a las **6 pm todos los martes** para nuestras manualidades semanales de verano en Aldine! (No olvide que esta es una gran oportunidad para que los niños trabajen en habilidades esenciales para la vida, como compartir, leer instrucciones, cortar, pegar y trabajar en grupo).

#### PARA LOS NIÑOS

Each workshop includes learning activities to use at home related to the theme of the week. For parents and children ages 8 and younger (and siblings too!)

Cada taller incluye actividades de aprendizaje para usar en casa relacionadas con el tema del taller.

Para padres y niños menores de 8 años (¡y hermanos también!) **Wednesday, June 14, 11:00am - 12:30pm.**

#### Books Alive: Too Many Frogs!

presents beloved children's books adapted into original, fully staged musicals, brought to life by their professional touring company, promoting literacy and introducing audiences to the magic of theatre! **Books Alive! presents: Too Many Frogs by Sandy Asher, Wednesday, June 14.**

#### ¡APRENDA A USAR SU CHROMEBOOK!

¡Aprenda a usar su Chromebook para el trabajo o uso personal en 4 sesiones! Áreas cubiertas:

**Sesión #2 June 15, 5pm - 6:45pm** - Comandos del ratón/almaquilla táctil y el teclado (hardware)

**Sesión #3 June 22, 5pm = 6:45pm** - Usando su Correo para acceder a servicios de la nube (Google Apps y Office 365)

**Sesión #4 June 29, 5pm - 6:45pm** - Vistazo general de las aplicaciones gratuitas de la nube (Office 365 y Google Apps Workspace)

#### TEEN THURSDAY

Teen Thursdays at Aldine Branch Library are a fun, safe environment for teens ages (12-18) to hang out after school! Join us as we play games, watch anime, and hang out! **Thursday, June 15, 3:30 - 5:30pm.**

#### HARRIS COUNTY VOTER REGISTRATION

Are you registered to vote? Do you have questions about the process but never had an opportunity to ask? Well, here is your chance! A representative from Harris County Elections Administration will be on site at the Aldine Branch Library to get you registered. They will also be able to answer any questions you have as well. Don't delay, register today! Your vote is your voice! **Thursday, June 15, 1pm - 5pm.**

¿Está registrado para

votar? ¿Tiene preguntas sobre el proceso pero nunca tuvo la oportunidad de hacerla? ¡Aquí está su oportunidad! Un representante de la Administración de Elecciones del Condado de Harris estará presente en la Biblioteca Sucursal de Aldine para registrarlo.

También podrán responder cualquier pregunta que tenga. ¡No se demore, regístrese hoy! ¡su voto es su voz! **Jueves, 15 de junio, 1pm - 5pm.**

#### Chromebook Workshop Series

**Thursday, June 15, 5pm - 6:45pm**

Learn how to use your Chromebook for work or personal use in 4 sessions!

Covered areas:

**Session #2 June 15, 5pm - 6:45pm** - Navigating the interface of your Chromebook (software settings)

**Session #3 June 22, 5pm - 6pm** - Using your Mail to access cloud services (Google Apps and Office 365)

**Session #4 June 29, 5pm - 6:45pm** - Overview of Free Cloud Apps (Office 365 and Google Apps)

#### ADULT VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Would you like to be a part of making an impact on people's lives? Are you looking for a meaningful way to spend your time? We are looking for adult volunteers to help with tasks and programs at the library as well as volunteers to teach English language classes, citizenship classes, or computer classes in person and virtually. Pick up an application at the Aldine Branch Library, call 832-927-5410, or click here: <https://forms.office.com/r/qSzMS-piaTL>.

#### PASSPORT SERVICES

Do have plans to travel out of the country soon? Get on the ball and make sure you get your passport in order NOW! You can make an appointment for passport services at Aldine Branch - <https://www.hcupl.net/services/passport-services>

Our passport hours - Mondays and Wednesdays 12pm - 5pm; Tuesdays and Thursdays 12pm - 7pm; Saturdays 10am - 12pm and 2pm - 4pm. We also have walk-in service from 2-4pm on Fridays on a first come first served basis. Those wishing to get a passport executed must have all necessary documents, photos, copies, and required people present with them.

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SCHOOL NEWS PAGE

# Victory Early College High School's Jonathan Bush, an EMERGE Scholar



Victory Early College High School's Class of 2023 graduate Jonathan Bush, who is getting a full ride to Northeastern University. Jonathan has been involved in EMERGE, a college program, since 10th grade and graduated with a 3.98 GPA and an associate's degree from Lone Star College.

Aldine ISD Creates Pathway to Selective Colleges and Universities

Aldine ISD partnered

with EMERGE in 2019 at a few high school campuses and expanded to all high schools in 2021. The Houston-based college-readiness program prepares high-performing high school students in grades 10-12 to attend and graduate from selective colleges and universities across the nation. Students participating in the program will receive SAT preparation, attend college admission and financial aid

workshops, receive assistance with college applications, and visit colleges and universities during summer tours.

"We equip and empower our students with tools to help them prepare for college or university after graduation," Aldine ISD Superintendent Dr. LaTonya M. Goffney said. "This program exposes our students to various opportunities and offers them countless possibilities beyond graduation."

Throughout the fellowship, students will develop personal education goals, attend SAT prep sessions, gain leadership skills, and receive one-on-one advice from college counselors. After students are admitted to a top-tier university of their choice, they will be assigned an EMERGE counselor, which will follow them throughout their college experience and provide additional guidance. This includes summer internships, study abroad opportunities, and other resumé-building experiences. EMERGE graduates have attended MIT, Yale, Rice, Harvard, Johns Hopkins, UT-Austin, and more.

# Victory Early College HS Student Named MASBA Scholar



Congratulations to Nathan Kenmognie, a Victory Early College High School senior student. The Mexican American School Boards Association (MASBA) awarded a \$5,000 scholarship to Nathan for his first year of college; Nathan will attend Houston Community College. Nathan was one of five students across Texas to receive a MASBA scholarship.

According to the website, MASBA members are committed to closing the achievement gap for all students — especially for Latino students, who comprise the majority of students in Texas public schools. Latinos will make up nearly a third of U.S. students in 2030.

Board Trustee Connie Esparza represents Aldine Aldine ISD on the MASBA Board of Directors. Trustee Dr. Viola M. Garcia served as MASBA Board President from 2003-2004.

Visit the MASBA website for scholarship details.

# Aldine ISD Billboards Promote Early Childhood Education Programs



The district offers free, full-day programs for eligible children ages 3, 4, and 5.

Alisd has launched a series of billboards across the district to raise awareness about the district's early childhood education programs, which include Head Start (3-5 years old), prekindergarten for 3-year-olds

(PreK3), and prekindergarten for 4-year-olds (PreK4).

Billboard Location and Running Period

\*1-45 & North Beltway — April 17-May 14, 2023

\*FM 1960 E & Cypresswood — April 17-May 14, 2023

\*1-45N — May 15-June 11, 2023

\*FM 1960E and Theiss — May 15-June 11, 2023

\*1-45N & Rankin — June 12-July 9, 2023

\*59N & Mt. Houston — June 12-July 9, 2023

\*HWY 249 & Killough — July 10-August 6, 2023

\*59N & Hopper — July 10-August 6, 2023

For more information about Aldine ISD's early childhood education programs, visit [AldineISD.org/primary](http://AldineISD.org/primary).

# Carver High School Student Prepares to Head to PVAMU and Spelman College Summer Leadership Programs

Paige Levi, a rising 10th grader at Carver High School, an Aldine ISD Choice School, was accepted in two 2023 summer leadership programs for girls — The Darden-Caldwell LeadHERship Series for Girls at Prairie View A&M University and The Spelman College Prep Institute (CPI).

Paige will attend the Darden-Caldwell LeadHERship Series for Girls from June 25 through June 29 in Prairie View and the Spelman College Prep Institute from July 7 through July 21, 2023.

Darden-Caldwell LeadHERship Series for Girls at PVAMU

The Darden-Caldwell LeadHERship Series for Girls is a 4.5-day residential program for females in the ninth grade that inspires and dares them to dream. The series is named after Phyllis Darden-Caldwell, director of alumni affairs at PVAMU.

The series will provide the girls with tools for leadership development, self-empowerment, college and career preparedness, and instilling the desire to become positive change agents within their communities. The summer camp will involve workshops led by professional women in leadership roles, both undergraduate and graduate students, with activities that promote leadership and empowerment to elevate girls' beliefs in all their possibilities.

Participants will understand that success is about



overcoming obstacles, setting and achieving goals, and accepting seemingly insurmountable challenges. There will be a group of dynamic, diverse, exciting, passionate, and engaging speakers on leadership, health and wellness, and social justice.

A student can be nominated for admission into the Darden at PVAMU. Once nominated, the students are asked to complete the registration process and potential permission forms.

Spelman College Prep Institute

The Spelman College Prep Institute (CPI) is a two-week residential program for female high school students in the 9th and 10th grades seeking an exceptional experience to launch their college search process.

Since 2005, CPI has been a leader in empowering

hundreds of female high school students to achieve acceptance into the college of their choice.

The institute is an intense academic program that features hands-on seminars, college preparation workshops, online sessions, and lessons with homework on test preparation.

Approximately 60 to 90 female applicants are accepted between the two sessions. Spelman College is the No. 1 Historically Black College and University (HBCU) ranked by U.S. News and World Report.

CPI applicants must be current high school students in ninth or 10th grades. Applicants must have a minimum GPA of 3.0 GPA and demonstrate leadership skills and an interest in attending. Other requirements include references, essays, and transcripts.

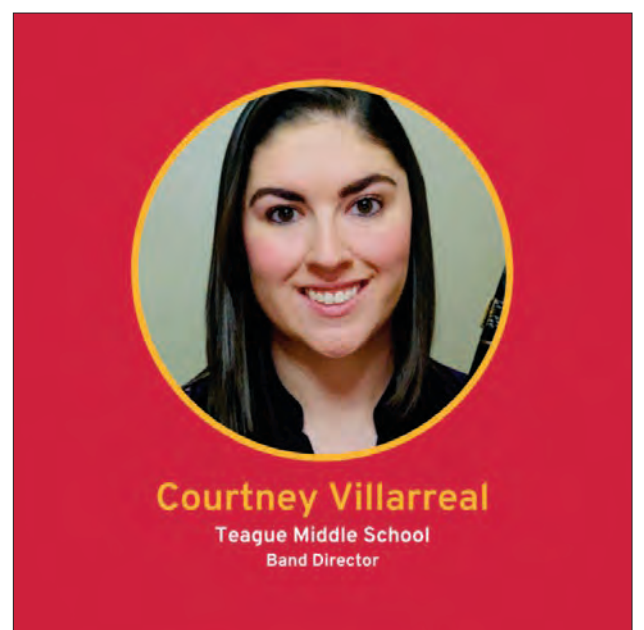
# 2 District Band Directors to be Inducted Into American School Band Directors Association

Aldine ISD is pleased to announce that Jeremy Gray, band director at Aldine High School, and Courtney Villarreal, band director at Teague Middle School, will be inducted into the prestigious American School Band Directors Association.

Potential members of the association must be nominated and sponsored by a peer who is also a current member. They must also demonstrate a high level of experience, excellent moral character, and quality of musicianship.

Gray is a huge advocate for the performing arts. On the Be a Part of the Music website, he wrote, "Music learning is one of the most beneficial things a young person can do. Research shows that young people involved in music have higher IQs, better grades, more developed language skills, and are better prepared for college."

Villarreal has been the band director at Teague Middle School since 2022. She previously taught music at Pharr-San Juan-Alamo North High School for eight years (2011-2019) before joining Aldine ISD in 2019 as head band director at Plummer Middle School for three years (2019-2022). Villarreal moved to Teague Middle School in 2022 to serve in the same capacity and has since set out to rebuild the band program. Professionally, she is a TIA Exemplary Distinction Award recipient and the Fine Arts Modeling Excellence recipient. She was also just awarded a \$3,000 scholarship from the College of Arts and Media Dean's office here at SHSU. More recently, she has been bestowed a \$5,710.50 grant for continuing her fine arts



education through the Cynthia Woods Mitchell Pavilion Grant Program. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in music teacher education from the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley. Villarreal is currently pursuing her Master of Arts in band studies at Sam Houston State University.

Gray and Villarreal will become involved in the organization by attending the Regional Conference this coming summer on June

21-23, 2023, in New Orleans and the National Convention in Minnesota in June 2024.

Founded in 1953, the American School Band Directors Association (ASBDA) is a national organization for band directors whose mission is to promote, enhance and preserve quality school programs through the leadership and fellowship of exemplary band directors.



OPINION PAGE

OPINION

By Ruben Salazar
East Aldine Civic Association

Civic Association opposes bar permit in East Aldine

ATTENTION East Aldine Residents: An Ojos Locos Sports Bar/Cantina is looking to set up shop here in East Aldine to be located at 11743 Eastex Freeway Houston TX. 77039. These establishments have a strong reputation of being a breeding ground for crime, violent (in some cases deadly) behavior, and intoxicated drivers.

We are asking that residents join State Representative Armando Walle, who has already filed a letter of protest in advance of the permit application by Ojos Locos, to show that our community is against having this business open in our community.

and download and fill out the PDF permit protest form and send it via email along with a letter asking TABC to DENY the application for a MB Mixed beverage and FB Food-Beverage license for Ojos Locos at this address and explain why you do not want this establishment here in our community.

Make sure to check the last two boxes on the form! MAKE SURE TO EMAIL YOUR COMPLETED FORM AND LETTER TO THIS EMAIL: Protests\_Reg3@tabc.texas.gov

If you need any help creating or submitting your protest letter or have questions, please reach out to the East Aldine Civic Association at (713) 569-8305 or eastaldinecivic@gmail.com

OPINION

Harris County Judge Lina Hidalgo



Judge objects to state bills targeting Harris County elections

"Harris County today finds itself grappling with the audacity of Republican state lawmakers, hell-bent on recklessly enhancing the election chances of one party by targeting the largest county in the state," said Judge Hidalgo.

Background information: Harris County is home to nearly 5 million residents and the third largest in the nation. The signing into law of two Texas election subversion bills, SB 1933 and SB 1750, will strip away Harris County's nonpartisan Elections Administrator and empower a Republican state official (the Abbott-appointed Secretary of State who served for 30 years as a Republican state senator) to tightly control the elections in Texas' largest—and Democratic—county.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Opinions expressed here are not necessarily that of this newspaper or its staff. YOUR OPINION is welcome. Send a letter for possible publication to Grafikpress Newspapers, 5906 Star Lane, Houston TX 77057 or an email to GRAFIKSTAR@aol.com. Please limit your words to about 200. Letters will be subject to editing. Thank you.



THE POSTSCRIPT

By Carrie Classon

"Father's Day"

It's time to be thinking about Father's Day—even if all we do is think about it.

The woman who suggested Father's Day in 1909 was named Sonora Smart Dodd. She was raised, along with her five siblings, by her father after her mother died in childbirth.

The idea took a long time to catch on, and didn't become a national holiday until Richard Nixon was in the White House. If you're thinking it's too bad that Ms. Dodd wasn't around to see her dream fulfilled, you'd be wrong. She was just 90 years old. At age 92, she was honored for her idea.

I always have trouble finding a card that seems appropriate for Father's Day. My dad's eyesight isn't great, but even if the cards were easier to read, there wouldn't be much worth reading. Father's Day cards are all about fishing or drinking or playing golf, and my dad isn't big on any of those activities.

This year, I'm seeing my dad right before Father's Day.

"We're going to miss Father's Day!" I told him.

"That's fine!" he said.

He didn't sound disappointed at all. Missing Father's Day meant we'd have less of a chance to wrestle the restaurant check away from him. He sounded like he hoped we might forget to get him a present as well. But that doesn't mean I won't be thinking about him because I always am—whether I know it or not.

My dad's advice, my dad's way of solving problems, of taking care of business is so ingrained in me that I'm not sure I know where he leaves off and I begin. It doesn't seem like my dad's way of looking at the world, it just seems like the way the world should be looked at— if I take the time to be thoughtful and don't rush out and do something stupid.

My dad would say that every plan needs "belt and suspenders." What will I do if something falls through? What's the next move?

The lesson in this way of thinking is that a person can do virtually anything they want to do as long as they take the time to think it through. My dad might argue mightily against something I wanted to do (and he has), but he'd never tell me not to do it. He'd just want to make sure I'd covered all the angles.

The result is that I've done things that, at first glance, might seem improbable or risky but, because I'd given them the "belt and suspenders" test before I started, were not nearly as precarious as they seemed. I can't imagine a more valuable lesson to have learned young. I can't imagine a better teacher than my dad.

My dad now lives in the house he planned for many years before his retirement and built almost entirely by himself with the help of his Uncle John. He always has a project in progress. He's going to turn 90 next year, and he would tell you he has slowed down, and perhaps he has, but if you just met him, you'd never guess.

I will be celebrating Father's Day this year— maybe early, maybe late, certainly over the telephone at the very least. I'll try to tell my dad how important he has always been to me—how every major decision of my life has been guided by him, how every decision I ever make will continue to be. And how much I love him.

Happy Father's Day. Till next time, Carrie

STATE CAPITAL HIGHLIGHTS

By Gary Borders



Central Figure in Paxton Case Charged

The Austin real estate developer who is at the heart of Attorney General Ken Paxton's impeachment was arraigned on eight federal charges Friday, the Austin American-Statesman reported. Nate Paul was arrested by the FBI on Thursday.

Paul, 36, has been accused of providing financial benefits to the attorney general, who in exchange intervened in several legal issues involving Paul. That connection led in part to the Texas House impeaching Paxton on May 27. He now awaits a trial sometime this summer in the Senate.

The federal charges allege Paul made false statements to financial institutions in Texas, Connecticut, New York and Ireland that underreported his total liabilities and overreported his cash, influencing lenders' decisions to loan him money to buy commercial properties.

Meanwhile, Tony Buzbee, the Houston attorney hired to represent Paxton, said his client was the victim of a "kangaroo court," according to the Texas Tribune. Buzbee, who is leading Paxton's legal team, predicted Paxton "will never be convicted by the Senate. Not on this evidence. Not with this record. The fact is these allegations are completely untrue."

Paxton has been temporarily removed from office, with former Texas secretary of state John Scott appointed as interim attorney general.

STATE FIGHTS TO SEIZE FORMER STATE PARK LAND

Commissioners with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department voted unanimously Saturday to pursue eminent domain claims to acquire property that once was Fairfield Lake State Park.

The move came amid increasing acrimony between state officials and Todd Interests, the new owners of the land in Freestone County. Todd Interests recently purchased the land that had been leased to the state for the past half-century.

Shawn Todd, the company's founder and CEO, told



STATE CAPITAL HIGHLIGHTS By Gary Borders

The Dallas Morning News the state had engaged in "intimidation" in an attempt to block his family's company from acquiring the 5,000-acre tract from energy company Vistra. The state made a \$25 million offer to buy Todd Interests out of its contract in mid-May, according to The News.

Arch "Beaver" Aplin III, chair of the nine-member commission, said the legal maneuver is an effort to save and expand a "beloved state park."

At least three measures concerning condemning the park land in order to acquire it failed to pass in the last legislative session. The park averaged 80,000 visitors annually, according to TPWD.

NEW \$321.3 BILLION BUDGET SENT TO ABBOTT

Texas comptroller Glenn Hegar has certified that the recently passed \$321.3 billion, two-year state budget is balanced. The budget legislation is the only task required of lawmakers by the Texas Constitution, the Texas Tribune reported. That means Gov. Greg Abbott can now review the 1,115-page document and potentially veto certain items that do not meet his approval. The deadline to do so is June 18.

Abbott's line-item veto authority only applies to the state budget. The 2024-2025 budget allocates tax money toward tax cuts, broadband internet expansion, border security and raises for state employees, to name a few items. It does not provide increased pay for teachers. Although \$4 billion has been set aside to increase teacher salaries and public-school funding, that will occur

only if the Legislature acts separately to create a private school voucher program. Legislation for that failed in the regular legislative session but likely will be considered again in a special session later this year.

JACKSON NAMED INTERIM CHAIR OF PUC

Kathleen Jackson, recently confirmed to the Public Utility of Commission by the Texas Senate, has been named interim chair by Abbott. That follows the resignation of chair Peter Lake, who will remain on the PUC until July 1. He joined the PUC in April 2021 in the wake of the major failure of the electric service after Winter Storm Uri the previous February.

"I'm honored and humbled by Governor Abbott's trust and confidence in me to lead the Public Utility Commission at this very important time for the agency and for Texas," Jackson said.

DROUGHT CONDITIONS EASE ACROSS STATE

Abundant rain in the Panhandle and much of Central Texas has eased drought conditions for much of those areas, according to Dr. Mark Wentzel, hydrologist with the Texas Water Development Board. The end of May saw the ninth consecutive weekly decrease in areas of the state affected by the drought. Less than 1 percent of the state is now listed as suffering from severe drought. That's the least since March 2022.

A total of 34% of the state is listed in any type of drought condition, compared to 78% a year ago. The arrival of an El Niño weather pattern should bring a cooler, wetter autumn and winter, forecasters say.

STATE AGAIN NO. 1 IN FORTUNE 500 COMPANIES

With a record 55 Fortune 500 companies headquartered in Texas, the state continues to lead the nation, Abbott announced. "Texas is the headquarters of headquarters," Abbott said. "With our strong and growing workforce and welcoming business climate, Texas is where businesses find the freedom to flourish, and people find opportunities to prosper."

The greater Houston metropolitan area is second in the nation, home to 25 Fortune 500 headquarters. The Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington metro area is third with 24.

Gary Borders is a veteran award-winning Texas journalist. He published a number of community newspapers in Texas during a 30-year span, including in Longview, Fort Stockton, Pargodoches and Cedar Park. Email: gborders@texaspress.com.

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# OBITUARIES

## SUSAN LYNN HOFFMAN

Susan Lynn Hoffman died on Tuesday, May 23rd in Phoenix, Arizona at the age of 64, from Cardiac Arrest suffered during a scheduled heart procedure.

Susan was a graduate of New Castle, Pennsylvania High School, class of 1976, and Arizona State University, class of 1980, with a bachelor's degree in Political Science. Susan's career was as a Legal Assistant, and for most of her life she was employed by Attorney Scott Palumbo of the law firm Palumbo Wolfe & Palumbo. She was a valuable member of the firm who will be greatly missed.

Susan's interests included extensive travel, and care for every conceivable stray animal she encountered. With her sister Trisha, Susan had travelled to Mexico, Australia, Canada, and Florida and Washington States. She cared for many stray animals, including cats,



dogs, and birds. She kept some, but found foster homes when possible. She supported animal shelters and encouraged others to do the same. She was also an avid sports fan, following NASCAR and the NFL. She had been to several Super Bowls, and a Rose Bowl game.

Susan was born on September 24, 1957 in New Castle, Pennsylvania to Gilbert E. B. Hoffman and Carol Louise Lutz Hoffman. Her mother Carol preceded her in death in 2017. Susan is survived by her husband Terry Blanchard, her sister Trisha (Patricia) Alison Hoffman, her nephew Derek Geffs, stepsons

Kevin and Billy Blanchard, and several step-grandchildren. She is also survived by her half-sister Kristan Liu Hoffman and family of Cincinnati, Ohio. She also leaves extended Cramer family in Florida.

Susan had planned to retire in a few short years, and had a second home in the woods of Show Low, Arizona where she was able to retreat and enjoy the quiet of the country. She will be greatly missed by her family and friends. Funeral arrangements are private, and donations can be made in her name to animal rescue organizations.

## Harris County Pets over capacity! Waiving adoption fees

HOUSTON – Spring and summer bring many new things, including litters or unwanted puppies and kittens! Many of them are being brought to Harris County Pets (HCP) – already crowded with homeless dogs and cats, pushing the shelter past its capacity. HCP needs people to adopt or foster and rescue groups to help us in our effort to provide loving homes for adoptable pets.

HCP has almost 300 animals over its capacity (currently 758 animals). Up to 40% of animals that are brought to the shelter are surrendered by owners for various reasons. Although not all animals that arrive at the shelter are adoptable for various

reasons (e.g., elderly, feral, sick, aggressive or injured animals), many of them would make great pets for individuals and families.

Currently, all adoptable animals at the Harris County Pets Resource Center are free of charge to a loving home! All adopted animals from HCP are spayed or neutered, receive age-appropriate vaccinations (including rabies), are microchipped and receive a one-year Harris County pet license.

Pet ownership requires an investment of time and money, so when adopting a pet, please consider:

- Selecting a pet that is suited to your home and lifestyle. Do you have time to walk your dog? Would an older pet be more suit-

able than an active kitten or puppy?

- Avoiding impulsive decisions when selecting a family pet.

- Owning only the number of pets that you can provide for appropriately.

- Ensuring that the pet is properly vaccinated, identified and registration is up to date.

HCP, located at 612 Canino Road in Houston, has many animals ready for a loving home. Stop by and choose yours! If you cannot adopt a pet, consider volunteering at our shelter. Volunteers are needed to facilitate adoptions, socialize, and foster animals. For more information, email [volunteer@countypets.com](mailto:volunteer@countypets.com) or call (281) 999-3191.

## Harris County starts anti-poverty program,

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

by a third-party agency and subjected to rigorous evaluation.

Judge Hidalgo said "The program is designed so it goes to folks with a certain income level, so it's below the poverty line for those zip codes where there are economic challenges for a lot of people."

Uplift Harris was spearheaded by Commissioner Ellis' Office. The program, funded by American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds, is part of the county's broader strategy to reduce poverty and deliver economic prosperity for everyone in Harris County. "Decades of neglect, in-

equity, and discrimination have financially destabilized generations of Harris County families, perpetuated poverty, and created unfair barriers to prosperity," Commissioner Ellis said. "Unchecked and ongoing inequality has created an economic divide that families can't overcome on their own, and Harris County has an obligation to act."

Similar programs have been launched in 45 cities across the country, including Austin, which has seen positive results so far.

According to a study by the Urban Institute, before the program was brought

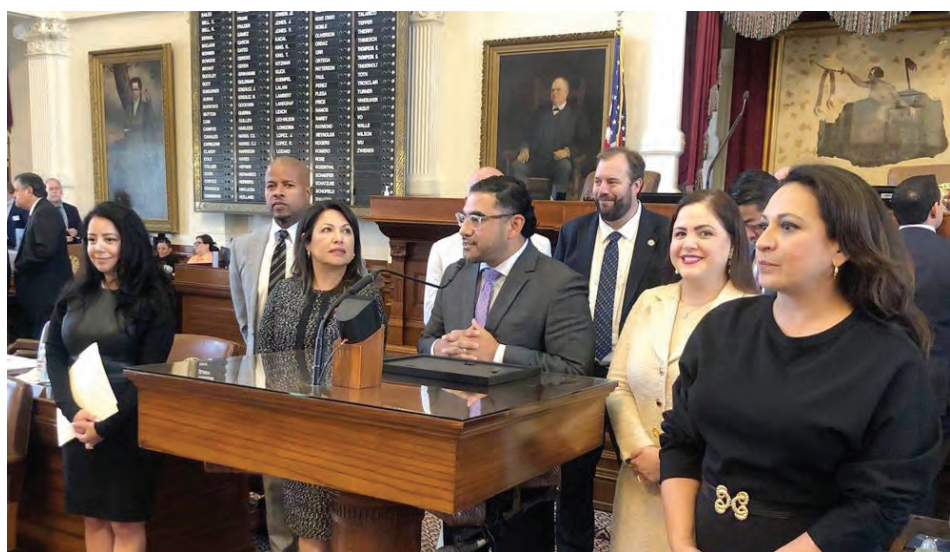
to Austin, 80% of families said they could not afford food. After six months of being in the program, the number dropped to 68%.

Also before the program, 77% of families in Austin said they couldn't afford to serve balanced meals to their children. After six months of being a part of the program, that number dropped to 62%.

About 55% of families in Austin said they were behind on their rent before starting the program, and after six months, that number dropped to 33%.

For more information, visit this website: <https://countiesforaguaranteedincome.org/>

# WALLE WORLD



May 29, 2023

## 88th Texas Legislature Adjourns "Sine Die"

On Monday, May 29th, the Texas House of Representatives gavelled out and adjourned to complete the 88th Legislative Session. During the 88th Session, Rep. Walle served as the Chair of the Appropriations Subcommittee on Articles VI, VII & VIII, the Vice Chair of the Licensing & Administrative Procedures Committee, and a Member of the Health Care Reform Select and House Administration Committees.

Rep. Walle also served as the House Representative for Articles VI, VII & VIII on the conference committee that helped determine the final budget. Within his Articles — which cover natural resources, business and economic development and regulatory — Rep. Walle oversaw the appropriation of over \$9 billion in general revenue dollars for critical programs. This money includes transformational investments in flood and water infrastructure projects, port capital and ship channel improvements and targeted pay raises for state employees.

As a budget conferee, Rep. Walle helped oversee the construction of Articles VI, VII & VIII of the state budget. Here are a few highlights of key line items Rep. Walle worked on this Session:

### BUDGET UPDATES

#### Flood Infrastructure Projects

- \$625M for the Flood Infrastructure Fund, which provides loans and grants for flood control, flood mitigation and drainage projects.
- \$200M for port capital improvement projects.
- \$176M for coastal erosion projects.
- \$550M for the Gulf Coast Protection District, including the "Ike Dike" project.
- \$50M for the Lake Houston Dam Spillway.
- \$16.9M for Poor Farm Ditch for drainage improvements in Harris County.
- \$12M for the T.C. Jester Stormwater Detention Basin project in Harris County.
- \$18M for the Halls Bayou Watershed in House District 140.

#### Air Quality Improvements

- \$7M for the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality to expand pollution reduction programs to also target particulate matter issues (PM 2.5), which will help communities impacted by concrete batch plants.

#### Expanding State Parks

- \$1 Billion for the Centennial Parks Conservation Fund, established by Rep. Walle and Sen. Tan Parker, which can be used for the acquisition and expansion of state parks.

#### Food Insecurity

- \$10M for the Texans Feeding Texans program to contribute surplus agricultural products for food banks.
- \$6.6M to provide free breakfast for any student eligible for the free and reduced lunch program.
- \$10M for the creation of a new Houston Food Bank in House District 140.

#### University of Houston

- \$3 Billion to create the Texas University Fund, which the University of Houston will be eligible to draw funds from in pursuit of rising in national research rankings.
- \$34M for an institutional enhancement for the University of Houston for system-wide improvements.
- \$2M for the University of Houston/Houston Independent School District partnership program to support the certification of new educators.

### LEGISLATIVE UPDATES

Rep. Armando Walle successfully passed seven bills this Session that have been sent to Governor Greg Abbott. Two of those bills have already been signed into law by the governor.

#### House Bill 1472

HB 1472 by Rep. Walle adjusts the income requirements for participation in the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs' Bootstrap Loan Program, which expands access to affordable housing. The bill passed both chambers and has been sent to the governor for final approval.

#### House Bill 2897

HB 2897 by Rep. Walle gives victims of wage theft more opportunities for recourse by expanding which addresses demands for payment may be sent. The bill passed both chambers and has been sent to the governor for final approval.

#### House Bill 1634

HB 1634 by Rep. Walle ensures Public Facility Corporations cannot discriminate against families who use Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers when selecting tenants. HB 1634 was amended onto HB 2071 by Rep. Jacey Jetton, which did ultimately pass.

#### House Bill 2205

HB 2205 by Rep. Walle renames a portion of US Highway 59 in memory of Harris County Deputy Sheriff Darren Almendarez. HB 2205 is the companion bill to Senate Bill 957 by Sen. Carol Alvarado, which was signed into law by the governor on May 19th.

#### House Bill 4177 and House Joint Resolution 185

HB 4177 establishes the Centennial Parks Conservation Fund, which has been allocated \$1 billion during the budget process for the expansion and acquisition of Texas state parks. HJR 185 authorizes a constitutional amendment to give Texas voters the opportunity to vote to approve the creation of the fund during the 2023 General Election. HB 4177 and HJR 185 are companion bills to SB 1648 and SJR 74 by Sen. Tan Parker, which have been passed and sent to the governor for final approval.

#### House Bill 4318

HB 4318 creates a grant program to fund crime victim notification systems through law enforcement agencies, which would improve 9-1-1 response times and give Texans more information and agency when filing a report. HB 4318 is the companion bill to SB 2085 by Sen. John Whitmire, which has passed and been sent to the governor for final approval.

Several key pieces of legislation by Rep. Walle made it to various points in the process, but did not finally pass. Rep. Walle will continue to push for these critical changes in the interim and during the next Legislative Session.

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# CHURCH PAGE

## BIBLE TRIVIA

By Wilson Casey

1. Is the book of James (KJV) in the Old or New Testament or neither?
2. From 2 Samuel 18:18, who erected a memorial to himself because he did not have a son? Onesimus, Absalom, Spartacus, Isaiah
3. Where is Satan called "the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience"? Galatians 1, Ephesians 2, Colossians 3, Titus 4
4. What widowed prophetess was 84 years old on seeing the young Jesus in the temple? Anna, Jezebel, Hagar, Abigail
5. Which book foretold of the Messiah being born in Bethlehem? Ezra, 1 Kings, Amos, Micah
6. From Genesis 35:22, how many sons did Jacob have? 1, 3, 6, 12

ANSWERS: 1) New, 2) Absalom, 3) Ephesians 2:2, 4) Anna, 5) Micah 5:2, 6) 12  
 Hardcore trivia fan? Visit Wilson Casey's subscriber site at [www.patreon.com/triviaguy](http://www.patreon.com/triviaguy).  
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**THE ILLUSTRATED BIBLE**

*For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*

GALATIANS 3:27,28

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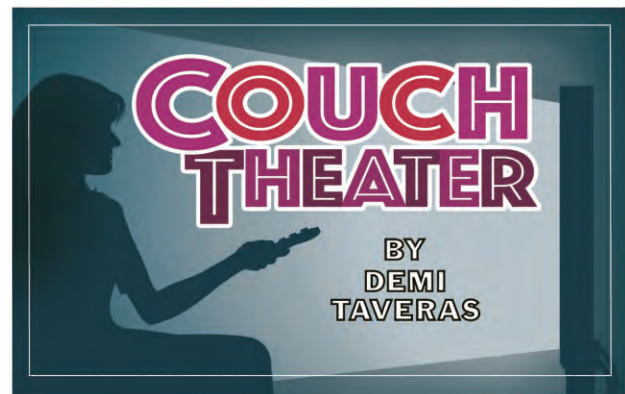
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Amanda Seyfried and Tom Holland star in "The Crowded Room."

"The Crowded Room"

"THE CROWDED ROOM" (TV-MA) — Tom Holland ("Spider-Man: No Way Home") leads this new psychological thriller series set in 1979 Manhattan, New York. Holland plays a young man named Danny who gets arrested under the pretense that he was involved in a shooting. As he tries to explain his innocence to the investigator covering his case, Rya (Amanda Seyfried), Danny simultaneously uncovers parts of his life that were blacked out of his memory. Emmy Rossum ("Shameless") and Sasha Lane ("Loki") co-star in the 10-episode series, which was originally inspired by the non-fiction novel "The Minds of Billy Milligan" by Daniel Keyes. The first three episodes are out now. (AppleTV+)

13) — It doesn't take much to get me on board with a rom-com full of twists and turns, so the fact that there's an all-star cast — Richard Gere, Susan Sarandon, William H. Macy and Diane Keaton — in this film was pretty much just icing on the cake. Michelle (Emma Roberts) and Allen (Luke Bracey) are a young couple who are at odds when it comes to getting married. So, Michelle gives Allen an ultimatum, forcing them both to seek advice from their parents, who are all currently unfaithful to each other. Michelle then gets persuaded by her parents to invite Allen and his family over to their home, where both pairs of parents suddenly realize that their partners in infidelity are actually their children's in-laws. Premieres June 16. (Hulu)

\*\*\* "MAYBE I DO" (PG-

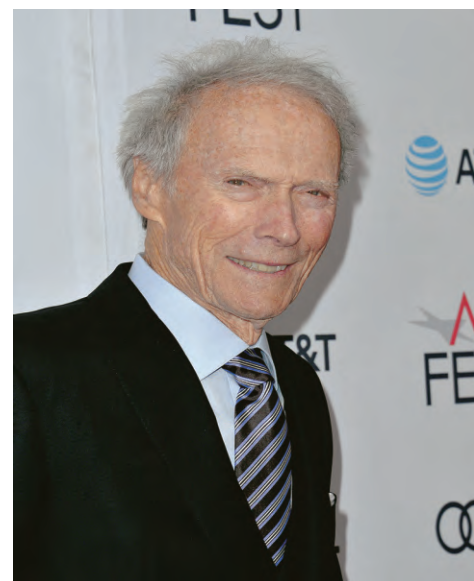
"BASED ON A TRUE STORY" (TV-MA) — Ava and Nathan Bartlett are a couple in desperate need of cash after Nathan lost his job, especially since they have a baby on the way. Ava, who has a crippling obsession with true crime, starts keeping tabs on a serial killer called the West Side Ripper near their neighborhood. The Bartletts then decide to capitalize on the interest in the West Side Ripper by starting a podcast, but as they begin to dive deep into the murders, their level of involvement escalates to the point of government intervention and killings happening right outside their door. Kaley Cuoco ("Big Bang Theory") and Chris Messina ("The Mindy Project") lead this comedy thriller series with all eight episodes out now. (Peacock)

"THE PRICE OF GLEE" (TV-14) — This three-part documentary series breaks down the "curse" surrounding the cast and crew of Fox's hit musical-comedy series "Glee." The high-profile deaths from the show that rocked the world included Cory Monteith, who overdosed right as he was set to return for the fifth season, and Naya Rivera, who drowned at Lake Piru after saving her son. But there were also several other crew members who met tragic endings following the show. In addition, the documentary series highlights the intense working conditions behind the show that seemed, at least in part, due to one of its creators Ryan Murphy ("American Horror Story" and "Dahmer"). All three parts are out now. (Max)

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HOLLYWOOD by Tony Rizzo

HOLLYWOOD — Clint Eastwood, who turned 93 on May 31, is set to direct his 41st feature film. Eastwood's directorial debut was "Play Misty for Me," 52 years ago, in 1971. His next film, "Juror #2," has Gabriel Basso (of Netflix's "Night Agent") as the title juror, along with Nicholas Hoult, Toni Collette, Kiefer Sutherland and Zoey Deutch. "Juror #2" has a serious moral dilemma, in that he could sway the jury's verdict either way.



Clint Eastwood is set to direct "Juror #2."

We need to address the elephant in the room: the writer's strike. In 2007, the last time the writers struck, there was no such thing as "streaming." Most people don't know what the strike is about. Writers are paid for writing a script, say, for a TV series. They're paid for the initial run and subsequent reruns. But streaming services don't have reruns, since the series are available to subscribers at anytime.

There are 11,500 screen writers who feel that series' budgets have increased, while the writers' share of that money has decreased. When you hear the phrase "available on Hulu tomorrow," that means, to a writer, that residuals from the network's run will be minimal, since it will be available on Hulu 24/7. Compensation from theatrical films also gets affected by streaming because the films are available 24/7. Writers get compensated by the number of views, which is how they rate films shown on streaming services.

In addition, there is the threat from artificial intelligence (AI), which can be fed thousands of scripts and create new scripts by taking dialogue and plots from past scripts. The Screen Actor's Guild faces AI problems as well, since voice patterns can be created from stored patterns in the AI systems. At first, streaming services earned big

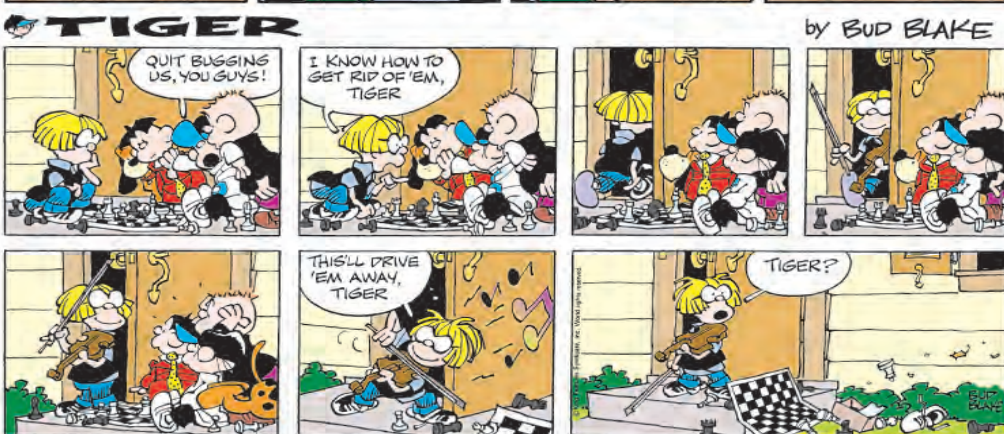
bucks from their large memberships — that is, until the field became overcrowded with over 200 streaming services, which cut profits for Netflix and Disney+ as well as newer ones such as AppleTV+, HBO Max (now Max), Hulu and Roku, to name a few.

Robert De Niro must be crazy about fatherhood. In 1976, he had a son with his wife, Diahnne Abbott, and adopted her daughter, Drena. He was in a relationship with Toukie Smith from 1988 to 1996, which produced twin sons, thanks to in vitro and a surrogate. In 1997, he married Grace Hightower, and they had a son and a daughter via surrogate. He has four grandchildren, and this year, he revealed he recently had a seventh child. However, his fatherhood comes with a very high price ... he needs to work nonstop to be able to pay the bills and alimonies for all those wives, partners and children. Maybe he should seriously think about getting a hobby!

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ENTERTAINMENT

Amber Waves



Weekly SUDOKU by Linda Thistle. Includes a 9x9 grid and difficulty level: Moderate.

HOCUS-FOCUS by Henry Boltinoff. Includes two panels of a boy looking at a car and instructions to find differences.

King Crossword

Crossword puzzle grid with clues for Across and Down.

Answers for the crossword puzzle.

Trivia test by Fifi Rodriguez. Includes a grid and 10 trivia questions.

Answers for the trivia test.

Trivia Test Answers: 1. 1969; 2. Pandora; 3. Brazil; 4. George; 5. Five; Happy, Sleepy, Dopey, Grumpy; 6. Australia; 7. Seven; 8. 63; 9. Mexico; 10. Throat.



# This summer, try a course at Lone Star College

HOUSTON (June 1, 2023) – Lone Star College has many educational programs this summer to jumpstart your academic journey.

“Lone Star College offers a world-class education that prepares students for the rigors of any four-year university or direct entry into the workforce,” said Stephen C. Head, Ph.D., LSC Chancellor. “Additionally, we offer flexible schedules and comprehensive financial aid options to help support students.”

LSC has two six-week summer semesters geared toward helping students start, continue or complete their college education at an accelerated pace. Summer I runs from June 5-July 11, and Summer II begins July 13 and ends Aug. 20. Offerings include academic transfer, core credits, workforce, continuing education and more.

“Lone Star College offers a variety of courses, and as a result, any student can find something that they would want to do,” said Edenzil Lacle, LSC-North Harris automotive technology student. “Lone Star



Cutline: Lone Star College offers many academic programs this summer for anyone wanting to start, continue or complete their college education.

College has made me believe that quality education is attainable and that I can achieve my dreams.”

LSC offers over 200 program options, including four bachelor’s degrees, for students to complete a degree, transfer to a four-year institution or enter the workforce. Courses are available in face-to-face, online or hybrid formats.

Summer registration continues and fall 2023 registration is now open. For a complete list of all summer 2023 courses, visit LoneStar.edu/Registration.

Lone Star College enrolls over 80,000 students each semester providing high-quality, low-cost academic transfer and career training education.

LSC is training tomorrow’s workforce today and redefining the community college experience to support student success. Stephen C. Head, Ph.D., serves as Chancellor of LSC, the largest institution of higher education in the Houston area and has been named a 2022 Great Colleges to Work For® institution by the Chronicle of Higher Education and recognized by Fortune Magazine and Great Place To Work® as one of this year’s Best Workplaces in Texas™. LSC consists of eight colleges, seven centers, eight Workforce Centers of Excellence and Lone Star Corporate College. To learn more, visit LoneStar.edu.

# LSC-University Park graduate advocates for foster children, inspires others

Houston, Texas (May 31, 2023) – At age five, Montoya Thomas entered the foster care. Since then, she has lived in 12 foster homes and two residential treatment centers. Despite her traumatic start, Thomas has risen to recover, overcome, and inspire others to do the same.

Thomas is one of the more than 1000 students who graduated from Lone Star College-University Park during the 2023 Spring Commencement ceremony on May 12. Despite a leg injury, Thomas finished her coursework in December and walked across the stage to proudly receive her diploma earlier this month.

“In my seven years of teaching undergraduate Physics,” said LSC-University Park Physics Instructor Naila Syed, “I have rarely met such a persistent, diligent, and passionate student as Toya. She followed up on individual lab submissions and feedback, as well as grade discrepancies down to the tenth of a decimal. However, above all, she was always respectful and professional in her demeanor. I am so incredibly proud of Toya, and I have no doubt that she will excel and achieve any goals she sets her mind to.”

Thomas takes immense pride in her accomplishments at LSC-University Park. She is determined to leverage her skills not only for personal growth, but also to advocate for those who have faced similar challenges. “I picked Lone Star because of diversity, equity, and inclusion,” Thomas said. “My degree is in Communications. One of my ca-



Montoya Thomas, a resilient graduate, proudly displays her school spirit on graduation day.

reer goals is to continue to bring awareness to trauma in the foster care system. I want to continue to advocate for foster youth by using my voice in public speaking.”

Through her involvement in the Black Student Union, Student Government Association, and Student Success Institute, Thomas has actively promoted better services, opportunities, and care for foster children. In March, as a Texas Community College Student Advisory Council member, Thomas testified before the Texas House Committee of Higher Education in favor of Texas House Bill 8 (HB8).

“I am a former foster youth,” Thomas told the committee. “As a community college student, I struggled to come up with the money to pay for classes and all the associated fees like books and project materials. I was actively transitioning out of the extended foster care system and became homeless. I worked 40 hours a week, making nine dollars

an hour while managing a course load of six to nine credit hours.” Between Spring 2015 and December 2022, Thomas says she faced a constant battle between making good grades and trying to keep a roof over her head. “Every day, I continued to sacrifice things that gave me peace of mind or sanity to prevent a sinking ship. I did ultimately navigate my hardships and earn my degree, but I know there are too many other students who cannot say the same.”

Thanks in part to Thomas’ testimony, HB8 passed the House last week. HB8, among other things, creates a state financial aid program to cover dual credit courses for educationally disadvantaged students.

“Toya’s journey is a testament to the power of faith and perseverance,” reflected Jamesia King, M.A., Lone Star College (LSC) Grant Developer and a steadfast guide in Thomas’s time at LSC-University Park. “In the face of challenges, Toya has shown courage and tenacity. As a participant in the Student Success Institute (SSI), her creativity and leadership were truly inspiring to others. I am super proud of Toya, and I have the utmost confidence she will achieve even greater success in the future.”

If you are a student involved in the foster care system and you are attending LSC-University Park or thinking about it, LSC Navigators are available to help. For assistance, please contact LSCNavigators@LoneStar.edu.

**MAP OUT YOUR FUTURE!**

Register today, multiple class options to choose from.

LSC-NORTH HARRIS

Fall classes begin August 28.  
LoneStar.edu/LearnMore