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NORTHEAST NEWS

METRO Bus Shelter Art



Aldine students designed artwork to be applied to METRO Bus Shelters near their schools. See Pages 1, 5. Art above by Jose Ibarra, Davis HS.

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 VOL. 48, NO. 1 TUESDAY, JANUARY 2, 2024 HOUSTON, TEXAS www.nenewsroom.com

NEWS NOTES

LSC Building renamed in honor of Dr. Head

LSC-NH hosts Super Registrations Jan 6 & 13

NORTH HARRIS – Is 2024 going to be a new year, new you kind of year? If so, Lone Star College-North Harris is ready to help you! Registration is underway for spring semester classes which begin Jan. 16, and the Student Services team is ready to help with the admissions and enrollment process on campus at Super Saturday. There will be two Super Saturday Registration Rally events, 9 a.m. – 2 p.m. Jan. 6 and Jan. 13, where students can get help with admissions, NSO, financial aid resources, and more. Campus tours will also be available. "Our team is here and ready to help students however we can," said LSC-North Harris Interim Vice President of Student Success Magdalena Mendoza-Stark, "so join us and start your future now." Students are encouraged to take advantage of the full-service event to get the help they need. Super Saturday Registration Rallies Saturday, Jan. 6 & 7 Student Services Building 2700 W.W. Thorne Blvd. Houston, TX 77073 9 a.m. – 2 p.m. For additional spring registration information, go to LoneStar.edu/LearnMore

NORTH HARRIS – The Lone Star College Board of Trustees honored LSC Chancellor Emeritus Stephen C. Head, Ph.D., during its Dec. 14 meeting by renaming the Lone Star Community Building at LSC-System Office, The Woodlands to the Stephen C. Head, Ph.D. Building. Head retired Aug. 1 after 39 years of service. "Dr. Head's leadership was exceptional. I worked closely with him on federal, state, and local governance policy formulation and reviews resulting in Lone Star College's continued position at the forefront of national and Texas community colleges in areas such as instructional and workforce offerings, legal compliance, and financial growth," said Michael Stoma, LSC Board



DR. STEPHEN C. HEAD The Lone Star College Board of Trustees voted to rename the Lone Star Community Building at LSC-System Office, The Woodlands to the Stephen C. Head, Ph.D. Building in honor of his years of service.

of Trustees chair. Head began his career with LSC in 1984 and had over 30 years in high-level positions at LSC, including serving as

president at three LSC campuses and executive vice chancellor. During that time, he focused on student access, equality, success and completion; academic quality; workforce programs in alignment with community needs; and collaborative agreements with educational, business and local civic organizations. "Dr. Head devoted his career to helping students, families and the community thrive by spearheading initiatives, resulting in their success," said Jim Cain, Ed.D., LSC Board of Trustees assistant secretary. "It is only fitting to recognize his life's work by renaming the Lone Star Community Building in his honor." The newly named Stephen C. Head, Ph.D. Building houses state-of-the-art conference and banquet rooms open to the system and community for educational and professional development classes and conferences. Spring 2024 registration is underway. Visit LoneStar.edu/Start to learn more about all the educational opportunities LSC has to offer. 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. Mario K. Castillo, J.D., serves as Chancellor of LSC, the largest institution of higher education in the Houston area. LSC has been named a 2023 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.

Rep. Walle invited participant at White House conference

WASHINGTON, DC – The White House held a public policy briefing of state legislators from across the nation in order to prevent gun violence in our streets. Aldine's State Representative Armando Walle was invited by former Representative Garnet Coleman as part of this effort to keep our streets safe. Armando said he was Greatful for President Joe Biden & VP Kamala Harris leading this effort. Thank you Everytown for Gun Safety. Walle also said "Good to be with Texas members Senator Roland Gutierrez and Rep. Vikki Goodwin. So honored to speak on behalf of HD140 and Texans from across the state. Humbling experience. As I said before, from Aldine Mail Route to the White House. Keep grinding my people."



State Representative Armando Walle poses in front of a White House plaque during his visit last month.



Representative Armando Walle was invited to participate in a Gun Safety conference held at the White House for invited State Representatives.

Aldine students design METRO bus shelter art



METRO president Tom Lambert, left, congratulates Aldine Students at center of ribbon cutting for their Shelter designs. Students are Jazlyn Otero (Victory ECHS), Gerardo Ibarra (Davis HS), Dorelyz Garcia (Nimitz HS), and Jose Garcia (Hall Academy). Event took place Dec. 7 at Bamberg Resource Center.

ALDINE – Students, along with METRO officials and Aldine educators celebrated new winning art designs for METRO bus shelters at an announcement ceremony in December. Student artists from Aldine ISD took center stage in December as part of a collaborative effort between METRO and the school district to bring color and creativity to bus stops. The celebration at the Aldine ISD's Bamberg Professional Development and Resource Center was held to announce the latest winners of METRO's bus shelter art program. Winners included students from four high schools: Davis High School, Hall Success Academy, Victory Early College High School, and Nimitz High School. METRO President & CEO Tom Lambert, along with Board Members Troi Taylor and Diann Lewter, personally congratulated the winners and educators. "I'm so inspired - these young artists aren't just

Continued. See METRO Bus Shelter Art, Page 5

KEENEY'S KORNER - Coach of the Year Harmon leads Nimitz to eight-win season, playoffs

By Mike Keeney
Contributing Writer

It appears, Cornelius Harmon likes this head coaching thing. Harmon, who became a first-time head coach in March of 2022 when he was hired by Aldine ISD to run the Nimitz High football program, led Nimitz to a second straight playoff berth and an eight-win season. In two years as a head coach, Harmon is 14-8 and with nine offensive and seven defensive starters returning for the 2024 season, more big things could be on the horizon for the Cougars. For leading Nimitz to eight wins and second straight playoff berth, Harmon was named the Northeast News' Coach of the Year for the second straight year. Harmon, who started at three years at quarterback at Texas Southern University, began his coaching career as an assistant coach at his alma mater, Port Arthur Memorial where he spent nine years. He then moved to Summer Creek in Humble ISD where he served as offensive coordinator before being named the head football coach at Nimitz.



Nimitz High School head football coach Cornelius Harmon has been named the Northeast News Coach of the Year for the second straight year.

Harmon admitted he and his knew they had a young team to start the 2023 season, but that things began to click early. "We knew we were going to be young and I want to give kudos to the staff for the

Continued. See KEENEY'S KORNER, Page 5

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Fatal crash on Airline at Canino

Houston police are investigating a fatal crash at 100 Canino Road about 2:45 p.m. on Sunday (December 17).

The identity of the deceased man, 40, is pending verification by the Harris County Institute of Forensic Sciences.

HPD Vehicular Crimes Division Sergeant J. James and F. Serna reported:

The driver of a silver Dodge Ram 1500 pickup truck was traveling southbound in the 7800 block of Airline Drive and ran the red light at the intersection of Canino Road. The Dodge then struck a blue Hyundai Sonata traveling eastbound on Canino, crossed the median into the northbound lanes of Airline and then struck a red Chevrolet Camaro, a blue Chevrolet Silverado pickup

truck and a Ford F-150 pickup truck waiting at a red light on the northbound side of Canino. All three persons in the Dodge, including the driver, exited the vehicle and fled the scene on foot without providing assistance.

The driver of the Hyundai was ejected from the vehicle and was pronounced deceased by responding Houston Fire Department paramedics. No other persons were injured in this crash.

The investigation is continuing.

Anyone with information on the identities of the persons in the Dodge pickup truck or in this case is urged to contact the HPD Hit and Run Unit at 713-247-4072 or speak anonymously to Crime Stoppers at 713-222-TIPS.

COMMUNITY WATCH

UMMC/Doctor's Hospital fined \$2 million by Dept. of Justice for false claims

Wednesday, December 20, 2023

Doctor's Hospital 1997 L.P., doing business as United Memorial Medical Center LLC (UMMC), an entity that formerly operated hospitals in the Houston, Texas area, has agreed to pay \$2 million, and to make additional contingent payments, to resolve alleged False Claims Act violations for claiming excessive cost outlier payments from government health care programs and for double billing the government for COVID-19 tests that were also billed either to the State of Texas or the City of Houston.

According to the settlement agreement between UMMC and the United States, the settlement funds will be paid by one of UMMC's principals, Ravishanker Mallapuram, and UMMC has guaranteed the payment of those funds.

"Hospitals and other providers who participate in federal health care programs have an obligation to the taxpayers to ensure that they are billing appropriately," said Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General Brian Boynton, head of the Department of Justice's Civil Division. "We will hold accountable those who knowingly overbill or double bill for the medical services they provide to federal beneficiaries."

In addition to its standard payment system, Medicare and Tricare provide supplemental reimbursement to hospitals called "cost outlier" payments in cases where the cost of care is unusually high. Congress enacted the supplemental outlier payment system to ensure that hospitals possess the incentive to treat inpatients whose care requires unusually high costs. This settlement resolves allegations that UMMC submitted claims for cost outlier payments by rapidly increasing its charges for inpatient care and underreporting its charges on Medicare cost reports, thereby preventing the government health care programs from adjusting those charges so that they would reasonably reflect UMMC's actual costs. The settlement also resolves allegations that UMMC concealed and improperly avoided its obligation to reimburse the federal health care programs for any excessive outlier payments its hospitals received.

In addition, UMMC has agreed to settle allegations that it submitted claims to the Health Resources and Services Administration's Uninsured Program for COVID-19 testing services, despite being reimbursed for those same services by either the State of Texas or the City of Houston.

"This over \$2 million settlement is significant," said U.S. Attorney Alamar S. Hamdani for the Southern District of Texas (SDTX). "We depend upon medical providers to be good stewards of a community's healthcare services and of the federally funded programs that pay for those services. The case alleges UMMC made millions by overbilling those health care programs and intentionally double billing for COVID-19 testing. Instead of returning those monies to America's taxpayers, they allegedly

pocketed the money for themselves. Finding the wrongdoing and lost monies in these types of cases involves complexities akin to playing three-dimensional chess, but know this, the SDTX will not stop in its quest for justice until it can claim checkmate."

"Hospitals and executives who run them should prioritize accurate, lawful billing of Medicare and other taxpayer-funded health care programs at all times," said Special Agent in Charge Jason E. Meadows of the Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Inspector General (HHS-OIG). "This practice is especially imperative, however, when the world is responding to a public health crisis. At HHS-OIG, it is our fundamental responsibility to, along with our law enforcement partners, safeguard federally funded health care programs and American taxpayer monies."

"The Department of Defense (DOD) Office of Inspector General's Defense Criminal Investigative Service (DCIS) is committed to rooting out fraud schemes that waste valuable taxpayer resources intended for the healthcare of our service members, military retirees and their families," said Acting Special Agent in Charge Gregory P. Shilling of the DCIS Southwest Field Office. "DCIS, along with our law enforcement partners, will aggressively pursue and hold those accountable who took advantage of the pandemic for profit at the expense of DOD's taxpayer funded healthcare program, known as TRI-CARE."

"The FBI and its partners will relentlessly pursue bad actors that participate in nefarious double billing at the cost of the American taxpayer and our health care system," said Executive Assistant Director Timothy Langan of the FBI's Criminal, Cyber, Response and Services Branch. "Violations of the False Claims Act will not be tolerated. If you do not follow the law, you will face the consequences of your noncompliance."

The settlement resolves a lawsuit originally brought by Ryan Griffin, a former employee of UMMC, under the qui tam provisions of the False Claims Act. The Act permits private citizens with knowledge of fraud against the government to bring a lawsuit on behalf of the United States and to share in any recovery. Under the settlement announced today, Griffin will receive \$300,000.

This settlement was the result of a coordinated effort by the Justice Department's Civil Division; the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of Texas; HHS, Office of Counsel to the Inspector General and Office of Investigations; DCIS and the FBI.

The lawsuit resolved by this settlement is captioned United States, et al., ex rel. Ryan Griffin v. Mediscop Global Services Pvt Ltd., et al., 3:21-cv-183 (S.D. TX.).

The claims resolved by the settlement are allegations only, and there has been no determination of liability.

Suspect Arrested, Charged in Fatal Crash at 4700 North Freeway

Houston police have arrested a suspect charged in the fatal crash that occurred at 4700 North Freeway (North Interstate Highway 45) about 2:25 a.m. last Friday (December 22).

The suspect, Edwardo Delgado, 36, is charged with intoxication manslaughter in the 228th State District Court. A booking photo of Delgado is attached to this news release.

The identity of the female victim, 35, is pending notification to family members by the Harris County Insti-

tute of Forensic Sciences.

HPD Vehicular Crimes Division Sergeant M. Sudduth and Officer J. Best reported:

Delgado was driving a silver Chevrolet Tahoe northbound on the freeway at the above address when he failed to maintain a single lane and struck a concrete barrier. The vehicle then struck a concrete pillar and rolled onto its side. The female passenger (victim) was pronounced deceased at the scene.



EDUARDO DELGADO

Delgado was transported to an area hospital for treatment of minor injuries. He was found to be intoxicated and was arrested for his role in the crash.

Suspect Charged, Arrested in Fatal Shooting at 832 West Greens Road

Charges have been filed against a suspect arrested in the fatal shooting of a man found at 832 West Greens Road about 10:50 p.m. on November 12.

The male suspect, 16, has been referred to Harris County Juvenile Probation authorities on charges of murder and aggravated assault with a deadly weapon. Juvenile suspect information is not releasable.

He's accused in the death of Jeffrey Martinez Menjivar, 18.

HPD Homicide Division Detectives W. Huff and J. Nguyen reported:

HPD patrol officers responded to a person down call at an apartment complex at the above address and found the victim unresponsive sitting in the driver's seat of a

vehicle. He had suffered apparent multiple gunshot wounds. Houston Fire Department paramedics transported the man to HCA Houston Healthcare Northwest where he was pronounced deceased.

Further investigation identified the juvenile as the suspect in this incident. He was arrested on Tuesday (Nov. 28) and admitted to investigators his involvement in the incident. He was subsequently charged on Wednesday (Nov. 29).

The investigation is ongoing.

Anyone with information in this case is urged to contact the HPD Homicide Division at 713-308-3600 or speak anonymously to Crime Stoppers at 713-222-TIPS.

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AIRLINE LIBRARY NEWS

WE WILL BE CLOSED JAN. 1. WE WILL OPEN JAN. 2 AND 10AM.

Affordable Connectivity Plan Sign-Up

HCPL Connected Mifi and Chromebook Service ends Dec 31st!

Don't lose internet access - sign up for the Affordable Connectivity Program! Harris County Digital Navigators will be at Aldine library to help eligible persons sign up. **Every Tuesday and Thursday 12 pm - 4 pm.** To get more info or to make an appointment, **contact the Digital Navigators: Call 713-755-5000 OR Visit broadband.harriscountytx.gov/acp**

Please note: Even though the service is ending, the MiFi Hotspot you received from HCPL or one of its partners is yours to keep and can be used with any Affordable Connectivity Program internet service provider. If you no longer want the T-Mobile MiFi Hotspot, you can return it to any HCPL Branch Location.

Movie Night with Hot Chocolate

Thursday, Jan. 4, 5-6pm. Families and friends, join us as we watch this classic children's movie. Hot chocolate will be provided.

Adult Volunteers

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/qSzMSpi-ATL>.

Passport Services

Do have plans to travel out of the country for the holidays? You need to get your passport in order NOW! Current routine processing is estimated at 10 weeks and expedited processing time is estimated at 7 weeks. You can make an

appointment for passport services at Aldine Branch - <https://www.hcpl.net/services/passport-services>.

Our passport hours - Mondays and Wednesdays 12pm - 5pm; Tuesdays and Thursdays 12pm - 7pm; Saturdays 10am - 12pm and 2pm - 4pm - Appointments required. 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 to be added on the list to be seen. Sign-in starts at 1pm.

Michelle Pichon
 Library Program Specialist
Harris County Public Library

Aldine Branch Library
 11331 Airline Dr.
 Houston, TX 77037
 832-927-5410

SCHOOL NEWS PAGE

New FAFSA Form Opens Dec. 31; AISD to Host Districtwide Financial Aid Application Blitz in January 2024



High school seniors can seize the opportunity to kickstart their college journey. For many families, financial aid is critical to paying for college. However, students must first complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid to access assistance. And this year, the FAFSA has been significantly delayed.

For the 2024-2025 school year, a new, streamlined FAFSA form will be available on Dec. 31, 2023, up to nearly three months later than in previous years. The Education Department will return to an Oct. 1 start date next year.

In ordinary years, high school graduates miss out on billions in federal grants because they don't fill out the FAFSA. Many families mistakenly assume they won't qualify for financial aid and don't even bother to apply.

Michael N. Minter, AISD director of college readiness, is aware students and families might be stressed by the later start date to apply.

"Trying to navigate the process, a new formula, and the delay are intimidating and frustrating to some students and their families," said Minter.

What's Changed With the New FAFSA

- *It also uses the Student Aid Index calculation to estimate family income.
- *The number of questions has been reduced from 108 to less than 50.
- *The Department of Education will no longer use the "sibling discount" for multiple children in college — it will take full effect beginning with the 2024-2025 academic year.
- *The new FAFSA will raise the family income threshold, making more students eligible for federal need-based aid and increasing Pell Grant eligibility to over 1.5 million. Currently, the maximum Pell Grant award is \$7,395.

What Can Students Do Now to Get Ready?

- *Students should prepare for college applications by having their tax forms ready.
- *Create a StudentAid.gov account and obtain a Federal Student Aid ID.
- *Follow Federal Student Aid on social media for announcements and complete the new FAFSA form.
- *Consider other sources for merit-based aid, such as Scholarships.com and the College Board, which offer over 1.7 million private scholarships and fellowships often funded by foundations, corporations, and other independent organizations, with a total value in the billions.

Resources and Our Districtwide Financial Aid Application Blitz in January
 Additionally, plenty of free resources help guide families through the updated FAFSA process. One of those resources is the upcoming Districtwide Financial Aid Application Blitz in January.

"We want students to seize the opportunity to kickstart their college journey with our Aldine ISD Senior Financial Aid Blitz," said Minter. "We don't want any student to let financial barriers stand in the way of their dreams. The goal of the blitz is to ensure our students' FAFSA/TASFA forms are submitted so they can focus on what matters most — their education."

Districtwide Financial Aid Application Blitz Details



*Campus Programming Day: Each high school in our district will host personalized FAFSA assistance sessions on select days and times between January 8 and 19, 2024.

*Unlock Financial Aid Secrets: Students will discover the ins and outs of FAFSA/TASFA with expert guidance. A dedicated team will help them navigate the application process.

*Virtual Support Available: Virtual assistance will be available on select dates for those who prefer virtual support.

Flyer: The flyer has a QR code letting students and their families know what they need to bring and another QR code to look at campus dates and times. [Click here to download the PDF of the flyer](#) available in English and Spanish.

* Check regularly for updates to the school dates and times, especially as the blitz period in January approaches

Districtwide Financial Aid Application Blitz

January 8-19, 2024
 Event date and time selected by each high school.

Mark Your Calendars!

Seize the opportunity to kickstart your college journey with our Aldine ISD Senior Financial Aid Blitz!

Campus Programming Day
 Each high school in our district will host personalized FAFSA assistance sessions on select days between January 8-19, 2024.

Unlock Financial Aid Secrets
 Discover the ins and outs of FAFSA/TASFA with expert guidance. Our dedicated team will help you navigate the application process.

Virtual Support Available
 What if you can't make it in person? Virtual assistance will be available on select dates for those who prefer virtual support.

Secure Your College Future
 Don't let financial barriers stand in the way of your dreams. Let's ensure your FAFSA/TASFA is submitted so you can focus on what matters most — your education!

CAMPUS DATES

WHAT TO BRING

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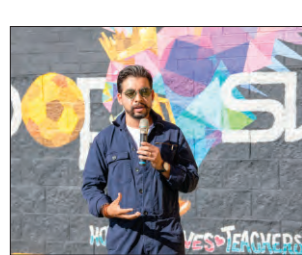
Your Future Awaits! Let's Make it Affordable!

The FAFSA/TASFA application opens December 31, 2023.

A Painting Worth a Thousand Words: A Mural of Dedication and Gratitude

In a vibrant collaboration between the College Football Playoff Foundation, the 2024 Host Committee, Good Reason Houston, and Aldine ISD, the heart of Houston beats with appreciation for its educators. The Eisenhower ninth-grade campus now proudly boasts a stunning mural, a testament to the impact of the Acres Home community and educators on campus.

This awe-inspiring mural was envisioned and brought to life by the immensely talented artist Betirri Bengtson. When asked why this mural project is so impactful, Bengtson believes "the way it was created, involving the community."



"The way everyone came together, involving sports, students, artists. Art is a way of expression, and hopefully, this will leave an impression on the kids and future generations."

The mural stands not just as a piece of art but as a profound symbol of gratitude and recognition for the invaluable contributions made by teachers in shaping young minds and the community that is nurturing future leaders.

The project continued with the unveiling of this magnificent artwork. Throughout the process, 'Houston Loves Teachers' hosted a series of events to honor and support the teaching community. The Extra Yard Makeover Project event was a heartwarming affair where volunteers came together to enhance the school environment, ensuring teachers and students have an inspiring space for learning and growth. Moreover, the 'A+ Breakfast' served as another gesture of appreciation, with a sumptuous breakfast spread laid out exclusively for the dedicated educators of La Promesa. This event allowed for a moment of respite and acknowledgment for the hard work and commitment that teachers pour into their noble profession daily.

In the heart of Houston neighborhood Acres Home, this mural stands as a beacon of gratitude, inspiring all to recognize and honor the dedicated individuals who mold young minds, instill knowledge, and shape future generations.



Concept Behind Mural:

The concept depicts the mighty eagle as the main focus. Being the symbol for Eisenhower Ninth, I wanted to showcase its importance by being the most predominant element in the mural. The eagle is formed of different geometrical shapes as in some of my previous mural work. The eagle carries two elements that symbolize triumph and high achievements, which are the trophy and the crown, all flying over minimalist shapes of houses representing the acres homes community.

The background is composed of the legendary 'SWOOP, SWOOP'; using some of the O's letters as the different sports balls that a lot of the students like to play.

The color palette is inspired by Eisenhower's main colors: black and gold. The design is mainly cubist and geometrical to express a sense of a futuristic style.

A yellow frame surrounds the entire composition to add some depth and a visual illusion to the design.

Overall, the design is an homage to the community at Eisenhower Ninth with a message about believing in their own roots to accomplish greatness.

AISD Earns State's Highest Fiscal Accountability Rating for 20th Straight Year

Financial Integrity Rating System of Texas

Superior Achievement for 10 Consecutive Years

For the 20th consecutive year, Aldine ISD received a "Superior" rating under Texas' School FIRST (Financial Integrity Rating System of Texas) accountability rating system. The "Superior" rating is the state's highest rating, demonstrating the quality of Aldine ISD's financial management and reporting system. Aldine ISD received a score of 986 out of 100 possible points.

The primary goal of the School FIRST system is to ensure that Texas public schools are held accountable for the quality of their financial management practices. The School FIRST system is designed to encourage Texas public schools to manage their financial resources better and provide a maximum allocation for direct instructional purposes.

The School FIRST system has 15 indicators that are evaluated. The first

five indicators are critical and must be met to avoid failure. The other 10 indicators evaluate financial solvency and financial competency.

According to Chief Financial Officer Stan Osborne, Aldine met the five critical indicators' requirements. Those indicators are filing of the district's annual financial report within a month, the district's annual financial report was free of any instances of material weaknesses, the district complied with the payment terms of all debt agreements at the end of the district's fiscal year, the district made timely payments to the Teachers Retirement System (TRS), Texas Workforce Commission (TWC), the IRS and other governmental agencies, and the district's total unrestricted net asset balance in the Statement of Net Position/Assets was

greater than zero.

Indicators 6-10 evaluated the financial solvency of the district. Those indicators analyzed the amount of cash on hand needed to cover operating expenditures, the ratio of current assets to current liabilities, the ratio of long-term liabilities to total assets, total revenue compared to expenditures, and whether the district had sufficient funds to cover its debt. Aldine met the requirements for each of those indicators.

Indicators 11-15 evaluated the district's financial competency. Those indicators assessed the district's administrative costs ratio, student enrollment compared to the number of staff, the accuracy of its PEIMS reporting, compliance with guidelines, and revenue forecasting. Aldine met the requirements for those five indicators as well.

OPINION PAGE

OPINION By BILL KING



It's Just a Number

Yesterday morning at 11:05, I completed my 72nd trip around the sun. A friend called to wish me a happy birthday and reminded me, "It is just a number, Bill."

Yeah, it is a number alright. Like the number of pills I have to remember to take every day. Like the number of aches and pains in my knees. Like the number of doctor appointments I have these days. Like the number of times I have to get up in the middle of the night to attend to nature or walk off a cramp. Like the number of funerals of friends and family I have attended recently.

But there are other numbers too.

Like the amazing seven children and six grandchildren Cheryl and I share. Like the hundreds of friends that we've shared so many fun times with and who have been there to support us in so many different ways. Like the thousands of great people I've met across this great city over my two mayoral campaigns.

Like the thousands of breathtaking sunrises and sunsets I have witnessed. Like the thousands of miles of open seas I have sailed. Like the hundreds of places across the planet I have visited. Like the scores of fishing trips with friends. And so much more.

But the number most on my mind at this particular moment is the number of you who have given me the privilege of regularly corresponding with you about the various topics that pique my interest. I truly appreciate that opportunity and the feedback I receive from so many of you.

It appears that we will have plenty to discuss in 2024, so I am looking forward to continuing our dialogue for another year.



Treasure Christmas

Mabel Adams was sitting in the day room at the Rest of Your Life retirement home when the children came in. She smiled and so did all the others in the room except for two who didn't know what was going on.

The old-timers in the home knew the kids were coming and had put up Christmas decorations around in the day room and on the doors of their own small apartments and on themselves. Mabel had been reminded several times by the staff that morning that the kids were coming over, this being necessary as Mabel's memory isn't what it used to be. And she put a sprig of imitation holly in her hair and tied a red ribbon on the other side.

The little girl smiled and walked over to Mabel. "Are you a grandma?" she asked.

"Why, yes dear, I am."

"I brought you a present, Grandma," she said, handing a box to Mabel. Mabel opened it and was delighted at the sandalwood-scented hankies inside.

"Why thank you so much, Honey!" she said. "And what is your name?"

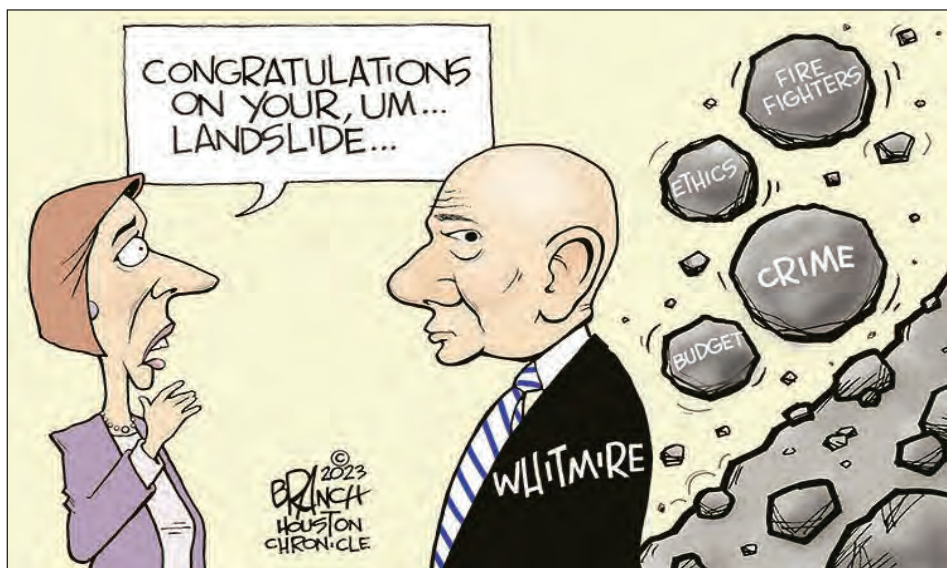
"I'm Candice. I'm four."

"Well, Candice, merry Christmas to you. Have you been here before?"

"Well ... no, I guess. Mom said this is where the grandmas are and we can have fun bringing presents to the grandmas."

"I see," Mabel said. "Well, Candice, come over here, dear and let me give you a hug. There!"

Sometimes, it isn't the cost of the hankies, or the fun wrapping them up. Sometimes it's just a child's smile and a small taste of love that makes us treasure Christmas.



STATE CAPITAL HIGHLIGHTS By Gary Borders



Legal Groups Sue to Stop New Immigration Law

The ink was barely dry on a law signed by Gov. Greg Abbott that makes unauthorized entry into the United States a state crime before a lawsuit was filed by civil rights groups and El Paso County challenging its constitutionality. The Austin American-Statesman reported the suit was filed in an Austin federal court by the ACLU and two immigrant advocacy groups on behalf of the county.

The complaint says Texas Senate Bill 4, passed in the recently concluded fourth special session, is "patently illegal" and that it violates "the federal government's exclusive immigration powers and the sensitive foreign policy implications of these powers." The law is set to go into effect on March 5.

SB4 allows any Texas law enforcement officer to arrest people who are believed to have entered the country illegally. Once in custody, they could either agree to leave the U.S. or face prosecution on misdemeanor charges of illegal entry. "These laws will help stop the tidal wave of illegal entry into Texas, add additional funding to build more border wall, and crack down on human smuggling," Abbott said after signing the bill.

BORDER PATROL BANNED FROM CUTTING TEXAS RAZOR WIRE

An appeals court has ordered the Border Patrol to stop cutting razor wire installed by Texas officials, The Dallas Morning News reported. The 5th Circuit Court of Appeals reversed a lower court ruling that gave federal authorities the legal right to remove the fencing, which federal officials said had been done to prevent injuries to migrants. The state contended, however, that federal agents were removing the concertina wire simply to let migrants enter Texas without notification.

Col. Steve McCraw, Texas Department of Public Safety director, said the state agrees that the wire should be cut in cases of emergency.

"We're doing it to go rescue somebody," he said. "We're not doing it to allow a large number of migrants



to enter between the ports of entry. We want them to go to the ports of entry."

TEXAS HAS LOWEST GAS PRICES IN COUNTRY

Gasoline prices in the state are at their lowest level in nearly three years, according to AAA. The current average is \$2.57 a gallon — the lowest average gas price in the nation, according to a Texas Standard report. Matt Smith, an energy analyst for Kpler (stet), warned Texans that higher prices are likely during the holiday period.

AAA is projecting 104 million travelers are driving at least 50 miles to their holiday destinations, while air traffic is expected to be the busiest ever, with 7.5 million air travelers this holiday season.

Smith said a number of factors, including unrest in Yemen and the Middle East, could cause oil prices to rise, leading to higher gas prices in the future.

"We've seen a lot of bearishness that has pushed these prices to multi-month lows here; we may be at the point now where we're seeing a bit of a turnaround going forward here," Smith said.

ERCOT CHIEF: GRID IS READY FOR WINTER

The chief of the Electric Reliability Council of Texas told his board last week that added power generation will be sufficient this winter, despite population growth and lower output from wind power turbines because of less wind velocity.

"We are as ready as we have ever been to deal with the challenges of the winter season," ERCOT chief Pablo Vegas told the board.

The Statesman reported Vegas' statement of confidence in the grid comes just

three weeks after ERCOT warned much of the state could face rolling blackouts starting next month, most likely in the early morning hours before solar generating facilities can be utilized.

"In the wintertime, the peak of the system tends to happen in the early morning hours as people are starting to wake up at 7 a.m., 8 a.m.," Vegas said. "It's still cold from an overnight winter cold. And we don't yet have the resources like solar resources on the system at that point in time."

Vegas said 800 new projects have been added to the grid in the past year. ERCOT's chief meteorologist is predicting a milder than usual winter for much of the state.

AMOUNT OF STATE IN DROUGHT DECLINES

Drought conditions across Texas are declining, with 43% of the state in some stage of drought at the end of November — down 22 percentage points from the end of October and 42 percentage points from early September.

"Despite the improvements on the landscape, our statewide surface water supply reservoirs haven't seen a lot of recovery yet," Mark Wentzel, hydrologist with the Texas Water Development Board, wrote in his monthly report. "That's not unexpected. Compared to the landscape, our water supply systems take longer to respond to drought."

The surface water systems most adversely affected are clustered in Central and South Texas, which are still experiencing drought conditions. Also still in severe-to-extreme drought are far West Texas counties and a scattering of counties in Deep East Texas.

STATE LEADS NATION IN POPULATION INCREASES IN LAST YEAR

Texas' population grew more than any other state in the country, up nearly half a million people, according to the recent census estimate. The Texas Tribune reported the population growth is centered in the state's cities. Nearly 70% of the state's residents live in the four largest metro areas — Houston, San Antonio, Austin, and Dallas-Fort Worth.

While the state had the largest total increase in population, two other states had higher growth rates than the 1.6% recorded here — South Carolina and Florida. The South accounted for 87% of the country's population growth in the latest census estimate.

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

THE POSTSCRIPT By Carrie Classon

Wild Children: A Lesson

The children were in the pew in front of me.

We had not arrived early enough at my sister's church for the Christmas Eve service to secure a seat in the back, so we were in the fourth row. The first row is never used by anyone; the second row is only for people who arrive impossibly late. The third row is, for all intents and purposes, the front row, and that's where these two wild-looking children were.

The children were provisioned with colored pencils and drawing paper but, other than that, looked rather neglected. Neither one had seen a comb in a long time. Both were dressed in a combination of outdoor wear and pajamas. Neither was actually sitting on the pew. The girl was sitting on the floor, using the bench as a drawing table. The boy was sprawled out across the bench, arms and legs akimbo. I felt myself making judgments. I get that way sometimes.

"Seriously," I thought, "is getting out of their pajamas too much to ask?"

The children paid no attention to the service. When the congregation rose to sing, the children remained where they were. When the other kids went up for the children's sermon, the boy disappeared outside, and the girl remained where she was.

"Where has he gone?" I wondered. These children seemed feral to me. "Probably raised by wolves," I said to amuse myself. "He's gone out to hunt squirrels," I conjectured. "Likely he is eating one now." The boy returned and lay back down on the pew. "Why are they even here?" I wondered.

I looked at the skirt I had put on for the occasion, the good coat I had brought for wearing to church, the time and effort the other parishioners had taken before leaving their homes. These children (and whoever had transported them to church) had clearly missed the memo.

I was surprised when, as the service was about to end, a man joined the children. The boy suddenly snapped out of his lethargy and went to the man, who wrapped him in a hug. The boy and the man remained that way for a long time, oblivious to the service, enfolded in a hug.

"Did you see the organist's kids in the front row?" my sister asked her husband after we got home.

"Yeah," he said. I was about to make some snappy remark about their lack of grooming when my sister continued.

"Her husband left them just a couple of weeks ago. He won't even answer his phone when the kids call. Her son is autistic, and she is just beside herself."

"The husband was there," my brother-in-law told my sister. "He came into church at the very end."

"Really?" my sister said and shook her head.

I realized what a colossal ass I was.

There are so many troubles I have never known. There is a world of pain I have never experienced. While I was dwelling on a couple of hastily dressed kids with messy hair quietly doodling in the front pew, there were wells of pain and loss and confusion right in front of me that I could not imagine.

I do not like that prissy woman in the nice skirt who sits in judgment of those poor kids. I do not like her, and I don't want to be her. While I was focused on grooming and decorum, a tired, lost man took his child in his arms and—right in front of me—a Christmas miracle occurred, a miracle I was too blind to see.

Till next time, Carrie

NORTHEAST NEWS contact information and staff list including Gilbert Hoffman, Mei-Ing Hoffman, David Taylor, Willie G Glasgow, Kristan Hoffman, Julieta Paita, Gerardo Hernandez, and Contributing Writers: Mike Keeney, Charlotte Jackson, Allan Jamail, Kristan Hoffman.

Aldine students design METRO Shelter art,

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

creating visuals; they're breathing life into these public hubs," said Lambert. "Each piece I saw in this room embodies the spirit of art that moves people.

Taylor added that the program is about more than painting a bus shelter; it's an investment in the future.

"When we empower young people to be changemakers, we ignite a ripple effect of creativity and community pride," he said.

The program is the result of years of collaboration between METRO and the school district. The partnership was formed through Aldine's Visual Arts Department and the Authority's Arts in Transit initiative to provide Aldine students with opportunities to create and see their work and talent showcased in their communities.

Celebrating Art that Moves People: "I'm so inspired - these young artists aren't just creating visuals; they're breathing life into these public hubs," said METRO President & CEO Tom Lambert.

Dr. Adrian Bustillos, Aldine ISD's chief transformation officer, said the initiative offers young artists a unique platform to showcase their talents and contribute to the beautification of their neighborhoods.

"This collaboration provides our students with invaluable experience working with professionals in real-world fields," Bustillos explained. "They gain firsthand understanding of how their classroom learning translates to tangible applications, fostering creativity and a connection to their community."

The new winning designs promise to inject even more color and vibrancy into METRO bus stops throughout the Aldine area, exemplifying the power of collaboration and teamwork in community improvement.



Jose Fernando Garcia, a senior at Hall Success Academy, said the knight in his drawing represents the powerful will of students who proudly carry his school's name. "The characteristics of the knight are in all of us at Hall Success Academy: we are merciful, persistent, and sacrificial," he said.



Davis High School sophomore Gerardo Jose Ibarra, with the help of his teacher, Mr. Zachary Bradley (left), utilized digital tools to help create his design.



Victory Early College High School sophomore Jazlyn Otero's drawing depicts a Viking. According to Jazlyn, "The strong Viking shows our determination as a whole campus and how dedicated we are to our study."



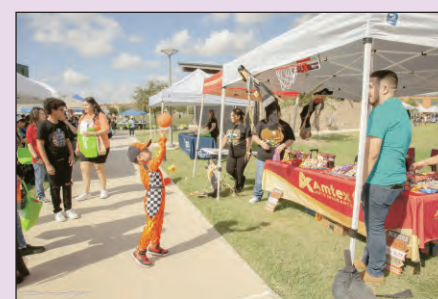
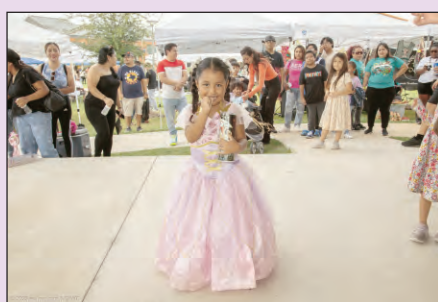
Nimitz bus shelter art depicting a cougar. Senior Dorelyz Garcia created Nimitz Senior High School's design. Garcia said the drawing of the cougar she created captures the spirit of Nimitz with its fierce gaze, symbolizing the strength at her school.

EAST ALDINE'S Dia de los Muertos PHOTO ALBUM

East Aldine's Dia de los Muertos or Day of the Dead celebration was featured in our edition of November 7th. The event took place on October 28 at the East Aldine Town Center.

Our photographer took many great

photos, and at the time we did not have room to publish all of them. As we end the year, we thought you might like to see some of the photos and people that were present that day which we have not previously published. Enjoy, we did.



Thanks to Marina Sugg and Alma deAlejandro for some of these photos.

KEENEY'S KORNER
By
MIKE KEENEY

KEENEY'S KORNER - Coach of the Year

Harmon leads Nimitz to eight-win season, playoffs

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

great job they did getting these kids prepared for the season," Harmon said. "The key to our success was our kids grew up quickly and they grew as the season progressed."

The Cougars won their first five games before falling to Westfield, then ran off three more straight wins before falling to Dekaney in the season finale and to Willis in bi-district.

The season did not end the way Harmon, his staff and his players wanted it to, but the head coach believes the future is bright at Nimitz.

"We have a lot of kids

coming back on both sides of the ball and we're excited about the future," Harmon said. "Our kids will continue to work hard on a daily basis. We will be confident, but not cocky. We know there will be expectations for us next year."

Harmon said the focus during the offseason will be for his players to get bigger, faster, stronger and develop some depth for the 2024 season.

Harmon said he has enjoyed coaching this group of players and is thankful he has the opportunity to continue working with them for another season.

"This is a fun bunch to

coach," Harmon said. "It's pretty fun when you get to coach a bunch of young kids and see them grown. That's the fun part about coaching."

Harmon added he and his staff are fortunate to have a group of dedicated young men with which to work and while he enjoyed the 2023 season, he wants to build a program at Nimitz that will be successful for years to come.

"We had our ups and downs this year and I enjoyed the season," Harmon said. "We will strive to make this one of the most respected programs in not only Houston, but in Texas."

PET MATTERS
In Memory of
Susan Hoffman

Dog Bites: Enjoy the Outdoors with your Furry Friends Safely!

Enjoy the Outdoors with your Furry Friends Safely! Remember Harris County's Leash Laws and Dog Bite Prevention Tips

HOUSTON – As community members and pet owners around Harris County enjoy the fall weather and time outdoors this holiday season, Harris County Public Health's (HCPH) Veterinary Public Health Division (VPH) reminds residents of important bite prevention methods and local leash laws in Harris County.

The American Veterinary Association estimates that each year nearly 4.5 million people are bitten by dogs, and more than 800,000 require medical treatment for a dog bite incident. Dogs can bite people for various reasons, but bite incidents occur most often when the dog feels stressed, hungry, threatened, sick, or sore.

Pet owners are always responsible for their pet's behavior. All pet owners **must keep dogs and cats restrained (leashed)** in unincorporated parts of Harris County. Restraint is defined as the control of a dog or cat under the following circumstances:

- When it is under control through a line or leash not more than 6 feet long or held by a human.
- When it is secured in your vehicle.
- When it is in the confines of your private dwelling that is not accessible to members of the public.

What Can Dog Owners Do?

There are several things you can do to keep your dog healthy and safe:

- Socialize your pet to feel comfortable around people and other animals.
- Make sure you train your dog

properly and have proper behavior education.

- Walk and exercise your dog regularly to keep it healthy, both physically and mentally.

- Ensure the dog is leashed (no longer than 6 feet) and can be secured in your vehicle when traveling to public places.

- Keep your dog up to date with vaccinations.

- Have your pet spayed or neutered.

- If you have a fenced yard, ensure the gates are secure.

How Can You Protect Your Family?

Generally, dog bites are a preventable public health issue. Here are some safety tips to reduce the chances of being bitten:

- Teach children - and adults - to be careful around pets. Do not approach strange dogs or try to pet dogs through fences.

- NEVER run away from a dog that appears to be aggressive. Remain calm and avoid eye contact.

- Always ask permission from the dog's owner before petting the dog.

- NEVER leave a baby or small child alone with a dog.

- Always be alert for possible dangerous situations.

- Do not bother a dog that is sleeping, eating, or caring for puppies.

- Report stray animals to your local animal control agency. Harris County residents can call Harris County Pets at (281) 999-3191 for assistance.

For more information on preventing dog bites, contact Harris County Pets at (281) 999-3191 or visit our website at hcphtx.org/vph or www.countypets.com.

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CHURCH PAGE


BIBLE TRIVIA

By Wilson Casey

1. For possible new year's resolutions, Proverbs 16:3 says, "Commit thy works unto the Lord, and thy thoughts shall be ____." Resolved, Established, Directed, Bountiful
2. Likewise, Psalm 37:5 instructs us to, "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to ____." Nurture, Pass, Action, Light
3. Which book proclaims the first day of the new year is for resting and a memorial sounding the trumpet?

- Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers
4. 2 Corinthians 5:17 and Galatians 2:20 are among the verses to focus on what in a new year? Blessings, Moving forward, Grace, Church attendance
 5. In which month of the religious calendar did the new year begin in the Bible? 3rd, 5th, 7th, 9th
 6. From James 1:5, what may one lack and if they ask God it shall be given? Love, Wisdom, Truth, Goals

ANSWERS: 1) Established, 2) Pass, 3) Leviticus, 4) Moving forward, 5) 7th, 6) Wisdom Hardcore trivia fan? Visit Wilson Casey's subscriber site at www.patreon.com/triviaguy. (c) 2024 King Features Synd., Inc.



THE ILLUSTRATED BIBLE

*Do not let your heart envy sinners,
But be zealous for the fear
of the Lord all the day;
For surely there is a hereafter,
And your hope will not be cut off.*

PROVERBS 23: 17, 18

*Detail of "Woman listening with outstretched arms
to the choir of angels in the clouds above her"
by Gijssbert de Groot (1691)*

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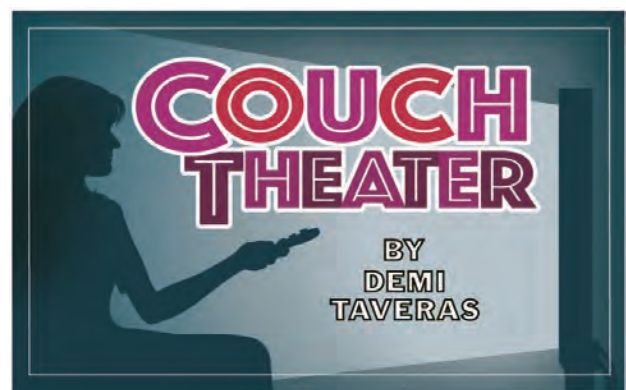
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Dan Levy makes his directorial debut in "Good Grief."

"Good Grief"

By Demi Taveras "GOOD GRIEF" (R) — Dan Levy ("Schitt's Creek") makes his directorial debut in this comedy-drama film out Jan. 5. A true triple threat, Levy stars as the lead character, while also directing and having written the screenplay himself. At the film's start, his character, Marc, is struggling with the unexpected death of his husband, and after spending a year grieving with his best friends, Sophie (Ruth Negga) and Thomas (Himesh Patel), the trio decides to go on a weekend getaway to Paris. This weekend proves to be a rebirth for Marc and his friends, as they all work to unearth the inconveniently intense feelings that they've all been harboring. Luke Evans, Emma Corrin and Kaitlyn Dever make appearances in this very touching and strong debut from Levy. (Netflix)

"PRISCILLA" (R) — Since it is so often the case with Hollywood to tout out similar movies back-to-back while interest is still up, we all knew that a foil to Baz Luhrmann's "Elvis," which tells the story of musical legend Elvis Presley, was surely on its way. And a year later, it came by way of Sofia Coppola and Presley's ex-wife, Priscilla. In this biopic, Cailee Spaeny plays a young Priscilla just as she meets the man who would become one of the most popular singers in the world, and her future husband, this time played by Jacob Elordi. While the film didn't wow at the box office, it received positive reviews from critics for Spaeny and Elordi, with Spaeny snagging a nomination for Best Actress at the Golden Globes. Out now to rent. (Amazon Prime Video)

In Case You Missed It "OFFICIAL COMPETITION" (R) — Multimillionaire businessman Humberto Suarez reaches his 80th birthday and feels that he doesn't have anything long-lasting to show for it. On a whim, he decides to produce a film that can live on past his lifetime, with eccentric director Lola Cuevas (Penelope Cruz) at the forefront. Lola has a strict creative vision for this film, which includes hiring two egotistical lead actors from different sides of the acting spectrum. Method actor Ivan Torres (Oscar Martinez) isn't fond of pomp and glamour, while Hollywood actor Felix Rivero (Antonio Banderas) relishes in everything celebrity and combining the two results in a chaotically hilarious performance. Cruz, Banderas and Martinez were the perfect trio for this Spanish black comedy. Out now. (Hulu)

"THE MORNING SHOW" (TV-MA) — This critically acclaimed show starring Jennifer Aniston and Reese Witherspoon is an addicting binge-watch. Aniston plays Alex Levy, co-anchor of "The Morning Show" alongside Mitch Kessler (Steve Carell). When Mitch's sexual misconduct results in his firing from the show, Alex is forced to protect her job and reputation. Meanwhile, West Virginia field reporter Bradley Jackson finds herself like a fish out of water when she lands the position as co-anchor. After its first season, the show expands on topics like racial inequality, the Russian-Ukrainian war and the Capitol riot. All three seasons are out now. (Apple TV+) (c) 2024 King Features Synd., Inc.

HOLLYWOOD by Tony Rizzo

Stars We Lost in 2023

HOLLYWOOD — George Clooney has given his stamp of approval for "Barbie" stars Margot Robbie and Ryan Gosling to play his parents in the upcoming prequel of "Ocean's Eleven."

In 2023, we lost many of my favorite stars who I did shootings with or knew. In 1985, while shooting Brian Bloom (Dusty in "As the World Turns") in Gramercy Park, New York, Italian superstar Gina Lollobrigida had a meltdown over him and said in her sexy Italian accent, "I love watching you on your telenovela." She kissed both his cheeks and sauntered away. Brian asked, "Who was that?!" I told him that she was an Italian sex symbol who starred with Burt Lancaster and Tony Curtis in "Trapeze" (1955), as well as Rock Hudson in "Strange Bedfellows" (1965), among other films. She left us on Jan. 16, 2023, at 95.

I remember in 1982 when "Laverne & Shirley's" Cindy Williams and Penny Marshall crashed a party for David Hasselhoff and hysterically pretended to be huge gushing fans of his. Cindy passed Jan. 25, 2023, at 75.

I pinched myself following Tina Turner around the post-premiere party for "Tommy" (1975), as she interacted with The Who and Elton John. She was so down to earth! She left us on May 24, 2023, at 83.

In 1967, at the closing night of Marlene Dietrich's Broadway show, I mingled with her conductor Burt Bacharach and his wife, "Police Woman" star Angie Dickinson, just before Dietrich was hoisted atop her limo with them inside. She threw little photos to thousands of fans in the street. Burt left us on Feb. 8, 2023, at 94.

In 1985, I ran into Stella Stevens in Hawaii. She starred with Elvis Presley in "Girls! Girls! Girls!" (1962) and



STELLA STEVENS - One of many Stars we lost in 2023.

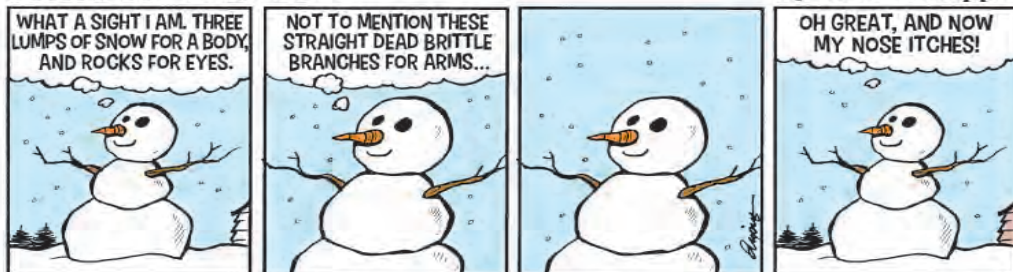
with Jerry Lewis in "The Nutty Professor" (1963). She wanted to learn how to surf, so I asked my friend Sam J. Jones (star of "Flash Gordon" in 1980) to teach her. As I shot pictures of them, the out-rigger I rented took on water and almost sank. How we laughed! She died on Feb. 17, 2023, at 84.

I was devastated when Raquel Welch died on Feb. 15, 2023, at 82. She was the epitome of glamour. She once told me at a party, "I want to thank you for all the encouraging things you've written about me in your columns." I nearly fainted when she kissed me.

I got to know Matthew Perry when he was filming "Studio 60 on the Sunset Strip." Every time I covered a shooting of his, he was friendly and nice, and liked it when I called him (what else?) "friend!" It was tragic when he suddenly died on Oct. 28, 2023, at 54. I disagree with the song "Auld Lang Syne" that old acquaintances should not be forgotten. Happy New Year! (c) 2024 King Features Synd., Inc.

ENTERTAINMENT

Amber Waves



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

HOCUS-FOCUS by Henry Boltinoff. Find at least six differences in details between panels.

January 1, 2024 Posting Date King Crossword

King Crossword grid with ACROSS and DOWN clues. Includes clues like 'Melville captain', 'Male swans', 'Luau dish', etc.

Trivia test by Fifi Rodriguez. Includes 10 trivia questions ranging from general knowledge to history.

Lone Star College enrolls the most international students nationwide



Lone Star College enrolled the largest number of international students nationwide in 2023-2024. Pictured are agency representatives who attended the Houston Forum for International Educators held at LSC-System Office, University Park.

HOUSTON (Dec. 19, 2023) – The city of Houston has long been known for being one of the most diverse cities in the nation, with Lone Star College welcoming nearly 3,000 international students from more than 100 countries. The American Association of Community Colleges recently ranked LSC the No. 1 community college in the nation, having the largest number of international students enrolled in the 2022-2023 academic year.

LSC recently hosted the Houston Forum for International Educators where nearly 90 registrants (including 26 institutions) discussed updates regarding F-1 visas and other services designated to international students and scholars in the Greater Houston area and other jurisdictions that fall under the Houston District Office of the Department of Homeland Security.

“The Houston Forum for International Educators serves as a sounding board for all who serve international students such as standalone language institutions, community colleges like Lone Star College, four-year universities and medical schools,” said Perzen Akolawala, LSC executive director, International Programs. “We discuss innovative approaches and best practices in the field of international education.”

The biannual forum is a platform for knowledge exchange, collaboration, and networking among professionals in international education. This year, LSC and other attendees shared local, state and federal government directives that will affect its business processes and ad-

vising policies for international students holding F-1, J-1 and H1B visas.

“The Houston Forum gave Lone Star College and others an opportunity to learn the latest developments that will greatly help our international students,” said Akolawala. “This event also gave us a collaborative space to discuss student cases and pain points and brainstorm solutions to complex situations.”

The LSC Office of International Programs provides innovative education and customized support to help them achieve their long-term goals. Learn more at LoneStar.edu/International-Students.

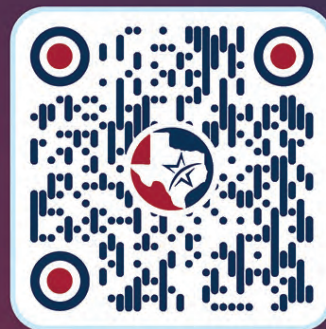
Lone Star College enrolls over 80,000 students each semester providing high-quality, low-cost academic transfer and career training education. LSC is training tomorrow’s workforce today and redefining the community college experience to support student success. Mario K. Castillo, J.D., serves as Chancellor of LSC, the largest institution of higher education in the Houston area. LSC has been named a 2023 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.



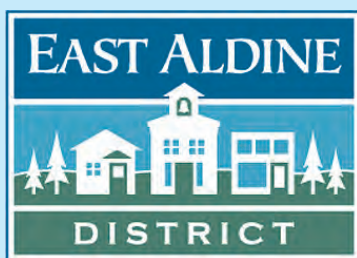
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East Aldine District COMMUNITY NEWS

Slow Down to see Amusing Signs at Town Center.

Scott Froschauer



Whimsical versions of traffic signs cause many East Aldine Town Center visitors to slow down to read slogans such as “One Love” and “Para Que Haya Paz” (If There Is To Be Peace).”

One warning you’ll never see on the signs, though, is “Stop there.” Because the nationally known artist who created the unusual display, Scott Froschauer, doesn’t confine himself to making a single form of art.

Froschauer, based in Los Angeles, is an art school dropout who has worked in the film industry. As a lighting consultant, he got a screen credit for his work on *The Lost World: Jurassic Park (2)*. He also worked on a famous and hilarious YouTube video featuring actor Christopher Walken’s best dance moves. Now he enjoys working on documentary films.

But after attending the annual counterculture festival in the Nevada desert in 2015 called *Burning Man*, he returned to working on handmade visual art.

“I dropped out of art school because I didn’t think I was a ‘good’ artist. But, I decided to give it another try,” he said.



“What I got out of *Burning Man* was permission allowing me to express myself.”

Banking on his college degree in linguistics, he created the amusing *Word On The Street* series of signs with messages that are anything but conventional.

At first Froschauer placed the signs in public areas —



without permission.

But he soon earned a contract with the city of Glendale, Calif., for 20 of the signs with the positive messages.

Members of the East Aldine Arts Council (funded by the East Aldine Management District) saw the artist’s works at a 2019 *Neighborhoods USA* conference and set out to acquire some of them as part of the council’s mission to enhance East Aldine with public art.

The five signs were installed at the East Aldine Town Center at 2800 Aldine Mail Route Road in June. Plans call for more signs to be posted in the community.

“We were compelled by the fact that the artist takes otherwise mundane Department of Transportation type street signs, that typically are negative or prohibitive in nature, and instead flips the script and makes the messaging something positive and uplifting,” said Arts Council Chairman Carlos Silva. “The unassuming style of this art is a perfect fit for our blue collar, hardworking community.”

Other such signs at the Town Center say, “Educate Children,” “Wonder” and “You Are Amazing.”

They have made news, too. The *Houston Chronicle* and *KPRC2* have done stories about the exhibit.

Come see for yourself!

— By Anne Marie Kilday and Alan Bernstein