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NORTHEAST NEWS

East Aldine Eggstravaganza 2026



East Aldine District & BakerRipley Hosted the Annual Eggstravaganza 2026. Photos on Page 8.

Serving the Neighborhoods of Aldine, Greenspoint, US59 Eastex, Beltway 8 and North Forest for over 50 Years
 VOL. 50, NO. 12 TUESDAY, APRIL 7, 2026 HOUSTON, TEXAS www.nenewsroom.com

East Aldine views Progress in its 25th Anniversary Year

East Aldine Management District Marks Milestones, Launches New Programs, and Advances Major Projects at March Board Meeting

From a record-breaking sales tax month to a new community app, a workforce partnership, and a Gateway installation on the verge of its ribbon-cutting, the EAMD's 25th anniversary year is gaining serious momentum.

The East Aldine Management District Board met on Tuesday, March 24, 2026. The ambitious agenda included a new beautification committee and a landmark bond closing on the horizon. There was also a community-facing mobile app, new events, and a



The GATEWAYS Project, colorful entrances to East Aldine, is almost complete at the intersection of Little York and Eastex Freeway.

workforce partnership to help the community's most vulnerable residents. The Board also reported another month of record sales tax collections.

A First-Class Celebration

— and a Thank-You to the Women Behind the Work

Before the Board got to business, Judy Rodriguez — a familiar and warmly welcomed voice at EAMD meet-

ings — took a moment to express appreciation for the EAMD's International Women's Luncheon, held March 12 at the EAMD office.

"What a magnificent way

to celebrate local women," she said. She described the event as "a first-class experience all the way." The celebration featured pink décor, a flower bar, a macaroon bar, and a vintage

telephone station for guests to "call their younger selves." She thanked Executive Director Richard Cantú, Deputy Executive Director Verónica Sanches, marketing director Mónica Campos, community engagement and events coordinator Emily Erreguín, and field staff Tommie and Jaime for their thoughtfulness. Rodríguez also singled out Sanches and Board Director Flor Zarzoza for sharing personal stories of hope and resilience.

"It has been said that if we had more women leaders, there would be fewer wars," Rodríguez told the Board. "We absolutely must contin-

Continued. See EAST ALDINE MARCH BOARD MEETING, Page 7

NEWS NOTES

Fun Day in the Park Saturday April 11

For Families of Children with Disabilities. 10am to 1pm at 2909 Amphitheatre Drive. Co-sponsored with BakerRipley and Aldine ISD and the Arc.

East Aldine SPRING MUSIC FEST Saturday April 18

Live Music, food, games, prizes & More at East Aldine Amphitheatre, 5pm to 11pm. Free Cheeseburgers. 4 Bands.

Aldine ISD Honors Legacy of 3 Former Trustees

Aldine ISD Honors Legacy of Three Former Trustees

Aldine ISD leaders, staff, families, and community members gathered March 31 at the Aldine ISD Community Center to celebrate the extraordinary service and lasting legacy of three former trustees: Rose Avalos, Connie Esparza, and Steve Mead.

The reception was more than a recognition of years served, it was a celebration of impact. Together, these leaders helped shape a district grounded in student success, community advocacy and a deep commit-



Former AISD Trustees Steve Mead, Connie Esparza, and Rose Avalos

ment to public education. Superintendent Dr. LaTonya Goffney reflected on their leadership and the role each played in shaping Aldine ISD since she first joined the district in 2018. "Because of your leadership, Aldine ISD is stronger," she said. "We're in a better position for the future. Your fingerprints are everywhere, in our schools, in our programs and in the lives of students we serve. While your time on the board has come to a close, your impact will continue to shape this district for years to come."

Avalos, Esparza, and Mead helped guide the dis-

trict through major bond initiatives, crisis response efforts, and continued advocacy for public education. They supported strategic plans such as A New Way Forward and Accelerate, helping bring the Portrait of a Graduate to life, a commitment to ensuring every Aldine student graduates with choices and opportunities. Through their collective commitment to governance excellence, the board achieved a milestone in which 100% of its members earned the Texas Associa-

Continued. See AISD HONORS 3 FORMER TRUSTEES, Page 5

Texas announces Record 274,000 Applications for Vouchers

Texas Comptroller's Office Releases Comprehensive Overview of TEFA Texas Education Freedom Account Applications

(AUSTIN) — Acting Texas Comptroller Kelly Hancock today announced that more than 274,000 students applied for Texas Education Freedom Accounts (TEFA) during the program's first year.

"Texas didn't just meet expectations, we set the national record for year-one demand in a school choice program," Hancock said. "Families across Texas made it clear they want a greater role in their child's education, and they showed up in record numbers."

The Comptroller's office released a detailed breakdown (PDF) of the application

pool, which shows:

- A record 43,000 students applied on the program's first day, with tens of thousands of students applying in the final days before the March 31 deadline.

- Nearly three-quarters of applicants are from low- or middle-income Texas families.

- Nearly 30,000 applicants qualify for the first priority tier — low- or middle-income students with disabilities.

- Another 79,000 applicants qualify for the second priority tier — students in low-income households.

All data is preliminary and based on information submitted by applicants.

The Comptroller's office is currently working with Odyssey, the program's certified educational assistance organization, to verify students' information before notifying

families regarding awards later this month and distributing funds to student accounts in July.

Available year-one funding is expected to be exhausted within the second priority tier. A lottery will be used to allocate remaining funds within the second tier and to establish waitlist order for remaining students. The waitlist will be reported to the Texas Legislature, as required by statute, to inform future funding decisions.

Maintaining the integrity of the program remains a top priority. Parents, school personnel and members of the public should report any concerns about fraud or unlawful activity to tefa.watchdog@cpa.texas.gov

More information regarding TEFA is available at educationfreedom.texas.gov.

Harris County Precinct 2 Honors Vietnam Veterans



Pct. 2 Commissioner Adrian Garcia presents a Proclamation to the Vietnam Veterans at the Memorial on Tidwell. MORE PHOTOS ON PAGE 2.

HARRIS COUNTY, TX — In a solemn and moving tribute, the community of Harris County Precinct 2 gathered to commemorate National Vietnam War Veterans Day. Local residents, officials, and veterans came together to honor the men and women who

bravely served during the Vietnam War.

The ceremony featured heartfelt speeches reflecting on the courage, sacrifice, and unwavering dedication of those who wore the uniform. Participants expressed their deep gratitude, ensuring that

the contributions of Vietnam veterans will never be forgotten.

The event concluded with a standing ovation for the attending veterans, a powerful reminder of a community united in remembrance and respect.

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Harris County Precinct 2 Honors Vietnam Veterans in Heartfelt Ceremony,

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1



CRIME STOPPERS Who killed Mason Bourda?

Reward of up to \$5,000 leading to the charging and/or arrest of the suspect(s) involved in this case.

Crime Stoppers of Houston and the Houston Police Department Homicide Division are asking for the public's assistance in identifying the suspect(s) responsible for the murder of Mason Bourda, age 19.

On Monday, February 9, 2026, at approximately 1:00 a.m., officers responded to a shooting in the 200 block of Greens Road in Houston, Texas. Upon arrival, they learned that 19-year-old Mason Bourda had been shot by an unknown suspect.

Mason sustained critical gunshot wounds and was transported for medical treatment. Tragically, he later succumbed to his injuries.

Mason's family is pleading with the community to come forward with any information that may

help identify those responsible for this senseless act of violence.

Together, we can help bring justice to Mason Bourda and provide answers to his grieving family.

Crime Stoppers may pay up to \$5,000 for information leading to the location and arrest of the suspects featured. Information may be reported by calling 713-222-TIPS (8477), submitted online at www.crime-stoppers.org or through the Crime Stoppers mobile app. All tipsters remain anonymous. Only tips and calls DIRECTLY TO Crime Stoppers are anonymous and eligible for a cash reward.

All cases/warrants are active at the time this post was created and is subject to change. Crime Stoppers of Houston is not making any legal claims that this is the most current legal status.

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Atom X



Audien Hearing

HIGH MEADOWS LIBRARY NEWS

CAREER AND COLLEGE HELP | AYUDA PARA BUSCA DE EMPLEO O CARRERAS

Wednesday, April 08, 12:00pm-6:00pm

Description Ready to re-enter today's workforce with confidence? Join us for a practical, empowering one-on-one meeting designed to help you take the next step in your career journey!

Connect with a Future U advisor! Discover the college and career resources around you.

What we offer:

- * Built professional resumes
- * Prepare for all types of interviews by discovering key elements.
- * Access free online career resources from our Harris County libraries to continue developing your career skills and confidence.

Please call. Virtual appointments are also available.

FutureU Appointment

TOON CAFÉ

Wednesday, April 08, 3:00pm-4:00pm

Description Lights, laughter, and classic cartoons! Calling all teens—come hang out at the library for a special cartoon.

Bring your own favorite snacks to enjoy while you watch and get ready for a fun-filled break with nonstop cartoon comedy. If you love animation and humor, this is the perfect event for you!

KRAFTY KIDS

Wednesday, April 08, 3:30pm-4:30pm

Description Krafty Kids offers a fantastic chance for your children to unleash their creativity while having a great time in a safe and inviting space. Whether it's painting, drawing, sculpting,

or other activities, there's something for every budding artist to delight in.

BOOK BUDDIES AT HIGH MEADOWS

Wednesday, April 08, 4:15pm-5:00pm

Description Book Buddies is a FREE literacy program that brings child and teens together to share the joy of reading. It pairs trained teen volunteers (Big Buddies) with children in K-3rd grades (Little Buddies).

Each Wednesday for 10 weeks, Big Buddies and Little Buddies will meet to read together and create positive experiences surrounding literacy. By the end of the session, we aspire that all Little Buddies will learn to love to read and form positive associations with reading.

Applications to be a Little Buddy or Big Buddy are available at the High Meadows Library until capacity is reached! Teen volunteers (Big Buddies) must attend a Big Buddy training to participate in the program.

AVENTURAS EN LECTURAS | ADVENTURES IN READING

Wednesday, April 08, 5:00pm-5:30pm

Description Experience the magic of two languages at our Bilingual Storytime, specially designed for children ages 5 to 8 years old. Each week features a fresh, exciting theme—from high-tech Robots to mythical Dragons. We go beyond the book with interactive games and hands-on instrument play to keep older kids engaged and moving. It's the perfect blend of literacy, culture, and high-energy fun.

CITIZENSHIP CLASS | CLASE DE CIUDADANÍA

Thursday, April 09, 11:00am-12:30pm

Description Join us for a free class to help you prepare for your naturalization interview and civics test. An English assessment must be taken for class admittance. Taking

this class does not grant citizenship or pay for any application fees. Registration is required as space is limited.

ESL INTERMEDIO | INTERMEDIATE ESL

Thursday, April 09, 12:45pm-1:45pm

Description Are you ready to learn more English? Classes are every Tuesday and Thursday from 1 pm - 2 pm starting February 3 and ending April 9 (no classes the week of March 14-21). This class is for registered applicants. Register in person on one of the following dates:

Monday Jan 26 at 11:30 AM

Tuesday Jan 27 at 12:45 PM

Thursday Jan 29 at 11:30 AM

DECODIFICANDO EL MUNDO DIGITAL: UN TALLER SOBRE SEGURIDAD CIBERNÉTICA

Thursday, April 09, 1:00pm-2:00pm

Description ¿Es la huella digital de su familia más grande de lo que imagina? Acompáñenos en Crime Stoppers de Houston para descubrir lo que realmente sucede detrás de las pantallas. Desde funciones ocultas en aplicaciones populares hasta el mundo secreto de las plataformas de videojuegos, revelaremos las tendencias en línea y le enseñaremos cómo crear un entorno digital seguro para sus hijos.

CRAFT & CHILL

Saturday, April 11, 10:30am-12:00pm

Description Are you ready to get crafty? Join us at High Meadows to work on an available craft project or bring one of your own! This program is for adults (18+) only.

AIRLINE LIBRARY NEWS

ESL 2 (ADVANCE BEGINNER)

Tuesday, April 07, 1:00pm-2:30pm

Description Are you looking for a way to continue to improve your English skills? ESL Classes are underway at the Aldine Branch Library.

The Aldine Branch Library will be offering:

ESL - 2 (in-person)

We will meet once a week on Tuesdays March 31st, 2026 - May 19th from 1pm - 2:30pm

A pre-assessment test is required. Our Literacy Coordinator will help determine the right class for you.

These courses are free of charge.

¿Buscas una manera de seguir mejorando tu inglés? Ya están disponibles las clases de ESL en la Biblioteca Sucursal de Aldine.

La Biblioteca de Aldine ofrecerá: ESL - 2 (en persona) Nos reuniremos una vez a la semana los martes del 31 de marzo de 2026 al 19 de mayo de 1:00 a 2:30 de la tarde.

Se requiere una prueba de preevaluación. Nuestra Coordinadora te ayudará a determinar la clase más adecuada para ti. Estos cursos son gratuitos.

BOOK BUDDIES

Tuesday, April 07, 4:30pm-5:15pm

Description Do you have a child in kindergarten through 3rd grade who loves stories—or one who could use a little extra reading support? Harris County Public Library's Book Buddies is a FREE, fun-filled literacy program that pairs enthusiastic, trained teen volunteers (Big Buddies) with younger readers (Little Buddies) for 10 weeks of reading adventures! Begins: Tuesday,

Feb 17th | 4:30 PM - 5:15 PM

Feb. 17 - April 28 (Excluding March 17th)@ Aldine Branch Library

Each week, your child will build confidence, make a new friend, and discover the joy of reading in a supportive, one-on-one setting.

WIGGLE WEDNESDAY

Wednesday, April 08, 11:00am-12:00pm

Description Come Move and Groove with Us!

Join us for a fun-filled session of reading, singing, and playful movement! It's the perfect way to introduce toddlers to the joy of books and reading while building important motor skills. Through music, movement, and play, we'll help support your child's growth in a joyful, engaging way—because play is essential to every part of toddler development! Ven a moverte y bailar con nosotros! Están invitados para una divertida sesión de lectura, canto y movimiento lúdico! Es la manera perfecta de introducir a los niños pequeños al placer de los libros y la lectura, a la vez que desarrollan importantes habilidades motoras. A través de la música, el movimiento y el juego, apoyaremos el crecimiento de tu hijo de una manera divertida y atractiva. ¡Porque el juego es esencial para cada etapa del desarrollo infantil!

ESL 1

Wednesday, April 08, 1:00pm-2:30pm

Description Start learning English for free at the library! This is an introductory English class for complete beginners.

Class is once a week on Wednesdays from 1 - 2:30 p.m. It is an 8 week session from April 1st to May 20th, 2026

Registration is required in order to attend. To register, visit us on a registration date to take a placement exam and confirm your

spot in a class.

ALDINE'S 50TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

Thursday, April 09, 5:30pm-7:00pm

Description We cordially invite you to our Golden 50-year anniversary celebration! We are celebrating 50 years of dedicated service and enrichment to the community members of Harris County, Texas. We will have community organizations, an escape room, and some family fun activities. Please join us!

¡Les invitamos cordialmente a nuestra celebración del 50.º aniversario! Celebramos 50 años de servicio dedicado y enriquecimiento a la comunidad del Condado de Harris, Texas. Contaremos con organizaciones comunitarias, una sala de escape y divertidas actividades para toda la familia. ¡Únanse!

¡Les invitamos cordialmente a nuestra celebración del 50.º aniversario! Celebramos 50 años de servicio dedicado y enriquecimiento a la comunidad del Condado de Harris, Texas. Contaremos con organizaciones comunitarias, una sala de escape y divertidas actividades para toda la familia. ¡Únanse!

PATHWAY TO CITIZENSHIP

Saturday, April 11, 10:00am-12:00pm

Description Join us for a free class to help you prepare for your naturalization interview and civics test. You must complete an English placement assessment to join the class. Taking this class will not grant citizenship or pay for any application fees. Registration is required as space is limited.

Bert Barron Adult Program Specialist

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

SCHOOL NEWS PAGE



A Message From The Superintendent, Dr. LaTonya M. Goffney.

Dear Aldine Community,

It's March Madness season, and whether your team is headed to the Final Four or not, educators have their own kind of madness with spring fever and end-of-school activities. There are just eight more Mondays to go before school is officially out for summer! I recently took my grandson to a Houston Rockets game, and the excitement on his face was pure joy. From the lights to the music to the players, he soaked up every moment. As we experience the excitement of end-of-year activities, it's important to remember that meaningful work is still ahead. Our goal is to ensure every student graduates with choices and opportunities, and that means we must keep the momentum going strong. Like any basketball player on one of the Final Four teams, we can't give up now. We have important work to do, and in the end, our students will be the victors.

Our Students Are Rising

Across Aldine ISD, our students are not just participating — they are excelling.

From the classroom to the competition stage, their talent and determination continue to shine. The MacArthur Academic Decathlon team earned a top-10 finish in Texas. Davis High School's theater students advanced in the UIL One-Act Play competition with a powerful performance. Our student-athletes are competing at the highest levels, and our CTE robotics students showed us what perseverance truly looks like.

In the arts, Aldine students took center stage across Houston — from Carver musicians performing alongside a professional ensemble to our students experiencing live Broadway perfor-

mances through the Broadway Bridges program. At the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo, our student artists earned an incredible \$82,000 at auction, with hundreds more works showcased — demonstrating the power of creativity and student voice.

Whether on a stage, in a classroom, or out in the community, our students continue to represent Aldine with pride. These moments are more than accomplishments—they are proof that our students are prepared for whatever path they choose.

Choices and Opportunities — Our Promise in Action Everything we do in Aldine ISD is grounded in a simple but powerful belief: every student deserves choices and opportunities.

This month, that promise came to life in remarkable ways.

Our seniors have now generated more than \$737 million in scholarship offers, opening doors to futures filled with possibilities. Through our partnership with EAB's Apply Match program, we are connecting students to opportunities at a scale we have never seen before.

At the same time, we are investing in the future of our workforce through the launch of our Grow Your Own teacher pathway, creating a strong pipeline of educators rooted in our community. Programs like dual language and hands-on STEAM learning continue to expand, ensuring students are equipped with the skills they need to succeed in a rapidly changing world.

We also celebrated a major milestone with the groundbreaking of the new Carver High School — a moment that honored the past while building toward an even brighter future for our students and community.

And we proudly recognized 35 years of service by the Aldine ISD Police Department, whose commitment to safety, service, and excellence continues to set the standard. Their recent

state accreditation places them among the top law enforcement agencies in Texas—a distinction that reflects their dedication to protecting and supporting our schools.

Connected as a Community

Our progress is not possible without the strength of our community.

From the Aldine Education Foundation's innovative teaching grants to online family learning sessions that support student success at home, we are seeing what is possible when schools and families work together.

I also want to personally thank our Aldine community for the support and encouragement I received this month. Being recognized among Houston's Most Influential Women is an honor I share with all of you. It is a reflection of what we are building together — an educational community grounded in opportunity, excellence, and care for every child.

Looking Ahead

As we move into the final stretch of the school year, I encourage our families to stay connected and engaged. Events like our Choice Schools Festival that took place over the weekend highlight the many pathways available to our students — each designed to help them discover their strengths, pursue their passions, and prepare for their future.

Momentum like this does not happen by chance. It happens because of you — our educators, staff, families, and community partners — who show up every day committed to making a difference.

Thank you for all you do to support our students and to move our #AldineStory forward.

With Aldine Pride,
Dr. LaTonya M. Goffney
Superintendent of Schools Aldine ISD

Aldine ISD Festival de Primavera Returns for Fifth Year, Inviting All Emergent Bilingual Families

At the district's recent Choice Schools Festival, Elizabeth Godoy recognized a student and mentioned the upcoming Festival de Primavera (Spring Festival). His face lit up.

He remembered the last in-person spring festival, where he had met Raul the Third, the celebrated illustrator and author whose colorful, culture-rich books have captivated young readers across the country. After that day, the student went home and researched everything he could find about the author. He became a devoted fan. And when he heard the festival was coming back this spring, he said he planned to return to meet more authors, get more books, and feel that excitement all over again.

That moment is exactly what the Festival de Primavera is designed to create — an event where emergent bilingual families are welcomed, connected to resources, and celebrated as vital members of the Aldine ISD community. Now in its fifth year, Aldine ISD's annual Festival de Primavera takes a meaningful step forward, expanding its reach to welcome and celebrate emergent bilingual students and families from all language backgrounds across the district.

What began in 2022 as a celebration connecting Spanish-speaking families to district resources has grown to welcome an average of 1,000 attendees at each in-person event. This year, the festival reflects the full breadth of who Aldine ISD serves. Of the district's 51,502 enrolled students, 24,210 — nearly 47% — are emergent bilingual learners, speaking languages as varied as the communities they come from.

"Eli and I decided we wanted to make sure that all students in Aldine feel like they have a place in our district," said Eva Carrillo-Iniguez, Aldine ISD director of multilingual special programs, referring to her colleague Elizabeth Godoy, Title III family, literacy, and outreach liaison. "This festival is one way we make that real. This event is one way we say — loudly and clearly — that they belong here and we are here for them."

A Morning Full of Family Activities

Families can enjoy a range of morning activities, including free books for students, author talks, and book signings, a featured speaker, a petting zoo, a fire truck visit, a soccer clinic, student presentations, arts and crafts, games, community resource tables (in English, Spanish, and Vietnamese), and concessions stands operated by student groups.

Featured Authors and Free Signed Books



Festival de Primavera 2023

At 9 a.m., two award-winning authors will take the stage — and every student in attendance will receive a free signed copy of each author's book. For many students, meeting a published author feels nothing short of extraordinary.

"Students are always excited to meet authors and get their books signed and take pictures with them," Carrillo-Iniguez said. "For them, it is like meeting a celebrity!"

Dr. Edith Treviño, nationally known as "Dr. ET," is a dynamic presenter, storyteller, author, advocate, and educator on the Texas-Mexico border. Dr. ET is an immigrant from Mexico and a U.S. Army Reserve veteran. She co-authored *The Death of My Mexican Name* and authored children's books, including *I'm María, The Family Translator*, and *La Chancleta's True Story*. Her work is shaped by the border life of La Frontera — the culture and experiences of students and families on both sides of the border.

Angela Pham Krans is the award-winning author of *Finding Papa*, recipient of the Asian/Pacific American Honor Award for Literature. Her other titles, including *Words Between Us* and *Another Word for Neighbor*, have been widely praised. Angela presents in English and Vietnamese, making her visit especially meaningful this year as the festival welcomes all emergent bilingual communities.

Together, these two authors bring voices that mirror the diverse backgrounds, languages, and stories of the Aldine ISD family.

Guest Speaker: Dr. José Luis Zelaya

At 10 a.m. and 11 a.m., nationally recognized educator and speaker Dr. José Luis Zelaya will lead two sessions focused on life

after high school.

10 a.m.: Completing Your College Application

11 a.m.: Finding Your Voice: How to Write a College Essay

Dr. Zelaya's own story is one of the most powerful in education. He grew up in San Pedro Sula, Honduras, came to the United States as an unaccompanied minor, and went on to earn a Ph.D. in Urban Education from Texas A&M University. His TED Talk, *From a Street Child to a Ph.D.*, has inspired students and communities across the country. He now leads Dr. Zelaya Educational Consulting LLC, working with first-generation college students and emergent bilingual communities to turn ambition into opportunity.

His sessions connect directly to Aldine ISD's Accelerate strategic plan and Dr. Goffney's commitment to ensuring every student graduates with real choices and real opportunities waiting for them.

All Means All in Aldine

Superintendent Dr. LaTonya M. Goffney has been a vocal supporter of the Festival de Primavera since its inception — and her vision has always been clear.

"All means all in Aldine," Goffney said. "That means every child, every family, every language, and every culture. We believe deeply in the power of being bilingual, biliterate, and bicultural — not as something families need to apologize for or leave behind, but as a strength and an advantage they carry with them. The languages and cultures our families bring from their home countries are not barriers. They are gifts. And this festival is part of our #AldineStory. It's our way of honoring those gifts and saying to every family: you belong here, and Aldine is better because you are here."

District Officially Recognizes Theatre in Our Schools Month



Posing (l-r) at the March Board meeting are Chief Transformation Officer Dr. Adrian Bustillos, Keshia Bolton, administrator of college initiatives; Judea Perkins, Alexander Gatica, David Sevilla, Cassidy Blake, Tirek Royston, Giselle Moreno, Heidi Aaron Rouse, Angie Gonzalez, Nevaeh (Asher) Paul, and Miguel Ramos.

Each March, the American Alliance for Theatre and Education, the Educational Theatre Association, and the International Thespian Society partner to celebrate Theatre in Our Schools Month (TIOSM) — a nationwide effort to increase understanding of the importance of theatre education and the need for students to have access to quality theatre programs.

On March 24, the Aldine ISD Board of Trustees unanimously passed a proclamation, at the request and efforts of Eisenhower High Theatre Department, officially designating March as Theatre in Our Schools Month, commending the district's theatre programs and the talented students who participate in them.

The proclamation "encourages all schools, students, staff, families, and

community members to recognize and support the contributions of theatre education in forming well-rounded, thoughtful, and capable future leaders."

Student representatives from Eisenhower Senior High School Troupe 4588 officers, who have served for the 2025-2026 school year, shared their united thoughts of this to the Board about the impact of theatre education in the following statement:

"Theatre In Our Schools Month is important to our troupe because it brings to light the work and efforts that young individuals put into their programs. TIOSM also recognizes the commitment of our directors and administrators who dedicate so much to us in our goals and endeavors. Our theatre department believes that this

program isn't just acting or building, but it's creating a safe space where we work hard together as a family. We are grateful and appreciative to our district leaders for recognizing the vitality of theatre in our schools and honoring us with this proclamation."

Heidi Aaron Rouse, the Eisenhower HS theatre director of Troupe 4588, initiated the proclamation process.

"I, along with my students, am so grateful for our administration taking the time to recognize this request as well as the work that all of our theatre departments do across the district," said Rouse. "This is a huge step in bringing more awareness and support to not only our theatre students, but our fine arts family across the board."



A morning packed with fun for the whole family!

- ACTIVITIES**
- Arts, crafts & games
 - Free books for students
 - Featured author talks & book signings
 - Petting zoo
 - Fire truck
 - Soccer clinic
 - Student presentations
 - District & community resource tables
 - Concession stands & more!!

Featured Authors & Book Signings – 9 a.m.

Every student receives a FREE signed book!

Dr. Edith Treviño – "Dr. ET"

- Storyteller and Educator
- Author of *La Chancleta's True Story*
- La Frontera, Texas-Mexico Border

Angela Pham Krans

- Award-Winning Author of *Finding Papa*
- ALA Asian/Pacific American Honor Award for Literature
- Presents in English & Vietnamese

Guest Speaker

Dr. José Luis Zelaya

- Nationally recognized educator
- Works with first-generation college students and emergent bilingual communities
- Turns ambition into opportunity


- 10 a.m. – Completing Your College Application
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OPINION PAGE

OPINION
By **BILL KING**

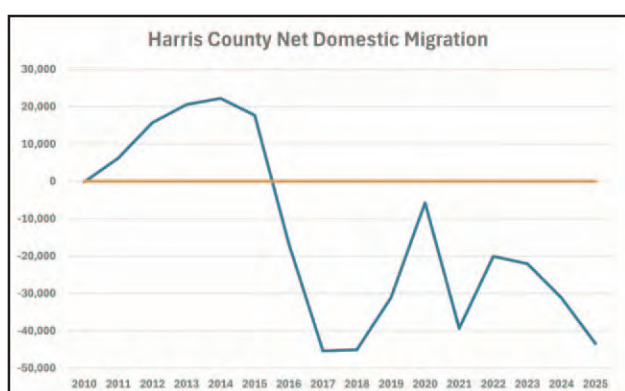


Immigration Crackdown Takes Toll on Harris County Growth

According to the US Census Bureau's estimates released yesterday, Harris County grew last year by just under 50,000, about half of what it grew in 2024. International immigration, which has fueled the County's growth for most of the last decade, fell from 101,000 to 57,000. Nonetheless, it still accounted for all of the County's growth. Without international immigration, the County population would have declined by about 10,000.

It should be noted that Harris County is overwhelmingly the preferred destination for international migration within Texas. Last year, while Harris County accounted for only 16% of the state's population, 34% of international immigrants settled here.

The number of people moving out of the County destined to somewhere else in the US (domestic migration) grew from 31,000 to 43,000. The County has not had positive domestic immigration since 2015. In the last ten years, about 300,000 have left the County for other places in the US.

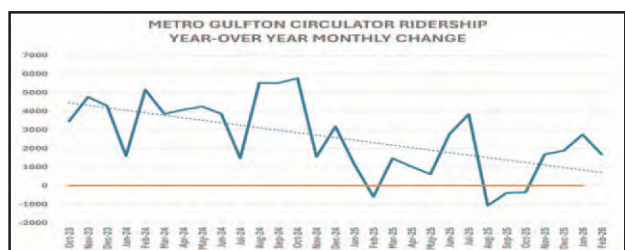


The number of births and deaths in Harris County held steady at about 67,000 and 31,000, respectively, resulting in natural growth of 35,000. Because of the relatively young median age in Harris County, it will likely sustain a small natural increase for some time. However, this will inevitably slowly fall as the County ages.

Harris County Population Growth 2025		
Natural Growth (Births - Deaths)	34,861	72%
Domestic Immigration	(43,377)	-89%
International Immigration	57,225	117%
Total	48,709	100%

It is important to understand that the Census Bureau's estimates are as of July 1 each year. So, the estimate released yesterday was as of July 1, 2025. This means that the range covered by this estimate would have about seven months of the Biden administration and about five months of the Trump administration. Therefore, it is likely that most of the international immigration into Harris County occurred earlier in the year and has slowed significantly since then.

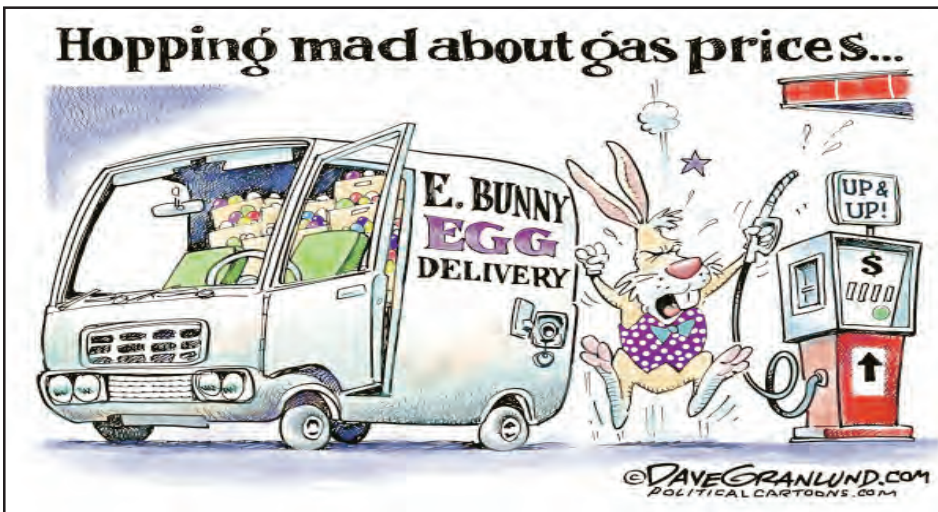
It is noteworthy, however, that this estimate does not indicate a mass exodus of immigrants, as DHS claims. At Baker, we have been looking at other data that might indicate a significant outflow of immigrants, and so far, we are not finding much. For example, we have been tracking the ridership on Metro's Gulfton circulator route. Gulfton is essentially Houston's Ellis Island, with many immigrants making their home in that area when they first arrive. Metro operates two bus lines that circle the area. It is used by many immigrants for routine trips and to connect to other lines to large employment centers. Ridership on those lines steadily increased in the last two years of the Biden administration, but has shown some deterioration since Trump was elected.



Taken together, the Census data and the local data we have been tracking appear to indicate a significant decline in international immigration – probably close to zero, but not that there has been a mass exodus of immigrants from the County.

The bottom line is that Harris County has effectively become dependent on international immigration for population growth. Without it, stagnation or decline is the baseline. Therefore, future federal immigration policy will probably have no more impact on Harris County than any other place in the state, and possibly the entire country.

Author's note: The numbers for the Houston region show better population growth. More on that next time.



STATE CAPITAL HIGHLIGHTS
By **Gary Borders**



Texas Poised to Lead Nation in Data Centers

Texas is poised to lead the nation by 2030 in the number of data centers, the Austin American-Statesman reported, surpassing Virginia. The state currently has 6.5 gigawatts of data center capacity under construction, accounting for 20% of the capacity added to the U.S. pipeline last year. One gigawatt can power about 750,000 homes on average. Data centers provide the infrastructure to support both crypto currency facilities and the growth of artificial intelligence. The centers require huge amounts of power and water to operate. The Electric Reliability Council of Texas, which operates most of the state's power grid, said the continuing growth in data centers will increase Texas energy demand by 71% in the next five years. Central Texas has become the top data center market in the country. The American-Statesman identified at least 55 completed or planned projects between Temple and San Antonio in 2025.

PAXTON CALLS FOR HANCOCK'S REMOVAL

Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton called for Gov. Greg Abbott to remove acting state comptroller Kelly Hancock, calling him an "incompetent loser." The Dallas Morning News reported. Paxton said the governor should replace him with Don Huffines, who defeated Hancock in the GOP primary race for the post earlier this month. "Kelly Hancock was rejected by Texans because he failed to do his job. He failed to take me down during impeachment, and his career is over," Paxton wrote on X. "It's time for him to be fired." Before his appointment as acting comptroller, Hancock served in the Texas Senate and was one of two Republican state senators who voted to convict Paxton in his impeachment trial. Paxton was acquitted. The latest dispute comes after Hancock sent a letter to Paxton and to federal officials, calling for stripping the Houston Quran Academy of its charter because of alleged ties to CAIR, the nation's largest Muslim civil rights advocacy organization. Abbott has designated that group a foreign terrorist organization. The academy is suing to overturn the designation.

\$116 MILLION IN FIFA SAFETY GRANTS ANNOUNCED



The city of Houston and the North Central Texas Council of Governments, areas that are both hosting FIFA World Cup events, will receive \$116 million in grants to provide for safety personnel, equipment and other public safety needs, the governor's office has announced. "The FIFA World Cup coming to Texas gives our state a premier opportunity to showcase all it has to offer," Abbott said in a news release. "These public safety grants will help ensure that travelers visiting and traveling throughout Texas can enjoy our great state safely, will bolster Texas' efforts to combat crime, and help prevent potential acts of violence." The money is coming from the federal government under the omnibus budget bill passed last year. The budget provides \$625 million in federal funding to host cities across America. The funds are allocated for recipients to provide extensive security to protect venues, players, staff and attendees against potential terrorist attacks.

LICENSE SEEKERS WILL HAVE TO PROVE THEY'RE IN COUNTRY LEGALLY

Anyone seeking a professional license in Texas, from barbers to dog breeders, will have to prove they are in the country legally after May 1, The Texas Tribune reported. The state's Commission on Licensing and Regulation last week adopted a new rule that could affect thousands of workers. A long line of speakers at a hearing urged the commission not to adopt the rule, arguing it will hamper the state's economy and push people to work without a license. The commission oversees the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation. "TDLR has long been evaluating verification of license eligibility in line with federal law. With the

transfer of the Texas Lottery to TDLR, the recent launch of our licensing system modernization project, and increased focus on combatting human trafficking, the department is moving forward with lawful presence verification," Caroline M. Espinosa, a TDLR spokesperson, said. TDLR attorney Derek Burkhalter told commissioners that some non-citizens will still be able to get licenses if they are here legally; for example, if they were granted asylum or admitted as a refugee. "The proposed rules do not impose a citizenship requirement," Burkhalter said. "Individuals who are not U.S. citizens may still be eligible for licensure if they meet the eligibility criteria."

PEDESTRIAN, BICYCLIST FATALITIES CONTINUE TO INCREASE

With spring and warmer weather here, there are more pedestrians and cyclists out on the road. More than 20% of all Texas traffic fatalities involve either pedestrians or cyclists, according to the Texas Department of Transportation, which is urging drivers to know and follow the rules for sharing the road. In 2024, 852 cyclists and pedestrians were killed in crashes on Texas roads. There were 6,095 crashes involving pedestrians and 2,761 crashes involving bicyclists. In 2025, there were 1,372 traffic crashes involving pedestrians in Texas and 527 traffic crashes involving bicyclists. In these crashes, 186 people were killed. "All of us share a responsibility to watch out for each other, but people on foot or riding a bike are most at risk for serious injury or worse in a crash with a car, which means drivers must be extra vigilant," TxDOT Executive Director Marc Williams said.

SLIGHTLY LESS ACTIVE HURRICANE SEASON PREDICTED

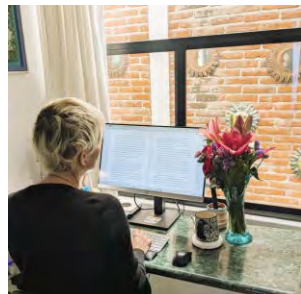
Hurricane season is a little more than two months away, and weather media outlet AccuWeather is predicting a slightly less active season this year than in 2025, the Houston Chronicle reported. However, Texas and the Gulf Coast are still at risk of being hit. AccuWeather is forecasting 11 to 16 named storms, including four to eight hurricanes. Of those, one to three are expected to become Category 3 or strong hurricanes, with winds of at least 111 mph. Three to six storms could directly hit the United States, including one to three along the Gulf Coast, putting Texas and neighboring states at risk. Last year was the first since 2015 without a hurricane making a direct U.S. landfall. Hurricane season runs from June 1 to Nov. 30.

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**

400 Square Feet



Last week, we thought we would leave our little place in Casa de los Soles.

If you've read my column, you know about this place my husband, Peter, and I stay in while in Mexico. The interior of our apartment will set you right back to the 1980s. The Formica countertop has seen better days. I write in a corner of the living room and have exactly 6 inches between the back of my office chair and the end of the couch. Peter measured our apartment, and it is 400 square feet—and that includes a rather large bedroom.

So, last week, we decided to look around for a place with a little more space. We told our landlord, Jorge, we were thinking about doing this, and he said he understood, and we went looking at apartments.

We did not make it easy on ourselves. In addition to loving this particular place, we love the neighborhood it is in, and the street it is on, so our circle of investigation was small. When we heard of an apartment for rent just a block away and on the same street, we were very excited.

The apartment was much bigger. It had a fireplace and a rooftop terrace. It had two bedrooms and a full dining room. It would need a little work, but we were very excited. We met with the landlord two days later.

But later that night, I started to think about what we would have to do to live in that apartment. There was nothing on the walls. There was not a lot of furniture. The couch looked a little worse for wear. The furniture on the roof needed replacement. None of it was big stuff, but it added up. We'd have to pay an electric bill. If we wanted housekeeping, we'd have to figure that out and pay for it. We'd have to get our water and our gas delivered. We'd have to get the garbage out on the curb on the right days at the right time—which, in the center of an old town with cobblestone, one-way streets, is not as easy as it sounds.

I lay in bed that night and thought of all the things I don't have to worry about now, like having regular internet and a front desk that will accept our deliveries and someone on staff if we ever have a medical emergency.

Then I thought about the things that give me such joy here: the lively restaurant below, which will deliver lunch right to our door. The staff that will store my computer monitor and my clothes and take them out again when we arrive. The bouquet of flowers that is always waiting for me when we check in. The going-away party that the entire staff throws for Peter and me when we leave at the end of the season. And the kindness of Jorge, our landlord who, whenever we have a request, no matter how unusual, will say, "Certainly!"

I thought of how very easy my life was in 400 square feet, how free of worries, and of how much writing I had accomplished sitting at my little green Formica desk with the fresh flowers in front of me.

I talked to Jorge the next day. "We love this place too much to leave!" I told him. And I felt tearful.

Then I looked with fresh eyes at my 400 square feet and realized there was a lot I could do in this space. Because right now, 400 square feet is more than enough.

Till next time,
Carrie

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Aldine ISD Honors 3 Former Trustees,

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

tion of School Boards (TASB) Master Trustee designation, a rare achievement. The board was also honored with TASB's Inaugural Legacy Award.

Each former trustee brought a unique perspective and deep personal connection to Aldine ISD.

Avalos, an Aldine native, dedicated more than 30 years to the district as an educator and nearly two decades as a trustee. She was elected to Position 3 in May 2006. A graduate of MacArthur High School, she served Aldine ISD as a teacher, counselor, program director, assistant principal and principal. She led MacArthur for several years and was named the Principal of the Year in 2002 and 2003. "It's been a wonderful experience, a wonderful journey," Avalos said. "The only thing I ever wanted was to make a difference. I hope that I have and want to continue to do so."

Esparza, a longtime Aldine resident and retired Houston Community College Northeast educator, brought a strong voice for families and the community. She was appointed to Position 4 in February 2017 and consistently advocated for bilingual learners, parent engagement and equitable opportuni-

ties for all students.

"I've always sat on the board with the intention of being a voice for the people I serve," Esparza said. "I am very blessed, I am very humbled and overwhelmed by what has been said about me."

Mead, a graduate of Aldine High School and local business owner, has dedicated more than 50 years of service to the community. He was first appointed to Position 5 in January 2004 and was known as a steady, thoughtful leader who brought the perspective of a parent, neighbor and advocate.

"My philosophy in life has always been not to run from things, but to try to change things," said Mead. "That's what I've tried to do with my time on the board. We're so fortunate to have the board we have, and we're really so fortunate to have our Superintendent, Dr. Goffney."

Throughout their service, all three leaders remained grounded in a shared belief: putting students first. Speakers reflected on the influence each trustee has had not only on board decisions, but across the district and in the lives of students, families, and staff.

"This is not a sad occasion because they are able to hear us give them their

flowers," said Board President Dr. Kimberley N. Booker. "This is a celebration to thank them in person for everything they have done, for all the nights, and to thank their families for sharing them with us. We appreciate your hard work and dedication." Each honoree received gifts from the Aldine Police Department, a commemorative plaque signed by attendees, and proclamations from several local and state leaders.

State Rep. Armando Walle attended in person, while representatives from the offices of Harris County Commissioner Rodney Ellis, U.S. Rep. Sylvia Garcia, Sen. Carol Alvarado, and State Rep. Charlene Ward Johnson presented proclamations on their behalf.

A proclamation from Harris County Commissioner Adrian Garcia's office was also read, naming March 31 as a day in honor of Rose Avalos, Connie Esparza and Steve Mead in recognition of their lasting contributions to the Aldine community.

While their time on the board has come to a close, their influence will continue to be felt across the district, in its schools, programs, and in the lives of the students they supported.

HCC Culinary Arts student chefs gain valuable experience during Houston Restaurant Weeks

By Donald Sparks

HOUSTON — Each year, thousands of foodies anticipate the month of August to explore diverse culinary cuisines throughout the city of Houston to please their palates as part of Houston Restaurant Weeks.

This year, two longtime chefs were looking forward to the annual event to showcase a curated experience not just for customers, but for student chefs as part of Houston City College's (HCC) Culinary Arts program.

David Cordúa, chef and owner of The Lymbar, and Carlos Gamboa-Muller, chef and culinary arts instructor, HCC, fulfilled what started from a conversation during both their family's vacation in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico, into a reality.

"My wife Irunú García Gamboa, introduced me to Chef Cordúa, a friend from her high school days, telling him that her husband is also a chef," Gamboa said. "We had plenty to talk about because we have both been in the restaurant industry for so long. When I told him about my work as a culinary arts educator at HCC, he shared the idea of bringing the students to cook at The Lymbar, a restaurant with the perfect platform and clientele to launch new talent."

Recalling the poolside conversation, Cordúa thought the idea would make a perfect collaboration between his restaurant and HCC's Culinary Arts program — especially since they are neighbors in Midtown.

Since joining HCC, Gamboa mentioned it was always his dream to provide his students with the ultimate experience and go the extra mile to put them on a pathway to success in the industry.

Placing my students in The Lymbar during Restaurant Week gave them real-world experiences beyond the classroom.

"With a unique, discerning clientele expecting excellent service and delicious food, they were challenged to refine their skills and work under pressure," Gamboa said. "Knowing Chef Cordúa's expertise, I was confident they would learn a great deal from him. This experience helped them grow not just as cooks, but as professionals ready for any cu-



Chef David Cordúa, far left, and his father, Chef Michael Cordúa, second left, visited HCC's Culinary Arts Building to inspire and motivate student chefs prior to the start of Houston Restaurant Weeks. The students would later cook meals at The Lymbar restaurant as part of the famous culinary scene in the nation's fourth largest city.

linary environment."

Although the Cordúa and Gamboa could have collaborated anytime during the class semester, both agreed putting the students through the crucible during Houston's Restaurants Week would give them an unforgettable learning experience.

Cordúa praised HCC's equipment, collective wisdom and culinary arts lab where the students receive their learning and instruction.

"However, culinary school is just what it is — it's just school," Cordúa said. "There's no, no better teacher than the high impact, high stakes, high adrenaline, and energy of a professional kitchen. There's just no replacement for it. The plates know when you're scared."

Describing Restaurants Week as the "Super Bowl" of Houston's culinary arts scene, Cordúa was happy to get as many hands as possible on deck to prep, cook and serve the meals to the restaurant's patrons.

"That's really where I think the real-life learning happens is when you're putting what you learned at school to work in a real professional kitchen environment," Cordúa

To motivate and guide his students during the height of the action, Gamboa maintained clear communication, giving step-by-step instructions and broke tasks into manageable pieces. He encouraged them to stay calm, trust their training and to support each other.

"My goal was not only to ensure the success of the service but also to teach them resilience, problem-solving and professional skills that will serve them throughout their culinary careers," Gamboa said.

At the conclusion of their night in the Lymbar's kitchen, the students celebrated and congratulated each other after surviving an eye-opening experience. After moving to Houston from Nevada last year, Afrin Mirzabaig chose to attend HCC to pursue a career in culinary arts.

Upon hearing that she and her classmates would be working at a real restaurant during Houston Restaurant Weeks, she was both excited and nervous.

"At first, it was stressful because we were preparing food for real guests—not just for ourselves or classmates," Mirzabaig said. "Timing was crucial, and we had to work efficiently as a team in a busy kitchen. But once the first course went out on time, I started to feel more confident."

She said the Lymbar experience gave him a real taste of the professional culinary world.

"This was one of the best experiences of my life," Mirzabaig said. "Hearing that the guests loved the food we made was such a rewarding feeling and confirmed that I'm on the right path. It made me even more determined to follow my dream of opening my own restaurant one day."

One of the most memorable moments was a surprise visit from Chef Michael Cordúa, father of David and a pioneer of Latin American cuisine in Houston, to HCC's Culinary Arts lab to pass on his expertise.

"Seeing him share his knowledge and passion with our students was extraordinary," Gamboa said. "It reinforced the importance of mentorship and legacy in the culinary world."

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CHURCH PAGE

BIBLE WORD SEARCH

by Elie's Spiritual Treasures

Psalm 40:15-16b

May those who say to me, "Aha! Aha!" be appalled at their own shame. But may all who seek you rejoice and be glad in you; may those who long for your saving help always say,

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Find the **bolded/underlined** words in the diagram. They run in all directions — forward, backward, up, down and diagonally.

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THE ILLUSTRATED BIBLE

Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me. Then I shall be blameless, and I shall be innocent of great transgression. Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer.
 — Psalm 19: 13,14



Detail of "Sara" by Irving Amen (1970)

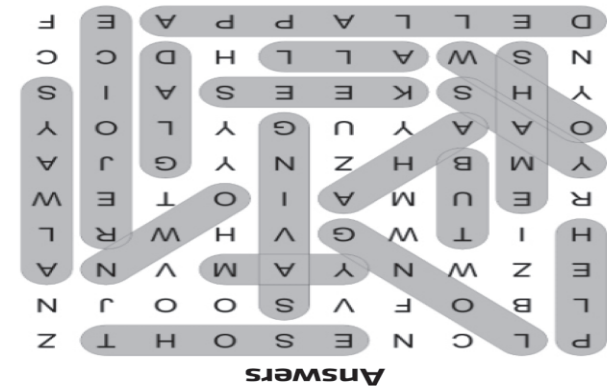
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BIBLE TRIVIA

By Wilson Casey

1. Is the book of 1 Thessalonians (KJV) in the Old or New Testament or neither?
2. To keep Adam and Eve away after the Fall, what did God place around the Tree of Life? Smoking pits, Deep moat, Cherubim with flaming swords, Walking vipers
3. In 2 Samuel 12, God gave Solomon what additional name? David, Amos, Jedidiah, Joab
4. What type of water did Jesus offer the Samaritan woman at the well? Fresh, Cool, Living, Clean
5. From John 10, to what type of animals are Christians compared? Camels, Sheep, Lions, Serpents
6. Which of these was a type of food? Yoke, Manna, Prodigal, Miina

ANSWERS: 1) New, 2) Cherubim with flaming swords, 3) Jedidiah, 4) Living, 5) Sheep, 6) Manna
 "Test Your Bible Knowledge," a book with 1,206 multiple-choice questions by columnist Wilson Casey, is available in stores and online.
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BIBLE WORD SEARCH

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East Aldine views Progress in its 25th Anniversary Year

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

ue to strive for this.”

Finances: Record Sales Tax Month and Healthy Reserves

Cindy Craig of Governmental Financial Reporting walked the Board through the EAMD's two-month financial picture — and the numbers reflect a well-managed operation heading into a busy year.

Year-to-date revenue through February reached \$2.65 million, \$165,360 above budget. Expenditures totaled \$1.43 million, \$699,470 under budget, while revenues exceeded spending by \$1.21 million.

EAMD's unrestricted reserves are now \$18,206,740; total funds, \$22,870,490.

Executive Director Richard Cantú highlighted that East Aldine's sales tax revenue is breaking records.

“March collections set a new East Aldine record,” Cantú told the Board. “Each month surpasses last year's figures.” Year-to-date, sales tax revenue is up 11% from 2025 and 6.6% above budget.

A New Committee to Keep Beautification Accountable

Board Chairman Carlos Silva announced the formal creation of the Beautification and Cleanup Committee — making official the ongoing work across East Aldine.

“We want to make sure we are holding ourselves accountable to this work every month,” Silva said. He appointed Board Director Flor Zarzoza as the committee's chair.



Executive Director's Report: Big Milestones Across the Board

Cantú's monthly report was packed with updates — several of them years in the making.

Keith Weiss Park officially transitions to Precinct 2. After about a decade of effort, Harris County Precinct 2 has taken over the park's maintenance and operations. “That means we'll have a cleaner, safer park,” Cantú said. The EAMD will continue its park patrol program through deputy sheriffs on ATVs and side-by-sides. This expanded patrol will increase security and oversight at more parks and key commercial corridors throughout the EAMD.

The MacArthur High School mini-mural is complete. Cantú encouraged everyone to make a special trip to see the finished work. “It's really nice looking — a spaceman,” he said. “And I think there's something in the reflection in his visor that you need to focus on.”

The EAMD has submitted final closing documents for its \$11 million sales tax revenue bond. This, along with a \$10 million forgivable loan from the Texas Water Development Board, secures \$21 million to fund the Castlewood sanitary sewer project, which will provide modern sanitary sewer infrastructure and support long-term public health and environmental protection in the Castlewood area. The EAMD's counsel confirmed receiving a preliminary approval letter from the Texas Attorney General's office the evening of the meeting. Closing is targeted for April 10.

The Gateway project is more than 75% complete. The public art installation at Little York and the Eastex Freeway (Hwy. 59) is nearing the finish line. “Big, big, big project,” Cantú said. “It's a big celebration.” Ribbon-cutting and media announcements are in the works for the near future.

The Town Center Phase 3 design is almost finished. Design and community engagement work with Asakura Robinson is wrapping up. The Board approved Invoice No. 14 for \$2,547.50 to complete final design services. Board Director Sherry Curl previewed the project: “What they projected is going to be amazing — it's kind of like the Post in downtown Houston. Once it comes to fruition, it will be phenomenal.”

The H-GAC recycling grant is underway. All paperwork for the \$50,000 Houston-Galveston Area Council grant for the residential recycling program has been processed, and implementation is moving forward. This grant will expand recycling options, aiming to reduce waste and promote sustainability for East Aldine residents.

Two new faces join the EAMD team. Cantú introduced Oswaldo “Oz” Rivera, the EAMD's new field operations specialist. Rivera will also support outreach to local businesses. “He's a man of few words,” Cantú said with a smile, “but he'll make up for it in his work.”

Adriana-Martinez

The EAMD also welcomed its first intern, Adriana Martínez. She is a MacArthur High School graduate and a University of Houston-Downtown social work student. Martínez, a homegrown East Aldine talent, will support all departments, including fielding community complaints. “We've been working on trying to get an intern for a long, long time,” Cantú said. “And we finally got one.”



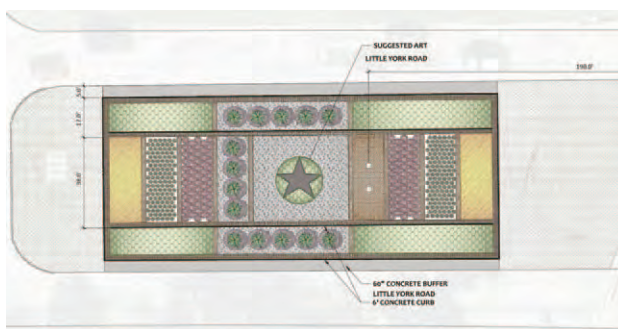
Mobility and Beautification: New Signage, 12 Intersections, and a Smarter Approach to Abatement

The Mobility and Environmental Design Committee brought several significant items before the Board.

Collector Street Signage — Phases 3 and 4. The Board approved a proposal from ESD Signs for \$436,686 to lock in pricing for the next two phases of the Collector Street Program ahead of potential cost increases.

Entryway and Median Improvements. The Board approved a proposal from Buckson Landscape Architecture to beautify 12 key entryways and medians, improving aesthetics, enhancing flood management, deterring unauthorized vendor activity, and creating spaces for rotating public art. Cantú highlighted the Little York and Hempstead intersection median as a prime candidate due to its current flooding and vendor issues, while Catt Lynch detailed plans for the Hirsch and Little York intersection: new concrete, a paver system, tiered landscaping, trees, and a pad for rotating art displays.

“The idea is to add sod, to add flowers, and to add signage to every one of these selected intersections throughout East Aldine,” Cantú said.



UpRise Abatement Services Partnership. The Board approved a partnership with Career and Recovery Resources, Inc. The UpRise Abatement Services program will come to East Aldine, providing jobs for local individuals transitioning out of homelessness and incarceration while improving neighborhood cleanliness and safety. The program will recruit workers directly from the East Aldine community.

“This is kind of the answer to our prayers,” Cantú said, describing cases where elderly or disabled homeowners face nuisance violations they are physically or financially unable to resolve on their own. EAMD nuisance abatement deputies will be on-site during all work. The program already operates under contracts with all four Harris County precincts.

Federal Sidewalk Funding Secured. The Board adopted a resolution authorizing an Advance Funding Agreement with the Texas Department of Transportation — unlocking \$4 million in federal Highway Safety Improvement Program funds for sidewalk construction along Sandydale Drive near Grantham Academy. This project will improve pedestrian safety and promote walkability, especially for students and families accessing the school.

Speed Humps Update. The first set of speed humps — installed on Hill Road and Irwin — has been completed, with a ribbon-cutting held alongside Commissioner Adrian Garcia and several Board members. Additional locations, including Sandydale and Connervale, are next in the queue. Cantú committed to providing the Board with an updated list of remain-



ing locations needing speed humps and stop signs.

Water and Sewer: Infrastructure Work Continues

The Board approved Outlay Request No. 70 for the Hartwick Sanitary Sewer Extension Project (\$76,274.24) and invoices from 5Engineering LLC (\$17,148.19) covering planning and engineering work for the Lyncrest wastewater system and the Castlewood collection project.

Public Safety: Active Month Across East Aldine

HCSO Sergeant Richard Torres presented February's public safety report: 89 felony arrests, 49 felony warrants served, 82 misdemeanor arrests, 58 misdemeanor warrants, and 2,025 calls for service. Deputies conducted 437 traffic stops, filed 419 original reports, and installed nine car seats for families in need. Nuisance abatement operations addressed 76 cases, with 34 vehicles stickered.

Torres also highlighted the Flock camera system, which flagged 43 cross-jurisdictional license plate alerts in the EAMD during February — a coordination tool Torres called “very important” in modern law enforcement. And in only mildly alarming news: wild hogs have been spotted at Keith Weiss Park. “It was worse in the beginning,” Torres said, “but now it's minimized.”

Economic Development: A Certificate, New Events, a Community App, and a Multi-Pronged Marketing Push

Mónica Campos opened with a win: the EAMD received a Certificate of Achievement for Economic Excellence from the Texas Economic Development Council, recognizing the EAMD's professional approach to economic development. The award was secured by Lance Dean, EAMD director of economic development.

The Board then approved a series of items that expand the EAMD's visibility, community engagement, and investment in local business.

Business Improvement Grant — Plaza La Gloria. The Board approved a \$4,750 grant reimbursement for Siari Investments, owner of the Café La Luna center at 2421 Aldine Mail Road, to repaint the building façade in Rave Red — a fresh look for a familiar East Aldine spot.

Cinco de Mayo Celebration. The EAMD is hosting its second annual Cinco de Mayo event, featuring live Hispanic music, activities, giveaways, and family fun. The Board approved up to \$46,000 for the event.

Fourth of July Fireworks. The EAMD's second annual Fourth of July celebration is returning — and based on last year's turnout of 1,700 to 2,000 people, the community is clearly ready for it. The Board approved \$40,000 for the fireworks show.

East Aldine Connects — New Community App. In one of the meeting's most forward-looking decisions, the Board approved development of EA Connects, a bilingual mobile app — available in English and Spanish — designed to give East Aldine residents fast, convenient access to EAMD services. Users will be able to view events and board meetings, report issues, apply for grants, receive push alerts, and explore an interactive East Aldine map. The flat development fee is \$47,500, with a low monthly support cost of \$250. “It improves engagement, transparency, and real-time communication,” Campos said.

Billboard Renewals and New Reach. The Board renewed the EAMD's existing Hwy. 59 billboard with Outfront Media (\$89,475.75) and approved a new billboard at Northbelt and Chaplin along Beltway 8 (\$75,000 per year) — placing the EAMD's message at the north entrance to East Aldine, near the incoming Starbucks location. Together, the two billboards extend the EAMD's visibility to residents and commuters moving through the area.

Spanish-Language Digital Campaign. The Board approved a \$15,000 campaign with Televisa/Univisión, targeting Hispanic adults 25 and older — including digitally active adults 65 and up — with 1.6 million digital impressions promoting EAMD programs, events, and resources. The campaign

is impact-driven rather than time-bound, running until the guaranteed impressions are reached. Additional campaigns may follow.

Houston Chronicle/Hearst Media Digital Package. The Board also approved up to \$10,000 for a digital advertising package with the Houston Chronicle and Hearst Media, reaching East Aldine residents through social media, news websites, and targeted email blasts to opt-in subscribers. Like the Televisa/Univisión campaign, each placement guarantees a set number of views or clicks, giving the EAMD reliable, measurable visibility for events and announcements.

Chairman Silva reflected on the EAMD's overall marketing strategy and what it is producing: “Those who attended our Zydeco event or other events — you could see that the word is starting to go out. We believe that a multi-pronged approach is typically best, if you can afford it, and thankfully, all these items are within our budget.”

Campos also highlighted two recent community events: a Spring Dance held at the Deputy Darren Almdarez Community Center, and the March 28 Eggstravaganza in partnership with BakerRipley and Texas Children's Health Plan — a community fair, 5K run, and 10,000 Easter eggs for children to find.

Looking ahead, the EAMD encouraged residents to attend Precinct 2's Reimagine Hopper Road Community Meeting on March 31, inviting residents to share input on improvements to one of East Aldine's key corridors.

Health, Education, and Community Engagement: CPR Classes, a Survey, and a Family Fun Day

EAMD Board Director Rocio Whitte provided updates from the Health, Education, and Community Engagement Committee, encouraging residents to check the Board book for upcoming partner events across East Aldine — including Lone Star College open house events and the Fit Houston walking group, which meets Saturdays at 7 a.m. (with a time change to 8 a.m. coming soon).

Free community CPR training with Harris County Emergency Corps continues, with another round of classes planned for May. Final dates are being confirmed and will be announced as they become available.

The committee is also planning an empowerment forum later this year and will survey members to finalize the format and focus. A youth field trip is in early planning stages as well.

On the topic of animal control, EAMD Board Vice Chairman Reyes García inquired about a possible partnership with Harris County to address stray animals across East Aldine. Cantú confirmed that the Director of Veterinary Public Health has already been conducting sweeps in targeted areas, including near Ladbroke Lane and at Town Center. “They are answering our call,” Cantú said, noting crews have been working to address the issue. A dedicated East Aldine facility remains a longer-term conversation.

The Board also approved up to \$8,000 to partner with Aldine ISD's Special Education Department for the second annual Family Fun Day at the Park, scheduled for Saturday, April 11, 2026, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. The event, designed for families of children with disabilities, is expected to welcome approximately 200 families. EAMD will provide food, with BakerRipley and The Arc of Harris County contributing activities and community resources.

Arts Council: A Restored Monument, an Art Car, a Gateway Almost Ready for Its Close-Up, and Color Coming to Town Center

EAMD Board Chairman Silva, who serves on the East Aldine Arts Council (EAAC), had a full slate of updates — all of them worth seeing in person.

The John F. Kennedy Monument at JFK Boulevard and Aldine Bender Road has been fully restored — cracks filled, pressure washed, rust-treated at the base, and given a fresh coat of paint. “The monument is looking great, ready to receive all of our guests and residents,” Silva said. The results of the work should hold for approximately four years.

The Gateway installation at Little York and the Eastex Freeway is nearing completion. “Within the next week or two, the project should be completed,” Silva said, “and we would be starting to set up the ribbon-cutting ceremony.” He encouraged residents to look for what has taken shape under the underpass, where painted columns now appear tiled. “That's really something to look forward to.”

On a more colorful note — literally — the EAMD is entering its first-ever Houston Art Car Parade, and it is doing it with student heart. The EAMD purchased a 2020 Nissan Kicks (a steal of a deal, according to Cantú) that will be transformed into a rolling work of art designed in collaboration with students from Avalos P-TECH School, whose mascot — the Phoenix — inspired the car's central imagery. Floral elements woven throughout the design reflect the students' creative vision.

The car will be number 75 in a parade featuring more than 250 entries. Before parade day, it will be brought to Avalos P-TECH, where students will physically work on the car alongside the artist to bring the design to life. The EAMD's logo — and potentially the 25th anniversary mark — will be featured prominently on the vehicle.

“Not only did they design it, but they're going to physically be working on the car to embellish it,” Cantú said. “We are really excited about that.”

Finally, the Town Center public art — in partnership with Color Condition — is taking shape with a newly refined vision. Following earlier feedback, the artist has incorporated sensory elements into the design, with each of the three pavilions featuring a distinct experience centered on sight, sound, and touch.

The bandstand's lintel will bear a bilingual welcome: Welcome and Bienvenidos. And a series of “swag lines” — decorative lines crisscrossing the first four lamp posts at each intersection in an X pattern — will be visible from the street, drawing visitors in. The installation is expected to be in place from late April through September.

“People will see that from the street, be drawn in,” Silva said. “Once they're here, they'll see the pavilions, and then of course the focal point of the bandstand. A lot of wonderful things are going on.”

What's Next

With a bond closing targeted for April 10, the Gateway ribbon-cutting in planning, Town Center Phase 3 nearly final, a new community app in development, and a new beautification committee in place, the EAMD's 25th anniversary year is shaping up to be something residents will see, feel, and use across East Aldine.

The next regular Board meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, April 28, 2026.

East Aldine Annual 2026 EGGSTRAVAGANZA



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