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# NORTHEAST NEWS

## East Aldine Gateway



The Decoration of the Underpass at Little York and US59 continues on the beams, columns, ceiling and icons.

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VOL. 50, NO. 18 TUESDAY, MAY 19, 2026 HOUSTON, TEXAS www.nenewsroom.com



Art Courtesy UpArt Studio

# EAST ALDINE DEDICATES GATEWAY PROJECT

By David Taylor  
Managing Editor

East Aldine leaders, residents and artists gathered Friday to dedicate a large-scale public art installation on the overpass at Little York Road and U.S. 59, celebrating what they called the first in a planned series of gateways meant to reflect the community's identity and pride.

Carlos Silva, chairman of the East Aldine Management District board, said the mural was designed to tell the story of the area. "There's a story to tell in East Aldine, and this gateway does its part to showcase that story to the world on literally a massive scale," Silva said. He described East Aldine as "a place that is full of culture and opportunities" and said officials wanted residents to "see a reflection back of positivity and vibrancy."

Resident Judy Rodriguez said the project shows "there is a desire to invest in my neighborhood" and praised the public input process that helped shape the design. She said the gateway "positively shows



Speakers, board members, and staff of EAMD pose in front of the bright, new Gateway project with its brilliant colors and icons.



Carlos Silva, chairman of the board for the East Aldine Management District, welcomes dignitaries and guests to the ribbon cutting on the just completed Gateway 1 project at the corner of Little York Road and U.S. 59 freeway.



Up Art Studios was contracted to paint the design selected by the community at a cost of close to \$1 million. Owners Elia and Noah Aquiles thanked the district for the opportunity to participate in the project.

images of our East Aldine community" and gives visitors "a lasting impression of what is great about East Aldine." Positioned at a key entrance, she said, the Little York gateway gives people entering the district "a burst of art and color."

Silva, who gave the keynote speech, praised shared values and vision with partners.

"Together, we can do work that is greater than the sum of its parts and deliver uplifting and beautifying projects in addition to all the other essential services that we must do. We look forward to partnering up with the precinct and other partners on future projects and gateways," he told the gathered crowd.

Elia and Noah Aquiles of Up Art Studio said the work was shaped by community conversations and built under demanding conditions. According to the artists, the project spans 70,000 square feet of surface, including four walls, 16 columns, eight icons and 96 hand-painted tiles, and required 1,500 gallons of mineral paint over 16 weeks on an active stretch of highway. "The

icons you see on these walls weren't chosen by us," Elia Aquiles said. "They came from you ... from this community telling us what East Aldine is." The job was dangerous and not easy for the Aquiles and Up Art artists.

"We worked on a live highway. There were tires flying off vehicles, headlights blowing past us at 70 miles per hour, and a lot of honking. Some of it wasn't support, and some of it, let's be honest, was frustration about the traffic that we were causing. We took all of it," Elia said. But a shift came once the artwork began to take shape. "Once the icons began appearing on the walls, that's when the honks turned into waves. Drivers rolled down their windows and by the end, people were stopping right in the middle of the road just to say thank you. That's when we knew that Gateway was already doing its job, before the last brushstroke was even dried," she said with satisfaction. Harris County

CONTINUED. See East Aldine District Gateway Project, Page 8

## Rep. Walle Celebrates Mother's Day at Aldine Community Centers



REP. WALLE CELEBRATES MOTHER'S DAY AT PEP MUELLER PARK, page 8

See More Mother's Day on Page 8

## TIRZ 11 Paves the Way for Smooth Transportation on Rankin Rd



NORTH HOUSTON - The North Houston Development Corp (TIRZ 11) is nearing completion on a major street project in the

North Houston District's northwest quadrant. Bart Baker, NHD Executive Vice President & Chief Operating Officer, recently shared

updates about the project. A major street rehabilitation

Continued. See RANKIN RD REHABILITATION PROJECT, page 5

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COMMUNITY WATCH

Buckle Up or Pay the Price

Click it or Ticket Increased Enforcement

HOUSTON – We are Texans. We wear our Lone Star belt buckles with pride, but it's the buckle in your car or truck that matters the most.

That's why the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) is working with law enforcement and encouraging people to drive like a Texan — kind, courteous and safe — and always buckle up.

Lives changed in seconds

Camron Murrell of College Station was just 19 years old when he was killed in a nighttime crash on a back road off Interstate 10 in Liberty County, Texas, in 2020.

Camron wasn't wearing a seat belt, and neither was his passenger. They died instantly.

"Every time he was in my car and wouldn't put his seat belt on, I would say 'buckle up!'" said Camron's mother, Priscilla Wolf. "And it may seem I was on him about it all the

time, but he still didn't listen."

Seat belts save lives, but only when worn

In 2025, 965 people who died in traffic crashes on Texas roads were not buckled up. While that was a 10% decline from the previous year, which had 1,072 unbuckled fatalities, more lives could have been saved.

"A seat belt can be the difference between walking away from a crash and never making it home, but only if you're wearing it," TxDOT Executive Director Marc Williams said. "Whether you're going just a few blocks or many miles, buckle your seat belt every time, day and night."

Increased enforcement across Texas

Studies show 1 in 10 Texans do not take the simple step of buckling up — that's more than 3 million people. Law enforcement will be increasing patrols for two weeks starting May 18, watching out for people not wearing their seat belt.

Texas law requires all drivers and passengers to buckle up or

face fines and court costs up to \$200. Children younger than 8-years-old must be in a child car seat or booster seat unless they're taller than 4 feet 9 inches. If they aren't properly secured, the driver faces fines up to \$250 plus court costs.

A campaign proven to save lives

Click It or Ticket is one of the most effective traffic safety initiatives in history. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration estimates the Texas campaign has saved more than 8,600 lives, prevented 157,000 serious injuries and resulted in \$35 billion in economic savings since its launch in 2002.

The Click It or Ticket campaign is an important part of TxDOT's Drive Like a Texan: Kind. Courteous. Safe. initiative. Drive like a Texan is about embracing the pride, camaraderie and responsibility of being a Texan on the road. By making thoughtful choices, we can all help keep each other safe. Learn more at DriveLikeATexas.com.

Texas Leads in Immigration Detention as Crossings plummet

By Gary Borders,

Texas continues to lead the country in the number of people held in detention centers, even as unauthorized border crossings plunge, the Houston Chronicle reported.

As of early April, the daily average in Texas was nearly 18,000 people. That's more than twice the average number of immigrants held in Louisiana, the second highest, with about 8,100 per day. Texas' high numbers are partly due to the state's numerous detention centers and a ruling from the 5th Circuit Court of Appeals that upheld the practice of holding immigrants until their removal proceedings conclude.

"The 5th Circuit is not immigrant-friendly, and



it's easier to remove people who are detained in the Texas facilities," said Zenobia Lai, executive director of the Houston Immigration Legal Services Collaborative.

A spokesperson for the Department of Homeland Security said decisions on where detainees are held are made on a "case-by-case basis in accordance with U.S. law."

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HIGH MEADOWS LIBRARY NEWS

CLASE DE INGLÉS (INTRODUCCIÓN A ESL) | ENGLISH CLASS (ESL INTRODUCTION)

Wednesday, May 20, 11:30am-12:30pm

Description Please join us for an English introduction class every Wednesday!

This class is designed for students who are interested in learning and/or practicing speaking, listening, writing, and reading skills in English. Classes are free, and all materials are provided

¡Por favor, únase a nosotros para una clase de introducción Inglés todos los Miércoles!

Esta clase está diseñada para los estudiantes que están interesados en aprender y/o practicar hablar, escuchar, escribir y leer en Inglés. Las clases son gratuitas y se proporcionan todos los materiales

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

Wednesday, May 20, 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.

TOON CAFÉ

Wednesday, May 20, 3:00pm-5:00pm

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!

THE MAGIC OF COLOR: WATERCOLOR PAINTING FOR ADULTS

Wednesday, May 20, 5:30pm-7:00pm

Description De-stress, unwind, and enjoy the almost-magical calm that comes from painting with watercolors.

Each week features a different theme — we'll have some inspiration and supplies ready for you! But feel free to create something else if you'd like.

Want pointers on painting techniques? We'll do our best to help! But please keep in mind that this is not an art class — it's a chance to be creative and relax while enjoying each other's company in an encouraging environment.

See the colors flow from your imagination to the paper and let your worries drift away for a while.

This program is for adults 18+.

TEEN LOUNGE

Thursday, May 21, 3:00pm-5:00pm

Description Calling all teens and

tweens! This is your space to relax and unwind. Draw and color, play some games, do a craft, or hang out with your friends—the possibilities are endless! No registration is required. This event is open to ages 12 to 18.

TOON CAFÉ

Friday, May 22, 3:00pm-5:00pm

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!

ESL LEVEL 1

Saturday, May 23, 11:00am-12:30pm

Description Please join us for an English introduction class every Saturday!

This class is designed for students who are interested in learning and/or practicing speaking, listening, writing, and reading skills in English. Classes are free, and all materials are provided

¡Por favor, únase a nosotros para una clase de introducción Inglés todos los sábados!

Esta clase está diseñada para los estudiantes que están interesados en aprender y/o practicar hablar, escuchar, escribir y leer en Inglés. Las clases son gratuitas y se proporcionan todos los materiales

AIRLINE LIBRARY NEWS

ESL 2 (ADVANCE BEGINNER)

Tuesday, May 19, 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.

ESL 1

Wednesday, May 20, 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.

FUTURE U! REVISE

YOUR RESUME

Wednesday, May 20, 2:00pm-3:00pm

Description Ready to Enhance your Resume? and Cover Letter? Take your resume and cover letter to the next level with a Future U advisor who can help you with great insight on how to attract top-notch employers and get their attention. Get great tips on crafting your resume and cover letter to be tailor-made with your skills, qualifications, and experiences. Have one on one talks with Future U advisor about today's job market and how to prepare and what to look for.

BILINGUAL STORY TIME - ENGLISH AND SPANISH

Tuesday, May 26, 11:00am-12:00pm

Description You're invited to attend Story Time every Tuesday at 11 am.

Story Time is a great way for children to build early literacy skills with stories, rhymes and songs. Parents are encouraged to participate by sitting with children and singing (and learning!) new songs. Last half hour is craft time!

Children of all ages are welcome.

EXCITING FLAVORS!

Tuesday, May 26, 5:00pm-6:00pm

Description Want to taste something new? Join us for Exciting Flavors! A new program

where we make and/or taste new recipes.

We will be tasting snacks to celebrate Asian Pacific American Heritage Month.

See you there.

CLASES DE COMPUTACIÓN EN ESPAÑOL PARA PRINCIPIANTES

Tuesday, May 26, 6:00pm-7:00pm

Description Clases de Computación en Español para Principiantes:

Únase a nosotros en nuestras clases de computación en español de 8 semanas.

Todos los martes del 26 de mayo al 14 de julio.

Horario: 6-7 pm. 26 de mayo 9 de junio 16 de junio 23 de junio 30 de junio 7 de julio 14 de julio

Requisitos: El programa es solo para adultos.

No se requiere registro. Sin embargo, el espacio es muy limitado. El espacio se ofrece hasta que se alcance la capacidad.

La clase se realizará únicamente en español.

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

## SCHOOL NEWS PAGE

# More Students Stay on Track as Aldine ISD Expands Dropout Prevention Supports



Aldine ISD's dropout prevention supports are helping students like Lizeth Flores (in white) from Hall Success Academy stay on track to graduate from high school. Lizeth poses with her AISD support team comprised of (l-r) Bianca Honore, Victory Early College High School academic counselor; Phillip Kent, virtual school social studies teacher; Shanaya Anderson, Aldine ISD director of online learning; and LaShunda Brown, virtual school ELA teacher (in red).

By Leticia Fehling

Districtwide monitoring, early interventions, recovery efforts, and flexible learning options help more students stay connected to school.

Kevin had stopped coming to school. Balancing work, family, and home, Kevin, a fifth-year senior, struggled with traditional school hours, making graduation unlikely.

But Aldine ISD staff did not stop looking for a way to help him finish. Denisha Brown, student support specialist at Eisenhower High School, reached out to Kevin and shared a new opportunity Aldine ISD had created for students who needed a more flexible path to complete their graduation requirements and earn a high school diploma.

"The first thing Kevin said was, 'Ms. Brown I work during the day, so I can't come in person,'" Brown said.

Brown explained that the district had recently implemented a night school option designed specifically for students like him — students who were still determined to graduate but needed a different schedule to make it possible.

Once Kevin learned he could continue working during the day while attending school in the evening, Brown said he became excited and hopeful about the possibility of finally graduating.

For Kevin, night school was not a second shift. It was a second chance. From that point forward, Kevin demonstrated determination and commitment. Despite working during the day, he attended night classes, stayed focused on his coursework, and remained enthusiastic. Earning his diploma mattered not only for his future but also to be a positive role model for his siblings, showing them the importance of perseverance and education.

On May 29, 2025, Kevin walked the stage at the M.O. Campbell Educational Center and received his diploma. Family members cheered as the moment celebrated his dedication and determination.

For Aldine ISD, Kevin's story reflects the purpose behind the district's ongoing dropout prevention work: keeping students connected to school, supporting them through challenges, and helping them graduate with more choices and opportunities for the future.

## Progress Through Persistence

The most recent reported data show encouraging progress. Aldine ISD's four-year longitudinal dropout rate for the Class of 2024 was 11%, down from 16% for the Class of 2023. The Class of 2025 data will be released June 24, 2026, and district leaders believe the continued implementation of student supports will help sustain the progress.

"A high school diploma opens up the door to completely change the path of choices and opportunities," said Diaka R. Melendez, Aldine ISD chief of school improvement and student support services.

Nearly three years ago, Aldine ISD began implementing more consistent district-wide procedures and guidelines to monitor students from the time they enroll through any withdrawal process. The goal is to better understand where students are, why they may be disengaging, and what support may help them return to school or stay on track.

## Finding Students Before They Fall Too Far Behind

When students reach certain attendance thresholds, campus and district staff respond. Aldine ISD issues early warnings when students reach a third absence and requires attendance contracts after a ninth absence. When students or families share that they are experiencing difficulties, staff connect them with counselors, support services, and other resources.

The district also uses dropout recovery specialists, who visit homes and work directly with campuses to reconnect students to school.

"All of our high schools have made a serious effort not only to maintain the cohort of students who enter each year, but also to locate students who are missing and those who may have stopped attending school," Melendez said. "Our student support specialists — certified counselors — work closely with our seniors and students at risk of dropping out."

Those efforts are supported by campus administrators, counselors, student support specialists, dropout recovery staff, teachers, and district leaders who work together to identify barriers and help students find a path forward.

## A Flexible Path Back to Graduation



Student Jennifer Bonilla has something to smile about after earning the credits she needed to graduate.

participated. In spring 2025, 25 students enrolled in night school and 23 graduated, for a 92% completion rate. In spring 2026, 21 students are participating, and all 21 are currently on track to graduate, representing a projected 100% success rate for that group.

Dr. Shanaya Anderson, Aldine ISD director of online learning, said the program reflects the district's commitment to providing flexible learning opportunities and targeted support for students who may be at risk of falling behind.

"Online Learning provides a flexible and accessible pathway for students to recover credits, remain connected to school, and continue progressing toward graduation," Anderson said. "The model allows students to receive support in a setting that meets their needs while maintaining high expectations for learning and completion."

Anderson said the teachers selected for the program bring strong content knowledge, specialized training in intervention strategies, and experience supporting students who may need additional support to stay engaged.

"Through personalized support and meaningful connections, these educators help students build confidence, stay engaged in their coursework, and believe in their ability to graduate successfully," Anderson said.



Student Gabriel Vásquez holds his certificate indicating he has earned his credits to graduate from high school.

The approach reflects a simple but important belief: students are more likely to graduate when the district stays connected to them and responds to their needs.

"Being present is the single most important factor," Melendez said. "If you are there, we will do everything in our power to get you graduated."

## Why a Diploma Still Matters

The stakes are high. In today's workforce, a high school diploma remains a critical gateway to employment, further education, military service, training programs, and long-term economic opportunity. Students who leave school without a diploma often face fewer choices and more limited opportunities.

"Gone are the days when a diploma wasn't needed to secure a job," Melendez said.

For the broader Aldine ISD community, a lower dropout rate has implications beyond the classroom. More graduates mean more students prepared to enter college, career, or the workforce, strengthening families and supporting long-term community outcomes.

Melendez said the impact is generational.

"It helps build a stronger community where education is valued and opportunity is within reach," she said. "When students earn their diploma, they are not limited by the absence of one. They have more choices for their future, and they can help create a culture of education for the next generation."

## Connected to the District's Vision



Student Jessica López proudly holds her certificate, earning her spot to walk with her class to receive her high school diploma.

The work also aligns with Aldine ISD's Accelerate strategic plan, which states that all Aldine ISD students will receive a dynamic and unparalleled education that guarantees choices and opportunities today and in the future. The district's mission is to provide a rigorous and enriching educational experience that prepares every student for success in college, career, and life.

Keeping students enrolled and on track to graduation directly supports that vision.

While the district has made progress, challenges remain. Melendez noted that Aldine ISD must continue to monitor the broader climate in Texas and its potential impact on families' decisions and students' ability to stay connected to school.

Still, Aldine ISD's approach remains focused on presence, persistence, and support.

The message to students is clear: If you are here, Aldine ISD will work with you. If you have stepped away, the district wants to help you find your way back. And if you are facing barriers, there are people ready to help you keep moving toward graduation.

Because in Aldine ISD, a diploma is more than a finish line. It is a doorway to choices, opportunities, and a future with more possibilities.

That is an Aldine Story worth telling.

# Aldine ISD Robotics Team 8818 Advances to Texas District Championship



By John Hickman

FRC Team 8818, known as The 44 Engineering Robotics Group, proudly represented Aldine ISD during the 2026 FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology) Robotics Competition season, advancing to the Texas District Championship and earning multiple awards.

Coached by Dr. Don Prier, Dr. Monikka Mann, Tim Lewis, and Chris Junious, Team 8818 consists of students from Carver High School and Dwight D. Eisenhower High School, part of the FIRST in Texas District.

Founded in 2022, the program has grown into a competitive, student-centered robotics team focused on hands-on STEM learning, leadership and teamwork.

During the 2026 season, Team 8818 competed among 181 teams across the FIRST in Texas District. Only 90 teams advanced to the District Championship, placing the Aldine ISD students among the top-performing robotics programs in the state.

Throughout the season, students applied engineering, programming, fabrication and strategic problem-solving skills while navigating the full

engineering design process. Team members analyzed the annual game challenge, designed and tested prototypes, built and wired an industrial-sized robot, programmed robot functions and competed in alliance-based matches against teams from across Texas.

Team 8818 kicked off the season at the FIRST in Texas District McAllen Event, held March 12-14 at the McAllen Convention Center. Following qualification matches, the team ranked 14th overall and was selected as the second pick for Alliance 2 during the playoff selections. Despite a demanding season filled with obstacles and adjustments, students embraced the challenge with determination and resilience.

"This robotics season was one of the most challenging but rewarding experiences I've ever had," said Alejandro Santana, the 2026-2027 Carver student president of The 44. "It pushed us way beyond what we thought we were capable of and showed how much teamwork, trust and determination really matter. I learned how to adapt when things changed suddenly and how to keep moving forward even when our plans didn't work out. From long build sessions and late nights fixing code

to stressful competitions, we made memories I'll always remember and learned lessons that will help us in the future."

The Aldine ISD students advanced through the playoff rounds and reached the finals, earning District Event Finalist honors. The team also received the Industrial Design Award and a Safety Award for professionalism and safe work practices throughout the competition.

The Industrial Design Award recognizes excellence in robot design, functionality and engineering execution. For Team 8818, the recognition reflected months of work in mechanical design, systems integration, fabrication, programming, testing and iterative problem-solving.

The team concluded its season at the Texas District Championship — Apollo Division — held April 15-18 in Houston. Competing against some of the top robotics programs in Texas, Team 8818 finished ranked 39th in the Apollo Division.

As the program continues to grow, Team 8818's success highlights Aldine ISD students' commitment to innovation, perseverance and excellence in STEM education.

OPINION PAGE

**OPINION**  
By **BILL KING**




**THE POSTSCRIPT**  
By **Carrie Classon**

Sharon's Book Club



I was never a part of any team.

I was terrible at sports. I was so bad at tennis in high school that my gym teacher sent me to the school nurse to have my vision checked. I didn't bother to tell her I was wearing contact lenses.

In elementary school, I was never asked to jump rope. Jumping rope was popular when I was in elementary school, and I was not. I watched the girls jump and knew two things: I would never be asked, and I would be terrible at jumping rope if I were asked.

Instead, I read. Books were my escape and my friends. But I never thought of writing a novel until I was almost 60.

"Would you like to come to my book club?" a woman I had never met, named Sharon, asked me in January.

"Loon Point" had not yet been released. I was a bundle of nerves. And here was this stranger who read an article about me in her local paper, asking if I would come and talk about my book.

"Of course!" I said.

The weeks passed. I hoped "Loon Point" wouldn't disappoint my publisher. I hoped people wouldn't write terrible things about it in their reviews. I knew that getting a first book into the world is hard. But a lot of people read "Loon Point." I gave my husband, Peter, the job of looking at the sales numbers that my publisher seemed determined to provide (even if it might have been better for my mental health not to have quite so much information). Peter told me that my little book was doing surprisingly well.

So the night of Sharon's book club came, and she contacted me to make sure I had not forgotten. I had not. I would not have missed Sharon's book club for the world.

When I drove up to Sharon's house in suburbia, I saw there were a lot of cars already parked outside, and a few more people walking down the street, headed to her house carrying book bags, and I realized all these folks had come to Sharon's house to hear about my book.

Sharon had made name tags because, as it turned out, this was not really an established book club after all. Sharon had just moved into her new house a year ago. She had invited friends from her old home and neighbors from her new home, and Denise, a friend she'd had since third grade. Many of these women were just meeting for the first time. Sharon just wanted everyone to have a chance to meet this local author she had hunted up and ask questions.

And everyone had questions about the book. They asked about how I wrote it, and they told me about the people in their lives who reminded them of the character Wendell. We talked about the first books we remembered reading as kids and what we were reading now. Everyone seemed to enjoy "Loon Point," whether they had read it on a Kindle or on paper or listened to the audiobook. I don't know when I have had so much fun.

Two hours flew by and, as I left, Sharon gave me a card and some beautiful pink flowers. I didn't read the card until I got home.

"We look forward to following your career!" the card said. It was signed, "Your Home Team."

I'd never had a team before. I put the flowers on my desk and thought how grateful I was to have been invited to Sharon's book club.

Till next time,  
Carrie

**STATE CAPITAL HIGHLIGHTS**  
By **Gary Borders**



Top Lawmakers Back Lifting Camp Safety Law

Top Texas legislators are pushing to waive a new state law that requires camps to install broadband fiber optics in order to legally operate this summer, The Dallas Morning News reported. Scores of camps are struggling to meet the deadline. Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick and House Speaker Dustin Burrows released a statement last week saying they support lifting the law.

Nearly 20 camps have sued to block the law requiring them to install a fiber-optic network, arguing that it does not make their properties safer and would cost millions of dollars. So far only nine Texas summer camps are licensed to open, with fewer than two weeks before the season begins. Nearly 300 are still working to obtain licenses. The Department of State Health Services said last week that camps will be allowed to operate under existing licenses while their applications are reviewed.

The laws were passed in the aftermath of last year's July 4 flooding, which killed more than two dozen campers at Camp Mystic along the Guadalupe River. In addition to fiber optic networks, camps must install emergency warning and public address systems and provide safety training for campers.

**PATRICK BACKS MIDDLETON IN ATTORNEY GENERAL RUNOFF**

Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick is backing state Sen. Mayes Middleton, R-Galveston, in the GOP runoff for Texas attorney general on May 26. Early voting runs from May 18 to May 22. In the runoff, Middleton faces U.S. Rep. Chip Roy, R-Austin.

"Mayes Middleton has established a record as one of the most conservative senators in Texas history," Patrick said on social media.

The News quoted Patrick as saying Middleton will make the post "the strongest and most impactful AG office in the nation."

Democrats Joe Jaworski, a former Galveston mayor, and state Sen. Nathan Johnson, D-Dal-



las, are in a runoff for their party's attorney general nomination. Incumbent Ken Paxton opted not to run and is locked in a primary runoff with incumbent U.S. Sen. John Cornyn.

**Cornyn, Paxton in tight runoff race**

Paxton is locked in a tight race against incumbent U.S. Sen. John Cornyn for the GOP nomination, the Texas Standard reported. The Hobby School of Public Affairs at the University of Houston recently conducted a poll that showed Paxton leading Cornyn, 48% to 45% with 7% still undecided.

The poll of those indicating they were likely to vote in the GOP runoff had a 2.83% margin of error.

In the first quarter of this year, Cornyn raised nearly \$9 million, including \$3.4 million after the March primary. Paxton raised \$2.2 million. Democratic nominee state Rep. James Talarico, D-Round Rock, raised a record \$27 million in the first quarter, the largest-ever sum for a Senate candidate in the first quarter of an election year in any state.

**TEXAS HAS BIGGEST TEACHER WORKFORCE, BUT THEY GET PAID LESS**

Texas has the country's largest teacher workforce but lags behind the national average in teacher pay and per-student spending, according to a report in the Austin American-Statesman.

A National Education Association report said teacher pay in Texas is about \$10,700 below the U.S. average. Texas public school teachers earned an average of \$63,749 in 2024-2025, which put it

33rd among states and Washington, D.C. The national average was \$74,495.

Texas had nearly 370,000 public school teachers in 2024-2025, the highest number in the country.

**SMOKABLE HEMP AGAIN PULLED FROM TEXAS SHELVES**

Smokable hemp products such as flower buds and rolled joints must again be pulled from store shelves as the state appeals the latest court ruling, according to The Texas Tribune. The ban was set to take effect on March 31, but lawyers for the hemp industry filed suit challenging the plan. A Travis County district judge temporarily halted imposition of the ban, but with the 15th Texas Court of Appeals agreeing to hear the state's appeal of the lower court ruling, the ban is now back in effect.

"We are confident that the 15th Court of Appeals will reinstate our temporary injunction so that our vets, elderly, and adult consumers have reasonable access to these products," said David Sergi, an attorney for the hemp industry.

Hemp retailers have said their businesses have lost over half their revenue since imposition of the new rules, which also include much steeper licensing fees.

**TEXAS MOST AT-RISK STATE FOR HAIL DAMAGE**

Everything is bigger in Texas, including the hail, according to Cotality's 2026 Severe Convective Storm Risk Report, published in the Statesman. The state ranks as the most at-risk for hail damage, with 8 million homes exposed and a combined reconstruction value exceeding \$3.1 trillion.

Four Texas cities rank among the top 10 for homes at greater risk of hail damage. Dallas ranks second nationally, behind Chicago, followed by Houston in third, Austin in ninth, and San Antonio in tenth.

"Although most hailstones are typically pea- or dime-size, hail can grow to as large as golf balls and baseballs. In extreme cases, hail can reach the size of a softball, grapefruit or even a pineapple," Statesman meteorologist Mary Wasson wrote.

A pineapple?

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: gbborders@texaspress.com.

New FEMA Flood Maps for Harris County

Update!

New FEMA Flood Maps for Harris County

This week, FEMA issued updated flood maps for Harris County. This is the first update to the maps since 2007. The maps are currently proposed and subject to public comment. However, it is widely expected that they will soon be adopted largely in the proposed form.

These revisions are hugely consequential for Harris County. Their adoption will mean that thousands of acres of land will now be subject to more restrictive flood regulations. Thousands more will be subject to regulation for the first time.

The proposed FEMA maps can be found [here](#) (Click on Draft Database for Community Review and then zoom in to Harris County). The Houston Chronicle has also published an excellent map showing the changes in the flood map from the 2007 maps. Unfortunately, it is currently behind their paywall, so only subscribers can view it. However, the Harris County Flood Control District has also just put up a new map that shows the changes in very high resolution and is the most user-friendly of the three. On the HCTRA map, changes can be compared by clicking the "Manage Change Comparison" button in the upper-left corner of the map, then using the sliding bar to view the changes.

The maps designate areas within the 100- and 500-year floodplains — that is, those properties that have a 1% and a 0.2% of flooding in any given year. When you are looking at the FEMA maps, the 100-year floodplain is designated as "AE."

The changes primarily reflect updated rainfall projections for southeast Texas adopted by NOAA in 2018 — widely known as "Atlas 14." These models predict about a 25%-30% increase in rainfall in our region.

The new maps also reflect changes to the physical watershed, such as additional runoff from paved areas and improvements such as detention facilities. One silver lining of the new maps is that some areas have been removed from the floodplains due to the massive drainage projects completed in those watersheds. These included significant areas near Braes, Sims, Hunting, and White Oak. A particularly dramatic example of this is along Hunting Bayou near the NE corner of Loop 610, where hundreds of homes and businesses have been removed from the floodplain altogether. This includes virtually all of the Settegast neighborhood.

There are two immediate consequences of these changes. First, in nearly all cases, flood insurance will be required to obtain a mortgage on any property that has been moved into a 100-year flood plain. Second, any property moved into a 500-year floodplain will be subject to the regulations adopted by Harris County and the City of Houston after Hurricane Harvey. Generally speaking, these regulations require that any structure in a 500-year floodplain be raised to two feet above what is referred to as the "base flood elevation." The base flood elevation must be calculated for each property.

While the new flood maps will mean that fewer homes and businesses will flood in future storms, they will also make it dramatically more expensive and difficult to build in Harris County. They will likely make it impractical to build in much of the County. That will, of course, encourage more development outside the County. In a perverse irony, much of the development will be shifted to Montgomery County, where the FEMA maps have not been updated. But of course, drainage from developments in Montgomery County mostly flows downstream into Harris County — once again making the case for a regional flood control authority.

The maps will also cause additional brand damage to the Houston region. They will once again remind individuals and companies considering relocating here of our region's vulnerability to flooding.

The new maps also underscore the importance of the Harris County Flood Control Authority's timely completion of the 2018 bond program. The completion of those projects could serve as the basis for removing large tracts from the floodplains. The reductions in the floodplain along several of our watersheds show these projects can make a difference.

Building a giant metropolis on a flat coastal plain, subject to frequent hurricanes, reminds me of Robert Burns' line in 'To a Mouse, "the best laid schemes of mice and men gang aft agley (often go astray)."

Yet perhaps we need to think about our excess rainfall differently and not purely as a liability. In a nation increasingly concerned about freshwater scarcity, Houston's hydrologic surplus could be a long-term strategic asset. Each inch of rain across Harris County represents roughly 29 billion gallons of freshwater. The challenge is not how to make it disappear faster, but how to capture, store, and recharge more of it. With smarter regional detention, aquifer recharge strategies, and reservoir management, Houston could convert its principal liability into a strategic asset, indeed, perhaps an entirely new industry.

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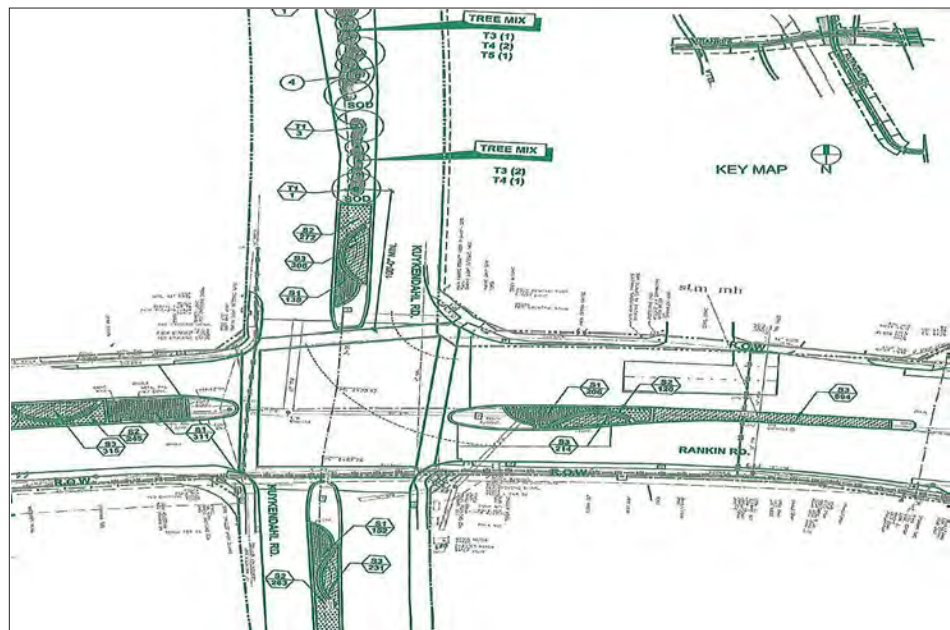
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# Rankin Rd. rehabilitation project nears completion,

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1



tation project is in progress on Rankin Road, where the N. Houston Development Corp (TIRZ 11) is replacing the concrete panels in lanes going both directions on the stretch of Rankin extending West of I-45 to Ella Blvd.

The scope of the project also includes enhanced intersections and pedestrian crosswalks with colored stamped concrete clearly delineating the crosswalk and contributing to an improved aesthetic.

"This project will address the quality of roadways in the area, and improve transportation on Rankin Road," said Sally Bradford, Executive Director of TIRZ 11.

The \$5 million project is funded entirely by N. Houston Development Corp, and the North Houston District will partner on maintenance and upkeep over time. Construction began this past January and is anticipated to conclude by late July or early August 2026. MC2 Civil, LLC is the contractor completing the work.

"We appreciate TIRZ 11 taking on major infrastruc-

ture projects in the area, and being a crucial partner in improving the North Houston District," Bart Baker, NHD Executive Vice President & Chief Operating Officer, explained.

### Upgrading Key Corridors

The street rehabilitation project dovetails with other TIRZ work in the area, including completed projects on Greens Parkway, Airline Drive corridor, and another upcoming on Greens Road. An NHD-commissioned traffic study will conclude in Oct. 2026, and data collected will be shared with TIRZ 11 to help inform planned projects in the area.

"This is a major corridor in the District. Rankin Road has seen a lot of new commercial development and growth, and also provides access to North Houston Skate and Bike Parks. So these improvements are very timely for the area," Baker shared.

He added that TIRZ can often move quickly to address the specific needs of the area and include additional aspects to enhance the project, like landscaping and artistic embellish-

ments.

"This project will address the quality of roadways in the area, and improve transportation on Rankin Road," said Sally Bradford, Executive Director of TIRZ 11.

Landscaping Contributes to Aesthetic Improvements

New landscaping will be installed within the medians of Rankin as part of this project, in line with the work that the TIRZ and North Houston District have already done elsewhere in the area. For example, elements used will complement the aesthetic established by the District's Gateway Improvement Program and the TIRZ's Greens Road project.

Landscaping will also extend down Kuykendahl, in front of the North Houston Skate Park and North Houston Bike Park. TIRZ 11 will enhance this boulevard with pavers installed on the tips of the medians heading south on Kuykendahl from Rankin to Rush Creek. This will complement the landscaping that TIRZ already completed on Kuykendahl as it approaches the I-45 feeder.

# 2nd Annual Lone Star College System Step Show Brings High-Energy Entertainment



Zeta Phi Beta-Lambda Eta chapter from Sam Houston State University was the winning sorority at Lone Star College System's second annual Step Up and Show Out: A Divine 9 (D9) Step Show on April 10.

HOUSTON (April 29, 2026) – In its second year, Lone Star College System's Step Up and Show Out: A Divine Nine (D9) Step Show has become a highly anticipated community event featuring local talent.

Nearly 2,500 attendees enjoyed the synchronized stepping traditions of the Divine 9, a group of historically Black fraternities and sororities. The program celebrated the organizations' rich histories and cultures to inspire future generations. The event also showcased performances by Kappa Kappa Psi, a college band fraternity, as well as step teams from local high schools.

Kappa Kappa Psi-Gamma Omega chapter from Texas Southern University and Zeta Phi Beta-Lambda Eta chapter from Sam Houston State University were this year's winning fraternity and sorority, respectively.

"The thing that I enjoyed the most about the show was the sense of com-

munity shared between the Lone Star College System community, our university and school district partners, and our community at large," said Sheldon Moss, Ed.D., LSC-Houston North vice president, Student Success, and a member of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity. "It warmed my heart to see individuals of all ages, both young and old, come out and truly enjoy themselves at this family-friendly event."

High school step teams from Conroe, Humble and Cy-Fair ISDs also showcased their stepping skills,

and local elementary school students from YES Prep Public Schools enjoyed their first step show experience.

"We're very proud of what we've been able to accomplish with our step show and the tradition we've set for years to come," Moss said.

Lone Star College System offers a robust Student Life experience at all eight main locations, including student activities, club sports, and fine and performing arts. Learn more at [LoneStar.edu/Student-Life](http://LoneStar.edu/Student-Life).



Kappa Kappa Psi-Gamma Omega chapter from Texas Southern University was the winning fraternity at Lone Star College System's second annual Step Up and Show Out: A Divine 9 (D9) Step Show on April 10.

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# CHURCH PAGE

## BIBLE WORD SEARCH

by Elie's Spiritual Treasures

Psalm 41:11-13

I **know** that **you** are **pleased** with me, **for** my **enemy** does not **triumph over** me. **Because** of my **integrity** you **uphold** me and **set** in **your** presence forever. **Praise** be to the **Lord**, the **God** of **Israel**, from everlasting to everlasting. **Amen** and **Amen**.

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 J I Y L T Y F O R B

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

WWW.SEARCHING-FOR-JESUS.COM

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## THE ILLUSTRATED BIBLE

"I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys."  
 "Like a lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters."  
 "Like an apple tree among the trees of the woods, so is my beloved among the sons."  
 SONG OF SOLOMON 2:1-3  
 Detail of "Rosette in Notre Dame" by T.E. Simon (1877-1942)

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## BIBLE TRIVIA

By Wilson Casey

1. Is the book of 2 Timothy (KJV) in the Old or New Testament or neither?
2. From Ruth 1, who called herself Marah, a name meaning "bitter"? Priscilla, Miriam, Naomi, Deborah
3. What did Malachi say the people of Judah were stealing from God? Servants, Unrighteous miracles, Holy Grail, Owed tithes
4. Which was a city of Ephraim and home of the Ark of the Covenant? Ai, Sardis, Gaza, Shiloh
5. What Old Testament word means "anointed"? Bishop, Messiah, Jehovah, Salvation
6. Ahasuerus was also known as ... Noadiah, Agrippa, Joash, Xerxes

ANSWERS: 1) New, 2) Naomi, 3) Owed tithes, 4) Shiloh, 5) Messiah, 6) Xerxes  
 Find expanded trivia online with Wilson Casey at www.patreon.com/triviaguy. FREE TRIAL

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 Answers

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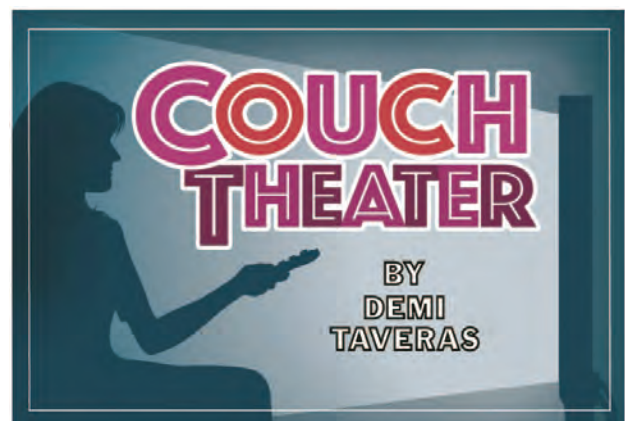
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action/comedy film is led by Bob Odenkirk ("Better Call Saul")...



Bob Odenkirk star in "Normal."

"Normal"

"Project Hail Mary" (PG-13) — This sci-fi film starring Ryan Gosling ("The Actor")...

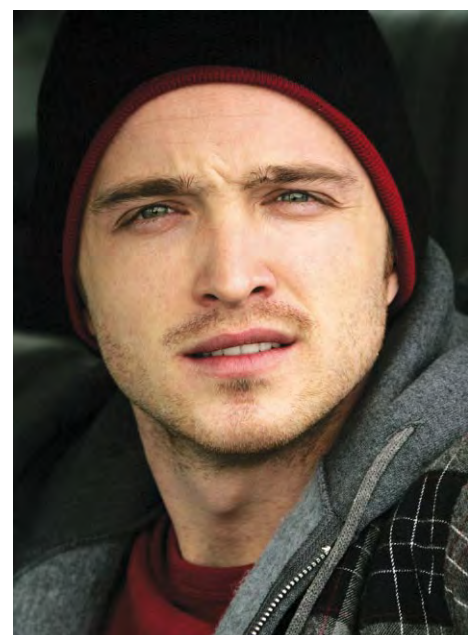
"Ladies First" (R) — Inspired by the French film "I Am Not an Easy Man,"...

"In the City" (TV-MA) — The spin-off of the Bravo reality series "Summer House"...



Q: Is there any chance that there'll ever be a continuation of the show "Breaking Bad" with the character Jesse Pinkman? — M.G.

A: Never say never, but the answer for now is "no." Despite Aaron Paul's fondness for the character of Jesse...



Aaron Paul as Jesse Pinkman in "Breaking Bad"

Q: Wasn't there a TV show from years ago where the lead guy from "Sons of Anarchy" played a college student? I never did watch it but would like to find it on streaming. — T.J.

A: Before Charlie Hunnam bulked up to play a motorcycle gang member in the FX series "Sons of Anarchy,"...

Q: Is cat expert Jackson Galaxy still making new episodes of his show for Animal Planet? I need help with my temperamental feline and would like to apply to be on the show. — Y.C.

A: No, Jackson Galaxy's show "My Cat from Hell" ended its regular run on Animal Planet in 2020 after 11 seasons.

You can also read his helpful book "Total Cat Mojo: The Ultimate Guide to Life with Your Cat" and check out his website, JacksonGalaxy.com.

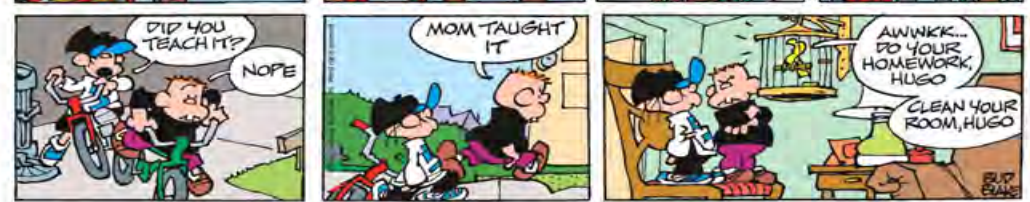
Apatow is credited with introducing audiences to future stars like Hunnam, Seth Rogen ("The Studio"), Jason Segel ("Shrinking"), and Linda Cardellini ("DTF St. Louis").

You can stream "Undeclared" on Netflix. Be sure to keep an eye out for appearances by Apatow's buddies Adam Sandler, Will Ferrell and Amy Poehler.

Send me your questions at NewCelebrityExtra@gmail.com. (c) 2026 King Features Synd., Inc.

ENTERTAINMENT

Amber Waves



Weekly SUDOKU grid and instructions

HOCUS-FOCUS comic strip by Henry Boltinoff

May 18, 2026 Posting Date King Crossword

Crossword grid with clues

- ACROSS 1 Detox center, 6 Gives up, 12 Swiss metropolis, 13 Unexpected, 14 Ingratiate, 15 Stahl of "60 Minutes", 16 Disposition, 17 "La — Bonita", 19 Casual shirt, 20 Third son, 22 Capote nickname, 24 Canine greeting, 27 Furnace fuel, 29 Branches, 32 President of South Africa, 1994-1999, 35 Pronto, 36 Monumental, 37 Half dozen, 38 Fannie —, 40 Former Laker Lamar, 42 Sashimi fish, 44 Neatnik's nightmare, 46 Jazzy James, 50 Legislative group, 52 Camelot king, 54 Aerie newborn, 55 Organize an art show, 9 Birds of prey, 10 Duel tool, 11 Ocular woe, 12 Tiara jewel, 18 Rug cleaner, 21 — friendly, 23 "Awesome, dude!", 24 Navarro of "The View", 25 Scale members, 26 Pink wading bird, 28 Relaxed, 30 Roman 1051, 31 Coltrane's instrument, 33 Aromatherapy spot, 34 Sgt., e.g., 39 Lauder of cosmetics, 41 Paris subway, 42 Cruising, 43 Lettuce unit, 45 Reply to "Shall we?", 47 Spring melt-down, 48 Mild rebukes, 49 "How — you?", 51 Cleric's tunic, 53 Scamper

Trivia test by Fifi Rodriguez

Answers to Trivia test

# Rep. Walle celebrates mother's day at Pep Mueller Park,

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

EAST ALDINE – In a beautiful day, Rep. Armando Walle celebrated Mother's Day at Pep Mueller Park, surrounded by the sweet moms of House District 140.

"We provided every mother a flower as a demonstration of our love," Walle said, as families gathered in the warm sunshine. The gentle breeze carried laughter through Pilgrim Place I, where Walle joined in fellowship with attendees.

"I was glad to visit," he added, watching children embrace their mothers. The park, alive with spring blooms and smiling faces, offered the perfect backdrop for honoring the women who give endlessly. It was a beautiful day of gratitude, community, and love.



# EAD Gateway Project,

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Precinct 2 also backed the effort. Manny Parra, marketing and brand director for Commissioner Adrian Garcia's office, called the installation "more than just a landmark," saying it is "a statement about identity" and proof that communities like East Aldine "deserve to be seen, not ignored." He said projects like the gateway improve quality of life while signaling that the neighborhood is valued.

"When communities are invested in, people feel it. They feel dignity, they feel belonging, and they feel that somebody believes in the neighborhood is worth caring about. That matters. On the surface, this is just public art, a gateway, a visual landmark. But underneath it, there's something deeper, the visible promise that East Aldine matters, that the families who live here matter, and that this community deserves beauty, identity, safety, investment, just like any other part of this county. Where you live should never determine whether your community feels valued. This project clearly says East Aldine is valued," he said. Executive Director Ri-



Manny Parra from Harris County Pct. 2 office representing Commissioner Adrian Garcia congratulated the EAMD and participants for their boldness. Garcia contributed \$200,000 for the project.

chard Cantu said formal planning began about two years ago, followed by extensive feedback on the icons, colors and overall design. The painting and construction took about four to five months, with weather delays pushing the completion to this spring. Cantu said the project cost just under \$1 million, including a \$200,000 grant from Harris County Precinct 2. Silva said East Aldine initially envisioned three gateways, with a future installation potentially planned for U.S. 59 and Aldine Mail Route.

For East Aldine officials, the dedication

marked both a ribbon cutting and a declaration of identity at one of the district's busiest intersections. "As we continue to make East Aldine a destination district where you can visit, live, work and play this place behind me will forever be unmistakable. No more overlooking this community. When you see this beautiful sunrise gradient behind me with the icons of culture and diversity, you will know that you are in a special place. A place where people look for prosperity and find it. A place of unlimited opportunities," Silva said. "You will know you've arrived in East Aldine."



Speakers, board members, and staff of EAMD pose in front of the bright, new Gateway project with its brilliant colors and icons.



Resident Judy Rodriguez said the project shows "there is a desire to invest in my neighborhood" and praised the public input process that helped shape the design.

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