

No city MLK trash holiday

There will be no interruption in curbside collection services for Houston Solid Waste Management customers in observance of the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday. All Solid Waste Management administrative offices and facilities, however, will be closed Monday, Jan. 19, set to reopen and resume normal operations the following day.

Sagemeadow to meet Jan. 15

Sagemeadow HOA will hold a meeting at 7 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 15, at The Gardens, 12001 Beamer at Hughes. Guest speaker to be announced.

Meetings are open to the public. All Sagemeadow residents are encouraged to attend. Meetings are typically held the third Thursday of each month. For additional information, visit www.sagemeadow.org.

Coffee with the Constable

Harris County Precinct 2 Constable Jerry Garcia will be at Donut Haven, 10802 Hughes Road at Beamer, from 7:30 to 8:30 a.m. each Thursday morning as part of the weekly Coffee with the Constable series.

For additional information, call Sagemont Civic Club President Kay Barbour at 713-419-3545.

Kirkwood to meet Jan. 26

The Kirkwood Civic Club's monthly meeting will take place at 6:30 p.m. Monday, Jan. 26, at the Sagemont Community Center, 11507 Hughes Road near Beltway 8. Meetings are typically held for the last Monday of the month. For additional information, call Kirkwood Civic Club President Ericka McCutcheon at 281-989-9990.

Sageglen to meet Jan. 19

The Sageglen Community Association will hold a homeowner meeting at 7 p.m. Monday, Jan. 19, at the Sageglen Community Building, 11610 Sageyork. Guest speaker to be announced.

Light refreshments will be served. All Sageglen residents are encouraged to attend. Meetings typically take place the third Monday of every other month. For additional information, call 281-481-2160.

Beverly Hills to meet Jan. 23

The Beverly Hills Civic Club will host a meeting Friday, Jan. 23, at the Beverly Hills Park community center, located at 10201 Kingspoint, from 10 to 11 a.m. All Beverly Hills residents are welcome to attend.

Knights to hold blood drive

Knights of Columbus Council 9201 will host a blood drive Sunday, Jan. 18, at St. Luke the Evangelist, located at 11011 Hall Road, from 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. Appointments are preferred but not necessary. Donors must bring identification. For additional information or to schedule an appointment, visit www.commitforlife.org/donor/schedules/geo.

Beltway closures planned

At least one northbound Beltway 8 frontage road lane will be closed from Spencer Highway to Greenshadow continuously through 11:30 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 31, 2026.

At least one southbound Beltway 8 frontage road lane will be closed from Pasadena Boulevard to Fairmont Parkway continuously through 11:30 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 31, 2026.

At least one southbound Beltway 8 frontage road lane will be closed from SH-225 to Red Bluff Road continuously through 11:30 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 31, 2026.

The closures are associated with the ongoing project to widen Beltway 8 from two to four lanes in each direction.

Freeway Manor to meet

The Freeway Manor Civic Club will hold a meeting at 7 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 22, at One Movement Bible Church (Bible Way Church), 10120 Hartsook. Meetings typically take place the fourth Thursday of the month. Residents of Freeway Manor, Sun Valley and Gulfway Terrace are encouraged to attend.

Gulf Freeway closures set

At least one northbound and one southbound main lane and frontage road lane on the Gulf Freeway will be closed from SH 96/Calder/Brittany Bay in League City to FM 519/Main Street in La Marque daily from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. and from 8:30 p.m. to 5 a.m. until further notice.

At least one northbound and one southbound frontage road lane on the Gulf Freeway will be closed from Deats Road in Dickinson to FM 2004/Camp Wallace Access in Texas City from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. until further notice.

At least one northbound and one southbound main lane and frontage road lane on the Gulf Freeway will be closed from FM 519/Main Street in La Marque to Tiki Drive in Galveston daily from 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. and nightly from 8:30 p.m. to 5 a.m. until further notice.

The closures are associated with an ongoing construction project to widen the freeway from three to five lanes in each direction and the frontage roads from two to three lanes in each direction.

SJC named a top online school in country

Local college's online program selected as 6th best in nation by Newsweek

San Jacinto College has been recognized as one of America's Top Online Colleges for 2026 by *Newsweek* and global data-research firm Statista, securing the sixth position nationally among 250 ranked institutions.

This significant advancement from the college's 42nd-place ranking last year underscores the college's deepening commitment to delivering high-quality online education tailored to the evolving needs of today's students.

This distinguished ranking underscores the college's steadfast commitment to delivering high-quality online education that meets the evolving needs of today's students.

The ranking, published online and in *Newsweek's* print issue this month, was based on a comprehensive evaluation of online education programs across the United States. The assessment considered four major pillars: institutional indicators, rating of experience, overall satisfaction and student recommendations.

“Advancing to sixth place among the nation's online learning institutions affirms our dedication to student success and innovation,” said Niki Whiteside, chief online learning and innovation officer at San Jacinto College. “It reflects our faculty, who bring real-world experience into the virtual classroom, continued investment in digital learning infrastructure, and robust student-support services.”

The ranking was determined through rigorous research involving more than 10,000 individuals who have completed online college degrees in the United States. The evaluation

criteria included organization, support, price, reputation, success, recommendation, practical relevance and overall satisfaction with the online learning experience.

San Jacinto College offers 26 associate degrees and 34 workforce certificates entirely online. Students can pursue credentials in areas including computer information technology, education, health care, global logistics, social and behavioral sciences, and business. The College's online programs offer students the flexibility to pursue their educational goals while balancing work, family and other commitments.

Pct. 2 clears Sabo encampment



On Tuesday, Jan. 6, Precinct 2 deputies cleared a homeless encampment behind a commercial property at Sabo and Sagetree, removing more than 25 shopping carts full of debris. The clearance was done at the request of multiple residents and area businesses. Precinct 2 Constable Jerry Garcia is seeking community volunteers to help keep such areas clean of debris. For more information, call 713-477-4070.

Former resident, activist Helms dies at 52

Former longtime South Belt resident and DWI-prevention advocate Dianne Louise Hegar Helms died Saturday, Jan. 10, at the age of 52.

Helms had a strong connection to the Sagemont community, attending Frazier Elementary, Thompson Intermediate and Dobie High School. Growing up, Helms was active in the local girls softball program and was a Brownie and Girl Scout. She and her family were members of Sagemont Presbyterian Church.

On Dec. 31, 2006, Helms was the victim in a DWI accident, in which she suffered a traumatic brain injury, followed by a stroke eight days later. Following her accident, Helms became a speaker via her text-to-speech computer for multiple Shattered Lives and Shattered Dreams programs from 2010 until COVID stopped the programs in 2021. See related obituary in next week's *Leader*.

County opens 2026 voting by mail

2026 applications now being accepted from eligible voters

The Harris County Clerk's Office reminds eligible voters who are 65 years of age or older, or who have a disability, that they may submit a single Annual Ballot by Mail application to request ballots for all 2026 elections.

Voters may begin to submit their Annual Ballot by Mail applications on or after Jan. 1 of the calendar year in which the voter wishes to vote by mail.

“It is important that voters complete the entire application and select the appropriate options,” said Harris County Clerk Teneshia Hudspeth. “In even-numbered years, it is also important to select a political party of your choice for the primary and runoff election in which the voter wishes to participate.”

What is an Annual Ballot by Mail?

Eligible voters must mark “annual” on their application to receive a mail ballot for all 2026 elections held within their jurisdiction. This includes primaries (if a party preference is selected), November elections and any resulting runoffs. Voters may also opt to vote by mail in only

the specific elections designated on their application. Each election has a specific deadline to submit a Ballot by Mail application.

Who is eligible?

To be eligible to apply for an Annual Ballot by Mail, voters must meet at least one of the following two criteria:

- Must be 65 or older.
- Have a disability.

How to apply

To apply for an Annual Ballot by Mail, voters must download the application at HarrisVotes.com, complete it and return it to the Harris County Clerk's Office.

Application expiration

The application will expire on Dec. 31, 2026, unless the voter cancels it, their voter registration is canceled or they register in a new county. “Remember, eligible voters must request an application every year, as applications are not automatically mailed,” said Hudspeth. For more information about voting by mail and upcoming elections, visit HarrisVotes.com.

Leader continues its look back at 2025

The *Leader* continues its look back on 2025 with a list of some of the significant stories of the year. For highlights up to April, see the Jan. 8 edition of the *Leader*.

April

A man was fatally shot Sunday, March 23, outside an apartment complex in the 10950 block of Tanner Park Court near Alameda Mall. The victim was identified as Joseph Thompson, 27. According to Houston Police Department officials, patrol officers responded to a shooting at Alameda Park Apartments at the above address and found an unresponsive male in the parking lot suffering from a gunshot wound. Houston Fire Department paramedics responded to the incident and pronounced Thompson dead at the scene.

On Saturday, April 5, St. Luke the Evangelist Catholic Church officially broke ground on its new Family Life Center to be located at the parish's future Riverstone Ranch campus in Pearland, located across the street from South Belt Elementary and the new Thompson Intermediate. This marked the first significant construction at the site in roughly a decade. The 25,000-square-foot Family Life Center is the second of five planned structures to be constructed at the site. A 10,000-square-foot structure dubbed the Cenacle Learning Center was erected in 2014. Eventual plans call for an education center, a social hall, youth center, administration building and church to all be constructed at the site. Funding for the new Family Life Center was made possible by a \$10 million loan from the archdiocese, along with donations from parish-

ioners as part of St. Luke's Capital Campaign. A game room located on Scarsdale at the Gulf Freeway was raided Wednesday, April 2, as part of a multi-agency operation that involved officers simultaneously executing search warrants on 40 such establishments across the Greater Houston area. Investigators said the game rooms – all affiliated with each other – were part of an organized crime ring, led by Nizar Ali, a 61-year-old Pakistani national from Richmond. In all, 720 law enforcement officers took part in the raids.

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Fombonne appointed county attorney

Appointee to fill remainder of term vacated by Menefee

Harris County commissioners on Thursday, Jan. 8, appointed Deputy County Attorney Jonathan Fombonne to serve as the county's interim chief legal adviser, filling the vacancy created by Christian Menefee's resignation as he pursues a seat in Congress.

Menefee stepped down in order to run the TX-18 Congressional District seat vacated by the late Sylvester Turner, triggering the need for an interim appointment until voters choose a permanent successor later this year.

Unanimous approval

Commissioners Court voted unanimously to elevate Fombonne, who had been serving as Menefee's first assistant and chief deputy. In those

roles, Fombonne led legal strategy for many of for the office's high-profile matters, advised elected officials and department heads directly and served as trial and appellate counsel for all major litigation in the office. As county attorney, he will serve as legal counsel to all elected offices in Harris County, including Commissioners Court.

Fombonne was humble in his acceptance of the position. “Thank you for the trust that you've placed in me. I appreciate the vote of confidence and the chance to serve as Harris County attorney. I am grateful for it, and I take this job seriously.”

Runoff election set for Jan. 31

Menefee, Edwards compete to replace late U.S. Rep. Sylvester Turner

A runoff election will take place Saturday, Jan. 31, to determine who will fill the unexpired term of the state's 18th Congressional District seat that was vacated by former Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner, who died in March 2025 shortly after taking office.

Vying for that position are Harris County Attorney Christian Menefee and former Houston City Council Member Amanda Edwards.

While most South Belt residents will be ineligible to vote in the election, the TX-18 runoff carries national weight because the winner will step into Congress immediately at a time when closely divided votes could hinge on a single member. The district is home to major energy, medical and research institutions whose federal funding and regulatory issues often shape national policy. TX-18 has also long been a prominent voice within the Democratic caucus, meaning its next representative could influence debates that reach far beyond the district's boundaries.

A crowded field of 16 candidates competed in the Nov. 4 special election, but none reached the required 50 percent threshold to win outright. Menefee led the field with roughly 29 percent of the vote, while Edwards followed with nearly 26 percent.

Under Texas law, the top two finishers advance to a runoff when no candidate secures a majority.

The winner will finish the remainder of Turner's term, which ends in January 2027.

Background

Texas' 18th Congressional District – one of the most historically significant districts in the nation – has experienced unusual turnover since 2024, driven by the following two unexpected deaths:

- **Sheila Jackson Lee (July 2024)** – U.S. Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee, who had represented the district since 1995, died on July 19, 2024. Her death – not her 2023 mayoral campaign – created the first vacancy.
- A Democratic Party committee selected Sylvester Turner to replace her on the November 2024

Frazier students decorate Park



Frazier students are contributing mosaic artwork to the local elementary school's new SPARK park. Opened at the campus last month, the new park was donated to the campus by the SPARK program. Founded in 1983, the SPARK program is a joint venture between local government entities and area business/nonprofit partners that donates parks to local schools.

Photo by David Flickinger

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Pct. 2 seizes drugs, guns



On Wednesday Jan. 7, deputies received a call for service for a welfare check on a male who was reportedly having suicidal/homicidal thoughts. Deputies were able to locate and detain the male. Male was identified, and was found to have an open warrant for organize crime. Upon further investigation, two firearms and narcotics were seized. One of the firearms located was found to be stolen out of the Austin Police Department.

Pasadena ISD fine arts sets dates

Pasadena ISD has announced dates for its January and February fine arts performances.

Dance Solo and Ensemble – Thursday, Jan. 22, 6 a.m. – 3:30 p.m., at Phillips Gym.

Morris Middle School – Thursday, Jan. 22, 7 – 8 p.m., at Beverly Hills Intermediate auditorium.

Dobie Theatre performance – Thursday, Jan. 29, at Dobie High School auditorium.

Intermediate Orchestra Pre-UIL – Saturday, Jan. 31, 8 a.m. – 3:30 p.m., at Beverly Hills Intermediate.

Thompson Dance Houston Rockets halftime show – Saturday, Jan. 31, 7:30 – 9 p.m., at Toyota Center.

Int. Band Pre-UIL – Feb. 6 and 7, 8 a.m. – 4 p.m., at Pasadena High School.

High School Orchestra UIL Solo and Ensemble – Saturday, Feb. 7, 8 a.m. – 4 p.m., at Goose Creek Memorial High School.

Moore Elementary second-grade program – Tuesday, Feb. 10, 6 – 7 p.m., at Moore cafeteria.

Atkinson Elementary Rodeo Program – Thursday, Feb. 19, 5:30 – 6 p.m., at Atkinson cafeteria.

South Houston High School Orchestra Pre-UIL – Friday, Feb. 20, 7 – 8 p.m., at South Houston High School Auditorium.

Thompson Dance Competition – Saturday, Feb. 21, 9 a.m. – noon, at Crosby High School.

High School Choir Solo and Ensemble – Saturday, Feb. 21, 8 a.m. – 4 p.m., at Pearland High School.

High School Band Solo and Ensemble – Saturday, Feb. 21, 8 a.m. – 4 p.m., at Dawson High School.

High School Choir Pre-UIL – Feb. 23 and 24, 3 – 7 p.m., at Dobie High School.

Intermediate Orchestra Concert and Sight Reading – Feb. 24 and 25, 3 – 7 p.m., at Beverly Hills Intermediate.

High School Orchestra Concert and Sight Reading – Feb. 26 and 27, 3 – 7 p.m., at Dobie High School.

High School Band Pre-UIL – Feb. 28, 8 a.m. – 4 p.m., at Dobie High School.

Intermediate Choir Pre-UIL – Feb. 28, 8 a.m. – 4 p.m., at Beverly Hills Intermediate.

Parker Williams, AARP celebrate partnership

The public is invited to celebrate the 25-year partnership between Parker Williams Library and AARP Foundation Tax-Aide, a collaboration that has provided free, trusted tax preparation services to the Southbelt-Ellington community for a quarter of a century.

AARP Foundation Tax-Aide offers free tax preparation and electronic filing, ensuring community members can file accurate tax returns at no cost. Since the partnership began, volunteer tax counselors have prepared and submitted more than 10,000 tax returns for local residents. In just the past three years alone, more than 1,400 returns were completed, resulting in significant refunds returned directly to local taxpayers.

Michael Saperstein, branch manager at Parker Williams Library, noted, “This partnership has been a cornerstone of support in the Southbelt-Ellington region, providing critical, free tax assistance to hundreds of residents each year. It gives our community peace of mind and the confidence that their taxes are being handled accurately.”

Spencer Tholstrup, site coordinator for the Tax-Aide program, emphasized the importance of the library’s involvement. “Michael and the staff at Parker Williams Library are an integral part of our team. Without their ongoing support, we would not be able to provide the level of service our community has come to rely on.”

Community members are invited to attend a 25-Year Partnership Open House at Parker Williams Library, 10851 Scarsdale Blvd., Houston, TX, beginning at 1 p.m. on Jan. 21. Join the celebration of this milestone and the volunteers and staff who have made a lasting difference for thousands of neighbors.

Local library events set

In case of storms or adverse weather, refer to library website for details.

Bracewell Branch Library

Bracewell Library is at 9002 Kingspoint. Customers are encouraged to visit the building to browse, check out and return materials, use the computers and Wi-Fi, and check out holds. For information, visit <https://houstonlibrary.org/>. For online learning, visit <https://houstonlibrary.org/online-learning-7556> or call 832-393-2580. Hours are Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays, 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.; Wednesdays, noon – 8 p.m.; Fridays, 1 – 5 p.m.; and Saturdays, 10 a.m. – 5 p.m. Bracewell is closed Sundays.

Tuesday, Jan. 20, 4 – 5 p.m. Family craft adventure. Registration required. Visit <https://houstonlibrary.libcal.com/calendar/events> for more library events.

Book drop

The book drop is open. Library materials can be returned. The library continues to provide online resources to enjoy the library virtually. Large items such as FLIP kits or laptops should not be placed in the book drop, but taken inside.

Parker Williams Library

Parker Williams Library is open. Visit <https://www.hcpl.net/reopening> for reopening information or the main website at <https://www.hcpl.net/branch/parker-williams-branch-library>. The library will follow state and county guidelines for mask and social distancing.

The book drop is open. Social media links are Facebook.com/ParkerWilliamsLibrary and Instagram.com/ParkerWilliamsLibrary.

The following events are scheduled for Parker Williams Library, 10851 Scarsdale Blvd.: Thursday, Jan. 15, 10:15 – 10:45 a.m. Toddler time. Friday, Jan. 16, 1 – 3 p.m. Genealogy. Saturday, Jan. 17, 10 a.m. – noon. Tai Chi. Monday, Jan. 19, 1 – 2:30 p.m. ESL conversation club. Registration required. Monday, Jan. 19, 5:30 – 7:30 p.m. Tai Chi. Tuesday, Jan. 20, 10:15 – 10:45 a.m. Babies and books. Tuesday, Jan. 20, 10:15 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. Personas que corren con libros: Club de lectura en Español. Wednesday, Jan. 21, 11 – 11:45 a.m. Four key benefits of a living trust. Wednesday, Jan. 21, 4 – 5 p.m. How to write a strong personal statement. Registration required. Wednesday, Jan. 21, 5 – 6 p.m. Tax workshop with Sheba: “getting IRS help.” Wednesday, Jan. 21, 6 – 7:30 p.m. Pathway to citizenship. Registration required.

Parker Williams “No-Contact Curbside Holds Pick-Up”

- After receiving notification that holds are ready for pickup, call 832-927-7870.
- Have a library card number and PIN handy.
- A pickup time and instructions will be given.
- Upon arriving, park in one of the two parking spots reserved for curbside holds.
- Be prepared to show a library card or other form of ID for verification.

Hours are Monday, 10 a.m. – 8 p.m.; Tuesday, 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.; Wednesday, 10 a.m. – 8 p.m.; Thursday, 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.; Friday, 1 – 6 p.m.; Saturday, 10 a.m. – 5 p.m. Visit <https://www.hcpl.net/branch/parker-williams-branch-library> for details.

Online services

- Use HCPL Wi-Fi service with HCPL’s drive-up Wi-Fi.
- Download e-books and audiobooks, stream movies, research and learn at www.hcpl.net.
- Attend an HCPL program or story time online through Facebook or YouTube.
- Check an account to renew loans or request books, e-books, comics or graphic novels.
- Stream classic films, indie cinema and award-winning documentaries on Kanopy.
- Listen to audiobooks through RBDigital or OverDrive.
- Read along and play with picture books on TumbleBooks.

Don’t have an HCPL library card? Instant access can be obtained to all HCPL’s digital materials and research tools with an iKnow Digital Access Card. Apply at <https://www.hcpl.net/services/iknow-card> for a HCPL card. For details, visit <https://www.hcpl.net>.

South Belt-Ellington Leader

The Voice of Community-Minded People

11555 Beamer 281-481-5656

E-mail: mynews@southbeltleader.com

David Flickinger, owner

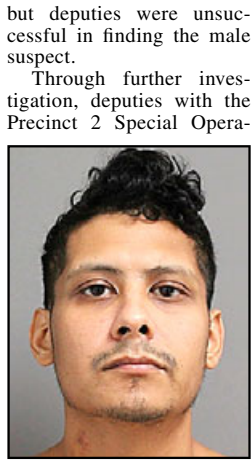
Call about suspicious behavior leads to Highland Meadow arrest

A call about a suspicious man in the Highland Meadow Village subdivision Friday, Jan. 9, led to an arrest the following week.

According to officials with Harris County Precinct 2 Constable Jerry Garcia’s office, a resident in the 11500 block of Gullwood Drive called to report that a suspicious man kept repeatedly walking past her house and staring at her. At one point, the man began to approach the resident in her garage, while simultaneously grabbing something from his fanny pack in a threatening manner.

Scared the man had a gun, the female resident shut her garage and ran inside and called police.

Upon their arrival, deputies found the suspect had already fled the scene, but the resident provided deputies with a description of the man. A manhunt ensued involving a K9 and a drone,



Camilo Carmarlio

tions Unit were able to identify the suspect as Camilo Carmarlio, also a Highland Meadow Village resident. A warrant for evading on foot was subsequently filed. It was also discovered that Carmarlio had three active

warrants through the Harris County Sheriff’s Office, one of which was for a prior evading offense.

On Jan. 13, the Precinct 2 Special Operations Unit was deployed to execute the arrest warrant at Carmarlio’s residence in the 11500 block of Gullwood. The Special Operations Unit issued several verbal commands for Carmarlio to exit the residence but the suspect failed to respond.

After Carmarlio failed to comply, Precinct 2 deputies breached the garage and made entry into the residence.

Following the breach, Precinct 2 K9 Deputy Hero gave several K9 warnings (barks), which prompted Carmarlio to quickly exit the residence with his hands raised.

Carmarlio was apprehended without incident and remained in Harris County custody at press time.

Arnold named Thompson Teacher of the Month



Thompson Intermediate officials congratulated Jacob Arnold (center) for being voted the Lions’ Teacher of the Month for December, as chosen by his peers. Those with Arnold were Kelli Moneyhun (left) and principal Tanis Griffin.

City’s Christmas tree recycling continues

The City of Houston Solid Waste Management Department is inviting residents to recycle their natural Christmas trees and help give them a second life.

Beginning on Friday, Dec. 26, and continuing through Friday, January 23, residents can drop off their undecorated trees at any of 20 re-

cycling locations across the city.

Trees delivered to these sites will be turned into nutrient rich mulch and compost that support local parks community gardens and other green space projects.

Residents should do the following to prepare a tree for recycling:

- Remove all lights, ornaments, tinsel, wire, nails, and stands.

- Ensure the tree is not flocked, painted, or artificial, as these cannot be recycled.

Residents can find a full list of the 20 recycling locations along with maps and hours on the Solid Waste Management Department

website at www.houstontx.gov/solidwaste.

Residents may also place the discarded trees curbside for the city’s regular heavy trash pickup Thursday, Jan. 8, or Friday, Jan. 9. See related sidebar entry on Page 1.

For additional information, visit www.houstontx.gov/solidwaste or call 311.

TX-18 runoff election scheduled for Jan. 31

Continued from Page 1

ballot.

- **Sylvester Turner’s (March 2025)** – Turner won the November 2024 election and took office in January 2025, but died just two months later, on March 5. His passing triggered the November 2025 special election, marking the second special election in less than a year for the district.

As a result, the winner of the Jan. 31 runoff will become the fourth person to represent the district since 2024.

Traditionally a Democratic stronghold, the 18th Congressional District has been represented by political heavyweights including Barbara Jordan, Mickey Leland, Sheila Jackson Lee, and most recently, Turner. With both Menefee and Edwards running as Democrats, the seat is expected to remain under Democratic control.

Candidates

- **Christian Menefee:** Menefee currently serves as Harris County attorney, a role in which he has frequently clashed with state Republican leaders over voting rights, environmental enforcement and local control. He has built a reputation as a progressive legal advocate focused on protecting civil rights, expanding access to the ballot and strengthening environmental protections. His campaign has emphasized standing up for working families, defending Democratic institutions and ensuring federal resources reach underserved communities.

- **Amanda Edwards:** Edwards is a former Houston City Council member and

attorney who has long been active in civic leadership and community development. She previously ran for U.S. Senate and for Houston mayor, building a profile centered on economic opportunity, infrastructure investment and public health initiatives. Her

platform highlights affordable housing, small business support and strengthening social services, along with a message of collaborative, community-driven leadership.

Early voting

Early voting will begin

Wednesday, Jan. 21, and continue through Tuesday, Jan. 27.

For additional information on the Jan. 31 runoff election, to view a sample ballot or see a complete list of polling locations, visit www.harrisvotes.org.



South Belt Resident



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I served to protect our great country. Now I will serve to protect your rights!

OSCAR SALAZAR JR.

FOR JUSTICE OF THE PEACE, PRECINCT 2 PLACE 2

Democratic Party Primary

Election day March 3, 2026

Early Voting Feb 17 to Feb 27

Pol. Adv. Paid for by Oscar Salazar, Jr.

Death

Leda Ann (Hover) Williams



Leda Ann (Hover) Williams passed away peacefully on Jan. 9, 2026, at her home, surrounded by family and friends.

She was born on Feb. 26, 1944, in her family home in Slidell, La., to James Fountain Hover and Leda Ann (Mayfield) Hover. Leda attended Northeast Louisiana State College, where she met her husband, Glenn D. Wil-

liams. They shared 60 years of marriage and moved to Texas in 1975, becoming longtime residents of the Sagemeadow community.

Leda is survived by her husband; her children, Shea Williams Norris (Jeremy), Scott Williams (Linda), Clifton A. Williams (Katie) and Craig Williams; 10 grandchildren and 10 great-grandchildren; her brother, Andrew F. Hover (Mickey); and many nieces and nephews.

She was preceded in death by her parents and her siblings, James Fountain Hover Jr., Charles Clifton Hover, Nellie Mae (Hover) Packer, and Marie (Hover) Pravat.

Leda was a longtime member of St. Luke’s Catholic Church, as well as the Catholic Daughters and Red Hat Society. She was deeply involved in the lives of her children and grandchildren, supporting FFA events, school activities and family gatherings. She cherished time spent with her grand-

children and was known for always showing up alongside her husband, lovingly called Pop.

Leda will be remembered for her quiet strength, steady presence, and deep love for her family.

“Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.” — Matthew 5:4

Services will be held at St. Luke the Evangelist Catholic Church, Thursday, Jan. 22, 2026. The Rosary will be recited at 9:30 a.m., followed by a memorial Mass at 10 a.m. A reception will follow in the church social hall.

Leader obituary policy

Obituaries submitted to the *Leader* are published free of charge. They are edited to conform to the *Leader* style.

Partnership celebrates

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AARP Foundation Tax-Aide offers free tax preparation and electronic filing, ensuring community members can file accurate tax returns at no cost. Since the partnership began, volunteer tax counselors have prepared and submitted more than 10,000 tax returns for local residents. In just the past three years alone, more than 1,400 returns were completed, resulting in significant refunds returned directly to local taxpayers.

Michael Saperstein, branch manager at Parker Williams Library, noted, “This partnership has been a cornerstone of support in the South Belt-Ellington region,

providing critical, free tax assistance to hundreds of residents each year. It gives our community peace of mind and the confidence that their taxes are being handled accurately.”

Spencer Tholstrup, site coordinator for the Tax-Aide program, emphasized the importance of the library’s involvement. “Michael and the staff at Parker Williams Library are an integral part of our team. Without their ongoing support, we would not be able to provide the level of service our community has come to rely on.”

Community members are invited to attend a 25-Year Partnership Open House at Parker Williams Library, 10851 Scarsdale Blvd., Houston, TX, beginning at 1 p.m. on Jan. 21. One can join to celebrate this milestone and the volunteers and staff who have made a lasting difference for thousands of neighbors.

Stuchbery announces honor roll, merit roll

Officials of Stuchbery Elementary School have announced the fourth nine-weeks honor roll and merit roll for the 2025-2026 school year.

Third grade

Honor roll
Izzabella Ross, Adan Moreno, Olivia Mendez, Victoria Rangel and Mathias Garcia.

Merit roll

Sebastian Dominguez

Fourth grade

Honor roll

Alery Zamora, Leonardo Batiste, Braylon Jenkins, Isiah Sung, Abigail Rangel and Sophia Velasquez.

Merit roll

Paulette Del Villar, Mario Tzintzun, Ruben Benavides, Bryan Hua, Madeline Jacuinde, Simon Matta, Cameron Baines, Madelyn Jimenez and Sonaya Lopez.

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ST. LUKE THE EVANGELIST

Catholic Church

Rev. Douglas J. Guthrie, Pastor
Rev. Antonio Cisneros, Parochial Vicar

11011 Hall Rd.
(between Beamer & Blackhawk)
www.stlukesatholic.com

LITURGY SCHEDULE

| | |
|----------------------------|------------------------|
| Saturday Vigil | 5:30 p.m. |
| Sunday | 8 a.m. and 10 a.m.* |
| Sunday | 1 p.m. Misa en Español |
| Monday, Wednesday & Friday | 9 a.m. |
| Tuesday & Thursday | 7 p.m. |

Sacrament of Reconciliation (Confessions)
Thursday 7:45 to 8:30 p.m. Saturday 4 to 5 p.m.

Parish Office: 281-481-6816
Children’s Faith Formation: 281-481-4251
Adult Faith Formation: 713-538-2862

All are welcome to come to worship and serve the Lord in a spirit of love, sharing, and hope.

New Covenant Christian Church

Day Care Christian Based Child Care



New Covenant Christian Church provides Christian based child care for the local community. Director Nedra Jackson and her staff are here to take perfect care of your children while you work.

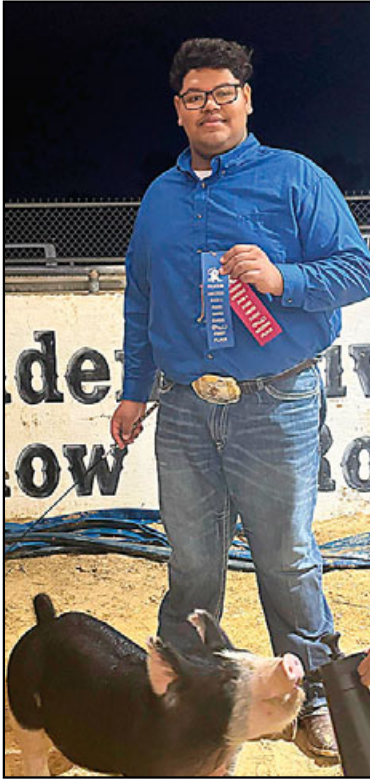
281.481.2003

www.newcovenantchristianchurchhouston.com
10603 Blackhawk Blvd. Houston, TX 77089
Blackhawk @ Kirkfair

Dobie High School FFA attends Pasadena New Year's Shootout Prospect Show



FFA member Thalia Oddo won second place in Ring A and Ring B with her spotted pig Baylock.



Dobie FFA member Xavier Martinez placed first in Ring A and second in Ring B with his pig Don Julia.



Agriculture teacher Robert McGill (left) is pictured with Jose Carbajal and his goat, Squirt, who placed third in Ring A and Ring B.



FFA student Vianka Alanis (right) is pictured with her older sister and former member Vianey Alanis. Vianka's goat placed third in Ring A and Ring B.



Pictured are, Abrianna Carbajal (left) who placed first in Ring A and Ring B, holding her heifer Honey and FFA member Mathew Trevino holding Honey's calf Don Pepe.

Special Girl Scouts project earns award, ends kitten boredom



Pictured at right, left to right, are Pearland Animal Shelter employees Randee Guy, Joshua Rodriguez, Haylee Henry and Girl Scout members Brooklyn Ulekowski, Braelyn Bingham and Xara Oddo.

The Girl Scout Silver Award is the second highest honor a Girl Scout can achieve and the highest award a group of three members can earn together. The three must work on their project for more than 50 hours each and create a project that is sustainable over time. Members of Troop 143162 created a project titled "No More Kitty Boredom" and presented it to the Pearland Animal Shelter on Friday, Dec. 19, 2025. The girls created homemade cat scratchers using wood to make box frames and cardboard strips to glue and fit inside the wooden frames. They then painted the frames to look more attractive. Cats use these "entertainment centers" to avoid boredom and to train themselves not to scratch up furniture but to instead use the cat scratchers. At left, is a cat from the animal shelter playing with the cat scratcher.



Fombonne named interim county attorney

Appointee to fill remainder of unexpired Menefee term

Continued from Page 1

said Fombonne. "It has been a privilege to serve Harris County over the past five years, and I am honored to be appointed as the next Harris County attorney. This office plays a vital role in the county's day-to-day operations while also serving as legal counsel protecting the county's legal interests in litigation. I look forward to continuing that work and ensuring our office remains a force for fairness, accountability and progress. I have complete confidence in our talented staff and look forward to the great work ahead."

Menefee expressed confidence in Fombonne's selection as his replacement.

"Since my first day in office, Jon has been a steady

and capable leader, handling some of the office's most complex and important cases," said Menefee. "He is easily one of the best lawyers I know and has been absolutely instrumental in building this office into what it is today. His deep knowledge of the office and proven leadership make him the ideal person to guide our team through this transition. I am confident the office will continue to thrive and be a shining example of what good government looks like."

Precinct 2 Commissioner Adrian Garcia, who represents much of the South Belt community, shared this sentiment.

"Jonathan Fombonne has done an excellent job as first assistant county attorney, making him the obvi-

ous choice to serve as interim county attorney for the remainder of the year," said Garcia. "Much of the transformative work of the Harris County Attorney's Office from the last several years has been extensively supported by Jonathan's behind-the-scenes efforts, and he will carry the baton to continue the progress we've achieved thus far. We are lucky to have Jonathan ready to step into the role."

A proud tenure

Menefee, who had served as county attorney since 2021, is proud of his time in office.

"I didn't run for county attorney to hold a title; I ran to build an office that shows up for people, and that's what we did," Menefee said in a statement. "We took on hard cases, powerful interests and delivered real results for working

families."

Garcia praised Menefee and his efforts in office.

"It is a bittersweet moment to welcome Jonathan while saying goodbye to Christian Menefee," said Garcia. "Christian's work as county attorney has been nothing short of extraordinary. As the first African American elected to the position, he will forever serve as an inspiration to all those who follow him. Christian's outstanding leadership and vision have made Harris County a more just place. I wish Christian all the best in his future endeavors."

Menefee is currently in a Democratic runoff with former Houston City Council Member Amanda Edwards for the congressional seat long held by the late Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee. The TX-

18 runoff election is set for Jan. 31. See related story on Page 1.

A permanent replacement

Filing to permanently replace Menefee as county attorney ended last month with three candidates – all women – officially running, including two Democrats and one Republican.

Democrats running for the position include Houston City Council Member and Harris County civil court judge Audrie Lawton-Evans; former civil court judge and former Harris County Attorney's Office lawyer Jacqueline Lucci Smith is the lone Republican to file for a place on the ballot.

Primary elections are set to take place March 3, with general elections scheduled for Nov. 3.



Exhibitor Pablo Reyes is shown with his steer holding two ribbons after placing second in Ring A and Ring B.



Kaylee Robles is pictured with her steer, Rocco, who placed third in Ring A and Ring B. Robles also placed third with her pig Maverick.



Dobie FFA student Mathew Trevino and his steer placed first in Ring A and Ring B.

Pct. 8 makes 3 freeway drug busts in 3 days

Deputies with Precinct 8 Constable Phil Sandlin's office made three significant drug busts in three days along the Gulf Freeway between Fuqua and Alameda Genoa.

On Friday, Jan. 2, around 4:15 p.m. Precinct 8 Deputy C. Crider conducted a traffic stop in the 11130 block of the Gulf Freeway near Alameda Genoa on a black Chevrolet Malibu for traffic

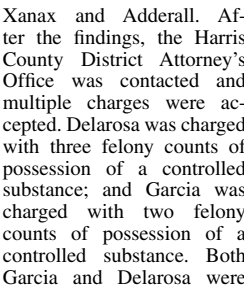
black backpack on the front passenger floorboard containing methamphetamine.



Geraldo Delarosa

cocaine, marijuana, Xanax and a loaded handgun. Due to the findings, the passenger of the vehicle was subsequently identified as 29-year-old Geraldo Delarosa of Houston. Delarosa was fingerprinted at the scene because he had no physical identification on his person. Upon the return of Delarosa's fingerprints, it showed he had given a false date of birth.

During a further search of the vehicle, a green bag was located. In its contents, deputies located marijuana,



Kshon Mack

transported and booked into the Harris County Joint Processing Center without incident. Garcia's bond was set at \$7,500, while Delarosa's bond was set at a total of \$80,000.

Two days later on Sunday, Jan. 4, Precinct 8 K9 Deputy K. Peters initiated a traffic stop on a blue Mercedes-Benz near the Gulf Freeway and Fuqua for multiple traffic violations. The driver was identified as 22-year-old Kshon Andrew Mack. Mack was placed in custody for DWI. An AR pistol was observed in plain view in the back seat. Upon completing an inventory of the vehicle, Peters located marijuana, small plastic baggies, a handgun and \$2,307 in U.S. currency.

The Harris County District Attorney's Office was contacted and charges were accepted for driving while intoxicated, unlawful carry of a weapon and possession of marijuana. The currency was seized through the Harris County District Attorney's Office Asset Forfeiture. Mack had bond conditions in Harris and Galveston counties of which he was in violation. Mack was transported and booked into the Harris County Joint Processing Center. Bonds were set totaling \$12,500.

Leader continues its look back at 2025

Continued from Page 1

representing the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, FBI, DEA, ICE, Houston Police Department, Harris County Precinct 1 and Precinct 4 constable offices. Led by Homeland Security, the investigation spanned at least five years, federal officials said. The FBI also executed search warrants at three separate residences in Richmond and Rosenberg. In addition to Ali, officers arrested more than a dozen others allegedly involved in the crime ring, including members of Ali's family.

South Houston High School announced its 2025 Hall of Honor inductees, recognizing the efforts of three alumni, two faculty members and one former employee representing the campus's support staff. Inducted alumni included Danny Morgan (Class of 1961), Amy Ashby-Pike (Class of 1972) and Debbie Yerkes Drury-Tyrone (Class of 1974), and inducted faculty members included teachers Annette Schomber and the late Madge Crumpler Wilson. Also inducted was former campus custodian Wilton Thibodeaux, who became the first member of the school's support staff to make the list. The new hon-

orees were later formally inducted in September during the school's homecoming activities.

Four people were injured in a drive-by shooting around 3:30 a.m. Sunday, April 20, outside an after-hours nightclub in the 12900 block of Nyack Drive near Scarsdale and the Gulf Freeway. This marked the second shooting outside the Social Empire club in just five weeks. No immediate arrests were made.

May

The third annual South Belt Cleanup, held Saturday, May 3, was a huge success, removing nearly 2 tons of debris from area roadways.

Three suspects were arrested on felony theft charges after allegedly stealing three dogs from Pet Place on Beamer. Destiny Elizabeth Estrada, Elmer Geovanny Velasquez-Lopez and Carmen Montes were accused of stealing two chocolate dapple dachshunds and a Shih Tzu – reportedly worth more than \$10,000 total. This marked at least the fourth time dogs had been stolen from the store over the last decade.

Charges were filed against a suspect arrested in the fatal shooting of a man Thursday, May 15, outside an apartment

complex in the 1400 block of Redford near Edgebrook and the Gulf Freeway. The suspect, Tyrell Robinson, 21, was charged with murder, accused of killing Jermon Williams, 20. Once dubbed by police as a "hot spot for violent crime," this marked the first known fatal shooting to take place at The Redford in nearly two years.

A local kidnapping investigation led to multiple felony charges against two suspects. Launched in late March following an alleged kidnapping on Nyack in the Scarsdale subdivision, the Precinct 2 investigation concluded in May with the arrests of Crandall Kelly and Johnny Kaiser. Kelly was charged with aggravated kidnapping, aggravated assault with deadly weapon and possession of a firearm by felon, while Kaiser was charged with aggravated kidnapping, possession of a firearm by a felon and possession of a controlled substance with intent to distribute.

June

The Pasadena ISD Board of Trustees announced Joe Campos would serve as the school district's newest trustee, filling the seat left vacant by Vickie Morgan who died in late 2024 after serving

nearly 40 years on the board. A product of Pasadena ISD, Campos attended Richey Elementary, Jackson Intermediate and Pasadena High School, graduating in 1992 before attending San Jacinto College.

Former longtime San Jacinto College professor/coach Judy Harrison was elected to fill the SJC Position 3 trustee seat formerly held by Leader co-founder Marie Flickinger, who had retired in November 2024 after serving the district for nearly 30 years. A personal friend of Flickinger's, Harrison narrowly defeated incumbent Salvador Serrano Jr., who had been appointed to serve the remainder of Flickinger's term following her passing in late 2024.

Clear Creek ISD announced its 2025 Athletics Hall of Honor inductees, with four students and two coaches being recognized. Alumni to be inducted included Carol Atchinson Hollinger, Clear Creek High School, 1990 (swimming); Roger Jordan, Clear Creek High School, 2000 (football, basketball, track); Tymeka Charelle Moore, Clear Creek High School, 2000 (volleyball, basketball, track); and Erica Alexander Guidry, Clear Brook High School,

(track). Coaches to be inducted included Jim Hatfield, Clear Brook High School, 1985-2003 (football), and Doug Elder, Clear Lake High School, 1988-2000 (soccer). Multiple Clear Creek ISD teams were also recognized.

St. Luke the Evangelist Catholic Church celebrated its golden anniversary with a rare Tuesday Mass June 17 to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the local church's first Mass held June 17, 1975. What began in the cafeteria of Thompson Intermediate has now grown to include two campuses, the newest of which is located on a 20-acre piece of property in Pearland, where a new \$10+ million facility is being constructed. An offspring of nearby St. Frances Cabrini Catholic Church, St. Luke was necessitated by the explosive growth of the South Belt community in the early 1970s, brought on largely by workforce associated with the newly opened Johnson Space Center. A Golden Jubilee Gala was scheduled to take place later in the year in October, when a group of church elders were to be recognized.

To be continued in next week's *South Belt-Ellington Leader*.



Alejandro Garcia

violations. Crider made contact and identified the driver as 25-year-old Alejandro Manuel Garcia of Pasadena. Crider requested and was granted consent to search the vehicle and located a



Jan. 2 seizure



Jan. 4 seizure

Frazier announces December mathematicians of the month



Left to right, are Pre-K students Arianna Leyva, Eli Martinez and Leila Chavez.



ECSE student Abel Garcia



Able 1 student Elyan Mendoza



Able 1 student Sebastian Perez



Left to right, are first-graders (front row) Romeo Rodriguez, Alayna Lopez, (back row) Leondro Leal and Noah De Hoyos.



Left to right, are kindergarten students (front row) Bryson Halimton, Harper Rivera, (back row) Adeline Rocha and Logan Riley.



Left to right, are second-graders (front row) Victoria Trevino, Abraham Hernandez, (back row) Cash Pendleton and Eva Moreno.



Left to right, are (front row) third-graders (front row) Aqsa Shaikh, Easton Perez, (back row) Antonella Bautista and Abner Yzaguirre.



Left to right, are fourth-graders (front row) Adam Aguilar, Saygan Booth, (back row) Ava Hernandez and Cheyenne Mijares.

Remember When

45 years ago (1981)
Dobie High School assistant head varsity football coach Don Cole announced his resignation. Firemen from the Sagemonst station of the Houston Fire Department responded to 13 fire calls and nine ambulance calls in a seven-day period.

40 years ago (1986)
Dr. Ruede M. Wheeler of La Porte has been appointed to the San Jacinto College Board of Regents to fill the seat left vacant by the death of Dr. William Davison in November. Wheeler was officially named to the position Jan. 7 at the Regents' regular monthly meeting. The term will expire in January of 1987.

The search to replace Davison, also of La Porte, who had served since 1971, took two months to complete, said W.L. "Levi" Smallwood, a regent who served on the committee to seek a replacement.

Although the college district is not on a single-member district representation system, Smallwood said the Board of Regents elected unanimously to replace Davison with someone from the La Porte school district.

The decision was based on a "gentlemen's agreement" set forth with the establishment of the district 25 years ago to maintain a balance among the six school districts represented by the college district, he said.

"That's the way it's always been maintained," said Smallwood who had served on the board 12 years.

Wheeler had been a member of the La Porte school board for nine years, serving as president for the past two years. He resigned his seat on that board Jan. 14.

Wheeler said he came to the San Jacinto College board with "no preconceived ideas."

"Everything I have heard about the college has been positive and I plan to learn and to learn quickly," he said. "I think my experience will help me do that."

Wheeler added that he is "looking forward to representing La Porte and all the areas the district encompasses" on the San Jacinto College Board of Regents.

He is a member and past president of the La Porte Rotary Club, a director of Bayshore National Bank in La Porte and a director of Bay Bancshares, Inc. of La Porte. He earned his Bachelor of Science degree at Texas A&M University and his doctor of dental surgery at the University of Texas Medical Branch in Houston.

35 Years ago (1991)
South Belt area residents used to playing dodge the bullet on the bridge at the intersection of Hughes Road and Beamer will receive relief this

year with the addition of signal lights.

The \$205,000 project was part of a joint effort between the Houston Department of Public Works, Traffic and Transportation Division and METRO. There were 23 projects included in the overall package, but the Beamer lights were the only ones in the South Belt area.

Only METRO funds will be used for the total \$2,440,000 needed for all 23 projects.

Signal lights would be erected to control traffic moving over and around the Hughes bridge. In addition, left-turn lanes would be constructed on Beamer to facilitate heavy traffic loads.

Project director Mark Luper from METRO said bond packages would be ready within 30 days from Jan. 1. Once the bid would be awarded, construction would begin in approximately 60 days.

Luper said the project would take 120 days (approximately four months) to complete. "Hopefully we should have the entire intersection reworked with the lights put up by the end of July. We'll have to order the traffic signals, then do all the left-turn lane construction. The construction is what will take the longest," said Luper.

City Councilman Frank Mancuso said he was pleased to see the intersection included in the project. "With the beltway coming through to Beamer,

we're going to see more and more traffic on Beamer and Hughes. It's just time to fix that intersection and get those lights up. It will be safer for everyone," said Mancuso.

30 years ago (1996)
Dr. Rhea Oglesbee, San Jacinto College South's registrar for the past 10 years, ended a 40-year career in education when she retired Jan. 31.

Thirty of those years had been at San Jacinto College.

In the span of her three decades at San Jacinto College, Oglesbee had been an English instructor, foreign student/financial aid counselor and registrar, serving an equal amount of time in each position. "I moved every 10 years," Oglesbee noted.

25 years ago (2001)
John Tuy Pham, 18, who was convicted of killing Dung Van Ha, 19, had his murder conviction overturned.

An appellate court overturned the conviction saying the law, which requires prompt parental notification, was violated.

Appellate Judge Margaret Mirabal wrote the opinion.

Pham, who was 16 when the murder occurred, had confessed to the crime approximately two hours after being arrested. His attorney theorized Pham may not have confessed had his parents been promptly notified of the arrest.

According to court records, Pham was arrested at Clear Brook High School at

approximately 2:30 p.m. Sept. 9, 1998. His sister was notified of the arrest six hours later, but his mother was not notified until 10 that evening.

Pham was convicted as one of four taking part in the killing of Ha. Three other arrests were made in the murder. Also arrested were Pham's brother, Huy Dang Pham, Tien Nam Tran and Thomas Troung Tran.

Ha was driving a vehicle occupied by three other Asian youths.

The two groups of Asian youths had been playing at a pool hall before the shooting, but according to police there had been no confrontation between them.

After both groups left, they were at a traffic light at Richmond and the Beltway when the group Pham was with opened fire on the car Ha and the others occupied.

Ha's vehicle was hit with 20 bullets. In addition to Ha's murder, two others were wounded and required surgery, the other escaped injury.

According to police, the shooting was a result of Pham's group erroneously believing the other youths were members of a rival gang.

After Tien Nam Tran had been arrested for the Ha murder, he was also charged with the April 30, 1998, murder of Tanya Meyers, 27, a Webster postal employee.

20 years ago (2006)
One hundred forty-four

acres of property south of Dixie Farm Road near the south side of the Brio Superfund Site was transferred as a Clear Creek Preserve conservation easement. The land was not open for public visitation and was designed to be preserved for natural habitat. The BSTF retained ownership while Legacy Land Trust holds the acreage as an easement. Present at the signing were, from left to right, site manager of Brio John Danna; LLT board member Cliff Meinhardt; Brio former site manager Larry Engle; LLT chairman Bill Turner; LLT board member Tom Roche; publisher and owner of the *South Belt-Ellington Leader* newspaper and chair of the Brio Community Assistance Group Marie Flickinger; and BSTF attorney Brad Raffle. The transaction had been approximately 10 years in the making and is the settlement of a legal agreement between the state of Texas and the BSTF.

BSTF was required to donate the land which was near the superfund site but did not include any of the designated superfund property.

15 years ago (2011)
House District 144 Rep. Ken Legler, who represented much of the South Belt area, was sworn in to office in Austin on Jan. 11. Legler and other representatives were to tackle several key issues this legislative session, including education spending and redistricting.

10 years ago (2016)
With the arrival of the new year, Texas' new open carry firearm law was in effect. The regulation, signed into law by Gov. Greg Abbott last June, allowed the state's licensed hand-gun holders, who previously had to keep their firearms concealed, to now carry them openly in a hip or shoulder holster. While it was already legal for Texans to carry long guns or rifles in public, the new law allows citizens to also carry handguns in plain view. Texas is the 45th (and largest) state in the nation to implement such a measure. In addition to having a concealed handgun license (CHL), those wishing to open carry must be at least 21, have a clean criminal and psycho-logical record, complete classroom training and pass a shooting test. Statewide, roughly 925,000 Texans — about 3 percent of the population — have CHLs. According to the Texas Department of Public Safety (the entity responsible for issuing CHLs), 468 residents living in the 77089 ZIP code alone received their CHLs in 2014. While no figures were yet available for the year 2015, that number was expected to be significantly higher, given nationwide trends. FBI records show a record number of more than 185,000 background checks taking place on Black Friday — a 5 percent increase over the previous year. By

comparison, the neighboring 77581 ZIP code in Pearland issued 770 permits during the same time period. The 77546 ZIP code in Friendswood issued 907. Despite the new law, most places already deemed gun-free zones, such as public schools, polling places and courtrooms, remained as such. State colleges and universities, however, would be required to allow permitted weapons on campus, per state law. Rice University, a private institution, had voted to opt out of campus carry, as it is referred to. Businesses in the state could also choose to opt out of the new law. H-E-B, Whataburger and Target are among the businesses prohibiting open carry. Other businesses, such as Walmart, Kroger and Home Depot were among the businesses that allowed it. Under the open carry law, a business must post signs in English and Spanish, known as 30.07s, if they choose to prohibit the practice. There are multiple sites online that compile lists of businesses that do and do not have 30.07 signs. It is often a sensitive decision for businesses to make, as the issue is quite polarizing. On one hand, there were many who would argue that carrying a gun makes them feel safer, while others feel much less safe in the presence of visible firearms. In an effort to educate local residents of the new regulations, Precinct 2, Place 1 Justice of the Peace Jo Ann Delgado would deliver a presentation to the South

Belt-Ellington Chamber of Commerce at a luncheon that spring. Harris County District Attorney Devon Anderson will also be taking part in the event.

5 years ago (2021)
Jerry Garcia was sworn in as the new Harris County Precinct 2 constable, replacing Constable Chris Diaz, who had held the seat since 2012.

The new constable said he planned to hit the ground running upon taking office by establishing a more solid rapport with the South Belt community.

"I would like to bring back integrity and a positive culture within the constable's office," Garcia said. "I would like to implement proactive patrol visibility to deter criminal activity in our communities. Establishing a mental-health unit and a Citizens Outreach Team is a top priority of mine to provide citizens with quality service. There is currently a disconnect with the constable and the residents of South Belt. As a South Belt resident I am already connected and engaged."

Garcia felt that his lengthy law enforcement experience would also help in this regard.

A 23-year resident of the South Belt community, Garcia most recently served as a lieutenant for the Harris County Precinct 3 constable's office. A 21-year law enforcement officer, Garcia had previously served with the Harris County Precincts 2 and 5 constable offices.

During his career, Garcia had worked on both the criminal and civil sides of law enforcement. He was also a longtime member of St. Luke Catholic Church and local youth soccer coach.

Garcia said he would tackle the issues of local homelessness and traffic accidents.

"Major issues affecting the South Belt community are the lack of patrol visibility, homelessness encampment issues, the rise in criminal activity and traffic enforcement," said Garcia. "I have received numerous concerns from our citizens in regard to traffic violations, major accidents within the South Belt area and the lack of proactive visible patrol activities."

1 year ago (2025)
Houston police were searching for a hit-and-run driver responsible for fatally striking a pedestrian around 7:10 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 22, in the 10100 block of SH 35/ Telephone Road near Alameda Genoa.

According to Houston Police Department officials, an unidentified vehicle struck the pedestrian, who was reportedly in the southbound lanes of traffic, then fled the scene without rendering aid.

Responding paramedics from the Houston Fire Department pronounced the male dead at the scene. The man's identity was not immediately available.

The investigation was ongoing at press time.



Over The Back Fence by Nicole

BIRTHDAY GREETINGS TO MARY
Best wishes to **Mary Clark** who enjoys a birthday Jan. 20. Greetings are sent from her husband **Chris** and her friends at the *Leader*.

MIKE ENJOYS A BIRTHDAY
Mike Williams celebrates a birthday Jan. 20. Best wishes are sent for a special day from family and friends at the *Leader*.

SCHOOL DAZE
The following staff and personnel of the Pasadena Independent School District celebrate birthdays Jan. 15 through Jan. 21.

Atkinson Elementary
Blow out the birthday candles for **Katherine Fielder** Jan. 20.

Burnett Elementary
Send a birthday greeting Jan. 21 to **Maria Hernandez**.

Frazier Elementary
Enjoy a slice of birthday cake with **Diana Moreno** Jan. 15.

Genoa Elementary
Send a nice birthday greeting Jan. 16 to **Luz Salazar**. Light the birthday candles Jan. 19 for **Patricia Kosmatka**.

Meador Elementary
Send a special birthday wish to **Melisa Hinojosa** who enjoys a birthday Jan. 16. Sing a happy birthday song to **Lizeth Flores**

Jan. 20.

Moore Elementary
Blow out the candles Jan. 15 for **Diana Moreno**. Jan. 19 is the day for a party for **Sandra Rodriguez** and **Marisol Salazar**. Send a birthday greeting Jan. 20 to **Brianna Lozano**.

South Belt Elementary
Jan. 19 is the day for a fun celebration for **Linh Moore**. **Mallory Stephens** celebrates a birthday Jan. 20.

Stuchbery Elementary
Blow out the candles Jan. 19 for **Charlene Provence**.

Melillo Middle School
Send a humorous birthday card Jan. 20 to **Denise Martinez**.

Beverly Hills Intermediate
Remember **Irene Flores** on Jan. 16 with a special birthday wish.

Thompson Intermediate
Melinda Harrison enjoys a birthday Jan. 15. **Lauren Soto** celebrates a birthday Jan. 19.

Dobie High
Celebrating a birthday Jan. 16 is **Jessy George**. Light the birthday candles Jan. 17 for **Fiorella Morin**. Jan. 18 is the day for a party for **Remi Yusuf**. A double-fun day is planned

Jan. 19 for **Cathy Meek** and **Yadira Razo-Perez**. Jan. 21 is the day for a fun celebration for **Miguel Ovalle**.

FRIENDS CELEBRATE BIRTHDAYS
Thursday, Jan. 15: **Denise Montano, Patrick Lesley, Heather White, Cody Fountain** and **Barbara Bennett-Northern**; Friday, Jan. 16: **Rachel Perez, Heidi Ferguson, Troy Merkall, Samesia Bass-Hamlett, Kimberly Dann-Mandy, Dana Willis** and **Lisa Pennington**; Saturday, Jan. 17: **Scott Greene, Tiffany Juarez, Donald Adams, Katherine Macias, Carla Parker, Jodie Lawson** and **Kevin Jasso**; Sunday, Jan. 18: **Charlie Boldt, Theria Malone, Lynn Carnes, Dwight Baker** and **Theresa Touchette**; Monday, Jan. 19: **Janet Thompson, Lisa Gates, Grace Lazo**, and **Brenda Mahoney**; Tuesday, Jan. 20: **Jeremiah Orsak, Stephanie Johnson, Mary Belz** and **Mark Roden**; and Wednesday, Jan. 21: **Traci Fort, Kim Saucedo, Karen Harlan, Connie Birmingham** and **Lisa Allen-Bragg**.

LEADER WANTS YOU IN THE NEWS
Email announcements of anniversaries, vacations and graduations to mynews@southbeltleader.com with OTBF in the subject line by Friday noon for the next week's publication. For birthdays, type "OTBF: Friends Celebrate Birthdays" in the subject line.

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SPORTS NEWS & NOTES

Spring sports scene soon to get busy

Excitement will be building for local sports fans at all levels as the spring season kicks into high gear.

Intent on capitalizing on the momentum created by a run to the Division 1 area playoff round a season ago and boosted by the return of several key players, the Dobie varsity softball team will get things rolling Jan. 24 with the varsity program scrimmages at Deer Park beginning at 11 a.m.

Dobie will also scrimmage at La Porte Jan. 27, at Clear Falls Jan. 30 and at Angleton Feb. 3. Dobie will then attend a varsity scrimmage at Clear Springs Feb. 6 before the Feb. 9 regular season opener at Clear Brook.

The Longhorns will once again attend the prestigious National Fastpitch Coaches Association Leadoff Classic at College Station Feb. 12-14.

Dobie will be led by a host of proven performers, including senior pitcher Vanessa De La Fuente, a Texas Lutheran University signee who registered her 300th career strikeout last season and will be counted on to pitch plenty of big games this season.

The offense is also bolstered by the return of at least a half dozen players who got at bats against both Ridge Point and Clear Springs in the post-season in 2025.

The Dobie boys' and girls' track and field programs will begin competition Feb. 6 by attending the Kethan Relays at Deer Park.

Pasadena ISD will then be the host of the prestigious Brown Relays Feb. 12 at Auxiliary Stadium in Pasadena.

The Dobie baseball program begins scrimmage action Jan. 31 at Summer Creek, and the varsity program will also scrimmage at Clear Falls Feb. 2 before scrimmaging at Baytown Sterling Feb. 6.

Dobie has scrimmages at La Porte Feb. 10 and at home against Clear Brook Feb. 13 before opening the regular season at Goose Creek Memorial Feb. 16.

The Dobie tennis program begins its spring season at Pearland Jan. 15 and will then attend the Furlow Invitational in Missouri City Jan. 23-24.

And of course the boys' and girls' basketball seasons as well as the boys' and girls' soccer seasons are in full swing.

The Longhorn varsity boys' basketball team is coming off a victory over Sam Rayburn and at 2-4 is still well in the mix for a late season playoff push.

Pearland was undefeated at 7-0 at press time to lead the way, with Shadow Creek at 5-1 and Dawson at 5-2. Beyond that, Memorial was fourth along with Alvin at 3-3, followed by Dobie.

The Clear Brook varsity boys' basketball team has won 19 overall games but is coming off a tough loss to Clear Falls, which has the Wolverines at 1-2 in the league race for fifth place at press time with a key game against Clear Lake upcoming.

The Longhorn varsity boys' soccer program stood at 4-0-1 after a 3-0 victory over Klein Forest in nondistrict action. Following a 1-1 tie against Dawson to open league play, the Longhorns will take on a tough Pasadena Memorial program on the road Jan. 16.

The Dobie varsity girls' soccer program dropped a 6-0 match to Dawson to open league play, and stood at 1-4 early this season with a match coming at home Jan. 16 against Memorial.

Pearland, Dawson, Memorial and Shadow Creek earned first-round victories as the 22 6A season kicked into high gear.

The San Jacinto College softball and baseball programs will also start their respective seasons later this month.

De Hoyos leads JFD softball

At right, senior Natalie De Hoyos (15) has secured her collegiate future as she will continue her education and playing career at Texas A&M-Victoria. First, she will look to lead the Longhorns back to the postseason after a run to the area playoff round in 2025.



Richard Jr. to FSU



Dobie graduate and former Illinois State freshman football star C.J. Richard Jr. was named a prestigious Phil Steele fourth-team All-American out of the Missouri Valley Football Conference while leading the 13-3 Redbirds to the Jan. 5 FCS Championship Game against Montana State. Illinois State pushed Montana State to overtime in the championship game before Montana State emerged with a 35-34 victory. Richard, a 2024 Dobie graduate, picked off three passes in 2025 as a redshirt freshman and has since announced via X that he will transfer to Florida State.

Dobie graduate Mathews joins New Mexico football

The University of New Mexico football program certainly seems to be on the upswing these days, and former Dobie star Cameron Mathews is now ready to add his talents to a Lobos' program coming off a 9-4 run in 2025 that included a Rate Bowl appearance against Minnesota.

Bidding to become just the second team in program history to win 10 games in a single season, the Lobos took a 17-14 lead in overtime at Chase Field in Arizona Dec. 26 before the Gophers scored a touchdown on their first possession in overtime to steal a thrilling win.

Moving quickly to capitalize on the momentum within the program, Lobos' head coach Jason Eck and his staff enjoyed a great 2025-2026 national signing day Dec. 3, signing six players as part of a strong incoming class of freshmen.

Shifting their focus to the transfer portal earlier this month, the New Mexico staff also welcomed current collegiate players including Mathews, who last season was a redshirt freshman at Memphis. Dobie's all-time leading rusher with more than 5,000 career yards, Mathews said he is more than ready to contribute at the University of New Mexico.

Mathews might very well have been perfectly happy to stay at Memphis, but a coaching change there allowed for players within the program to transfer through the portal, which Mathews did. He will have four years of eligibility remaining when he takes the field at New Mexico.

"I'm actually glad that I had a chance to redshirt last season which gave me a chance to view the college game from the outside looking in and to understand the expectations and the preparation that goes into being a college athlete," Mathews said.

"I tried to take advantage of every opportunity that was in front of me, whether it was a 5 a.m. weight room workout or just taking care of my body through diet and fitness training.

"I'm up to 190 pounds right now and really feel like I can contribute quickly at New Mexico. All I need is an opportunity, and I'm going to get that with the Lobos. I can't tell you how excited I am to get started with this program."

Still intent on becoming a coach once his playing days are fulfilled, Mathews says he will likely focus his studies within the history field at New Mexico, although he has not decided on a major. He

was in the Houston area visiting family in recent days and will head to Albuquerque to begin classes for the spring semester very soon, which at some point will include participation in spring football workouts with the Lobos.



"All of us out there playing college football understand that it's a different world out there with the portal and so forth, but New Mexico has given me an opportunity to come in and compete for playing time immediately, and I look forward to that, Mathews said. "I truly believe I'm as prepared as ever to play at this level. The opportunity is there for me, and I plan to take full advantage of it.

At left, Dobie's all-time leading rusher, Cameron Mathews, will have four years of eligibility remaining as he joins the University New Mexico football program.

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Dawson, Manvel and Shadow Creek have each eclipsed 20 overall wins to this point on the varsity girls' basketball scene and hold top-10 state rankings courtesy of the Texas Association of Basketball Coaches, and fourth-place Pearland isn't far behind. Kianni Senegal (3) and Dobie finished the first half of 22-6A action with a win over Rayburn Jan. 10 and were at 3-5 in the standings heading into the second half of league play.



Dobie senior Hailey Butler (23) and her Longhorn teammates are intent on finishing the 2025-2026 strong even as a playoff berth may prove to be out of reach with eight games remaining.

Photos by Donna Alsdorf

JFD girls host Manvel Jan. 17, 1 p.m. Dobie main

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2025 Year in Review: Players and their teams stand out



Camryn Dickson (left) delivered a win in the 100 at 11.27 seconds for the Aggies while team member Jasmine Montgomery was second for a silver medal with her clocking of 11.33 in Eugene, Ore. Overall,

The *Leader* continues this week with its third installment of the 2025 year in review, focusing on some of the sports highlights from last year. Enjoy!

April 24
Clear Brook senior Darwin Bolden II advanced to the University Interscholastic League's 2025 State Track and Field Championships at Mike A. Myers Stadium on the campus of the University of Texas after finishing second in the discus at the Region III Championships April 18 in Webster.

Gold medalist Adam Carter of Katy (186 feet, 2 inches) and Bolden, who delivered a personal record of 182-6 for the silver medal in the event, were dominant at Challenger Columbia Stadium in Webster in qualifying for the state championships.

Bolden helped extend a streak of what is now six consecutive seasons (2020 excluded due to the pandemic) of at least one Wolverine athlete reaching the state championships. Bolden is currently a freshman competing in the weights at Lamar University in Beaumont.

Winners of 10 of their last 12 district games and six overall, the Dobie varsity baseball team surged into third place in the District 22-6A standings with a series remaining against Manvel prior to the start of the postseason.

The Longhorns were most likely to enter the playoffs as the No. 2 seed out of 22-6A in the

Division 1 bracket, with Pearland having secured the top seed in the division courtesy of a series sweep over the locals.

Dawson finished league play at 14-2 and won a district championship for the first time since 2018.

Patrick Longstreet, who had been the varsity head football coach at South Houston High School since 2018, gained Pasadena ISD board approval and is now the district's incoming director of athletics.

Longstreet replaced Rupert Jaso, who retired from education after a lifelong career that began in 1992 at Clear Creek Intermediate.

Both the San Jacinto College softball and baseball programs qualified for the postseason and were looking to finish strong prior to that postseason run.

Career win No. 800 in hand, San Jacinto College head softball coach Kelly Saenz was focused on getting her team to the finish line within the Region 14 South division.

As for Saenz, her 800th career victory came April 21 as the Ravens defeated Lamar-Port Arthur by a 10-9 count.

Lutheran South Academy varsity girls' soccer standouts Jemma Riekert and Addi Smith were recognized as Academic All-State honorees by the Texas Association of Private and Parochial Schools for the 2024-2025 school year.

Smith was also a second-team All-State selec-

tion as a defender for the Pioneers.

First-team All-District honorees for the Pioneers included Smith at defender and forward Cassidy Pfeiffer.

Midfielder Peyton Lawrence and Riekert at defender were second-team honorees, while forwards Jade Barefield and Olivia Rivas as well as goalkeepers London Cathey and Skylar Catron were honorable mention choices.

Lutheran South Academy swimmers Elijah Brown, Lauren Ferguson and Luis Ordaz were honored as Academic All-State honorees by the Texas Association of Private and Parochial Schools for the 2024-2025 school year.

The trio also qualified for the state championships in various events, with Ferguson winning a pair of medals.

Three Lutheran South Academy varsity boys' basketball players earned All-District honors following the 2024-2025 season, including senior and first-team performer David Streeter.

Other LSA players, including Harry Burkett, Mike Matthews and Ralston Wagoner, earned All-District second-team honors. The Pioneers' Jashaun Brooks collected All-District honorable mention status.

Lutheran South varsity girls basketball player Natalie Browning earned Texas Association of Private and Parochial Schools Academic All-State honors for the 2024-2025

school year and was also a second team All-District performer on the court following the pioneers' season.

LSA's Annie De La Pena was an All-District first-team pick while Sam Avery, Browning and Olivia Varanauski were named to the second team. Lutheran South's Elisabeth Hergenrader, Anna Schepmann and Ava Zamora were honorable mention choices.

Lutheran South Academy varsity girls' golfers Emma Poffinbarger, Addison Trahan and Olivia Rivas each earned first team All-District accolades while finishing in the top 10 at the district golf tournament.

Poffinbarger was fourth after firing a single round 81, while Trahan was sixth with her 85. Rivas completed a round of 92 to finish ninth overall. Lutheran South Academy was second as a team.

May 1
Having reached the elite eight of the University Interscholastic League's first-year Division 1 postseason bracket, Dobie and Clear Springs met for the first time since the 2021 regional quarterfinals as the two programs contest an area round best-of-three softball series.

Dobie improved to 18-11 overall after reaching the second round for the first time in four years courtesy of a two-game sweep over District 21-6A champion Ridge Point, ending the series with a 10-7 win over the Panthers April 25 at Ridge Point after taking the series opener 10-5 the previous night at San Jacinto College South.

Having taken the opener 10-5 but now facing the prospect of two possible road games at Ridge Point, Dobie plated four runs each in the top half of the third and fourth innings to build an 8-3 lead heading into the latter stages of game two.

Amaya Corona singled in two runs and Chloe Nunez and Viviana Fernandez also plated runs in the top of the third inning for a 4-0 Dobie lead.

Ridge Point responded with two runs in the bottom half of the inning to cut the lead to 4-2, but back came the Longhorns.

Peralta doubled in two runs in the top of the fourth and a Fernandez single plated two more runs as the Longhorns extended their advantage to 8-3. Leslie Sarduy hit a sacrifice fly in the fifth inning and scored on a double by Persephone Soria in the top of the seventh as Dobie produced plenty of offense to advance to the next round.

Soria was 4 for 5 in the deciding game with a double, two runs scored and another driven in.

Competing in a District 22-6A alignment that featured some of the top boys'

and girls' tennis players in the region, it would have been easy to understand if Dobie were to have gotten shut out of a regional berth for the second straight season, yet Diego Flores and Nestor Garza brought it home in grand fashion for the Longhorns.

Seeded sixth to open the 22-6A spring championships of the boys' doubles draw and having to begin one match at 9 p.m. in the evening due to rain, Flores and Garza rallied for a 7-6 (7-2), 7-5 win over Pearland in the play-back match with their season on the line.

The straight-set win therefore secured the second of two Region III tournament invitations as the spring tennis season shifted to Deer Park High School.

May 8
Dobie was into the second round of the varsity baseball postseason for the third straight season following a 6-2, 9-4 series sweep of Ridge Point May 1-2 at Manvel High School.

Juelz Martinez, Isaiah Jones and Williard Joiner III starred at the plate in both games for the Longhorns and senior Aiden Sanchez and freshman Jaylen Aguilar delivered strong five-inning starting-pitching performances as Dobie advanced to the Division 1 area round.

Martinez and Angel Molina both went 2 for 3 and scored three runs each at the top of the lineup to set the table again and again for the rest of the lineup as the Longhorns closed out the series with a 9-4 victory over the Panthers in game two of a best-of-three series May 2.

In the series closer, Molina singled and stole second in the top of the first inning and eventually scored on a passed ball for a 1-0 Dobie lead after an inning. In the top of the third, Martinez singled to left field and advanced to third on an error before scoring on Molina's RBI single.

Jones then doubled home Molina for a 3-0 Longhorns' lead. Later in the inning, Jones scored on a groundout by Joiner as Dobie's lead was 4-0. Leading 4-1, the Longhorns plated three more runs in the top of the fifth inning despite just one hit in the frame to lead 7-1.

Joiner then had an RBI single as the Longhorns went on to close out the series. Aguilar allowed just three hits and two earned runs across five innings against the Panthers, and Martinez twirled the final two innings for a 9-4 win that clinched the area round berth.

Clear Brook senior Darwin Bolden II completed his exceptional career with the Wolverines as he was seventh overall in the discus with a throw of 166-8 at state.

District 24-6A softball tri-champion Clear Springs advanced to the Division 1 regional semifinals courtesy of an area around playoff sweep of Dobie.

The Chargers, 21-6 overall following the two wins over the Longhorns, got a second home run from freshman Mackenzie Thomas in as many nights while getting off to a 3-0 first inning start, then played sparkling defense at times to keep the Longhorns at a distance in winning 8-3 May 1 at La Porte High School, therefore closing out the best-of-three series.

Dobie, which finished its season at 18-13 overall, scored a pair of runs in the bottom of the first inning after Clear Springs took its 3-0 but then trailed 4-1 and seemingly spent the majority of the evening one hit away from changing leadership in the game.

Dobie multievent standout and Class of 2025 senior Stacie Harris announced via X that she planned to continue her education and track and field career at Texas Southern University in

Houston.

Harris was a four-year varsity performer for Dobie and has also excelled on the summer circuit with the Pearland Track Xpress.

She has 100, 200 and 400 experience along with a pair of regional long jump qualifications while at Dobie and has also competed in the pentathlon with the Xpress.

Former Elkins High School star Branford Jones was named Dobie's boys' basketball head coach, and Jones said he was committed to helping to guide the Longhorns' program back to prominence within a region and state he knows very well.

The Texas A&M track and field program hosted its annual Alumni Muster invite on May 3, in College Station as junior Camryn Dickson of Clear Brook and teammate Jasmine Montgomery went 1-2 in the women's 100, with Dickson winning at a season's best of 11.04 seconds and Montgomery second at 11.13, another season's best.

The duo also delivered season's best times in the 200, with Montgomery winning at 22.17 and Dickson third at 22.39. Jizzale Davis, a freshman at UT Rio Grande Valley and also a Clear Brook graduate (class of 2025), posted a time of 11.78 for 16th-best. A time of 24.18 also placed Davis 16th in the 200.

The Lutheran South Academy varsity track and field squad came away with a pair of top-three medals as the Texas Association of Private and Parochial Schools all classes state championships were held at Waco Midway High School's Matador Stadium.

A pair of Houston area programs went to the tape in the 4x100 relay, with Fort Bend Christian snagging the gold in a time of 42.14.

Lutheran South was next in for the silver medal as Elijah Brown, Rhet Lavergne, John Leblanc and Scott Farine combined for a time of 43.03. Pioneer senior Alma Martin was a bronze medalist in the pole vault as she cleared 10-0.

May 15
A pair of losses sandwiched around a one-run victory over Blinn served to bring an end to a 26-31 season for the San Jacinto College Softball program as head coach Kelly Saenz and her crew concluded an up-and-down 2025 campaign.

The Ravens advanced to the National Junior College Athletic Association's Division 1 World Series in three of the past four seasons leading up to this one, but things never really seemed to click in terms of consistency as the Ravens finished with a sub .500 record for the first time in several seasons.

Following the end of the regular season, several San Jacinto College players were recognized with regional and Conference honors for their performance on the field.

Infielder Kamryn DeLeon and designated player Madelyn Perez were selected to the All-Conference first team along with outfielders Iliana Melendez and Bree Winkelman. DeLeon also captured first team nominations.

A pair of one-run losses to Atascocita in the Division 1 area playoff round served as a disappointing ending to the varsity baseball careers of 15 Dobie seniors and their teammates as the Longhorns were swept 3-2, 6-5 by the Eagles in a best-of-three series May 9-10 at Baytown Sterling.

Atascocita clinched a regional Final Four berth thanks in large part to a six-run top of the fourth inning in the second and eventual deciding game, forcing the Longhorns to play catch-up the rest of the way.

The second game was scoreless through three innings as Dobie fresh-



Williard Joiner III (17) once again played a huge role for the Dobie varsity baseball team as the locals reached the area playoff round.

Photo by Gloria Wallace

man right-hander Jaylen Aguilar and Atascocita's Ty Higgingbotham posted zeroes on the scoreboard.

Consecutive singles plus a walk loaded the bases with no outs for the Eagles in the top of the fourth inning before Jayden Hernandez drew an RBI walk and C.J. Toney came up with a two-run single for a 3-0 lead.

Down 6-3, the Longhorns plated two more runs in their half of the sixth inning. Julian Valencia had an RBI groundout and Martinez smacked a two-out double to score Aguilar.

But with Martinez at second, Molina flied out to end the inning. In the bottom of the seventh, Dobie had its chances but Atascocita's Garett Hackenbruck managed to close out the series.

Clear Brook's loss is now Clear Falls' gain as former longtime Wolverine head baseball coach Gene Flores was named to the same role with the Knights.

The maneuvering began with the retirement of Eddie Youngblood,

who had been the first and only varsity head baseball coach at Clear Falls.

Dobie's Diego Flores and Nestor Garza lost to Katy Seven Lakes' No. 2-seeded Sorathan Leekumjorn/Aidan Xu, 6-2, 6-0, in the opening round of the Region III 6A Championships at Deer Park High School South, after qualifying as the District 22-6A runners-up.

"Diego and Nestor played two of the best matches in Dobie tennis history at district," Moreno said, noting the two upset No. 2-seeded Alvin Shadow Creek in the quarterfinals in three sets before shocking No. 5-seeded Pearland in the second-place playback match, 7-6 (7-2), 7-5, Garza hitting the match winner.

"It was a forehand crosscourt winner I'll always remember," Moreno added. "I'm sure Nestor, Diego and Pearland won't forget it, either."

The Lutheran South Academy varsity golf team captured its third consecutive Texas Association of Private and Pa-

rochial Schools 5A state championship with the team win May 5-6 at the Cottonwood Creek Golf Club in Waco.

The LSA girls put together a five-player total of 377 to capture the state championship, just one shot ahead of Frasatti Catholic.

Individually, Jameson Louie of Fort Bend Christian fired a single round 77 to win the gold medal, with the Pioneers' senior Addison Trahan second with a round of 81.

Junior Emma Poffinbarger of LSA was eighth with an 88. Senior Olivia Rivas (101), freshman Kiley Alexander (107) and junior Sophia Maxwell (119) rounded out the scoring for Lutheran South.

Trahan, Poffinbarger and Rivas were part of each of the program's three consecutive state titles under the guidance of head coach Geoff Stresman.

The state championship team included Alexander, Maxwell, Rivas, Poffinbarger and Trahan. LSA

Continued on Page 8



Longhorn senior Leslie Sarduy (1) and her teammates advanced into the second round of the postseason for the first time since 2021 and looked to continue their momentum against a tough Clear Springs opponent. The Chargers swept the series.

Photo by Gloria Wallace



Adam Carter of Katy (center) was the Region III discus champion with a throw of 186 feet, 2 inches, while Clear Brook senior Darwin Bolden II (right) came up with a personal record throw of 182-6 for the silver medal as both qualified for the state championships. At left is bronze medalist Cornelius Francis of Summer Creek.

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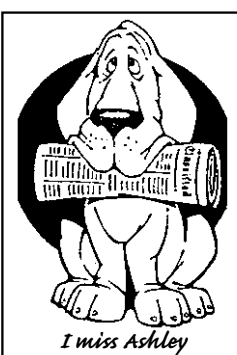
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THURSDAY, JANUARY 15
7 a.m. **AA Meeting** - "Breakfast With Bill," Tuesday through Friday, 7 a.m., and Saturday at 7:30 a.m. Hope Community United Methodist Church, 2838 Lily St. Call 713-686-6300 (24/7) or visit <https://aahouston.org/meetings/>.
7:30 a.m. **Rotary Club of Pearland** - Check website for time and location <https://pearlandrotary.com/events/calendar> or call 832-293-9860.
9 a.m. **Pasadena Heritage Park and Museum** - Exhibits include dioramas, a turn-of-the-century doctor's office and an old-time kitchen. Open Tues. - Sat., 9 a.m. - 4 p.m., 204 S. Main, Pasadena. Call Karen Hollon at 713-472-0565 for appointment. Tours 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.
FRIDAY, JANUARY 16
7 a.m. **AA Meeting** - "Breakfast With Bill." See Thursday's notice.
9 a.m. **Pasadena Heritage Park and Museum** - See Thursday's notice.
Noon **Alcoholics Anonymous (AA)** - **Imperfect Nooners Group**, 3525 Broadway, Pearland, or at <https://aahouston.org/meetings/imperfect-nooners>. Call 713-686-6300 for more information. Meets Monday, Wednesday and Friday.
7 p.m. **Narcotics Anonymous (NA)** - Vigilance Group of NA, open meeting, 2930 E. Broadway (FM 518), Pearland, First Presbyterian Church (youth building). For details, call 713-661-4200 or visit www.hascona.com or <https://nastuff.com/>. Meets Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday.
7 p.m. **Congregation Shaar Hashalom** - All services are live and on Zoom. For details regarding services or Judaism classes, visit <https://www.shaarhashalom.org>.
8 p.m. **Alcoholics Anonymous** - meets at Cross Roads UMC Wednesday, Friday and Sunday, 8 p.m., 10030 Scarsdale Blvd. For details, call 281-484-9243.
8 p.m. **Beverly Hills Sharers Group AA** - meets at CrossRoads UMC Wednesday, Friday and Sunday, 8 p.m., 10030 Scarsdale Blvd. Call 281-484-9243.
8 p.m. **Serenity Now Al-Anon Group** - meets at CrossRoads UMC Fridays, 8 to 9 p.m., 10030 Scarsdale Blvd. Family members and friends of problem drinkers/addicts share, learn Al-Anon principles, that they are not alone, and discover choices available. For details, call 281-484-9243.

Bill." See Thursday's notice.
9 a.m. **Pasadena Heritage Park and Museum** - See Thursday's notice.
9:30 a.m. **Congregation Shaar Hashalom** - See Friday's notice.
SUNDAY, JANUARY 18
8 a.m./ 10:15 a.m. **St. Paul's Anglican Church** - has worship Tuesday at 11:30 a.m., Wednesday at 7 p.m. (Bible study, Book of Revelation, at 6 p.m.) and Sunday at 8 a.m. and 10:15 a.m., 11456 Space Center Blvd. (in back of a medical/retail community). For details, call 281-479-7285 and leave a message, or stop by.
5:30 p.m. **Celebrate Recovery** - A faith-based 12-Step program, in the Life Kids Chapel at Life Church, 5125 Preston Ave. Pasadena, TX 77505. Call 713-419-2635 for details.
8 p.m. **Alcoholics Anonymous** - See Friday's notice.
8 p.m. **Beverly Hills Sharers Group AA** - See Friday's notice.
MONDAY, JANUARY 19
Noon **Alcoholics Anonymous (AA)** - **Imperfect Nooners Group**. See Friday's notice.
5 p.m. **New Directions Singles Social Group** is a singles group for those 55+. Meetings are the first and third Monday held in the community room at Maplewood Crossing, 600 Hobbs Road, League City. There will a potluck dinner and may include group activities. For further information, call Carol at 281-508-1663. See Facebook page: New Directions Singles Social Group.
6 p.m. **Scrabble Club #511** - Meets Monday at Denny's, 19212 Gulf Freeway. Join the fun and improve crossword skills. COVID-19 vaccination required. Email huff_reunion@juno.com for info.
7 p.m. **TOPS (Take Off Pounds Sensibly)** - #0683 Friendswood chapter meets at Friendswood Methodist Church, 110 N. Friendswood Dr. in the educational bldg., room 201. For information, call Lynette Ringrose at 832-858-4617 or Dorothy Pourteau at 713-875-8820.
7 p.m. **Narcotics Anonymous (NA)**. See Friday's notice.
7 p.m. **Alcoholics Anonymous (AA)** - St. Luke's Group 12-Step Recovery, open meeting Mondays, 7 p.m. in the education Bldg. in room 4, at 11011 Hall Rd. Call 832-725-8479 or 281-309-2801.
TUESDAY, JANUARY 20
7 a.m. **AA Meeting** - "Breakfast With Bill." See Thursday's notice.

9 a.m. **Pasadena Heritage Park and Museum** See Thursday's notice.
11:30 a.m. **St. Paul's Anglican Church** - See Sunday's notice.
7 p.m. **Narcotics Anonymous (NA)**. See Friday's notice.
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 21
7 a.m. **AA Meeting** - "Breakfast With Bill." See Thursday's notice.
9 a.m. **Pasadena Heritage Park and Museum** - See Thursday's notice.
Noon **Alcoholics Anonymous (AA)** - **Imperfect Nooners Group**. See Friday's notice.
Noon **Ballroom Dancing** - A ballroom dance group welcomes visitors every Wednesday to enjoy free dancing from noon to 3 p.m. at Hometown Heroes Park Ballroom, 1001 East League City Parkway, League City. Everyone is welcome to enjoy dancing to a selection of CD music provided by DJ Neva Schroder and guest DJs. This weekly dance does not include lessons. Free lessons are taught by Jerry Sanford at the same location on Mondays from 1:30 to 3 p.m. While these opportunities are free and provided by volunteers, the park system requires participants to register and get an activity card for all park activities. For more information about the activity card, ask at the front desk or call 281-554-1180.
6 p.m./ 7 p.m. **St. Paul's Anglican Church** - See Sunday's notice.
7 p.m. **Narcotics Anonymous (NA)**. See Friday's notice.
7 p.m. **St. Paul's Anglican Church** - See Sunday's notice.
8 p.m. **Alcoholics Anonymous**. See Friday's notice.
8 p.m. **Beverly Hills Sharers Group AA**. See Friday's notice.
THURSDAY, JANUARY 22
7 a.m. **AA Meeting** - "Breakfast With Bill," Tuesday through Friday, 7 a.m., and Saturday at 7:30 a.m. Hope Community United Methodist Church, 2838 Lily St. Call 713-686-6300 (24/7) or visit <https://aahouston.org/meetings/>.
7:30 a.m. **Rotary Club of Pearland** - Check website for time and location <https://pearlandrotary.com/events/calendar> or call 832-293-9860.
9 a.m. **Pasadena Heritage Park and Museum** - Exhibits include dioramas, a turn-of-the-century doctor's office and an old-time kitchen. Open Tues. - Sat., 9 a.m. - 4 p.m., 204 S. Main, Pasadena. Call Karen Hollon at 713-472-0565 for appointment. Tours 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.

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JFD's Nunez picks Alvin softball



Chloe Nunez finalized her collegiate choice heading in the next school year as she will continue her education and playing career at Alvin College, where she will play for a Dolphin program that competes within Region XIV of the National Junior College Athletic Association. Nunez was a 22-6A second-team All-District outfielder and made the 22-6A Academic All-District team.

A&M-Victoria softball adds De Hoyos



Dobie senior Natalie De Hoyos is set to continue her education and softball career at Texas A&M-Victoria after signing with the program prior to the holiday break. De Hoyos heads into her senior season at Dobie after she was a first-team All-District infielder and a member of the 22-6A Academic All-District honor team as a junior.

It's Texas Lutheran for De La Fuente



The Longhorns' Vanessa De La Fuente has chosen to continue her education and collegiate softball career at Texas Lutheran University. De La Fuente was sensational as a junior in 2025 as she was a 22-6A first-team All-District honoree as a player and excelled in the classroom as an Academic All-District choice. Dobie will open the regular season Feb. 9 at Clear Brook.

Leader's 2025 Year In Review continues look at memorable sports moments

Continued from Page 6

boys' golfer Karsen Parker shot a 71 to finish in a third place tie individually. The Dobie swimming and diving team held its second annual End-of-Season Banquet at the Deer Park Battleground Golf Course.

Student-athletes honored with special awards as a result of their success this season included Zoey Vuong, Most Valuable Swimmer/Diver; Joel Chapa, Coach's Award; Khristian Zamora, Sportsmanship Award; Jossiah DePaul, Most Improved Swimmer/ Diver; and Alexander Griffin, Rookie of

the Year.

May 22
After dedicating nearly 80 years combined of their lives to high school athletics and public education within a pair of neighboring school districts, Pasadena ISD Director of Athletics Rupert Jaso and longtime Assistant Director of Athletics Donna Branch both announced their respective retirements.

Jaso, who spent the majority of his career within Clear Creek ISD before taking the lead within the Pasadena ISD athletic department nine school years ago, stepped out after be-

ginning his career back in 1992 at Space Center Intermediate.

Branch, a 1975 Sam Rayburn High School graduate and standout volleyball player with the Texans, won more than 500 career matches as the varsity volleyball head coach at Dobie, winning 10 district crowns before retiring from coaching following a regional quarter-final berth to complete the 2002-2003 season.

Upon leaving the volleyball court, Branch joined Dobie High School's administration as an assistant principal, a role she held for 15 years

before becoming the assistant AD overseeing the district's athletic activities. Inducted into the Pasadena ISD Athletics Hall of Fame as part of its 2016 class, Branch was retiring after a total of 45 years within the school district in a variety of roles.

Tempering some of the disappointment that came with consecutive premature postseason defeats leading into the 2025 season, a focused Lutheran South Academy varsity baseball program dominated the postseason on the way to the program's fifth Texas Association

of Private and Parochial Schools 5A state championship since 2015.

Putting together an impressive 43-0 combined score throughout the four-game postseason, the Pioneers capped off the state championship with an 11-0 victory over Grapevine Faith Christian May 13 in Waco.

Senior right-hander Grant Burns captured tournament Most Valuable Player honors after spinning a four-hit shut-out with nine strikeouts against the Lions as he capped a terrific season with the Pioneers.

LSA broke open a

scoreless game with a three-run third inning, then added a pair of four-run frames to cruise to the state championship.

Omar Serna, who played his first two high school seasons at Dobie before transferring to Lutheran South prior to the 2024 season, had a pair of singles and drove in three runs in his final game with the Pioneers.

Following 29 years on the baseline or on the cart path as a coach at Dobie High School, Class of 1990 JFD graduate and since longtime faculty staffer Kevin Cross decided to step away from

coaching at the only school for which he's ever worked. Cross remains on staff and continue to teach aquatic science, but decided that he would like to start going home at 3 p.m. more days than not.

Truly a Dobie lifer, Cross played varsity basketball with the Longhorns for three seasons before graduating in 1990.

May 29
Yet another indicator of the Dobie varsity baseball program's solid run of success over the past several seasons was on display June 3 as a pair of Class of 2025 graduates participated in the 2025

Greater Houston Baseball Coaches Association All-Star Game at St. Thomas High School in Houston.

Juelz Martinez and Willard Joiner III saved their best for their respective senior seasons, putting together incredible offensive seasons to help lift the Longhorns to a third consecutive second-round playoff series in three years.

Persephone Soria made a big splash as a freshman a season ago as she was the Freshman of the Year in a previous 22-6A alignment.

For 2025, Soria continued her sensational play as she was a first-team At-Large All-District selection as an outfielder as well as an All-Academic team honoree.

Soria hit .459 in 31 overall games, scoring 32 runs, driving in 30 runs and leading the team with 14 total extra-base hits and 18 stolen bases.

Leading her team to second place in the 22-6A standings and a bidistrict

playoff series sweep over Ridge Point, Dobie's Robbin Rackley was named the Coach of the Year within the varsity softball league.

Dobie junior Natalie De Hoyos was an All-District first-teamer as an infielder as she put together another terrific season with the Longhorns.

On the field, De Hoyos hit .402 with 39 runs scored to go with 14 runs driven in. She also excelled in the classroom as she was an All-Academic team honoree.

Dobie junior pitcher Vanessa De La Fuente once again turned into the staff ace for the Longhorns as she went 12-8 overall this season with an earned run average of 3.39 over 26 overall appearances on her way to first team All-District honors.

With 145 strikeouts this season, she has more than 330 for her career to go with 27 total wins. Excelling in the classroom, De La Fuente was also a 22-6A All-Academic nominee.



Four Lutheran South Academy varsity baseball players earned Texas Association of Private and Parochial Schools 5A All-State Tournament Team honors after leading the Pioneers to the crown. Those players in-

cluded, left to right, Brody Smith (7), Grant Burns (13), Victor Coronado (22) and Wyatt Powell (9). Lutheran South has now captured five state championships since the 2015 season. Photo by Mateo Serna



Pasadena ISD Director of Athletics Rupert Jaso (right) and Assistant Director of Athletics Donna Branch retired in July following decades-long careers in education. Jaso spent much of his career in Clear Creek ISD and had been with PISD for the past nine years. Branch began a 45-year career at Miller intermediate in 1980.



At left, Jordan "Jet" Hernandez (left) and Da'Marcus Hodges had a chance to reconnect as the former Sagemont Cowboy teammates (see photo at right) visited during the Bayou Bowl festivities earlier this month at Barbers Hill High School. Hernandez set district records in the sprints as an eighth-grade student at Thompson Intermediate before the family moved into the Pearland High School attendance zone. A three-year varsity letterman on the varsity football field, Hernandez put together a stellar career with the Oilers. For his career, Hernandez set Pearland all-time record for receiving yards with 2,273 and receptions with 132. He is also the program all-time leader in touchdown receptions with 26. Hernandez as a senior established a single-season record for receptions with 63 and is second all-time in single-season receiving yards with 1,094 along with 15 touchdowns. Not to be outdone, Hodges was the 22-6A Offensive Player of the Year after leading the district in rushing and was the Most Valuable Player of the Bayou Bowl after scoring a pair of touchdowns. Both seniors are continuing to evaluate their collegiate options.



Dobie graduate Lexie Gonzalez, currently a stand-out collegiate volleyball player at Lamar University, has landed Southland Conference All-Academic team honors for the 2025-2026 academic year.

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