South Belt-Ellington Leader

Serving South Belt since 1976

The Voice of Community-Minded People

Thursday, November 19, 2026 | **Email: mynews@southbeltleader.com** | **www.southbeltleader.com** | **Vol. 51, No. 42**

Friendsgiving returns

The community is invited to gather for Friendsgiving on Tuesday, Nov. 24, at The Gardens Houston, 12001 Beamer Road. The Friendsgiving potluck luncheon will be held from noon to 2 p.m., with guests bringing a favorite dish to share. Luncheon attendees receive VIP access to the pre-Black Friday market from 9 a.m. to noon, before the market opens to the public from 2 to 5 p.m. Registration is now open for vendors and local businesses interested in participating in the pre-Black Friday market. Proceeds benefit the South Belt-Ellington Toy and Food Drive. For information, call or text Kay Barbour at 713-419-3545.

MUD trash times may vary

Due to a major county construction project, trash collection times may vary in the coming weeks for Clear Brook City MUD residents, officials said. To ensure trash pickup, residents should have their trash curbside no later than 6 a.m. Mondays and Thursdays, as collection crews will be working in coordination with construction crews and may arrive earlier than they traditionally did. All Texas Pride Disposal trucks have cameras for verification. This will continue until the road improvement work is complete. Services will not be interrupted.

A project of Harris County Precinct 2 Commissioner Adrian Garcia, the massive undertaking will make street and traffic repairs to nearly 100 roads in the Clear Brook City MUD. Work is being done in the Sageglen, Sagemeadow, Highland Meadow and Wood Meadow subdivisions. Many roads may be diverted or made a temporary one-way street. Drivers are urged to use caution and watch for detour signs. Commuters are urged to avoid construction areas when possible.

HPD's PIP takes holiday

The Houston Police Department's monthly Positive Interaction Program meetings are on hiatus for the remainder of the year, with the November and December meetings being canceled due to the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays respectively.

The monthly meetings will resume next year, with the first one being held at 6 p.m. Monday, Jan. 18, at Grace Church, 14505 Gulf Freeway, Classroom No. 103. Guest speaker to be announced.

Begun in 1983, HPD's PIP involves police and community members working together for safer neighborhoods. PIP meetings typically take place the third Monday of each month. For additional information, contact HPD Officer C. Castillo at castillo@houstonpolice.org or 832-395-1777.

Sagemont hiatus until 2027

There will be no more Sagemont Civic Club meetings for the remainder of the year due to scheduling conflicts.

Typically held the first Tuesday of the month, the November civic club meeting date falls on Election Day. Civic club leaders encourage residents to exercise their right to vote.

December's meeting has been canceled due to the Christmas holidays. Meetings will resume in 2027, with the first function taking place Tuesday, Jan. 5.

Lakes of Golfcrest to meet

The Lakes of Golfcrest HOA will hold a meeting at 7 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 19, at the South Belt Ellington Chamber of Commerce office, located at 10500 Scarsdale Blvd. For more information, visit the Lakes of Golfcrest TownSq portal at hlgc.sites.townsq.io/0 or call 855-289-6007.

Beltway closures planned

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

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

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

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.

County's Hughes basin project moving forward

100-acre detention basin the latest in a decades-long fight against area flooding

Harris County is moving forward with plans for a new 100-acre stormwater detention basin along Clear Creek south of El Franco Lee Park, with the county recently seeking engineering firms to design the project.

The Hughes Stormwater Detention Basin is planned to provide approximately 1,000 acre-feet of stormwater storage and is intended to reduce flood risk in the Clear Creek watershed.

Harris County Purchasing recently issued a request for qualifications for engineering services for the project. The solicitation sought consultants to perform engineering and design work that includes identifying utility conflicts and right-of-way requirements and developing the construction package.

The deadline for firms to submit qualifications was Nov. 16.

The engineering procurement does not mean the basin is ready for construction. The Harris County Flood Control District's current anticipated schedule calls for a community engagement meeting in 2028, construction beginning in 2029 and completion in 2032.

When completed, the basin would temporarily store excess stormwater during heavy rainfall and release the water back into Clear Creek after the flooding threat has passed.

The Flood Control District says the approximately 1,000 acre-feet of planned storage is roughly equivalent to 1,000 football fields covered with one foot of water.

The basin, formally designated HCFCD Unit A500-04-00, would occupy an undeveloped 100-acre site along Clear Creek south of El Franco Lee Park.

The project is Phase 2 of the larger Clear Creek Federal Flood Risk Management Project and is intended not only to reduce flood risk but also to provide mitigation for future channel conveyance improvements included in the federal project.

Hughes will join several other major stormwater detention projects that have been developed or are advancing in the Clear Creek area.

The South Belt Stormwater Detention Basin, located along Mud Gully, also known as Beamer

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Firefighters respond to Burnett fire

Investigators suspect serial arsonist may have torched portable building

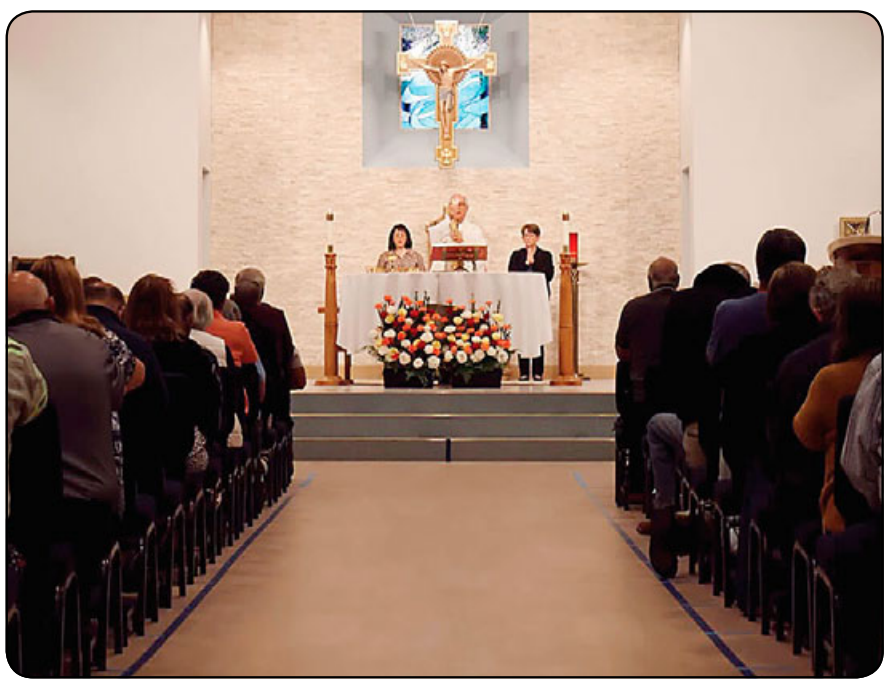
A building at Burnett Elementary was set on fire the morning of Friday, Nov. 13, with investigators suspecting it may have been the work of a serial arsonist.

The incident took place just after drop-off time, but the structure in question was an unoccupied portable building off the main campus, school officials said.

No injuries were reported.

Fire investigators said the fire was intentionally set and may have been caused by a homeless individual suspected of setting multiple recent fires in the area, including the dumpster fire on Scarsdale Oct. 7 that forced the closure of the street in both directions near Beamer. See related photo on Page 2.

New St. Luke campus opens



St. Luke the Evangelist Catholic Church celebrated its first Mass at the parish's new Riverstone Ranch campus the morning of Wednesday, Nov. 11. The local church recently moved from its original Hall Road campus, which had been home to the parish for nearly 50 years. The Rev. Douglas J. Guthrie, is shown above at the new building with Elizabeth Virgadamo (left) and Fran Sharpless. *Photo courtesy of St. Luke*

Pedestrial killed on I-45 frontage road

Man fleeing from crash on main lanes near Scarsdale

A man on foot was killed after being struck by a vehicle on the southbound Gulf Freeway frontage road lanes between Beltway 8 and Scarsdale Thursday, Nov. 12, while fleeing from an accident on the adjacent main lanes of the freeway.

According to Houston Police Department officials, officers initially received a report around 8:30 p.m. regarding a minor accident on the southbound main lanes of the freeway. Shortly after, around 8:40 p.m., authorities received a second call reporting that a pedestrian had been hit by a vehicle on the southbound service road.

Investigators said preliminary information indicates the man was an occupant in one of the vehicles involved in the initial crash. For reasons that remain unknown, the man exited the vehicle and fled the scene on foot. Police said he ran across multiple southbound main lanes of the freeway before reaching the feeder road, where he attempted to cross and was struck by an oncoming minivan.

Emergency responders pronounced the man dead at the scene. Authorities have not yet released his identity.

Police said the driver of the minivan pulled over at a nearby gas station, called 911 and remained at the scene to cooperate with investigators. Officers evaluated the driver and reported no signs of impairment. No charges had been filed at press time.

The crash prompted authorities to shut down the southbound Gulf Freeway feeder road in the Scarsdale area for several hours while HPD's Ve-

Continued on Page 2

Leader to begin annual Christmas drive

Now in 44th year, drive seeks donations for local families

The holiday season is here, and once again it's time for the annual *South Belt-Ellington Leader* Christmas program.

Now in its 44th year, the program is aimed at helping local families in need, by providing toys and food.

The annual Christmas drive was a pet project of *Leader* founder Marie Flickinger. This will mark the third drive since her passing in 2024.

Charitable organizations in the South Belt area are encouraged to donate to the *Leader* program. The drive is different from others in that all donations will go directly to families in the immediate South Belt area, with all applicants going through a screening process to determine their residence.

Past participants included local schools (South Belt and Frazier elementaries, Mellilo Middle School, Beverly Hills Intermediate and Dobie High School), Harris County Precinct 2 Constable Jerry Garcia, Pasadena ISD Police Department, American Legion Post 490, Memorial Hermann Southeast Hospital and the South Belt-Ellington Chamber of Commerce.

The *Leader* will begin accepting toy donations Monday, Nov. 23. Food donations will not be accepted until Monday, Dec. 7.

Desired items include toys for children of all ages, nonperishable food items, paper products and cash. There is a particular need for gifts appropriate for older children and teens, such as clothing, sporting goods, makeup kits and gift cards. All gifts should be new and unwrapped.

Past recipients include single-parent families and families suffering from illness, unemployment or incarceration. Many past beneficiaries have reciprocated and later donated items themselves.

Anyone who knows of local families who are experiencing special circumstances are asked to contact the *Leader* at 281-481-5656 or my news@southbeltleader.com.

Applications for assistance are not currently being accepted. See future editions of the *Leader* for additional information on applying for help.

McCrutcheon heads to December runoff

Kirkwood president in 1 of 2 HCAD board races on ballot

While most races from the Nov. 3 general election produced decisive winners, two Harris Central Appraisal District board contests are headed to a Dec. 12 runoff, including one featuring South Belt resident Ericka McCrutcheon.

South Belt residents and other registered Harris County voters will be eligible to vote in both runoff races, as the three publicly elected positions on the HCAD board are elected countywide.

McCrutcheon, the incumbent in HCAD board of directors At-Large Place 3, finished first in a three-way race Nov. 3 but fell short of the majority needed to avoid a runoff.

McCrutcheon, who is the longtime Kirkwood Civic Club president received 387,019 votes, or 42.47 percent, followed by Jesus Nieto with 278,707 votes, or 30.58 percent. Chris Moses finished third with 245,589 votes, or 26.95 percent.

McCrutcheon and Nieto, the top two finishers, will now face each other in the Dec. 12 runoff.

McCrutcheon currently serves as assistant secretary of the HCAD board and holds the publicly elected Place 3 position.

A second runoff will take place for HCAD At-Large Place 2, where Claudio Gutierrez and Jourdyn Wilson advanced from another three-candidate contest.

Gutierrez led the Nov. 3 voting with 348,403 votes, or 37.60 percent. Wilson received 299,348 votes, or 32.31 percent, narrowly finishing ahead of Chris Ehlinger, who received 278,812 votes, or 30.09 percent.

Because no candidate received a majority, Gutierrez and Wilson will meet in the runoff.

The third publicly elected HCAD position was decided Nov. 3 without a runoff. Beverly Barrett won At-Large Place 1 with 544,166 votes, or 57.66 percent, while Kathy Blueford Daniels received 399,539 votes, or 42.34 percent.

HCAD's publicly elected directors are chosen countywide rather than from individual geographic districts, meaning South Belt residents will be eligible to cast ballots in both the Place 2 and Place 3 runoff contests.

Early voting for the runoff will begins Monday, Nov. 30, and continue through Tuesday, Dec. 8.

Early voting hours will be 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Nov. 30 through Dec. 5; noon to 7 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 6; and 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Dec. 7 and 8.

Election Day is Saturday, Dec. 12, with voting from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. The deadline to apply for a ballot by mail is Dec. 1.

For voting locations and other election information, visit HarrisVotes.com.

Winter Wonderland returns Dec. 6

Now in 5th year, event to include snow, train, Santa, more

The South Belt-Ellington Chamber of Commerce will usher in the holiday season with its fifth annual Winter Wonderland on Sunday, Dec. 6, bringing an afternoon of holiday activities and entertainment to the South Belt community.

The outdoor holiday festival will be held from 3 to 6 p.m. at Clear Brook City MUD, 11911 Blackhawk Blvd. Attendees should note that the event will begin an hour earlier this year, shifting from its previous 4-7 p.m. schedule to 3-6 p.m.

The family-oriented event will feature many of the activities that have become part of the chamber's annual holiday celebration, including snow, a trackless train and visits with Santa and Mrs. Claus.

Children and families will also have an opportunity to meet Mr. and Mrs. Grinch and other characters, listen to stories beneath a lighted gazebo and explore a fire engine.

Holiday treats are also part of the festivities. The chamber says previous Winter Wonderland activities have included cookies, sno-cones, hot chocolate and cotton candy, along with sweet and savory treats.

The annual event has grown into a sizable community gathering. According to the chamber, last year's Winter Wonderland welcomed 2,000 families.

During that event, children played in the snow, rode the trackless train and visited with Santa and Mrs. Claus to share their Christmas wishes. Children also received specially-made balloons from Clarence, according to the chamber.

This year's Winter Wonderland continues the chamber's holiday tradition with the event returning for its fifth year.

The South Belt-Ellington Chamber describes Winter Wonderland as a family-friendly way for area residents to kick off the holiday season.

Fifth annual Winter Wonderland festival

– When: Sunday, Dec. 6, from 3 to 6 p.m. (new hours this year)

– Where: Clear Brook City MUD, 11911 Blackhawk Blvd., Houston

– What: Outdoor holiday festival featuring snow, a trackless train, Santa and Mrs. Claus, Mr. and Mrs. Grinch and other holiday activities

For additional on the event, visit southbeltchamber.com/winter-wonderland.

Donut Haven catches fire



Donut Haven, located at the intersection of Hughes Road and Beamer, caught fire the morning of Monday, Nov. 16. Responders from the Houston Fire Department are shown above gaining access to the business's roof to extinguish the blaze. There were no known injuries. At press time, the cause of the fire was unknown by the *Leader*.

Photo by Natalie Abarca

Investigators suspect serial arsonist



Firefighters from the Southeast Fire Department are shown above extinguishinbg a dumpster fire in the 11000 block of Scarsdale back on Oct. 7. Precinct 2 deputies assisted with traffic control, closing the thoroughfare in both directions at Chickwood Drive. Investigators are now saying the fire may have been started by a serial arsonist, who may also be responsible for a similar fire at Burnett Elementary Friday, Nov. 13. See related story on Page 1.

Photo courtesy of Precinct 2

Elected officials share their words

Bay Area Boulevard Panel Replacement in progress

Council Member Fred Flickinger would like to make residents aware that Houston Public Works has begun a panel replacement project along Bay Area Boulevard from Brook Forest to Krueger Way. The contractor mobilized on Monday, November 16, 2026, and is expected to finish by Thursday, January 14, 2027, weather permitting. The scope of work includes the removal and replacement of deteriorated concrete roadway panels, broken curbs, and restriping. The project is estimated to cost approximately $94,100 and is funded through Council Member Flickinger's Council District Service Funds.

The project is anticipated to be completed by Thursday, January 14, 2027, weather permitting. Construction activities are expected to result in minor traffic impacts, including single-lane closures and increased construction traffic as crews progress through the work area. Traffic is expected to continue flowing normally, although motorists should anticipate minor delays.

Crews are scheduled to work Monday through Friday from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Weekend work is not anticipated unless absolutely necessary.

Fred Flickinger
Council Member District E

Death

Milton Dittrich



Milton Dittrich longtime resident of Kirkwood. was born on Aug. 30, 1933, in St. John, Texas, to Alfred Dittrich and Selma (Berger) Dittrich. He passed into the loving arms of our Lord on Nov. 14, 2026.

Milton is survived by his beloved wife of 69 years, Joyce, and two sons, Anthony (Cindy) and Kenneth (Maggie) Dittrich. He was blessed with a loving extended family of grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Through Anthony, his grandchildren include Jennifer Anderson (Joshua), Leigh-Ann Dittrich, Elaina Dittrich and Jefferey Dittrich (Courtney). His great-grandchildren include Hunter and Jackson Anderson, Kai and Nash Stuart, Slayter Pedroza and Mason and Waylon Dittrich.

Through Kenneth (wife Maggie), his grandchildren include Steven Dittrich (Ashley), Ellen Dittrich, Alicia Eppley (Adam) and step-granddaughters Leslie Unnasch (Kyle) and Clarissa Townsend (Robert). His great-grandchildren include Martha and Ana Dittrich, Isaac and Zoe George, Kalani Dittrich and step-great-grandchildren Dakota and Briar Unnasch.

Milton was drafted into the United States Army in 1954 and proudly served his country from 1954 to 1955. During his military service, he was stationed at Fort Bliss in El Paso, before serving in Hanau, Germany.

Milton graduated from the University of Houston in 1963 with a Bachelor of Business Administration degree. He went on to build a successful career in transportation management, working for Curtin-Matheson Scientific Company and Foley's Department Store.

Milton met the love of his life, Joyce, at a church picnic in September 1956. They were married on September 14, 1957, at Queen of Peace Catholic Church in Sweet Home, Texas. Together, they built a beautiful life centered on love, family and shared experiences.

In 1971, Milton and Joyce made their home in the Kirkwood community, where they established lasting friendships and became an important part of the neighborhood. Their home was a place filled with family, friendship and countless treasured memories.

Milton retired in 1994 and enjoyed spending his retirement years doing the things he loved most. He especially enjoyed raising cattle and spending time on his farm, where he found great pleasure in working the land and being outdoors. He also loved gardening, traveling with Joyce and listening to polka music. Milton remained active in his community through his involvement with the St. Luke Knights of Columbus and cherished the friendships he built over the years. One of his favorite traditions was gathering with friends on Tuesday mornings for coffee at Bravo's, where good conversation, laughter and camaraderie made for a special part of his week.

Faith and service were important parts of Milton's life. As devoted founding members of St. Luke Catholic Church, Milton and Joyce generously shared their time and talents with their church community. Together, they helped count church offerings and assisted with funeral luncheon receptions, offering their kindness and support to families during difficult times.

Milton and Joyce also shared a love of travel and adventure. Throughout their years together, they explored the world, visiting approximately 60 countries, some more than once. Their travels brought them countless adventures, wonderful experiences, and memories they treasured throughout their lives.

Milton will be remembered for his dedication to his family, his commitment to his career, his service to his country, and, most of all, the beautiful life he and Joyce built together. Their marriage was a lasting partnership rooted in love, faith and a shared sense of adventure. Together, they created a family and a lifetime of memories that will live on through their children, loved ones and future generations.

Milton's legacy is one of love, family, commitment, faith and service. The life he lived, the friendships he built, and the memories he created will remain forever in the hearts of all who knew and loved him.

Visitation was held on Wednesday, Nov. 18, at Peavy Funeral Home.

A funeral Mass will be celebrated at St. Luke The Evangulist's new location, 1750 Riverstone Ranch Dr, Pearland, TX 77089, on Thursday, Nov. 19, at 10 a.m. Burial will follow at South Park Cemetery, 1310 North Main St., Pearland, TX 77581.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made to the new St. Luke's Research Hospital at https://give.commonspirit.org/stlukesfoundation/donate and the St. Luke food pantry.

Leader obituary policy

Obituaries submitted to the *Leader* are published free of charge. There must be a South Belt connection. Obituaries are edited to the *Leader* style.

Melillo welcomes National Elementary Honor Society members



The Melillo Middle School chapter of the National Elementary Honor Society inducted its new members on Nov. 12. Left to right, are (front row) Jude Aguilar, Jonathan Thomas, Reece Hayden, Dante Segovia Franco, Montree Maxie, Aiden Munoz Murcia, Royanne Montoya, Rhett Sullivan, Jazlyn Tran, Amelie Gonzalez, Alexander Mathers, Charlotte Riley, (middle row) Austin Le, Jacob Lozolla, Damian Hudson, Jesus Mesta, Ivan Duncan, A'Meliya Ailsworth, Dua Atiq, Olivia Brito, Alexandra Flores, Miguel Perez, Macie Salinas, (back row) Elena Mejia, Sophia Pachon, Julian Gurrusquieta, Robben Phuong, Ashley Aguilar, Allison Guox Barrientos, Aliyah Bhakta, Isabella Licon, Tanzeel Hubbard-Soumah and Isaac Torres.

Toastmasters meets Tuesdays

Southeast Houston Toastmasters is a community club for any adult (18+ years old) who wants to become a confident communicator, an active listener, a better writer and/or wants to hone his/her communication skills in a friendly atmosphere.

The group conducts virtual meetings every Tuesday from 6:30 – 7:30 p.m.; however, they include in-person meetings at the South Belt-Ellington Chamber of Commerce at 10500 Scarsdale Blvd. on the second and fourth Tuesdays. They do not meet on the fifth Tuesday of any month. On occasion meetings might cancel due to weather forecast or a holiday; these announcements are usually posted on their homepage at https://sehouston.toastmastersclubs.org/.

Friends of PWBL seeks donations

The Friends of Parker Williams Branch Library would like to thank the South Belt community for their continuing support. The library is currently in need of new or gently used children's books, adult paperback novels (both fiction and nonfiction) and DVDs and CDs. Donations can be made during open hours at 10851 Scarsdale Blvd., suite 501.

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/ 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.

The following events are scheduled for Bracewell Library:

Thursday, Nov. 19, 11 a.m. – noon. Senior social hour: It's all about connection. Registration required.

Saturday, Nov. 21, 2 – 4 p.m. Saturdays at HPL. Registration required.

Monday, Nov. 23, 10:15 – 11:15 a.m. Family storytime. Registration required.

Tuesday, Nov. 24, 4 – 5 p.m. Lego club. Registration required.

Tuesday, Nov. 24, 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 at 10851 Scarsdale Blvd. Customers are encouraged to visit the building to browse, check out and return materials, use the computers and Wi-Fi, and check out holds. 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 more information. One can also visit social media links are Facebook.com/ParkerWilliamsLibrary and Instagram.com/ParkerWilliamsLibrary.

The following events are scheduled for Parker Williams Library:

Thursday, Nov. 19, 10 – 11 a.m. 'For the Plot' book club.

Thursday, Nov. 19, 10:15 – 10:45 a.m. Toddler time.

Friday, Nov. 20, 1 – 3 p.m. Diamond painting club (18+). Registration required for new members.

Friday, Nov. 20, 1 – 3 p.m. Genealogy.

Saturday, Nov. 21, 10:15 a.m. – 1 p.m. Personas que corren con libros: Club de lectura en Espanol.

Saturday, Nov. 21, 10:15 a.m. – noon. Tai Chi.

Saturday, Nov. 21, 11 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. Embroidery, bouillon knot pumpkins. Registration required.

Monday, Nov. 23, 1 – 2 p.m. ESL classes (various levels).

Monday, Nov. 23, 1 – 2:30 p.m. Adult computer classes with Harris County universal services. Registration required.

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 additional information, visit www.hcpl.net.

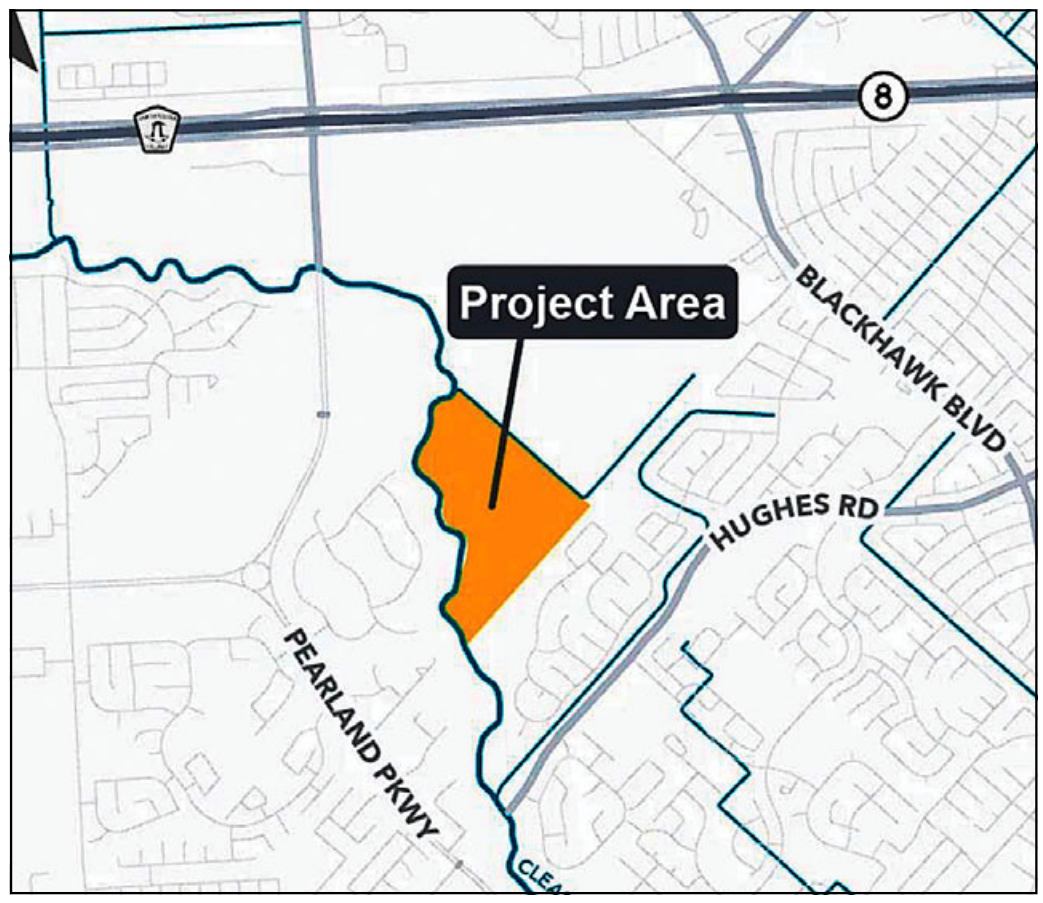
South Belt-Ellington Leader

The Voice of Community-Minded People

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David Flickinger, owner



Hughes basin project moving forward

100-detention pond to be located near El Franco Lee Park

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Ditch, near Beamer Road and South Fork Boulevard, was substantially completed in 2022. The approximately 59-acre basin was constructed in phases and is designed to hold about 1,550 acre-feet, or 505 million gallons, of stormwater.

Another major basin project is advancing near Friendswood.

The Friendswood Regional Stormwater Detention Basin is planned on an undeveloped 105-acre tract north of Clear Creek, south of FM 1959 and east of Blackhawk Boulevard. Harris County Commissioners Court awarded a contract for rough grading at the site in December 2023, and preliminary excavation followed in 2024.

More recently, the Flood Control District advertised the main Friendswood basin construction project for bids. The planned basin is designed to provide approximately 764 acre-feet of stormwater storage. Under the Flood Control District's current anticipated schedule, main construction is expected to begin in the first quarter of 2027 and be completed in the first quarter of 2029.

All three detention projects have ties to the Harris County Flood Control District's 2018 Bond Program, a $2.5 billion flood-control bond approved by Harris County voters. The Hughes and South Belt projects are identified by the district as bond projects, while Friendswood is being funded through a combination of bond and partnership dollars.

The South Belt, Friendswood and Hughes projects illustrate the role stormwater detention is playing in broader efforts to reduce flood risk in the Clear Creek watershed. Detention basins temporarily store stormwater during heavy rain events and release it after the threat of flooding has passed.

The Hughes basin specifically is part of the Clear Creek Federal Flood Risk Management Project, a partnership involving the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Harris County Flood Control District, Galveston County, Brazoria Drainage District No. 4 and the City of Pearland. Under a June 2019 partnership agreement between the Corps and Flood Control District, the district became the lead agency for the federal project through a federal pilot program.

The broader federal project combines detention with improvements intended to increase the amount of stormwater portions of the Clear Creek drainage system can carry. According to the Flood Control District, the federal project is expected to reduce flood risk for thousands of homes and businesses within the Clear Creek watershed, primarily between SH 288 and the Gulf Freeway.

Planning for the Hughes basin predates the latest engineering solicitation. The Flood Control District held a virtual community engagement meeting concerning the proposed basin in October 2020.

ST. LUKE THE EVANGELIST
Catholic Church
Rev. Douglas J. Guthrie, Pastor
Rev. Antonio Cisneros, Parochial Vicar
1750 Riverstone Ranch Dr.
(across from South Belt Elementary)
www.stlukescatholic.com

LITURGY SCHEDULE

Saturday Vigil	**5:30 p.m.**
Sunday	**8 a.m.** and **10 a.m.**
Sunday	**12:30 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

We have relocated to 1750 Riverstone Ranch Rd.

Pedestrian killed

Continued from Page 1

hicular Crimes Division processed the scene.

At press time, the investigation was ongoing.

Previous accidents

The Gulf Freeway has become a hot spot for fatal auto-pedestrian accidents over the past year, with at least nine known incidents taking place over the last 14 months.

According to HPD statistics, the following fatalities took place along the Gulf Freeway since September 2025:

– **Sept. 26, 2026:** A man standing in the northbound main lanes at the 18600 block of the Gulf Freeway was struck by a Jeep Cherokee and subsequently hit by multiple other vehicles.

– **Sept. 6, 2026:** A passenger exited a moving vehicle following an altercation at the 13500 block of the Gulf Freeway and was fatally struck by an oncoming Chevrolet Camaro after falling onto the main lanes.

– **June 29, 2026:** A pedestrian was struck and killed by a construction traffic control truck reversing during a roadway closure at the 13900 block of the Gulf Freeway.

– **June 1, 2026:** A pedestrian attempting to cross the exit ramp near Scott Street at the 3400 block of the Gulf Freeway was hit and killed by a Nissan Sentra.

– **April 27, 2026:** A Dodge Avenger struck and killed a pedestrian who was trying to cross the main southbound lanes at the 3500 block of the Gulf Freeway.

– **Feb. 24, 2026:** A female pedestrian crossing the moving traffic lanes of the service road at the 8700 block of the Gulf Freeway was struck by a Volkswagen Jetta.

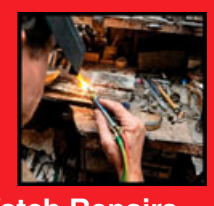
– **Jan. 31, 2026:** After crashing into a retaining wall at the 18900 block of the Gulf Freeway, a driver standing outside his disabled Dodge Durango was struck and killed by a Chevrolet Silverado.

– **Sept. 17, 2025:** a male pedestrian was killed after being struck by a black Ford Fusion in the 15400 block of the Gulf Freeway service road at Dixie Farm Road/FM 1959.

LEGAL NOTICE

Application has been made with the Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission for a Mixed Beverage/Food Permit by Preslee's Webster, LLC dba Preslee's Southern Good Eatery, to be located at 17886 Highway 3, Webster, Harris, Texas. Officer of said corporation are Justin Piper.

BAY AREA JEWELERS

Jewelry & Watch Repairs On Premises
Best Prices On Jewelry Since 1978
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Outside Baybrook Mall
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Alanis competes and places in PLSR



Dobie FFA member Vianka Alanis (center) is pictured with, left to right, Schuyler Morris, Maria Alanis, Vianey Alanis and Elyssa Sulak after competing and earning ribbons for her pig entry in the Pasadena Livestock Show and Rodeo.

Fred Roberts Middle School names Aviators of the month



Fred Roberts recently announced the October Aviators of the month. These students were recognized for being effective communicators by active listening; being clear and organized with their thoughts; being empathetic to others' feelings and opinions; and setting respectful boundaries. Pictured, left to right, are Zayden Leon, Thao Hoang, Tabarak Alnaasan, counselor Crissy Higham, Conner Strickland, Cataleya Jaime and Antonio Hernandez.

Graham promoted to principal at Texas City ISD



David Graham, Clear Brook graduate and son of Don and Rosa Graham of Sageglen, was promoted to principal of Hal Biery DAEP and Inspire Academy of Texas City ISD. David has 16 years experience in education, including nine years with Texas City ISD where he has served as a special education teacher, coach and assistant principal. David is a member of family educators. His brother, Esteban Graham is in intermediate school athletics coordinator in CCISD; his sister-in-law, Amy Graham is a librarian in CCISD; his sister, Teresa Blancas is a lead teacher in Rockwall ISD; and his mother is a retired elementary school principal.

BA hosts college and career fair

For hundreds of high school scholars at Beta Academy's flagship campus, the possibilities beyond graduation took center stage Nov. 9 as representatives from more than 25 colleges, employers, law firms, government organizations, and military service branches came together for the school's annual College and Career Fair.

The event transformed the campus into an interactive introduction to life beyond high school, giving scholars the opportunity to interact with representatives from participating organizations, sharpen their professional skills, ask questions, explore educational pathways and learn about careers and opportunities they may not have previously considered.

Among the participating institutions were Houston Christian University and San Jacinto College, alongside representatives from the private sector, public service, law enforcement and the U.S. Air Force.

For Beta Academy, the annual fair represents more than a day of introductions. It is a deliberate investment in exposure, access, and vision — reinforcing the importance of helping scholars recognize the range of opportunities available to them well before they reach graduation.

The initiative reflects the school's philosophy of joyful rigor, an approach that combines high academic expectations with engaging experiences that challenge scholars intellectually while cultivating curiosity, confidence, perseverance and a lifelong enthusiasm for learning.

Beta Academy believes that preparing scholars for success after high school requires more than academic instruction alone. Young people also need opportunities to encounter professionals, explore unfamiliar industries, understand the educational pathways connected to their interests and begin imagining themselves in environments they may not yet know are within reach.

"At Beta Academy, we believe a scholar's future should never be limited by what they have or have not been exposed to. College and career readiness is not a conversation that should begin during a student's final months of high school. It should be woven into their educational journey from an early age. When we bring colleges, employers and professionals directly to our scholars, we are doing more than introducing them to potential careers. We are expanding their vision of what is possible and helping them understand that there are multiple pathways to meaningful, successful futures. That is joyful rigor in action — challenging our scholars to think beyond the present while giving them the confidence and exposure to pursue what comes next," said Latisha Andrews, superintendent, founder and CEO of Beta Academy.

The fair also underscores the importance of making career exploration accessible and intentional. Rather than relying solely on scholars to seek out these experiences independently, Beta Academy brings representatives and opportunities directly to its campus, creating a setting where students can engage in meaningful conversations, ask questions without hesitation, and explore possibilities at their own pace.

For some scholars, those conversations may reinforce an existing ambition. For others, they may introduce an entirely new direction. Either way, the objective is to broaden perspectives and help young people recognize that their futures can take many different forms.

The annual event is one component of Beta Academy's broader commitment to preparing scholars for the next chapter of their lives. By connecting academic learning with real-world exposure, the school seeks to ensure that its scholars are equipped not only to graduate, but to make informed decisions about the opportunities that follow.

As the afternoon's conversations demonstrated, sometimes the first step toward a future career is simply meeting someone who can help a young person imagine it.

Participating organizations

More than 25 organizations participated in this year's College and Career Fair, representing higher education, business, law, government, public service and military opportunities.

Colleges and universities

Houston Christian University, Houston City College, San Jacinto College, Stephen F. Austin State University, Texas A&M University, Texas A&M University - Galveston, Texas State Technical College, Texas State University, University of Houston - Clear Lake and University of Texas - San Antonio

Employers, professional organizations and law firms

AADSM Dental, Dorchester Capital Corporation, Frost Bank, Landrum & Associates, Schulman, Lopez, Hoffer and Adelstein, LLP, Wellby Bank

Government and Public Service

Harris County Constable's Office and Economic Alliance - Houston Port Region

Military

United States Air Force



Stuchbery Elementary names students of the month



Stuchbery recently announced their October students of the month. Shown, left to right, are (first row) Penelope Cosil, Albert Ruiz, Julian Cardenas, Santiago Martinez, Sophia McBride, Avery Burleigh, (second row) Marlon Castillo, Alijah Ibarra, Leonardo Haro, Jairo Reyes, Ian Ondicho, Lexy Quiroz, Andrew Ash, school counselor Alyssa Valdez, (third row) Quang Vo, Eliana Ruiz, Nancy Nguyen, Skylar Perry, Taliah Kamau, Sergio Paredes, (fourth row) Jayleen Martinez, Anastasia Gaught, Leah Benford, Ivan Velasquez, (fifth row) Javier Rodriguez, Tiana Thomas, Antonia Galindo and Kenneth Rogers. Not pictured is Kaedin Thomas.

CCISD and UTMB announce STREAM program partnership

Clear Creek Independent School District and The University of Texas Medical Branch recently announced a multiyear partnership that establishes UTMB as the anchor healthcare partner for Victory Lakes Intermediate's new STREAM of Innovation program, which features a Medical Science focus.

The collaboration gives VLI students early, real-world exposure to health science and healthcare careers beginning as early as sixth-grade.

"UTMB is helping bring our District's Vision 2030 Strategic Plan into sharp focus through career exploration in health sciences for our students at Victory Lakes Intermediate," said Superintendent of Schools Dr. Karen Engle. "This investment and partnership are how we turn innovation and curiosity into a clear path forward for our students."

For UTMB, the partnership represents an investment in the next generation of healthcare professionals.

"Building the healthcare workforce of tomorrow starts by introducing students today to the many careers that improve the lives of patients," said David Vines, PhD, senior vice president and dean of the UTMB School of Health Professions. "That early exposure can spark curiosity, broaden what students see as possible, and create pathways to careers in the health professions. This partnership reflects the university's commitment to investing in our communities and strengthening the workforce our region will depend on for years to come."

A pathway built around real-world healthcare experience

Victory Lakes Intermediate is one of four schools in CCISD's STREAM of Innovation initiative, an integrated approach to intermediate education spanning Space, Technology, Robotics, Engineering, Arts, and Medicine.

VLI's pathway is centered on Medical Science, and the UTMB partnership is designed to bring that focus to life for students through:

– Allied Health coursework introducing students to a broad range of healthcare professions

– Guest speakers and healthcare career presentations from UTMB faculty and clinicians

– Curriculum consultation from UTMB subject matter experts to keep instruction aligned with real healthcare practice

– Hands-on learning experiences, including simulation technology and health sciences lab activities

– Public health awareness initiatives, such as Teen CPR and emergency preparedness education

– Campus visits and educational field trips to UTMB facilities for students

– Professional learning opportunities for VLI teachers to strengthen health science instruction

– Investment in VLI's Health Science Learning Lab

Building the regional healthcare workforce of tomorrow

The partnership reflects shared goals for both organizations: inspiring students to explore health science careers, connecting classroom learning to real-world applications, and building a vertically-aligned pathway that leads from VLI to CCISD's high school health science programs and on to post-secondary opportunities. For UTMB, the collaboration advances its education, workforce development, and community engagement missions while helping strengthen the region's future healthcare workforce.



Shown are VLI and Allied Health eighth-grade students, Wyatt Keeler (left) and Myranda Martinez unpacking inventory equipment and supplies donated by UTMB for the school's Health Science Learning Lab.



Dr. Rajkumar Rajendran, UTMB associate professor of instruction (left) is pictured showing VLI and Allied Health eighth-grade students Eve Viner, Alexa Lopez and Savannah Mutendereki a demonstration of an anatomage table featuring the anatomy of a heart from.



Dr. Jose D. Rojas, associate dean of strategic initiatives and development for the School of Health Professions at UTMB, serves as a guest speaker in the new Principles of Allied Health STREAM course at Victory Lakes Intermediate.

Dobie cheer raises money for student program fund



J. Frank Dobie High School cheerleaders have been busy supporting numerous community events. On Oct. 26, a group of cheerleaders lent their support to the grand opening of the Quick Quack Car Wash on Fuqua. Free car washes were offered and donations given were matched up to a predetermined amount and awarded to the Dobie student program fund. Shown, left to right, are Isabelle Chavez, Bella Sherwood and Arielle Martinez.



Pictured, left to right, are Aubree Rodriguez, Alicia Sypien and Alyssa Rodriguez

Rizzo receives award

Clear Creek Independent School District is proud to announce that Susan Rizzo has been selected as the 2026 Elementary Physical Education Teacher of the Year by the Texas Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance (TAHPERD). This prestigious statewide honor recognizes excellence in physical education and celebrates educators who demonstrate outstanding dedication to their profession.

The award is part of TAHPERD's annual recognition program honoring individuals who exemplify excellence, leadership and commitment to advancing health, physical education, recreation, and dance across Texas. Rizzo's selection highlights her contributions to physical education and reflects CCISD's commitment to providing students with a well-rounded, world-class education.

"Susan brings an incredible passion and commitment to physical education, creating an environment where every student feels encouraged, supported and motivated to succeed," said Principal Pamela Baggett. "Her dedication goes far beyond teaching physical skills. She inspires confidence, builds character, and helps students develop healthy habits that will last a lifetime. We are incredibly proud of Susan and thrilled to see her receive this well-deserved recognition."

Physical education plays an essential role in student development by promoting healthy lifestyles, building confidence, encouraging teamwork, and establishing lifelong habits that support physical and emotional well-being. Educators like Rizzo help students develop the skills and motivation to lead active, healthy lives both inside and outside the classroom.

Rizzo will be formally recognized during the 103rd Annual TAHPERD Convention, scheduled for Dec. 2-5, 2026, in Corpus Christi. The awards ceremony will take place Friday, Dec. 4, at the Omni Corpus Christi Hotel.

The recognition celebrates Rizzo's professional achievements while highlighting the dedication and excellence of educators throughout Clear Creek ISD.



Coach Susan Rizzo

Remember When

50 years ago (1976)

A 35-0 victory over South Houston made the J. Frank Dobie Longhorn football team district champs.

Members of the 147th Texas Air National Guard Fighter Interceptor Group stationed at Ellington Air Force Base participated in the biennial William Tell weapons meet at Tyndall AFB in Florida.

Nick McHenry died from a heart attack less than two hours after his family was robbed at gunpoint at their Kirkwood South residence.

After what members of the Southeast Volunteer Fire Department said was a slow period, five calls were received within a 20-hour period.

The Sagemont Jaycees held an open house and recruited three new members and one new Jaycee-ette member.

45 years ago (1981)

The Dobie Longhorn football team clinched the district championship with a 23-16 win over Pasadena.

Shirlyn Ross was named assistant principal at Burnett Elementary.

Only about 25 percent of Sagemont homeowners had paid the annual $10 maintenance assessment.

Pasadena Independent School District trustees Harvey Turner and Lamar Winebrenner would seek re-election. Turner would run for a fifth term, Winebrenner, a third term.

40 years ago (1986)

Dobie graduate Lee Anne Locken was crowned Miss Houston U.S.A.

PISD trustees voted to dismiss food services director Charles Ketchum as a result of a meeting which lasted more than six hours. Ketchum was terminated for failing to comply with district directives and policies and for not meeting accepted standards of conduct. Ketchum had been employed with the district more than seven years.

State highway officials said the long-awaited plans to widen the Fuqua and Scarsdale street overpasses across the Gulf Freeway were nearly complete.

35 years ago (1991)

The Federal Agency for Toxic Substance and Disease Registry announced plans for an in-depth, comprehensive health investigation of present and former Southbend residents. This was due to that agency's concern for the community's health status.

Matt Donaldson of Sagepark Lane in Sagemont had been out of jail just four days for criminal trespassing when he was charged with three counts of forgery. His companion, Robert Harton, was charged with burglary of a habitation.

30 years ago (1996)

A 60,000-square-foot, $5 million assisted-living center for the elderly was set to open in the area.

Vandals let air out of numerous car tires on Ryewater, Flushing Meadows and Fairbury streets in Scarsdale.

25 years ago (2001)

Sagemont resident John Duval Hunt, 21, was held on charges of possessing a controlled substance and evading arrest.

The Pearland City Council approved an agreement allowing Harris County to build a bridge connecting Scarsdale to Yost Road. The bridge over Clear Creek would span the connection between Harris and Brazoria counties.

20 years ago (2006)

Some homes in Kirkmont and Sagemont were demolished due to repeated flood insurance claims.

The long-awaited opening of the Scarsdale-Yost Road connection was delayed again. It was projected to open the first quarter of 2007.

An election to replace former Houston Councilmember Shelley Sekula-Gibbs was expected to cost $2 million. Sekula-Gibbs won the election to fill the unexpired term of Tom DeLay to serve 51 days in Washington, D.C. Afterward, Nick Lampson, who won in the general election, would be sworn in.

All three South Belt area municipal utility districts approved the hiring of two new deputy constables. They would be hired to work in the contract area, pursuant to a contract between the MUDs and Constable Gary Freeman.

15 years ago (2011)

Former Dobie student Manuel Rivera was arrested for allegedly being involved in a drive-by shooting. Rivera, 20, was charged with deadly conduct after being accused of being the triggerman in the shooting that took place the previous week in the 9400 block of Stone Ridge Canyon. The incident reportedly stemmed from an unpaid debt. No one was injured in the shooting.

10 years ago (2016)

A U.S. Navy veteran was killed in a car crash on Veterans Day Friday, Nov. 11, in the 12500 block of the Gulf Freeway near Fuqua. Adrian Herrera was wearing his Navy uniform in honor of the holiday at the time of the accident. According to police, Herrera, 31, was traveling south on the frontage road in a blue Honda Civic when he attempted to enter the freeway at a high rate of speed. Herrera then lost control of his vehicle and struck a concrete pillar. Herrera was pronounced dead at the scene. No other vehicles or individuals were involved in this incident.

A man was killed in a fatal car crash Saturday, Nov. 12, at the intersection of Beamer and Rex near FM 2351. Stephen Mason Montgomery Jr. was pronounced dead at the scene. Montgomery, 22, was a backseat passenger in a car driven by Joshua Parsons, who reportedly lost control of the vehicle at the intersection while driving at a high rate of speed. A sobriety test determined Parsons, 22, was intoxicated at the time of the crash. He was subsequently charged with intoxication manslaughter.

5 years ago (2021)

Harris County began administering the COVID vaccine for children ages 5 to 11.

This announcement came following the approval of the Pfizer COVID-19 to be administered to children in this age range from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

This version of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine for young children is a smaller dose or one-third of the version approved for adults and teens.

Republican county commissioners Tom S. Ramsey and R. Jack Cagle, along with a group of citizens, filed suit in state civil district court Tuesday, Nov. 16, challenging the redistricting maps approved during a special session in late October. The lawsuit alleges the new maps strip the right to vote in the 2022 county elections from more than a million residents.

1 year ago (2025)

Dobie High School art student Victoria Isabella Caballero recently sold her artwork "Shadows of Leather" for $3,000 at the 59th annual Cowboy Artists of America Exhibition and Sale in Fort Worth. Caballero had already been named the exhibition's Reserve Grand Champion, earning her $8,000 in scholarship funds, bringing her total earnings up to $11,000.

Over The Back Fence by Nicole

HAPPY BIRTHDAY, DONNA!

Donna Whitted celebrates a birthday Monday, Nov. 23. Best wishes are sent to her from children **Heather** and husband **Richard Williams**, **Jacob** and wife **Amber Whitted** and **Aaron Whitted**; grandchildren **Riley** and **Kinley Whitted** and **Bryce** and **Pressley Williams**; and mother **Frances Valigura.**

SCHOOL DAZE

The following staff of the Pasadena Independent School District celebrate birthdays Nov. 19 through Nov. 25.

Burnett Elementary

Send a birthday greeting Nov. 23 to **Corinna Vidal**. Nov. 25 is the day for a party for **Juanita Pham** and **Amy Lam**.

Bush Elementary

November 19 is the day for a fun celebration for **Elisa Castro**. **Gilberto Garza** marks a birthday Nov. 21. Sing a happy birthday song to **Maria Montelongo** Nov. 22. Send a humorous birthday card Nov. 23 to **Carrissa Enriquez**. Remember to wish **Dila Velez** a happy birthday Nov. 25.

Frazier Elementary

Blow out the birthday candles for **Cathy Silas** Nov. 25.

Genoa Elementary

Sing a birthday tune Nov. 21 to **Macarena Araujo**.

Moore Elementary

Send birthday greetings Nov. 20 to **Maria Canales**. **Liliana Sanchez** enjoys a birthday Nov. 23.

South Belt Elementary

Send a humorous birthday card Nov. 20 to **Karen Lopez**. The day for a celebration for **Laurie Weathers** is Nov. 21. Send a happy birthday wish Nov. 24 to **Vaughn Penny**.

Stuchbery Elementary

Blow out the candles Nov. 25 for **Andrea Rodriguez**.

Beverly Hills Intermediate

Remember to wish **Shelly Dejean Tillman** a happy birthday Nov. 21.

Dobie High

Blow out the candles for **Kyle Jurek** who enjoys a birthday Nov. 20. Best wishes for a special birthday Nov. 23 are sent to **Imelda Umansor**. A double-fun day is planned Nov. 25 for **Matthew Hamlin** and **Juliet Rogers**.

FRIENDS CELEBRATE BIRTHDAYS

Thursday, Nov. 19: **Jennifer Cook** and **Albert Craft**; Friday, Nov. 20: **Thomas Marks**, **Tim Hasse** and **Sica Marcello**; Saturday, Nov. 21: **Jennifer Hugghins** and **Edie Mari**, Sunday, Nov. 22: **Gene Perez** and **Sheri Jennings**; Monday, Nov. 23: **Linda Greuter**, **Dorlene Salas**, **Monika Patterson**, **Johnny McNeil** and **Don Doss**; Tuesday, Nov. 24: **Rhonda Baird** and **Santiago Gonzalez**; Wednesday, Nov. 25: **Keith Brown**, **Karen Allen**, **Susan Hansen**, **Jeff Sconyers** and **Jennifer Ross**.

LEADER *WANTS YOU IN THE NEWS*

For birthdays, "Friends Celebrate Birthdays" or announcements email to mynews@southbeltleader.com with OTBF in the subject line by Friday noon for the next week's publication.



SPORTS NEWS & NOTES

McDonald's Texas Invitational Basketball

Nov. 21 Trophy Round Finals

Division 1 Girls Gold Bracket
Phillips Field House, 3 p.m.

Division 1 Boys Gold Bracket
Phillips Field House, 6 p.m.

Division 1 Girls Silver Bracket
Sam Rayburn H.S., 3 p.m.

Division 1 Boys Silver Bracket
Sam Rayburn H.S., 1:30 p.m.

Division 1 Girls Bronze Bracket
South Houston H.S., 1:30 p.m.

Division 1 Boys Bronze Bracket
South Houston H.S., 3 p.m.

Division 2 Girls Gold Bracket
Dobie 9, 3 p.m.

Division 2 Boys Gold Bracket
Pasadena Memorial H.S., 3 p.m.

Division 2 Girls Silver Bracket
Beverly Hills Intermediate, 1:30 p.m.

Division 2 Boys Silver Bracket
Deer Park Watkins, 3 p.m.

Division 2 Girls Bronze Bracket
Adobe 9, 1:30 p.m.

Division 2 Boys Bronze Bracket
Dobie main, noon

Division 1 Girls Consolation Bracket
Deer Park Watkins, 1:30 p.m.

Division 2 Girls Consolation Bracket
Deer Park Auxiliary, 1:30 p.m.

McDonald's basketball delivers state's best

Some of Texas' top high school basketball talent will take the court in Pasadena Nov. 19-21 for the 2026 McDonald's Texas Invitational, but what happens beyond the court may be just as significant.

This year's tournament will bring together 80 teams for 196 games across 10 venues, with 48 boys teams and 32 girls teams competing over three days. The field includes established programs from throughout Texas, including North Crowley, Atascocita, North Shore, South Grand Prairie, San Antonio Brennan, Summer Creek, Converse Judson, Aledo and many others.

The field also includes a deep group of players to watch across the 2027, 2028 and 2029 graduating classes, offering fans and media an opportunity to see emerging Texas basketball talent compete in one place.

The McDonald's Texas Invitational is about much more than basketball.

Throughout the tournament, Pasadena ISD students will gain hands-on experience helping bring the event to life. Student media teams and their teachers help produce tournament livestreams, working in camera operation, directing, graphics and broadcasting.

Culinary students support tournament hospitality, while student photographers help document the action from courtside.

The student involvement is part of a much larger community effort.

Nearly 400 volunteers from schools, businesses and the community contribute their time to the tournament, while a 30-member steering committee representing business, education and government works throughout the year to organize the event.

That work continues to make an impact long after the final buzzer.

The 2025 McDonald's Texas Invitational generated $223,938.88, nearly $224,000, to benefit the Pasadena ISD and Deer Park ISD education foundations.

Tournament proceeds help support classroom minigrants that give teachers resources to bring innovative projects and learning opportunities to students.

For teachers, those dollars can turn an idea into an experience for students. For the community, it means three days of basketball create an impact that continues in classrooms throughout the school year.



Atascocita varsity boys basketball standout Royce Shelton (0), now a co-captain with the Eagles, will look to advance to the McDonald's Texas Invitational boys gold division championship game for a second straight season. The Eagles were defeated by eventual champion San Antonio Brennan in 2025.

Photo by Donna Alsdorf

18-6A football foursome swept out

It was another challenging postseason for squads formerly associated with District 24-6A, now largely grouped into 18-6A, as each of the four playoff participants were ushered out of the postseason in the first round.

League champion Dickinson entered the playoffs having captured seven straight victories, yet fell 48-41 in a shootout at home against Summer Creek in the first round of the Division 1 bracket.

Also in Division 1, Deer Park had the unenviable task of going up against defending state champion North Shore. In that one at Galena Park ISD Stadium, the Deer were on the short end of a 62-14 outcome as the Deer finished their season at 8-3 overall. In the Division 2 bracket, top seed Barbers Hill hosted Atascocita and fell in a tight one, this one going 23-20 to Atascocita. In the other Division 2 matchup, Clear Springs entered the postseason with a losing record and quickly exited following a 77-14 loss to high-powered C.E. King.

Shadow Creek, Pearland advance

District 19-6A varsity football champion Shadow Creek and second-place Pearland advanced in the state playoffs after gaining first-round victories, while Manvel and Dawson were handed defeats to open the playoffs.

Shadow Creek, which improved to 10-1, had little trouble getting past Houston Heights in a 48-10 game at Freedom Field as part of the Division 2 bracket.

In the other Division 2 game, Manvel went the distance at Houston Memorial before the Mustangs emerged with a 35-28 victory to end Manvel's season at 8-3 overall.

Pearland represents 19-6A as the top seed in the D1 bracket and improved to 10-1 overall following an easy 58-14 victory over Alief Taylor at Pearland ISD Stadium. In the other Division 1 pairing, Dawson saw its season end at 5-6 overall following a 42-13 loss at Houston Lamar.

Pearland and North Shore, both now 10-1 overall, will go head-to-head in the second round of the postseason. Meanwhile, Shadow Creek will be matched up against C.E. King in the second round Nov. 20 at Freedom Field.

Terry a first team All-Conference performer

Markel Terry, a former multiyear All-District performer at offensive tackle with Dobie, has been named a first team All-Conference selection at the same position with the Blinn Buccaneers.

Blinn went on to have a 4-5 overall season within the Southwest Junior College Football Conference ranks. Terry, a two-year starter at tackle for the Buccaneers, helped the offense average 28 points and 388 yards of offense per game. Terry will next be looking for a Division I four-year college program in which to transfer.

LSA, Polk headed to second round

Dedric Polk rushed for 284 yards and a pair of touchdowns as he led Lutheran South Academy to a 31-24 victory over Prestonwood Christian to open the Texas Association of Private and Parochial Schools 6A Division 1 postseason. The Pioneers, 10-1, will now take on Parish Episcopal Nov. 20 at 6 p.m. Polk, a junior, has rushed for 1,684 yards and 28 touchdowns to this point in the season.

Thompson Lion football sweeps Pasadena ISD championships

Another season, another dominant run for the Thompson intermediate football program.

Okay maybe it's not as easy as it sounds, but the Lions left little doubt on the football field in 2026 as they possessed the top-performing talent with a four-for-four sweep in the Pasadena ISD postseason championship round.

The truth is that Thompson Intermediate has been the top overall football program in the district for several decades, yet each season provides a new opportunity for any of the district's 10 programs.

At the end of this season, the Lions once again stood tallest with victories across the board.

"Obviously, we are proud of the guys on each of the teams," Thompson Intermediate head football coach Doug Sawyer said.

"We knew coming into the season, particularly at the A level, that we had pretty good talent. The expectation here at Thompson has always been and always will be to win, and our guys were able to do the job this season.

"That said, it's a process each and every season. We were able to do the little things each and every practice, workout, pregame, postgame and of course during the game

Continued on Page 6

PISD championship football

Thompson 8A, defeated Park View

Thompson 8B, defeated Miller

Thompson 7A, defeated SoHo Int.

Thompson 7B, defeated BHI

Gadd champions pickers contest

With 86 victories in 110 games over the course of the South Belt-Ellington Leader pickers contest, former longtime Sagemont Church associate pastor Emory Gadd emerged victorious in challenge.

Gadd, for decades one of the most prominent figures in the South Belt area, came away with an 89-21 record in the final week, including a pivotal victory from Clear Creek over Clear Lake to win the contest by a slim margin over *Leader* sports editor John Bechtle.

Gadd and Bechtle went into the final week tied at 77-23, with the lone difference in the final week being Gadd' s choice of Clear Creek over Clear Lake, while Bechtle chose the Falcons.

Gadd, the senior-ranking member of the contest, was thus crowned the champion for 2026. Bechtle wound up second fiddle, while contestants Stephen Sutton and Debbie Vaughn finished in a tie for third place.

The contest annually concludes when both the Clear Brook and Dobie varsity football seasons are finished.



Longhorn volleyball earns All-District honors for 2026



Dobie defensive specialist Aly Garza (19) was a terrific performer for the varsity volleyball team during the 2026 season as the junior collected first team All-District honors within District 19-6A. See Page 8 for additional photos.

Photos by Donna Alsdorf



Longhorn senior co-captain Alyssa Espinoza (1) filled the stat sheet throughout the varsity volleyball season as she was an easy choice for first team All-District honors in 19-6A. Early on during the regular season, Espinoza eclipsed 500 career kills and 100 career aces.



Thompson football dominant in Pasadena ISD postseason championship round

Continued from Page 5

that we needed to do. Our guys represented the Thompson Intermediate name well, and we are all very proud of them."

Sawyer is joined on the coaching staff with senior staff member Robert Boyes along with Sawyer's son, Daniel Sawyer, as well as Aaron Kutra, also a former longtime South Belt resident and former Thompson Lion in his own right. oyes actually coached both the younger Sayer and Kutra when they were students at Thompson.

Clearly, the coaching staff has a personal motivation to help the Lions be successful on the field each season.

Other programs within Pasadena ISD have certainly been able to break through in some of the other sports within the district, but the Lions have largely remained the cream of the crab on the football field.

As the head coach, Doug Sawyer certainly is front and center on the football field for the Lions. But he extends plenty of credit to the rest of the staff.

"I think a lot of our success has to do with the coaches who surround me. It's a credit to the consistency, and the fact that these coaches have been in the program for a long time. So that's a big thing, the consistency but also the winning culture that we demand.

"We expect to win, but we also expect consistency within the program. Both in the classroom and on the field. You always have to take care of the little things to be successful, and I feel like we have a coaching staff and kids who consistently allow us to do that."

The results speak for themselves. The scoreboard produces the final score each and every week. But obviously, there is much more involved with being successful within any extracrricular program.

"I believe as coaches, you can demand success but you also have to work at it. You cannot just demand it. Off the field, we make sure that our athletes are taking care of their business in the classroom.

"At the end of the day, their educational growth is the most important thing. We have what we call grade days where a lot of times we will take the entire athletic period and focus on checking grades and making sure our athletes have what they need to be successful.

"If we need to, we will check with a teacher and see what our students needs to complete in order to keep up with solid grades.

"A lot of these kids these days get busy with a lot of different things, and so we try to focus on making sure that our kids understand that staying on top of their grades is most important."

Thompson Intermediate usually welcomes a solid group of student athletes on an annual basis with feeder schools Melillo and Fred Roberts providing many of the students.

Sawyer said the process actually begins at the youth football level with the Sagemont Cowboys and extends to the sixth-grade level at Melillo and Roberts, ensuring the students are able to get a head start on what the expectations are once they arrive at Thompson.

"It really starts during the summer," Sawyer said. "We will go talk to these kids about our program at Thompson, including conversations about our success, and we'll talk about how exciting it will be for some of these students to come in and be part of our program.

"It's also important for a lot of those kids to be part of our summer camps and conditioning workouts. It all goes hand in hand. It's important to keep a lot of these kids busy so that they can stay on track."

"I appreciate the coaches across the board who have done a great job for us," Sawyer said.

"Everybody plays a key role. It's really a team effort. We also try to make sure that every guy who wishes to play football has a chance to do so.

"We were fortunate enough to have a couple of C division teams this year, and while it is really a tough job to find competition, I work hard to go out there and find games for our guys to compete in. I want everybody to have the opportunity to play football if they want to. We also had pretty good success at the C level, so we are proud of that as well."

Sawyer said that particularly in today's world, it is important to bear in mind just what the athletes are dealing with on a daily basis. To that end, Sawyer added the coaching staff is always willing to do what is necessary to help out.

"We ensure these kids know that you care about them, not just as athletes but as people. We reach out to them on Facebook and indifferent social media besides just to let them know about programs that we have going to get involved with.

"We also try to make sure that we follow these guys after they leave Thompson, whether it be at Dobie or even after at the college level. Everybody has ever played at Thompson for us as part of the lion family, and we make sure these kids understand that."

As for the success shown on the football field this year with the Lions, the Sawyers and the rest of the coaching staff are clearly thrilled with the results.

"Yes, we are very proud of what the guys put together for us this year. We were able to win the eighth-grade B game on a late field goal, and then the kicker actually made a tackle on the ensuing kickoff that very well saved the game for us in a 3-0 victory," Sawyer said.

"The rest of the games, we were able to handle pretty well on the scoreboard."

Photos by Donna Alsdorf



Kayden Leal (80) of Thompson goes high to make a play on the football during the Lions eighth-grade A postseason championship game against Park View. Leal and his teammates rolled to a huge victory in the game to complete a perfect season.



Lions eighth-grade A running back Johnathan Shaw (23) put together a terrific all-around season as the locals went on to go undefeated on the way to the Pasadena ISD divisional championship. Shaw and his teammates ran past Park View in the championship game to close out the tremendous run.



The Thompson Intermediate eighth-grade A football team was able to control the action in a big way against the Park View Cowboys in the Pasadena ISD postseason championship game as offensive linemen, from left, Delano Oliver (50) and Shaun Mijares provided stout blocking up front in support of quarterback Kevin Richardson (2) and others.



Thompson and Miller went head-to-head in a scoreless eighth-grade B Pasadena ISD championship game as the Lions got several big runs from Liam Goffney (12) and managed to kick a late field goal for a 3-0 victory.



The Lions delivered terrific defense during a Pasadena ISD eighth-grade B championship game as Luke Sanchez (4) and his teammates shut out the Miller Falcons to get the postseason trophy.



Liam Royel (5) and Eddy Varela (13) combined for a stop on a South Houston Indians ball carrier as the Lions cruised to an easy victory in the seventh-grade A Pasadena ISD postseason championship football game.



Taylor Sweat (2) of the Lions seventh-grade A football team breaks free for a long run as teammates Jacob Martinez (34) and Jesus Gomez (72) look to provide blocking downfield. Thompson defeated South Houston for the PISD postseason championship.



Keiden Torres (21) of Thompson had several big runs to gain key yardage as the Lions went on to beat Beverly Hills in the Pasadena ISD seventh-grade B championship football game.



Thompson and Beverly Hills resumed their neighborhood rivalry in the Pasadena ISD seventh-grade B division championship game as Lions players Elijah Nino (51) and Rodrigo Ortiz (59) discussed a blocking assignment during the Lions' victory.

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CALENDAR

Note: Attendees may need to verify events for the holidays are still scheduled.

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 19

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, NOVEMBER 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.

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.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 21

7:30 a.m. **AA Meeting** – "Breakfast With 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, NOVEMBER 22

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, at the Life Recovery Church, 5215 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, NOVEMBER 23

Noon **Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) – Imperfect Nooners Group.** See Friday's notice.

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. **Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) –** St. Luke's Group, 12-Step Recovery, open meeting Mondays, 7 p.m. in the Education Bldg. in room 6, at 11011 Hall Road. For details, call Rita at 281-309-2801.

7 p.m. **TOPS (Take Off Pounds Sensibly)** – Chapter #0683 Friendswood meets at the 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.

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 24

7 a.m. **AA Meeting** – "**Breakfast With Bill**." See Thursday's notice.

9 a.m. **Pasadena Heritage Park and Museum** – See Thursday's notice.

10 a.m. Join Wise Owls on every second and fourth Tuesday of the month. For companionship and games at, United Methodist Church, 12501 Palmsprings Dr. in Houston. Call Shirley at 713-449-9959.

11:30 a.m. **St. Paul's Anglican Church** – See Sunday's notice.

6:30 – 7:30 p.m. **Southeast Houston Toastmasters** – The Southeast Houston Toastmasters Club #05324194 meets virtually with the exception of the second and fourth Tuesdays (hybrid meeting) at sehouston.toastmastersclubs.org and in-person at 10500 Scarsdale Blvd. (SB Chamber of Commerce). Visit the website or call Karen Nunn at 832-722-9061 for information.

7 p.m. **Narcotics Anonymous (NA) –** See Friday's notice.

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 25

7 a.m. **AA Meeting** – "**Breakfast With Bill**." See Thursday's notice.

9 a.m. **Pasadena Heritage Park and Museum** – See Thursday's notice.

Carmeliters – a nondenominational senior citizen social group meeting at St. Bernadette Catholic Church, 15500 El Camino Real, in Clear Lake on the first and third Wednesdays for a time filled with fun, fellowship, lending library with books and puzzles, coffee and bingo. The meetings are open to those ages 55 and older, with no dues. Day trips and extended trips available. Deposits are now being taken for Poland. For details, call Marilyn at 713-444-6744.

Noon **Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) – Imperfect Nooners Group.** See Friday's notice.

Noon **Ballroom Dancing –** casual ballroom dance, open to the public, held every Wednesday afternoon from 12:30 to 3 p.m. at Hometown Heroes Park, 1001 East League City Parkway, League City. Everyone is welcome to come with or without a partner. The dance itself is free as music is provided by volunteer, Neva Schroder. The city requires an activity card for participants in all of the city's many activities. Call the park office (281-554-1180) for answers to any questions regarding the activity card. Visitors are welcome to walk in to observe or participate.

7 p.m. **St. Paul's Anglican Church** – See Sunday's notice.

7 p.m. **Narcotics Anonymous (NA) –** See Friday's notice.

8 p.m. **Alcoholics Anonymous** – See Friday's notice.

8 p.m. **Beverly Hills Sharers Group AA** – See Friday's notice.

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 26

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.

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Dobie volleyball players earn second team 19-6A honors



Freshman Neriah LeBlanc made an immediate splash at the varsity level for the Longhorns during the 2026 season as she was named to the 19-6A second team for her performance on the court.

Photos by Donna Alsdorf

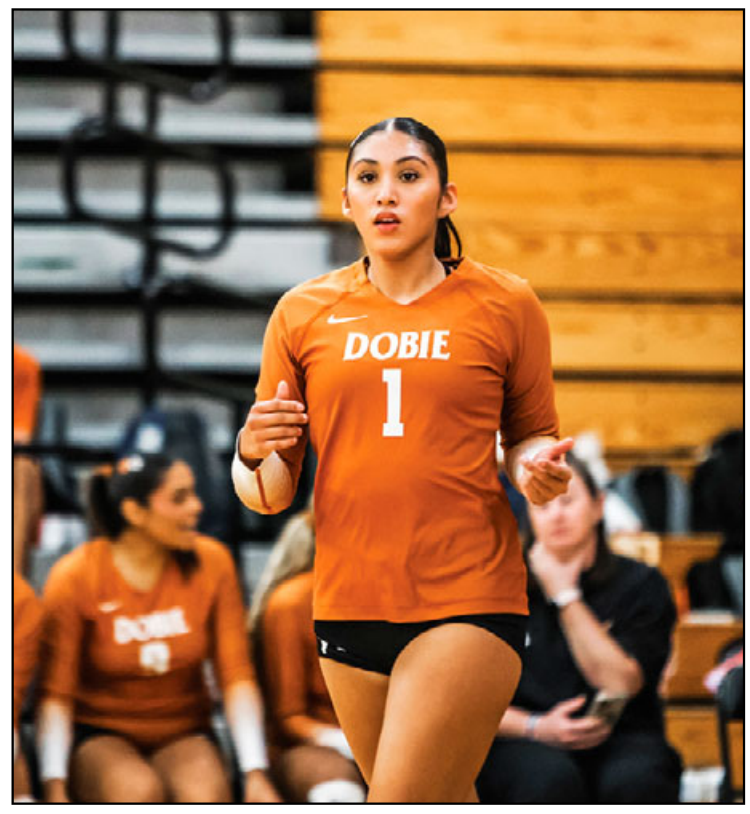


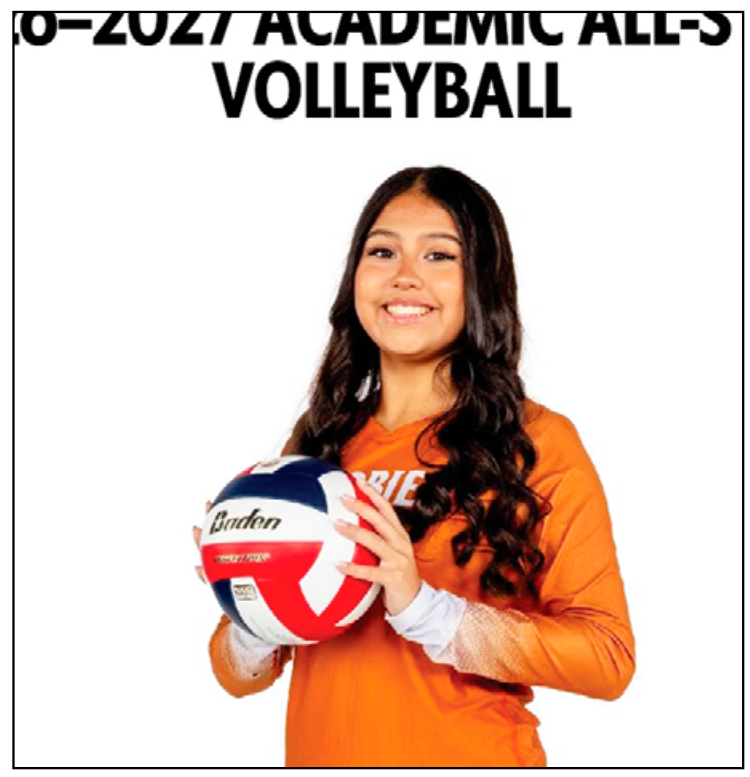
Dobie senior center Leah Hernandez (9) transferred in from Sam Rayburn High School and was a great addition to the Longhorns' efforts on the court as she wound up with 19-6A second-team accolades following the season. Hernandez eclipsed 500 career assists in early October.



Mahoganii Davis had a senior season to remember for the Dobie varsity volleyball program as she was selected to the 19-6A second team.

Espinoza, Martinez are Best, Brightest





The Texas High School Coaches Association has recognized Dobie varsity volleyball players Miah Martinez and Alyssa Espinoza (top photo) as 2026- 2027 Academic All-State honorees. Martinez was named to the second team, while Espinoza was an honorable mention selection. Both players turned in exceptional seasons in 2026 to help the Longhorns to a 20-20 overall finish to the regular season. Both players were also named as first team Best and Brightest Performers via the American Volleyball Coaches Association. Espinoza was also a first team All-District selection for her performance on the court.

JFD's Facundo is ballHER winner

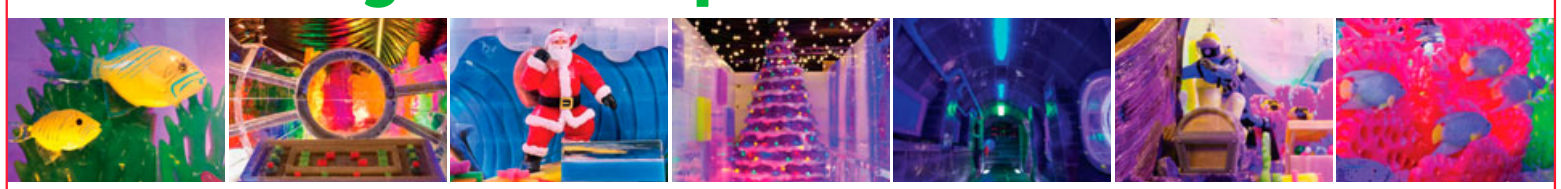


Dobie varsity girls basketball sophomore Tiffany Facundo had nine points and five steals in the Longhorns' 44-40 victory over Eisenhower Nov. 10 as she earned the ballHER Grind Award for her performance in the win. Facundo and her teammates got off to a 3-0 start prior to action Nov. 17 after press time and will look to deliver plenty of success during the McDonald's Texas Invitational Nov. 19-21.

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