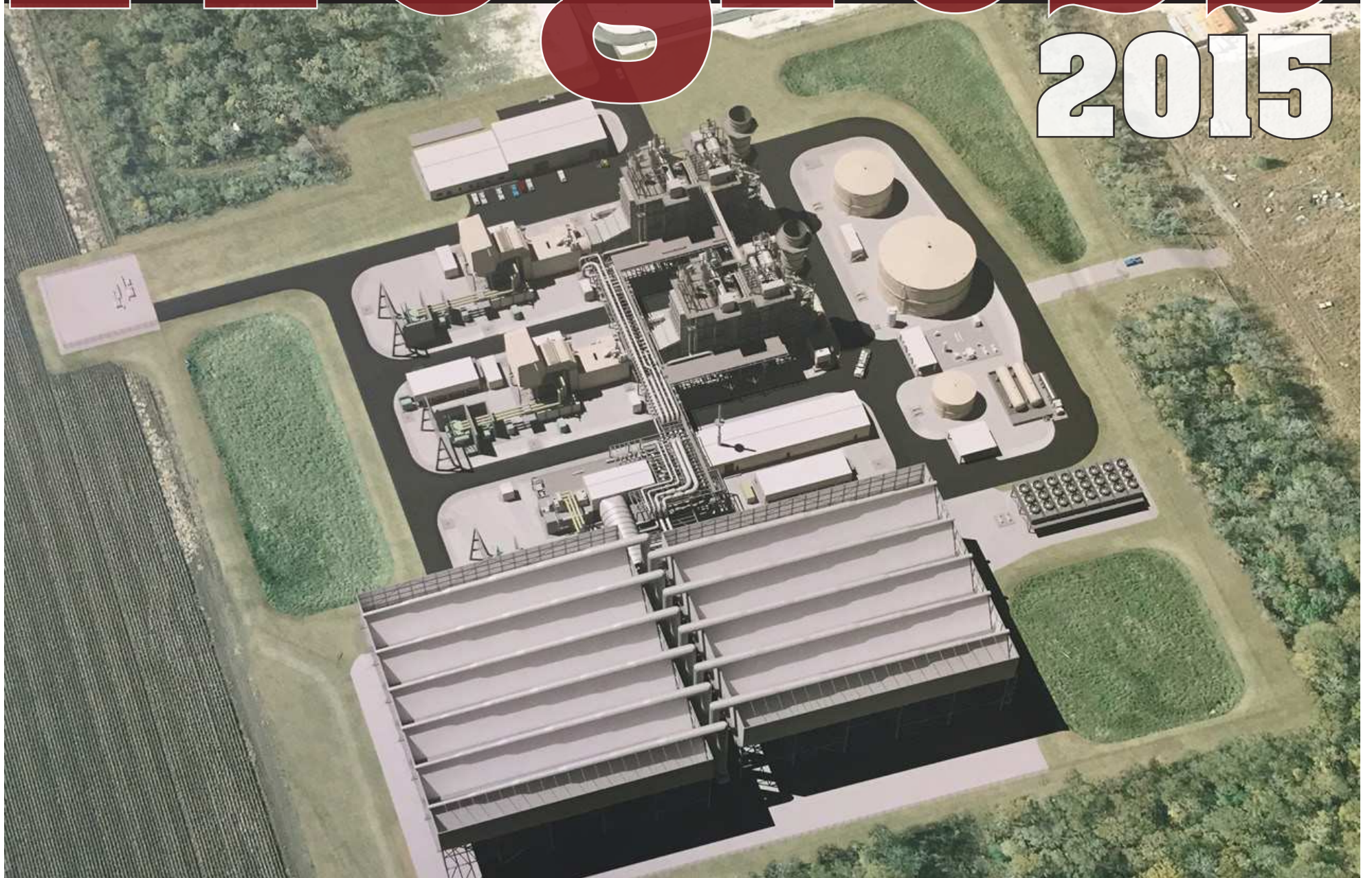


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Progress

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East Wharton County Progress 2015

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Annual small business seminar planned Aug. 29 in Wharton

Special to the Journal-Spectator/Express

A free seminar for people interested in starting or expanding their small business will be offered in Wharton on Saturday, Aug. 29 from 9:30 am to 2:30 p.m. in the board room of the Wharton Economic Development Corp., which is located at the Wharton Civic Center, 1944 N. Fulton St. in Wharton.

It is co-sponsored by Wharton Economic Development Corp., City Development Corp. of El Campo, Wharton and El Campo Chambers of Commerce, Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE), the City of Wharton and the UH-Coastal Plains Small Business Development Center.

Lunch will be provided, sponsored by NewFirst National Bank of Wharton.

The seminar, which has been held annually for the past 17 years, is aptly called "Exploring Business Opportunities."

It is geared toward entrepreneurs, as well as those who are already in business but are wanting to take it to the

"next level."

Jeff Jones, a local volunteer with SCORE of Houston, will lead the seminar session in discussions concerning preparation of a written business plan including financial projections.

Mike Price, another SCORE volunteer/consultant will lead the next session, focusing primarily on marketing and advertising, including the use of various social media platforms.

Chip Wolfe with SCORE will key on the importance of cash flow, revenue and expense projections and good accounting practices.

Kyle Smith, director of the UH-Coastal Plains Small Business Development Center, will be present during the session to answer questions concerning small business loans and possible means for financing the project.

David Schroeder, Wharton EDC's executive director, said the organization's mission goes beyond just attracting new employers and taxpaying entities to Wharton to also helping local citizens start or expand their respective business.

Answering questions in a myriad of areas along with providing guidance throughout the process, from start to finish, is a key component.

"The seminar is designed to assist owners, managers and potential entrepreneurs to identify basic management problems, determine their causes and to help participants become better managers," Schroeder said.

For more information or to register for the free seminar, call the Wharton EDC at 979-532-0999.

In El Campo, folks can register by calling the City Development Corp. at 979-543-6727.

For direct small business assistance, contact Smith with the Coastal Plains SBDC at 979-320-4085.

On the cover

A rendering of the new power plant under construction at Exelon Energy. See story, Page 8.

Courtesy of Exelon Energy



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Wharton is seeing another billion dollar year in capital investment

Special to the Journal-Spectator

Can we say red banner year?

The city of Wharton and our community have not yet realized the various capital investments that have started or have been completed in this last year. One billion, again — one billion dollars — in capital investment have landed into our community.

It greatly helps our tax base and sales tax numbers when Exelon has a ground breaking for a \$650-plus million plant, and the Lower Colorado River Authority starts a phase of development on a \$250 million reservoir, and other small businesses continue to develop in and around Wharton.

An important outgrowth of additional business activity is an increase in sales tax receipts to the city and county. Leadership from the city and county (past and present) are excited about these developments. One major result is that new employees visit our retailers, buy or lease housing, including hotels and RV parks, and facilitate more sales tax.

Whartonians want lower taxes, and while the Wharton Economic Development Corp. (WEDC) does not control the property values set by the Central Appraisal District, the WEDC can help keep city and county tax rates stable.

The city and the county should each have an actual tax revenue increase in excess of \$1 million net of any abatements or concessions granted to businesses. New businesses adding to the tax base can mean local tax rates can be reevaluated annually by City, County and other government entities. These monies can be used to address services requested by citizens.

The WEDC actively participates in the economic development world to benefit the residents of Wharton first. The increase in sales tax receipts stemming from new businesses, expansions, location or retention projects are aided through the economic development sales tax. If we can increase the tax bases, it allows the tax rates to remain stable for our citizen tax payers.

Although WEDC faces notable challenges, the task is achieved through successfully developing an economy and business environment where companies want to locate. Companies tell us they



Don Elliott, owner of Don Elliott Autoworld on Richmond Road in Wharton, stands inside the showroom, which is undergoing a major renovation along with the outside of the building.

Staff photo by Keith Magee

want to locate in cities that have a favorable tax and regulatory climate, which offer excellent education and training at all levels, infrastructure that can sustain growth and support a desirable quality of life.

The city-appointed WEDC board consists of Marshall Francis, Mike Wootton, Judd Perry, Freddie Pekar, Bill Ansley, Al Bryant and Russell Machann. A detailed annual budget approved by the WEDC Board and the city of Wharton will address the challenges and set the path for the future of the city of Wharton in attaining the quality of life everyone desires. A few of the projects mentioned in this 2015 East Wharton County Progress Edition will give a glimpse of the activity WEDC has generated in the last year.

WEDC annually re-evaluates every tool available and thinks creatively about how to move forward in the new economic and operational reality. Even after fulfilling the basic requirements of having a Sales Tax Corporation are met, the level of competition among cities and counties for quality corporate loca-

tions and expansions requires concerted efforts, as well as incentives to attract new businesses. Whartonians voted to collect sales tax to be used for economic development projects and to capture a tax base that will help Wharton sustain itself. This has proven to be an excellent investment for our future as more and more cities and towns have economic development programs.

Today, the highly competitive environment characterizing economic development virtually demands that we be competitive with incentives, along with being able to furnish the proper infrastructure for prospects looking to locate here.

Firms have come to recognize that they have significant bargaining power in choosing a city and are using it to effectively reduce their overall costs. In seeking new locations, lower tax levels and specific economic incentive packages bring with them a fiduciary duty to minimize overall outlays and maximize profits. This year, WEDC aggressively created structures of attractive packages to compete against other cities.

It must be remembered that economic development is a high stakes process in which winning cities receive very significant rewards of jobs, capital investments and tax revenues; on the other hand, second place (even a very close second place) gets nothing. The availability of funds to support economic development efforts is essential, and the sales tax for that purpose has enabled Wharton to improve their ability to compete for new business activity and retain existing businesses. Without the resources provided to WEDC by sales tax revenue, many of the projects would simply not be possible.

The economic development incentive options are allowing Wharton to be on a short list of attractive locations for the prospect. Most large firms employ agents (site selection consultants) to assist in the location process. Because these consultant firms largely compete with one another based on their ability to secure incentives, areas without competitive programs are often shut out or eliminated from consideration.

See WEDC, Page 5

— WEDC

Continued from Page 4

Many assisted businesses would not have remained, expanded or located in Wharton without the concerted economic development efforts funded by the sales tax for economic development. A year of developing stronger partnerships with the Governor's Office, the Greater Houston Partnership and CenterPoint Energy has gotten the attention of prospects looking to expand.

In WEDC's meetings with various consultants, they want to know about Wharton's business climate, incentive packages, available sites, solutions for sites and lastly they will comment, "and make sure you have the city looking good when the clients make their site visit."

Our involved WEDC directors are keen on building on our strength of developing relationships with a prospect that is mutually attractive.

Success on projects increased markedly when funding for economic development is available or facilitated by the sales tax and incentives are implemented. The economic sales tax is a major milestone in the process to improve Wharton.

Local economic development efforts

2014-15 new businesses, additions and renovation projects

The Wharton Economic Development Corp. has provided the following list of individuals and businesses who have new projects, renovations or additions during the previous year:

- Hinze's relocation
- Exelon Power Plant
- Bernard Construction leased Alabama location in building LCRA reservoir
- Little Caesars Pizza
- Wharton County Department of Family & Protective Services new facility.
- Dr. Nathan Nguyen, new medical bldg.
- Wharton Veterinary Clinic expansion
- Dialysis Center of Wharton/Dr. Dada
- Gulf South/Boardwalk gas pipeline project
- Buc-ee's additional 32 gas pumps
- Express Inn
- Auto Zone
- Wharton Guns & Gear
- Coyote RV Park
- Premier Party Rental/Alvin and Yvonne Hawkins
- Nan Ya Plastic Corp., USA
- Wolfpak Radio, Larry Kuciembua, John Alaniz
- Karen Ternois purchase 115/117 Fulton St.
- Amanda Hubenak, Unico
- Tina Jarvel, massage & haircuts
- Love's Travel Stop
- Dragonfly improvements, Caroline Wagner
- Yvonne Mader Craft Booth Shop
- Nonna's Emporium
- Painted Poodle Art Studio & Art Classes, Penny Medders
- Milam St. Coffee/Wall to Wall Books improvements, Linda King
- Starbrite Generator & Control Services
- Rosa's Creations, 240 Milam
- All in Stiches Boutique on Fulton
- Charles Obi Pharmacy & Medical Sales or rentals
- Boost Mobile Inc. took over AT&T in front of Walmart
- Marshall Francis, additional storage units
- Busy Bee Day Care on Alabama
- Don Elliott Autoworld major renovation

by WEDC sales tax are an important reason for the success of stable city and county tax rates.

The mandate for WEDC is to be prepared to capitalize on economic growth through installing infrastructure where such improvements do not exist for projects, finding occupants for empty buildings and getting unattractive properties updated or demolished.

WEDC has a strong, positive desire among partners such as WCJC, WISD, city of Wharton, Wharton County and others in landing mega projects that can result in the future for growth and having jobs for our youth. WEDC and our community will rely on the actions of all for us to be successful.

WEDC directors want to thank the *Wharton Journal-Spectator* and *East*

Bernard Express for creating this special section, *East Wharton County Progress 2015*, to inform all residents of this year's activity.

Story written by Executive Director David Schroeder on behalf of the Wharton Economic Development Corp. board. For more information about the WEDC, call 532-0009.

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Chamber of Commerce is Wharton's front door

The Wharton Chamber of Commerce and Agriculture is often the first stop when folks are shopping for products and services, starting a business, moving here or just visiting.

We have been Wharton's front door for nearly one century. We have served and continue to serve as the go-to source for tons of information about Wharton and the maps to get there. The sky's the limit.

Simply put, we are in the business of helping people do business. We connect businesses and customers.

We support our business community in many ways. We hold informational



luncheons, produce a first-rate map, market Wharton as a destination for travel dollars, host and support festivals and special events, hold business networking events, showcase new businesses and members with ribbon cuttings and open houses. We also offer

very competitive commercial electricity rates through our Wharton Chamber electric coalition.

We also operate the digital portal to Wharton from our website, www.whartontexas.com. Our on-line business directory and map are well traveled on our website, constantly connecting businesses and customers, as well as our email blasts and Facebook presence.

We range from some 700 to 1,000

referrals to local businesses each month from people using our website.

Community building — progress — is a team effort.

How can we help you?

Ron Sanders is executive director of the Wharton Chamber of Commerce & Agriculture. He can be reached at 532-1862. More information is also available on the chamber of commerce's website, www.whartontexas.com.

Jobs created in FY 2014-15

<u>BUSINESSES (TEMPORARY)</u>	<u>TYPE</u>	<u>JOBS</u>
Exelon Power Plant	Construction	400
Bernard Construction (LCRA Reservoir)	Construction	150
Gulf South	Pipeline	100
TOTAL TEMPORARY JOBS		650
NEW BUSINESSES		
Love's Travel Stop		35
Hinze's (new location)		25
Little Caesar's Pizza		6
Express Inn		6
Dr. Dada (new facility)		5
Family and Protective Services (new facility)		4
Day Care on Alabama		4
Wharton Veterinary Clinic (expansion)		3
Auto Zone		3
Charles Obi Pharmacy		3
Boost Mobile		2
Coyote RV Park		2
Dr. Nathan Nygen (new building)		2
Premier Party Rental		2
Wolfpak Radio		2
Coming Up From Nothing		2
Dragonfly/Caroline Wagner		2
Wharton Guns & Gear		1
Fancy Pants Boutique		1
Nonna's Emporium		1
Faith Christian Academy (expansion)		1
All In Stiches Boutique		1
Rosa's Creations		1
Starbright Generator & Control Services		1
Donna Design		1
Unico (relocation)		1
Tina Jarvel massage and haircuts		1
Yvonne Mader Craft Booth Shop		1
TOTAL PERMANENT JOBS CREATED		120

Source: Wharton Economic Development Corp. (as of July 2015)



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Major area employers

<u>FIRM</u>	<u>PRODUCT</u>	<u>EMPLOYEES</u>
1. Wharton ISD	Education	320
2. Wharton County Junior College	Education	277
3. Nan Ya Plastics	Rigid PVC film	240
4. Wharton County	Government	233
5. Gulf Coast Medical Center	Health care	200
6. South Texas/Memorial Hermann	Health care	164
7. Walmart	Retail	160
8. J-M Manufacturing	PVC pipe	130
9. H-E-B	Retail	125
10. Buc-ee's	Retail	100
11. City of Wharton	Government	93
12. Dorian Tool Co.	Machine tools	75
13. Maxim Production Co.	Egg farm	50
14. Texas Dept. of Transportation	State agency	26

Source: Wharton Economic Development Corp. (as of July 2015)



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PROGRESS 2015: INDUSTRIAL



Staff photo by Chasity Valdez

Officials with Exelon Generation, Alstom, General Electric, Zachry and local officials break ground on July 8 at the site of the power plant in Wharton.

Power plant highlights year's projects

By CHASITY VALDEZ
reporter@journal-spectator.com

Senior executives from Exelon Generation, Alstom, General Electric and Zachry were joined by community leaders from Wharton to officially break ground on July 8 on the construction of a new low-carbon, combined-cycle gas turbine (CCGT) at Exelon's Colorado Bend Generating Station in Wharton.

The new natural gas unit at Colorado Bend will provide more low-carbon electricity to the growing Texas energy market. It will add 1,100 MW of capacity to Colorado Bend's existing 498 MW. Instead of using water for cooling, the new unit will use air, reducing the amount of water required for operation. The unit's technology and design will make it one of the cleanest, most efficient combined-cy-

cle gas turbines in the state and the nation.

"This technology is state of the art, and Zachry is going to deliver high quality folks to build it," said Keith Manning, executive vice president with Zachry.

There will be 300-700 construction jobs opening within the next two years, and 17 permanent jobs when the plant is finished. Manning also said there will be \$20 million spent at local businesses to purchase supplies for the project.

"Exelon is a forward-looking company, and what we see is a clean energy future that includes this kind of new technology, which uses little water and produces few emissions while generating electricity at a very low cost," said Ken Cornew, president and CEO of Exelon Generation.

"We're delighted to be the first to

employ this GE technology, and we're delighted to do it in Texas. This is how Exelon sees the energy future of America — clean, affordable and efficient."

Wharton Mayor Domingo Montalvo Jr. said he wants Wharton to grow and prosper.

"For future prosperity in Wharton County, we are going to need more power," Montalvo said. "Exelon assures me that we'll have the most efficient, reliable power that can be produced with this new unit."

County Judge Phillip Spenrath said Exelon will generate tax revenue that will help Wharton tremendously.

"We're blessed and excited to have Exelon here," Spenrath said. "We have no fear of what you are [Exelon] doing."

Spenrath explained the revenue Exelon will generate with respect to taxes

as, "Wharton County entered into an economic incentive package with Exelon that equates to a 48 percent tax abatement. In actuality, Exelon will be granted a 100 percent 10 year tax abatement but in return will pay Wharton County a \$1.2 million payment in lieu of taxes (PILOT) for 10 years beginning the year after the plant is fully operational."

Ron DeGregorio, president of Exelon Power, acknowledged and thanked the first responders of Wharton.

"Safety is first, and we need local help from the fire department, EMS, and all first responders," he said.

DeGregorio explained the Effort program as being a program to get with local first responders to show them and have them be prepared in case something were to happen. He gave the Wharton Volunteer Fire Dept. a \$2,500 donation.

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LCRA building new reservoir in Lane City

Special to the Journal-Spectator/Express

The Lower Colorado River Authority is aggressively working to expand the region's water supply and meet the LCRA board of directors' goal of adding 100,000 acre-feet per year to the region's water supply.

The largest of LCRA's new water supply projects is the Lane City Reservoir Project, an off-channel reservoir LCRA is building near the Gulf Coast.

The project will be the first significant new water supply reservoir developed in the lower Colorado River basin in decades. The Lane City Reservoir will be constructed off the main channel of the Colorado River, near Lane City in Wharton County.

The reservoir could add up to 90,000 acre-feet of firm water to the region's supply. Firm water is water that can be counted on without shortage even during a repeat of the worst drought conditions in the region's history.

The Highland Lakes were created to manage floods on the Colorado River and to provide a sustainable source of water for the basin as a whole. The Lane City Reservoir is the first project that will allow LCRA to capture and store signif-



Key stakeholders join the Lower Colorado River Authority in breaking ground in December at the site of the Lane City Reservoir. Wharton Journal-Spectator file photo

icant amounts of water downstream of the Highland Lakes. The new reservoir will increase LCRA's operational flexibility, which will lessen the need to send Highland Lakes water down the Colorado River to customers near the coast, while improving water reliability and efficiency to meet agricultural and environmental demands.

The reservoir, which broke ground on Dec. 10, 2014, is expected to begin operating in 2018.

Lane City Reservoir highlights

- First Off Channel Reservoir capable of supplying water in the region since World War II.
- First project that will allow LCRA

to capture and store significant amounts of water downstream of the Highland Lakes.

- Allows LCRA to take advantage of the water climate in the lower basin.
- Will help improve agricultural water reliability and efficiency.
- Will be able to hold 40,000 acre feet of water.



Courtesy photo

An expansion project at Nan Ya Plastics will add 2-30 jobs by the end of the year.

Nan Ya expansion project to add 20-30 new jobs by the end of 2015

By **KEITH MAGEE**
kmagee@journal-spectator.com

In 2012, Nan Ya Plastics Corp. USA in Wharton added a new PET product line which has proved to be very successful, company spokesperson Sybil Inman said

PET is Polyethylene Terephthalate,

otherwise known as polyester; used in thermoforming and printing.

In mid-December 2014, Nan Ya began construction to install a second PET line at a cost in excess of \$9.5 million.

This line should be in production hopefully by the end of 2015 and will add 20-30 new jobs to the existing workforce, Inman said.

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PROGRESS 2015: U.S. 59 CORRIDOR



Courtesy photo

A Love's Travel Stop, which is under construction on U.S. 59 and FM 1161 just north of Wharton, is scheduled to open sometime this fall. It has been delayed because of weather issues.

Love's Travel Stop targets fall opening

By KEITH MAGEE

kmagee@journal-spectator.com

As officials continue their planning for U.S. 59 to become Interstate 69 through Wharton County, businesses up and down the highway are already preparing for increased traffic.

A new truck stop is under construction, and an existing convenience store is expanding.

In addition, a new restaurant has opened at an existing truck stop.

Also up the road in Fort Bend County, a Pilot Travel Center opened recently in Beasley, with an Arby's and a Cinabonn.

In Wharton County, a Love's Travel Stop will open in the fall at U.S. 59 and FM 1161.

And at Buc-ee's, the facility is adding much-needed gas pumps — 32 additional — to serve its customers.

Love's Travel Stop

A Love's Travel Stop is planned to open later this year just north of Wharton at the intersection of U.S. 59 and FM 1161 in Hungerford.

Construction workers are busy at the site, but the weather has been a major hold-up, company spokesperson Greg Love said.

"We are hoping to be open sometime late fall," Love said.

The travel stop will be one of the company's larger facilities at 11,000 square feet, Dorian said. It will feature two restaurants — Chester's Chicken and McDonald's.

The store will also have room for parking for 84 18-wheeler trucks.

Buc-ee's adding more gas pumps



Courtesy photo

Buc-ee's, a popular stop for motorists on U.S. 59 as they travel through Wharton as well as locals, is adding 32 gas pumps at the location. A spokesperson for the company said all of the new fuel dispensers were scheduled to open to the public on July 29.

The U.S. 59 corridor, which will be upgraded to Interstate 69, already has a lot of commercial traffic and is expected to have more.

Also, there is a lot of traffic from those who travel to South Texas to go to Corpus Christi, South Padre Island and other vacation destinations.

In addition to the two restaurants planned, the store will have the usual convenience store items — travel items, snacks, coffee, etc.

During the holiday season, the stores also carry toys and gifts for Christmas, making it convenient for those traveling to be able to purchase gifts.

Subway

Drivers along U.S. 59 will have a healthy option when they're ready to make a pit stop.

A new Subway restaurant is now open at the Texaco Truck Stop on U.S. 59 near County Road 216 north of Wharton.

A grand opening was held July 27-28.

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PROGRESS 2015: MEDICAL & SOCIAL SERVICES

Family, Protective Services in new building

By CHASITY VALDEZ
reporter@journal-spectator.com

Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) has moved its Wharton County office to its new location in Wharton.

The organization is now completely moved out of the building it was renting from the county on Burleson Street and on Monday was located in its brand new building built by the state at 200 University Ave. The new facility is located off North Fulton Street and behind the East Gate Shopping Center.

Adult and child protective services are located in the new building and serves all of Wharton County.

Also this year, a new medical facility opened, and another medical office building is under construction.

struction.

Dr. Mohammed A. Dada, M.D. from Bay City began remodeling a building that formerly housed a child care facility on Alabama Street last year.

The 8,000 square foot building opened earlier this year and houses the Dialysis Center of Wharton and Dada's office.

Also, Dr. Nathan Nguyen, along with partner Dr. Comay Pasdar, is building an 8,000 square foot medical building off of Regional Medical Drive. It is expected to be finished in three to six months.

Nguyen said the plans for the clinic are to have specialists come from Sugar Land at least once a week to see patients.

"Our goal is to recruit a cardiologist, GI doctor, podiatrist, surgeons and a lab center," Nguyen said.



The Texas Department of Family and Protective Services is now located in its new building at 200 University Ave. off Fulton Street and behind the East Gate Shopping Center in Wharton. Staff photo by Chasity Valdez



Courtesy photo

Construction has started for a new 8,000-square-foot medical facility off of Regional Medical Drive by Dr. Nathan Nguyen.



Staff photo by Keith Magee

The Dialysis Center of Wharton opened earlier this year on Alabama Road in a building that formerly housed a child care center.

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Express Inn opens in Wharton



Courtesy photo

Earlier this year, a new motel — the Express Inn — opened in Wharton on FM 102 next to Buc-ee's. The motel features standard rooms with one or two beds, as well as refrigerators and microwaves.

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PROGRESS 2015: WHARTON RETAIL

Don Elliott Autoworld getting a new look, new businesses opening in downtown area

By CHASITY VALDEZ
reporter@journal-spectator.com

Wharton's retail scene is growing, with several new businesses opening within the past year.

In addition, one of the biggest projects is a makeover at one of Wharton's auto dealerships.

Here are some of this year's highlights:

Don Elliott Autoworld

Don Elliott Autoworld on Richmond Road is getting a facelift.

"They are upgrading to GM imaging programming," said Kay Elliott.

Some of the upgrades GM wants the dealership to have are blue fronts and to use certain materials inside and out.

"Everything the customer can see and touch will be new and fresh," said Elliott.

They are planning to be finished by the first week in September, and then when fully completed, they will have an open house.

"We are eager for people to see it," Elliott said. "It's going to be lovely."

In addition to Chevrolet, Buick and GMC vehicles, Don Elliott Autoworld also sells Jeep, Chrysler, Dodge and Ram vehicles.

Nonna's Emporium

Nonna's Emporium opened May 15 in downtown Wharton on Milam Street near Monterey Square.

Antiques, decor, collectables, jewelry and consignment items are available.

The owner, Yvonne Mader said, "August is going to be a busy month for us."

A flower shop and a lunch shop will be opening in August. The lunch shop will serve soup, salads and sandwiches, and it will also have gluten free foods.

For booth rental or consignment information, contact Yvonne at 979-531-3103.

Wharton Guns & Gear

In January, Tom Donalson opened Wharton Guns & Gear in downtown Wharton. He said this store is not only guns and gear, but is also about personal safety and situational awareness.

"We're focused on home and personal protection," Donalson said.

He also offers concealed handgun classes. According to Donalson, there are less lethal alternatives, such as, pepper spray or a pepper blaster that shoots foam 90 mph.

Wharton Guns & Gear has many different styles of guns; however, there are no class 3 firearms, such as machine guns.

For more information contact Tom Donalson at 979-531-3100.

Fancy Pants Boutique

Fancy Pants Boutique located at 117 Fulton St. on Monterey Square opened its doors July 1.

Floral, plants, signs, gifts, soaps and custom painted furniture are all available at this boutique owned and operated by mother and daughter team, Pauline Goss and Kelly Hundl.

See RETAIL, Page 17



Staff photo by Keith Magee
Don Elliott Autoworld on Richmond Road is getting a new look this year, from the outside to the inside of the facility. The dealership is upgrading to the GM imaging programming.



Courtesy photo

Fancy Pants Boutique has opened on Monterey Square in downtown Wharton.

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Owners Morgan Muhlhause, left, and Amanda Hubenak have recently moved their Unico business to a bigger location at 210 N. Houston St. in Wharton.

Staff photo by Chasity Valdez



New place to shop

Nonna's Emporium is one of several new businesses that has opened in downtown Wharton.

Staff photo by Chasity Valdez

— Retail businesses opening in Wharton

Continued from Page 16

A favorite among many are Yellow Box shoes, and Goss said soon they will be carrying them at Fancy Pants.

Unico

On May 15, Unico opened in its new, bigger location at 210

N. Houston St. in Wharton.

Owners Amanda Hubenak and Morgan Muhlhause partner with other local dealers: Ashley Martin Designs, Tara Marek, Burr Trading Company, Bling All Over Boutique, Verdigris Sky and Dirt Road Diva to fill their store with one of a kind items.

“Our claim to fame is that we are unique, there is not two of the same item anywhere,” said Hubenak.

Antiques, collectibles, clothes, jewelry, and re-purposed items are sold at Unico.

Hubenak said, “People drop off furniture and we give it life again.”

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PROGRESS 2015: BOLING

Center receives grants for improvements, BHS expands with new building on campus

Staff report

The Boling area saw a new building completed last year at Boling High School, and this year the Boling Community Center is working on improvements for its facilities.

Boling Community Center

Earlier this year, the Boling Community Center applied for and received three grants for capital improvements. Cosmetic and safety updates, kitchen and bathroom renovations are some of the work being done to update the community center.

“To raise money for operating expenses, we rent the venues for all types of occasions including wedding receptions, quinceanaras, fundraising events, birthday parties, picnics, reunions, meetings, etc. Boling ISD and various youth organizations use the grounds for a number of activities free of charge,” said Teri Rolf, a board member.

The organization is in charge of three facilities — the Boling Community Center, Boling Community Fellowship Hall and St. Joseph’s Pavilion at 9839 County Road 162 in Boling.

For rental inquiries call 979-531-9838 or 979-657-2639.

More information is also available at www.facebook.com/bolingcommunitycenter.

Boling High School

Boling High School students enjoyed the opening of a new campus building last November.

Boling ISD’s new Science, Technology and Art Building helped give the district much-needed room for the programs.

Ground was broken in March 2014 for the \$1.76 million construction project at Boling High School. It was completed later in the year, and an official open house was held in November.

The 8,085 square foot building, which houses new science labs, an art room and a computer lab, was built next to the existing Homemaking Building.

The building includes two science classrooms/labs that are 1,400 square feet each, an art room and a computer/technology lab.

The project was paid from the school district’s fund balance, which was \$5.2 million at the end of the 2012-13 school year.

The district also had a \$455,000 surplus from 2013, which also helped the district with the project.



Courtesy photo

The Boling Community Fellowship Hall is one of three buildings managed by the Boling Community Center. This year the organization applied for and received three grants for capital improvements.



Courtesy photo

The Boling ISD added much-needed space to the Boling High School campus with the construction of a new Science, Technology and Art Building, which was completed in November.

PROGRESS 2015: EAST BERNARD



Courtesy photo

Prior to the end of the school year, East Bernard Elementary School third grade students got a sneak preview of the park. The park officially opened on May 30.

Park opening highlights East Bernard's year

The city of East Bernard has seen much progress in the last year. New employees, new park, and completed projects are a few examples of progress we have seen.

So far, 2015 has proven to be a productive year for the city. We have accomplished a great deal in the first half of the year, but we are also looking forward to what is yet to come.

The city of East Bernard has welcomed two new employees in 2015. Tommy Sabrusla and Joel Torres do it all for the city; whether it is mowing the park, patching a hole or repairing something that is broken; they are the faces you will see.

We are thrilled to have our newly-established maintenance department, but we are even more thrilled to have two fantastic employees who go above and beyond for their city. If you see them around town, please stop and say hello and congratulate them on their new positions.

Since we are on the maintenance subject, let's discuss what progress we have made on the city's infrastructure. We have been able to get our pothole epidemic under control. The maintenance department got out there and hustled to make sure our roads remained safe and

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drivable. We know this is an ongoing battle and we will continue to patch as needed.

There are also some areas throughout the city that will be scheduled for more extensive road repair. We also have drainage issues that will be addressed. We will notify the citizens of any road closures or detours that may be needed to complete the infrastructure projects.

Street signs are being replaced or repaired. It is imperative that we stress to our youth the severity of destroying road signs. Replacing several signs each year is very costly.

Our maintenance crew has also begun a beautification project for the city. The railroad will be finishing up maintenance soon, and we will be able to get back out there and clean the flag pole area, as well as the frontage of U.S. 90-A. We hope more is to come to the beautification plans we have, but those are still being

discussed and will need to be approved with Union Pacific.

The East Bernard Community Park is now officially open. The beautiful park opened on May 30, 2015 and has been a great asset to our community.

It is a great place for a gathering, birthday party, or just an evening stroll. Volleyball, basketball, and soccer are all now being played at the park. The kids' area is quite unique, and children really enjoy the nature themed play equipment.

The East Bernard Soccer players were able to raise funds for a much-needed backstop, and soccer is in full swing now. They urge anyone interested in playing to come out and join!

If you are interested in reserving the pavilion or having a function at the park, please contact City Hall.

We were blessed with a few donations to beautify the City Pool. Thank you Polak Petals and Vacek's Hardware for the generous donations. Polak Petals donated the spectacular Anorak chairs and Vacek's Hardware donated some fabulous plants for the front flower bed. When you see them, please thank them for their generosity.

A much-needed animal ordinance was passed for the city of East Bernard. The ordinance will go into effect in August.

Please make sure you have a collar and identification on your animal. Animals will also need to remain on your property. For a copy of the ordinance or to report stray animals, please call the City Hall.

We are in the final stage of production for a much-needed website. The website will allow our community an easier and more efficient way of communicating with city officials and city hall. We will have forms available, public notices, and much more information for the public to view. We are very excited to debut the website!

Future plans for the city of East Bernard include more events throughout the year. Some ideas include a movie night in the park, snow days in the park, and the second annual backyard bash. Stay tuned for more information on these events.

The city of East Bernard is committed to making this city the best city to live in. We are here for you. Please come see us anytime at City Hall, 704 Church St. We love to hear our citizens concerns and suggestions to make East Bernard a great place to live.

Audrey Wessels is city secretary of the city of East Bernard. She can be reached at 335-6558.

PROGRESS 2015: WHARTON COUNTY JUNIOR COLLEGE



Photo courtesy of Wharton County Junior College

Officials from Wharton County Junior College, Tenaris and the Bay City Community Development Corp. (BCCDC) tour the site where a new mechanical laboratory is being built adjacent to the college's Bay City Campus. Pictured, from left, are BCCDC's Bill Cornman and WCJC Nuclear Power Technology Director Rudolph Henry. The lab is scheduled to be up and running for the fall 2015 semester.

WCJC's Manufacturing Technology Program will provide skilled workforce

Special to the Journal-Spectator/Express

Wharton County Junior College students will soon have a cutting-edge career path to follow thanks to an ongoing collaboration between the college, Tenaris and the Bay City Community Development Corp.

Through WCJC's new Manufacturing Technology Program — which kicks off this fall — students will be able to ob-

tain one of three different certificates or complete a two-year associate of applied science degree in Manufacturing Technology.

Students participating in the program will be well-versed in the skills necessary for a host of industry-related fields, said Dr. Amy LaPan, WCJC's Dean of Vocational Instruction.

"The Manufacturing Technology Program will prepare students with the

expertise needed to work for Tenaris or other industries requiring skills like welding and machining," LaPan said. "This is a great opportunity for area residents to obtain a set of skills that can be quickly translated into gainful employment."

Tenaris officials said their collaboration with WCJC will have a positive impact on the entire community.

"Tenaris partnered with WCJC to de-

velop a sustainable program that would meet the needs of more than just our company," said German Cura, President of Tenaris-North America. "Our investment in this program will impact the community by providing them with an opportunity to achieve educational and career goals."

Manufacturing Technology Program

See WCJC, Page 21

— WCJC

Continued from Page 20

courses will be taught at WCJC's Bay City Campus, which is housed in the Center for Energy Development complex in Bay City. Tenaris currently occupies a suite of offices in the same facility.

A new mechanical laboratory building is currently under construction adjacent to the facility and is anticipated to be completed by Sept. 14. The roughly \$1.2 million structure is being funded primarily by the Bay City Community Development Corp.

Tenaris — a leading global manufacturer and supplier of steel pipe products plus related services for the world's oil and gas industry — has contributed \$575,000 for the purchase of the mechanical lab's specialized equipment.

BCCDC officials said the collaboration is a step in the right direction — one that will have far reaching benefits.

"Providing the best education and training we can to our young people is one of the best things the Community Development Corporation can do with its resources," said Bobby Wilkinson, BCCDC's board president.

Although Tenaris has taken the lead on the project, several other industries have contributed through an advisory finance committee. These include Oxea Corpora-

tion, Celanese Corporation, South Texas Nuclear Project and LyondellBasell Corporation.

"LyondellBasell understands that education an training can give prospective employees an advantage in our industry," said Dale Friedrichs, site manager of the LyondellBasell Matagorda Plant. "It's important to us that our investment benefits our neighbors and the community."

Rudolph Henry, WCJC's Director of Nuclear Power Technology and the Manufacturing Technology Program Director, said students who complete the one-year certificate programs can go directly to work for Tenaris or another similar industry or, if so choosing, continue for an additional year to complete the Manufacturing Technology or the Nuclear Power Technology AAS degree.

Henry said the certificates may also be used as "enhancements" to Process Technology and Nuclear Power Technology AAS degrees.

"This will provide students with more flexibility in their employment options," Henry said.

Certificates will be offered in three areas: the existing Electrical Technician or Instrumentation and Control Technician and the new Mechanical Technician. The Manufacturing Technology AAS degree will offer the same three areas as "specialties."

The purpose is to develop a "qualified, professional" worker who can "address

industry's demand for specialized technicians," Henry said.

"This program allows WCJC the opportunity to increase the diversity of its course and curriculum offerings which in turn gives students a more diverse compliment of skills," Henry said. "The curricula are structured to assist the students in their development of electrical, instrumentation, mechatronics or mechanical maintenance skills necessary for entry into many sectors of industry, including power generation, chemical processing and manufacturing."

Program graduates will be able to demonstrate a host of skills, including the ability to install, maintain and upgrade electrical systems, electronic and computer-controlled mechanical equipment and work with various instrumentation devices.

LaPan said additional staff members will be required to help teach the courses once the mechanical laboratory is up and running this fall.

More information on the Manufacturing Technology Program — including course descriptions — can be found on the WCJC website at www.wcjc.edu.

Tenaris is a leading supplier of tubes and related services for the world's energy industry and certain other industrial applications. The company's mission is to deliver value to its customers through product development, manufacturing excellence and supply chain management. Tenaris

seeks to minimize risk for its customers and help them reduce costs, increase flexibility and improve time to market.

Wharton County Junior College is a Texas public, two-year, comprehensive community college offering a wide range of postsecondary educational programs and services including associate degrees, certificates, continuing education courses, cultural affairs and leisure-time activities for the benefit of the community and a population of students that varies in age, background and ability. WCJC operates campuses in Wharton, Sugar Land, Richmond and Bay City with a student population of around 7,400.



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Is now a good time to open my new business?

"The Times They Are A Changin'..."
— poet / songwriter Bob Dylan

"It was the best of times. It was the worst of times" — Noted author Charles Dickens began his epic novel *A Tale of Two Cities*

"The sky is falling!" — Chicken Little

Three prognosticators, all considered "right" in their own way. Three perspectives on the status quo, or life as we know it. To some the cup is half-full, to others half empty. Should we expect any aspect of life or culture to remain the same over extended periods of time? No question today that there are more opportunities facing a small business owner, particularly during challenging economic times where the once-predictable has become virtually unpredictable. On the other hand, mankind has never had so many "tools" (technology, for instance) at our disposal than at any other time in history.

Experts say that the right time to advertise your business is when times are great, not wait until business is slow and try to convince folks this is where they should have been shopping all along... the correlation with starting a new business is similar — there obviously will be less "new" competition when times are tough, as most folks aren't committed to the long haul.

Is now the best time for me to strike out on my own, hang out my shingle, become my "own" boss and open my (dream) small business?

The answer is not a clear-cut, "aha!" moment. Nor is it a yes or no-type answer, more like an essay, or series of questions. It depends ... would be the



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obvious, most honest response. Depends on a series of variables (some liken it to the stars lining up properly). However, it isn't luck, or just hard work, it is more a combination of the two, along with passion, perseverance, dedication, a concern for detail and true customer service.

Is your business dependent on discretionary or disposable income? In other words, is what you are selling a "want" or a "need"? Who is/are your customer(s)? Who or what is your competition? Can you establish or create a "market" or "niche"? Do you have the passion to excel in your industry- are you willing to put in some long hours, at low or no pay, at least initially? Is your family supportive of your desire, even to the point of "pitching in" whenever necessary, especially in the start-up phase?

One thing to remember is that today is but a fleeting moment — the future is not predictable, in many ways ... and the cost (and potential profit) of doing business today is sure to increase given the principles of economics. Except in situations involving extreme supply and demand, or where a substantial improvement in efficiencies can be realized, or a newly-achieved break-even level be sustained, your cost of starting a business today will most certainly be less than in five or 10 years from now.

For the "not so faint of heart," and

those who are willing to take the challenge, the University of Houston/Coastal Plains Small Business Development Center offers free one-on-one business counseling and consultation for clients in Matagorda and Wharton counties. We also assist with business plan preparation, loan packaging and start-up assistance, marketing/promotion and even government procurement through the Procurement-Technical Assistance Center in Houston.

If you have questions, thoughts, ideas, etc. about starting your own business and would like to speak with someone directly about it, contact us for an appointment at 979-320-4085. Our office is located at 1900 Fifth St. in Bay City. We also have satellite offices in Wharton at the Wharton Economic Development Corp. office, 1944 N. Fulton St. (Wharton Civic Center), El Campo at Northside Education Center (707 Farenthold St.), and Palacios at the Chamber of Commerce/Economic Development Office (420 N. Main St.).

The UH-Coastal Plains SBDC is a business consulting and training center of the University of Houston Small Business Development Center Network, serving 32 counties in Southeast Texas. The UH SBDC Network is a program

of the C.T. Bauer College of Business and a resource partner of the U.S. Small Business Administration. Other funding partners include the Bay City Community Dev. Corp., Wharton Economic Dev. Corp., City Development Corp. of El Campo, and Matagorda County and Palacios Economic Dev.Corps.

Kyle Smith is director of the UH-SBDC's Coastal Plains office. He can be reached at 979-244-8466 or 979-320-4085.

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Phone: 979-244-8466 or 979-320-4085
Kyle Smith, director
www.coastalplains.sbdcnetwork.net

• **Wharton Economic Development Corp.**
1944 N. Fulton St., Wharton
Phone: 979-532-0999
David Schroeder, executive director
www.whartonedc.com

• **Wharton Chamber of Commerce & Agriculture**
225 N. Richmond Road, Wharton
Phone: 979-532-1862
Ron Sanders, executive director
www.whartontexas.com
helpdesk@whartonchamber.com

• **East Bernard Chamber of Commerce & Agriculture**
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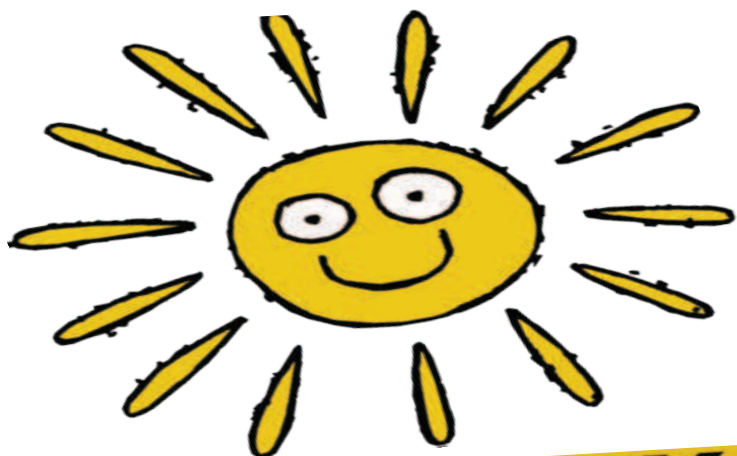
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