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FEBRUARY 2019
monthly

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Photo courtesy of Lynn Lane | Faith Parle in the recent Houston Grand Opera production of "La bohème."

Faith Parle

& says being onstage is the 'best feeling in the world' &

by **MARQUITA GRIFFIN** | mgriffin@fbherald.com

Inspiration is a bit of cyclical phenomenon, and it's one 10-year-old Faith Parle of Greatwood understands. Parle, who has performed with the Houston Grand Opera since she was seven years old, is drawn to the stage the way bees seek out nectar. And when she sings, she thinks not only of her performance but also to the listening audience.

"I like to perform because I want to inspire people, just like other singers inspire me," said Parle, who won second place in the junior division of the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo's Rockstar competition last year. "I feel music can make a difference in how people feel and relate to the world. I want to be an encourager and I love doing that through singing."

This past fair season, Parle won first place in her age group division of the Fort Bend County Fair's Talent competition and has earned first runner up and second runner up in two Sugar Land Jr. Super Star competitions.

Then in December, Parle was one of 22 contestants in the Cel-

ebration of Music, a nationwide talent search series, that came to Houston and was hosted by teenage superstar Ethan Bortnick. She did not win, but the experience was no less powerful for Parle.

"We had a great time watching the concert and seeing Ethan Bortnick. He has tremendous talent and it showed Faith the potential she could reach not only as a singer but a musician as well," said Parle's parents Joe and Suzan.

"It is inspirational [to see] a young child star, who is now graduating high school, achieve so much in such a short period of time," Parle said about seeing Bortnick perform. "It was fun to meet the other contestants and sing 'We Are The World' at the end. I was nervous when they announced the winner and a little disappointed that I won't be going to Los Angeles but I can try it again next year."

The stage, Parle stressed, doesn't intimidate her.

"It energizes me," she said. "It's the best feeling in the world."



Joe and Suzan Parle with their children Joe Jr., 9, and Faith Parle. Although Joe Jr. doesn't sing — he's into climbing trees, math and playing basketball — he thinks "it is cool" to have a sister who sings and encourages her before every performance. "I tell her: 'You are probably going to win,'" he said.



Faith with Buzzy Orange of Buzzy Orange Studio of Voice and Artist Development in Nashville.



Faith excited before her performance at a prior Sugar Land Fun Fest.

~A LITTLE GIRL WITH A GIFTED VOICE~

Parle was about three years old, and coincidentally watching American Idol, when she declared to her mother, Suzan, that she wanted to be a singer.

"Through experiences singing at church and school, she realized that God had given her a unique gift," Suzan said. Parle's first performance was in a Pine Cover Family camp talent show when she was four years old.

"I could tell when she was very young that she had a unique vocal ability," added Suzan, who is a speech pathologist but is currently a stay-at-home mother who devotes much of her time to finding appropriate singing opportunities for Parle. "Even when she would sing songs she seemed to have perfect pitch and she loved singing and imitating songs."

After plenty of pretend family concerts, Parle's parents connected her with Greatwood's Jennifer Frnka Vocal studios when she was five years old.

"She did well," Suzan said. "Our big test was when we responded to an open call for an audition for Houston Grand Opera's children's chorus of 'The Little Prince.'"

More than 100 children — from seven years old through high schoolers — auditioned, and Parle was the youngest one selected to perform.

"We knew then that it was not just us as parents who thought she was talented, but that the Houston Grand Opera thought she was good enough to perform for them," Suzan said. "That was the defining moment."

Following her performance in "The Little Prince," Parle was cast as a supernumerary in Houston Grand Opera's "Faust" and recently in the children's chorus in opera's showing of "La bohème."

"I loved performing in 'La bohème,'" she said. "I made so many great friends and the stage and set was amazing. Everyone who works there is wonderful to be around. I learned so much."

Parle's musical portfolio also includes leading worship at Kingland Baptist Church, The Unique Student Conference and First Baptist Church Height as well as singing the National Anthem for the Sugar Land Skeeters and performing at the city's Mayor's

State of the City Address, the Sugar Land Swim Team's Meet of Champions and the city's 4th of July event.

"Faith did not inherit her musical gift from either of us," said Joe with a laugh. "Both Suzan and I have the dubious distinction of having auditioned for our elementary school choir and not making it. We truly believe her singing ability is a gift from God."

Joe, who is the provost, academic dean and a professor of Bible at the College of Biblical Studies in Houston and a board member of the Christian radio station 89.3 FM KSBJ, said he would "selfishly would love to see [Parle] sing contemporary Christian music."

"However, I also want for her to pursue her dream and Faith would like to be more of a crossover artist like Tori Kelly or Amy Grant before her and Lauren Daigle [who] is receiving more fame outside of Christian circles," he continued. "I have told Faith that whether she is an elementary school music teacher, a stay-at-home mom, a speech pathologist, a worship leader at a church, a famous recording artist, or anything else, I will always be proud of her as long as she puts God first in her life, sings for His glory, she is a woman of character who loves others well."

~MORE THAN SINGING LESSONS~

Parle said each performance provides her with new insight for her next opportunity in front of an audience. With one local coach and another in Nashville, Tennessee, Parle is learning to perfect her skills.

"Typically, I work on a song by myself first and then I see my coach to tweak it. He also helps me with the vocal variety, possible key changes, and how to make the song more original," said Parle, who said her favorite genre of music to listen to and perform is pop, contemporary Christian and country. "I try and practice the song and video myself every day until the performance."

Her parents also strive to prepare Parle for the moments that will go her way, as well as those that won't.

"We have learned that we have to prepare our daughter for more failure than success if she is going to pursue this career," said Joe, noting that his daughter has lost competitions to people who are significantly older.

The contestant that won Producer's Choice for the Celebration



Photo courtesy of Lynn Lane | Faith Parle with famous opera singer Ana Maria Martinez in the Houston Grand Opera production of "Faust."

of Music talent search series was "very well deserving," Joe said, but she was also 25 years old.

"It is hard to compete in that space," he added. "It can be disappointing for a 10-year-old to go through, but we want to encourage her that the music industry is tough and she has to be willing to do her best even if she does not always get the results she wants."

She won't win every single time, and that's OK. She won't get the part she wants every single time, and that's OK, too, her parents stress.

Parle has also learned that minding her health is vital. A particular memory comes to Suzan's mind — Parle competing in the finals for the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo competition while sick. "We literally feared she was losing her voice and we may have to cancel," Suzan said.

But Parle went on, sang "Titanium," and won second place.

Experiences like this taught Parle that learning "healthy vocal habits for singing early on," is a pressing lesson any younger singer needs to heed.

"A few times I've had to perform while really sick," she recalled. "[But] the show must go on and I just alter my high notes or make small changes so I don't hurt my voice or have to push."

Parle and her parents added that being prepared — like choosing the right songs, warm-up vocal exercises, daily vocal programs, finding a professional and trusted voice coach, staying hydrated — and simply having fun are equally important.

"Enjoy the experience," Parle advises.

~SUPPORTING A CHILD'S PASSION~

"If you want your kid to do this type of thing, it is a huge time commitment," Joe said, in reference to the hard work that goes into helping a child pursue a singing career.

"Have a long term view," Suzan added. "Make sure they develop good voice habits that allow them to preserve their voice for the rest of their lives. Even popular singers have had careers cut short because they pushed their voice too much."

Suzan also suggests researching opportunities that will give a child "the chance to shine" — "Get them involved in school plays

or local theater," she encouraged — and be mindful of agents who charge money to represent a child.

"A true agent only makes commission off things they book their kids for," she explained.

But most importantly, "you can't want it more than your kids does," Suzan stressed. "You can't put so much pressure on them that they lose their love for their craft."

While the public can follow Parle on Facebook at @FaithParleMusic, on Instagram at parlesings and on YouTube at Faith Parle Music, both Suzan and Joe are adamant from protecting Parle from online trolls and child predators.

"In a scary world, we worry more about child predators than trolls. For the most part, people have been pretty gracious considering that she is 10 years old," said Suzan, who handles all of Parle's social media pages. "We also don't allow Faith on Facebook or Instagram. Faith really isn't aware of the posting or comments."

Still, Parle has been subjected to bullying and teasing by her peers.

"But we recognize that it is just going to prepare Faith for the reality of being in the music industry," Suzan said. "At the same time, we are blessed by some great friends Faith has at school, church and who also perform — many of whom live in Greatwood — that support her. One Greatwood resident even promoted Faith to her family in Greece to encourage them to vote for her."

Both Joe and Suzan said they appreciate all the support Parle receives from people in her own community, whether it be from their online votes during the recent competition or simple words of wisdom or encouragement.

"Find people that share your passion for your child's passion," Suzan said.

Parle said her ultimate dream is to become a recording artist, musician and "maybe even a speech pathologist who specializes in voice."

And the idea of living a life that doesn't involve singing, isn't worth entertaining.

"It's what I want to do," Parle said simply.



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"For the Kids We Love" Valentine's Day autism awareness luncheon

"It's not what I can't do, but what I can do that makes a difference," said Grant Maniér, an author, public-speaker and Eco-Artist phenomenon who is diagnosed with autism.

Through his work, Maniér is changing perceptions of how to reduce, reuse and recycle. He uses thousands of pieces of recycled paper products, shredded puzzle pieces and more to create extraordinary masterpieces of art. He is an award-winning artist and self-advocate who shares his visual art exhibits and literacy program to schools and organizations to teach the importance of environmental responsibility and inclusion through his art and new children's book: "Grant the Jigsaw Giraffe and Friends."

On Valentine's Day, Maniér will share his experiences at a special Hope for Three Autism Advocates event — the "For the Kids we Love" luncheon — where he is scheduled as a guest speaker.

Hope For Three, a local nonprofit focused on supporting children diagnosed with autism, will hold the "For the Kids We Love" luncheon from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Texas Safari Ranch in Richmond.

The luncheon, presented by Mary and Tom Solcher and guest speaker Maniér, encourages support in raising awareness, acceptance and inclusion for local families

and children living with autism.



Grant Maniér



2019 Luncheon Presenting Sponsor Mary and Tom Solcher with the Montgomery triplets, the inspiration for Hope For Three.

It is an opportunity to engage the public in the nonprofit's cause, build partnerships, resource donations and share information on the many ways Hope for Three can provide help and create hope for local families.

The CDC reports that 1 in 59 children in the United States are diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder. However, a recent study indicated the tally may be as high as 1 in 40 children. A child is diagnosed every 11 minutes.

Autism is more common than Aids, cancer and diabetes combined, and the annual cost of care for one child with autism is estimated to extend up to \$60,000.

Luncheon sponsors and supporters THINK Neurology for Kids, Behavioral Innovations Sugar Land, OCuSOFT and Texas Safari Ranch, believe when you give, and live for something greater, the gratification becomes a labor of love.

Funds raised from the mid-day affair provide children on the spectrum access to much-needed therapies and treatments. Individual tickets (\$50), table (\$500) sponsorships available.

To give a gift of hope or serve as a sponsor, visit hopeforthree.org or call 281-245-0640.

More Valentine's Day Highlights

Feb 4th

Folded-Book Hearts

The University Branch Library will host "Folded-Book Hearts" at 7 p.m. in Conference Room 1. Library staff will demonstrate how to take an old book and make words and images by folding the pages. No cutting, gluing, or special equipment are needed for this simple craft project. The project is a fun way to re-use old books and give them a new purpose. The resulting piece of art can be a great gift for someone who loves to read. Reservations required.

Feb 9th

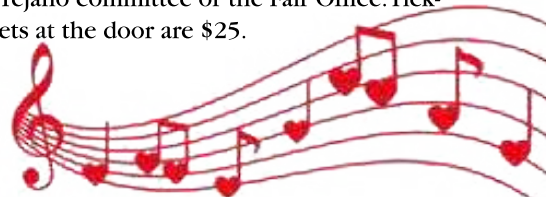
Flower Arranging

The George Memorial Library will host "Flower Arranging" at 10:30 a.m. in the meeting room. Charmanie Amaratunge will demonstrate different techniques to use in making decorative flower arrangements for Valentine's Day or the spring season.



Go Tejano Valentine's Dance

The Fort Bend County Fair Go Tejano Committee will host the 8th Annual Valentine's Dance at 7 p.m. at the Fort Bend County Fairgrounds in Building C. Doors will open at 7 p.m. for a great night of music. Zamorales, Solido & DJ Mario will really heat up your Valentine's night. Advance tickets are \$20 and can be purchased online from a member of the Go Tejano committee or the Fair Office. Tickets at the door are \$25.



sentiments that the colors of
roses are meant to convey

Roses are a popular gift on Valentine's Day. When accompanied by a box of chocolates, a bouquet of long-stemmed roses is sure to make a sweetheart smile on February 14.

Few people may know that the color of a rose is meant to convey a certain message. As a result, even the most head-over-heels-in-love man or woman may not be saying what they mean to say when giving roses. If that special someone has a favorite color of rose, then it might be wise to give that color regardless of what tradition suggests. But when sweethearts have no such preferences, it might be best to keep this guide, courtesy of ProFlowers®, in mind.

♥ **Red:** Red roses say "I love you." Red is symbolic of love, especially romantic love. Red also symbolizes beauty, courage and respect.

♥ **Pink:** Pink is a popular color on Valentine's Day, but sweethearts should know that pink roses say "Thank you," which makes them a better choice for friends than lovers.

♥ **White:** White roses say "I am the one for you." White symbolizes true love, purity, innocence, reverence, humility, youthfulness, and charm.

♥ **Yellow:** Yellow roses say "We're friends and I care about you." Joy, gladness, friendship, delight, and remembrance are just a few of the sentiments yellow conveys.

♥ **Yellow with red tips:** Yellow roses may be best for friends, but yellow roses with red tips say "I'm falling in love with you."

♥ **Orange/coral:** Another awe-inspiring color, orange/coral roses say "I want you in my life." This color indicates desire, enthusiasm and fascination.

♥ **Red and white together:** A mixed bouquet of red and white roses says "We are a great match."

♥ **Peach:** Peach symbolizes intimacy, telling a lover, "Let's make this a memorable Valentine's Day."

Different color roses say different things, meaning Valentine's Day celebrants can find a rose to convey any message they hope to send this February 14.



Countdown to Valentine's Day with week-long fun

Millions of people eagerly await the arrival of the shortest month of the year for the opportunity to show their spouses, girlfriends, boyfriends, companions, and many other special people in their lives how much they are loved. Even though Valentine's Day is just one day a year, that doesn't mean it should be the only time one expresses his or her love for a special someone.

With this in mind, individuals can count down the days to Valentine's Day with these daily events that precede the day of love.

February 7: Rose Day

Celebrate love with a vase filled with roses. Red symbolizes love, and many other colors represent heartfelt emotions. The flowers will add to home decor and ambiance.

February 8: Proposal Day

Couples ready to tie the knot can use this day as an opportunity to propose. Those already engaged or married can spend Proposal Day celebrating the events that led up to their own engagement or betrothal, and toast how their relationships have evolved.

February 9: Chocolate Day

Lavish a loved one with all the decadent treats they enjoy. These can include store-purchased chocolates, chocolate fudge sundaes or warm brownies fresh out of the oven.

February 10: Teddy Day

This day can be interpreted in different ways. Couples adding spice to their relationships can celebrate Teddy Day with the lingerie of the same name. Those looking for a more G-rated experience can gift each other with an adorable stuffed bear. Make-your-own stuffed animal retailers at nearby malls are a place to turn for customizable teddy bears.

February 11: Promise Day

Promise Day provides an opportunity to make promises to each other that are specific to couples' relationships. These can include being more patient, traveling more or spending more time together.

February 12: Hug Day

On this day the world celebrates the uplifting and comforting power of hugs, which can be powerful expressions of love.

February 13: Kiss Day

Couples can pucker up and spend a few extra moments showing their affection with some kisses. The lips are quite sensitive to touch, and kissing is one of the more renowned expressions of intimacy.

Show love all week long leading up to Valentine's Day.

Choose wisely when Selecting Valentine gifts

As the clock ticks down to Valentine's Day, the pressure is on to find the ideal gift. While some sweethearts may provide some clues to help with Valentine's Day shopping, many gift-givers are on their own.

The National Retail Federation predicts that, in 2019, shoppers may match Valentine's Day spending from a year ago, when lovebirds spent a total \$18.2 billion on gifts for their sweethearts. With so much money invested, shoppers no doubt want to find the best gifts possible. When shopping for Valentine's Day, try to avoid these common mistakes and choose gifts that are creative and heartfelt.

♥ Skip the gas station flowers, candy or last-minute gifts. Valentine's Day is a time to show you care. If you've left gifting to the last minute, you may make the situation worse by giving something impersonal you picked up on an errand. If you forgot or ran out of time, simply admit you goofed or time got away from you. Then ask your sweetheart what he or she wants and go shopping together.

♥ Avoid attention-getter antics. Sure it may seem like a good idea to send 20 helium balloons and a boatload of flowers to a sweetheart's office. But what if he or she really doesn't like being in the limelight? Are you gifting this way for the attention you'll receive rather than doing so to make your sweetheart happy?

♥ Eschew overly personal gifts. If your relationship is in its infancy and you haven't both mutually expressed interest to take it to the next level, avoid gifts that suggest moving in together (appliances), personal fragrances, couples massages, or other intimate activities. Wait until the relationship has reached certain milestones before getting too personal with gifts.

♥ Stop trying to be helpful. If your sweetheart has expressed a desire to make certain lifestyle changes, you may think a gym membership or a subscription to a new wardrobe mail service makes a great gift. But such gifts may send the wrong message, inadvertently, and even falsely, indicating that you don't like your partner the way he or she is.

♥ Pass up practical gifts. Valentine's Day is a time to cater to fantasies and wishes more so than necessities. Even if your sweetheart needs that new electric shaver or a snow scraper for the car, go for something more special on Valentine's Day.

Valentine's gifters should focus on presents that will be meaningful to the recipient and something he or she may see as an indulgence.

dinner for two: Lovely date night meals for your special day



lobster Colorado

by **TINA NICOTERA**

Prep: 10m | Cook: 30m | Ready In: 40m

INGREDIENTS

4 (8 oz) fillet mignon (beef tenderloin)
salt and pepper to taste
1/2 tsp garlic powder
4 slices bacon
1/2 cup butter, divided
1 tsp OLD BAY(R) Seasoning
8 oz lobster tail, cleaned and chopped

DIRECTIONS

Set oven to Broil at 500 degrees F (260 degrees C).

Sprinkle tenderloins all over with salt, pepper, and garlic powder. Wrap each filet with bacon, and secure with a toothpick. Place on a broiling pan, and broil to desired doneness, about 8 to 10 minutes per side for medium rare.

While tenderloins are cooking, melt 1/4 cup of butter over medium heat with 1/2 teaspoon Old Bay(R) seasoning. Stir in chopped lobster meat, and cook until done. Spoon lobster meat over cooked tenderloins, and return them to the broiler until the lobster meat begins to brown.

While the lobster is in the oven, heat the remaining 1/4 cup of butter in a small saucepan over medium-high heat, cook until it browns, turning the color of a hazelnut. To serve, spoon the browned butter over the steaks, and sprinkle with the remaining Old Bay(R) seasoning.

Preheat oven to 375 degrees F (190 degrees C).

Combine mustard and onions in a small bowl. Pour melted butter into bread crumbs in a separate bowl; stir until mixture resembles wet sand. Season with salt.

Coat top of lamb generously with the mustard mixture. Sprinkle crumb mixture onto the mustard mixture and press down to create a crumb crust.

Roast rack until it reaches an internal temperature of 125 degrees F (50 degrees C), about 15 minutes. Let rack rest 10 minutes before slicing between ribs into four 2-rib servings or two 4-rib servings.

Mix thinly sliced mint into strawberry sauce just before serving. Spoon a small pool of the sauce onto serving plates. Place ribs on sauce to serve.



rack of lamb with strawberry mint sauce

by **CHEF JOHN**

Prep 20m | Cook 40m | Ready In 1h

Ingredients

Sauce:

2 cups fresh strawberries, hulled & halved
1 lemon, zested and juiced
1 lemon, juiced
1/4 cup water
2 tbs honey
salt and cayenne pepper to taste
1/4 cup freshly sliced mint leaves

Lamb:

1 (8 bone) rack of lamb, fully trimmed
kosher salt to taste
freshly ground black pepper to taste
cayenne pepper to taste
2 tbs Dijon mustard
1 tbs finely minced green onions
1/4 cup fine plain bread crumbs
2 tbs melted butter
1/4 tsp salt

DIRECTIONS

Place halved strawberries, zest from one lemon, juice from 2 lemons, water, honey, salt, and cayenne pepper in a pot over medium-high heat and bring to a simmer. As strawberries begin to release their liquid, soften, and start to break down, reduce heat to medium-low and continue stirring and cooking occasionally until fruit is very soft, about 10 minutes. Remove from heat. Pass mixture through a fine mesh strainer.

Preheat oven to 475 degrees F (245 degrees C). Line a shallow baking pan with foil, bringing ends up and over sides of the pan.

Generously season rack of lamb on both sides with kosher salt, freshly ground black pepper, and cayenne pepper. Place lamb on prepared pan. Roast rack of lamb in hot oven to sear, about 10 minutes. Remove pan from oven. Reduce oven temperature to 375 degrees F (190 degrees C).

Simple Sweet & Valentine's treats



hot cocoa cookies

Makes 5 1/2 dozen cookies

COOKIES INGREDIENTS

8 tbs (1/2 cup) unsalted butter, at cool room temp.
1/2 cup King Arthur hot chocolate mix
1/3 cup light brown sugar
1 tsp baking powder
1/2 tsp salt
1 tsp espresso powder, optional, for enhanced flavor
1 large egg
1 tsp vanilla extract
1 1/4 cups King Arthur Unbleached All-Purpose Flour
1 1/2 cups mini chocolate chips
1/2 cup cocoa nibs, optional

TOPPING INGREDIENTS:

About 5 1/2 dozen Belcolade bittersweet disks, or other high-quality chocolate wafer

Marshmallow fluff, cocoa nibs, or chopped nuts, for garnish

DIRECTIONS

Preheat the oven to 375 F. Lightly grease two baking sheets, or line with parchment.

To make the cookies: Combine the butter, hot chocolate mix, brown sugar, baking powder, salt, and espresso powder in a mixing bowl. Beat until the mixture is smooth. Add the egg and vanilla, and beat until thoroughly combined.

Weigh out your flour. Or measure it by gently spooning it into a cup, then sweeping off any excess. Add the flour to the cookie mixture, stirring to combine. Mix in the chips and cocoa nibs.

Drop the dough by teaspoonfuls onto the prepared baking sheets — a teaspoon cookie scoop works well here. Space the cookies at least two inches apart. Bake the cookies for 8 to 9 minutes, until the surface is set, but the cookies aren't quite fully baked.

Take the cookies out of the oven and press a chocolate disk into the center of each cookie. Return the cookies to the oven for 1 to 2 minutes longer, until the chocolate begins to turn shiny and softens. Remove the cookies from the oven once again, and sprinkle the melted chocolate disk with your garnish of choice.

Allow the cookies to cool right on the baking sheet until the chocolate disks are set. Store well-wrapped cookies at room temperature for a week or so; freeze for longer storage.

TIP: King Arthur hot chocolate mix is a proprietary blend of sugar, ground chocolate, dry milk, and cocoa powder. If you'd like to use a store-bought hot chocolate mix, try to find one with a similar list of ingredients.

Romantic Drinks



chocolate covered cherry martini

by PUNKYBARISTA5

INGREDIENTS

1 cup ice cubes
1 (1.5 fluid ounce) jigger chocolate vodka
1 (1.5 fluid ounce) jigger cherry vodka
1/2 fluid ounce grenadine syrup
1 fluid ounce creme de cacao
1 fluid ounce half-and-half
1 dash chocolate syrup
1 maraschino cherry
1 chocolate kiss candy

DIRECTIONS

Fill a cocktail shaker with ice cubes. Pour in chocolate and cherry vodkas, grenadine, creme de cacao, half-and-half, and chocolate syrup. Cover and shake until the outside of the shaker has frosted. Strain into a chilled martini glass, garnish with maraschino cherry and chocolate kiss, and serve.



George Takes The Gavel

New Fort Bend County judge reflects on journey to America, his campaign promises & first week in office

Story & Photo by **TYLER JOHNSON** | sjohnson@fbherald.com

It's called the American dream. Fort Bend County Judge KP George knows it well.

He grew up on the other side of the world in a village in southern India called Kakkodu.

George lived in a farmhouse where his family raised cows while his father earned a living as a truck driver, providing for his family with little pay.

But he always envisioned himself doing greater things with his life. He would go on to do historic things.

In November, citizens of Fort Bend County elected George, 53, to become the first Democrat county judge in 24 years and the first Indian-American to win a countywide office.

"I give a lot of credit to God for my life's journey," George said. "I believe it was God's plan. I believe He has a real purpose in me."

"Coming from an immigrant background, we all come here and get involved. America is a wonderful place. People can come from all over and accomplish things, like I did."

While in India, George earned his high school and college degree. He then found a job in Bombay, now known as Mumbai.

He came to the United States in the early 1990s when he got the opportunity to move to New York where he spent six years working for a financial firm.

In 1999, George got a call to move to the Houston area for a job opening. At first, he declined the offer. But after much consideration, praying and consulting with his wife Sheeba, he accepted the job.

"This is my home. I can't imagine myself living anywhere else."

In the 1970s, Fort Bend County had a population of about 70,000 people. Since then, it has grown to about 780,000 people.

"Why are people coming here? Because there is something unique here."

"I understand why they come here because I came here for the same thing: good schools, a wonderful place to live, good community and good jobs."

He also said that the county is one of the most diverse in the entire country, which he believes helped him defeat longtime county judge Bob Hebert.

"This is a melting pot. Nearly 104 languages represent Fort Bend County," he said.

After winning the election, George, 53, and his transition team spent six to eight weeks working in the upstairs conference room of the historic Fort Bend County Courthouse, which he said Hebert was kind enough to lend.

"[Hebert and I] have good relationship," George said. "The day after the election, I came in and visited with him. He welcomed

me to the office and gave me his cellphone number.

"He said, 'KP, if you need anything, call me.'"

George has always been a man who believes in community service, which is a trait he has passed on to his three children.

"I realized giving back to the community is so important. When you go out and do things for others, God will never let you starve."

Prior to getting into politics, George was involved in the school system and active in the community. He served on school booster clubs, Parent-Teacher Association, rotary clubs and chambers.

Then he served as a board member for Fort Bend ISD for five years.

Now as the county judge, George feels like he is in a better position to get things done now.

"As a Fort Bend ISD board member, you are one of seven members so you can't just go and do anything. Here, we can make decisions."

Since taking office on Jan. 1, he said he and his staff have worked tirelessly to make the county a better place to live for everyone.

"We are working anywhere from 12 to 16 hours a day," he said. "I know being county judge is great responsibility. 'There is an expectation and we intend to fulfill that expectation to the fullest.'"

During his campaign, George made revitalizing and modernizing the Office of Emergency Management, better community engagement and youth empowerment, his top priorities.

"These are just some of the things we would like to get done in our first year," he said.

He has already begun his work in the Office of Emergency Management by naming county Fire Marshal Mark Flat-house as interim coordinator of the office.

"He's a well-respected man within Fort Bend County and is doing a great job," George said. "It was a well-thought out decision."

Flat-house's first duty is to develop a comprehensive report of the Office of Emergency Management within the first 100 days.

"Based on that report, we will start molding that department into our expectations," George said. "When I make a decision, I just want to make sure it fact-based — not based on how I feel."

To bring more engagement with the community, George and his staff have already begun scheduling a listening tour, which will allow residents in every precinct an opportunity to voice their opinions.

"I think it's something necessary we have to do," he said.

George said he has already begun talking to the different



Fort Bend County Judge KP George stands in the historic courtroom. He gavelled for the first time on Tuesday, Jan. 8.

chambers of commerce in the county about developing a youth leadership program.

"Youth empowerment is actually a top priority," he said. "Everything we do is for our children and young people."

George said he is a man of Christian faith. Every decision he makes is made after spending time in prayer.

He noted how although most of the people in India are either Hindu and Muslim, his village is Christian because in A.D. 52, Saint Thomas, who was a disciple of Christ, sailed to the southern tip of India, the same area where George grew up.

He established Christianity there.

"I read so much about that came to find out that Christianity came to India long before it came to Europe," George said. "When you go to the state I grew up in 20 percent are Christians, but overall Christianity in India is less than one percent."

"I pray every day to keep me humble. This is an enormous responsibility [as county judge] so I ask for strength to make smart decisions to help the people in Fort Bend County.

Because of his faith and desire for community service, George said he gives back to his home village in India out of his own pocket. He said his charitable work has provided 20 homes over the year and he provides nearly 15 to 20 kids scholarships to study.

He often looks back on his journey and God's plan that has brought him to the United States.

"I came from a farmhouse in India to a Fort Bend County judgeship. That can only happen in the U.S. and that is why this is an amazing place."



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Sugar Land again among nation's best at engagement, inclusion, transparency

The Center for Digital Government named Sugar Land among the nation's top five cities that successfully use technology to improve citizen services, enhance transparency and encourage citizen engagement.

Sugar Land has been among the top 10 cities in the country for the last five years.

Cities receiving the national accolade were recognized for successfully using technology to tackle social challenges, enhance cybersecurity, improve transparency and much more. Words used to describe Sugar Land included "open, citizen-centric, collaborative, secure, staffed/supported, connected, efficient, resilient, innovative, with use of best practices."

Sugar Land competed against cities ranging in populations from 75,000-124,999 in CDG's 2018 Digital Cities Survey. Rounding out the list were places like Westminster, Colo.; Lynchburg, Va.; Pueblo, Colo.; Avondale, Ariz.; Independence, Mo.; Bloomington, Ind.; and others. The complete list is posted at www.govtech.com/dc/digital-cities/Digital-Cities-Survey-2018-Winners-Announced.html.

"This year's leading digital cities are leveraging technology to connect citizens with critical information and services, promote citizen inclusion in important government processes and share



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Sugar Land City Council recognized recently recognized staff who contributed to the national digital cities award.

government data with the public,” said Teri Takai, executive director of the Center for Digital Government. “Thanks to the efforts of [cities like Sugar Land], citizens can now meaningfully interact with city government more easily than in any other time in history.”

Sugar Land was credited for innovative efforts to engage the public utilizing numerous social media platforms and transparency initiatives that leverage online tools such as the city website and mobile applications.

Judges specifically highlighted Sugar Land’s effective use of technology to keep citizens safe and informed during Hurricane Harvey.

“This year, [Sugar Land] launched a 311 Contact Center facility and also pushed the platform online, broadening the ways that citizens can report potholes and other infrastructure needs,” wrote Government Technology. “In terms of public-facing efforts, open data and transparency work is ongoing in the city, with story maps that include street address information ranking as a nice service for citizens. Similarly, helpful services include an online town hall and a real-time traffic map, which also features flood gauges.

“The city continues to expand its social media presence. This past year, Sugar Land garnered 71,845 followers on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and a new account on Nextdoor, an increase of roughly 40 percent. For its use of social media during Hurricane Harvey to get info to citizens, the city was awarded a statewide award from the Texas Association of Municipal Information Officers.”

An example of Sugar Land’s innovative use of technology includes partnerships with private platforms to improve quality of life. Sugar Land’s recent partnership with Waze, a Google company, to improve mobility via information sharing is the first collaboration of its kind in the Houston region.

The data-sharing partnership enhanced information already available to drivers through a free, real-time crowdsourced traffic and navigation app and directly addressed a need identified by residents in its most recent Citizen Satisfaction Survey. While residents gave the city high marks for customer service, citizen communications and public safety, mobility continues to be an area of concern with an interest on improvement.

The Center for Digital Government is a national research and advisory institute focused on information technology policies and best practices in state and local government. CDG is a division of e.Republic, the nation’s only media and research company focused exclusively on state and local government and education.



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The Fort Bend Women's Center boasts new playground built by volunteers

Volunteers from the Fort Bend Women's Center and the community joined KaBOOM! in December to transform an empty site into a kid-designed, state-of-the-art playground in just six hours at Fort Bend Women's Center.

KaBOOM!, a national nonprofit dedicated to giving all kids – especially those living in poverty – enjoyable and safe places to play.

In October children in the Women's Center's Emergency Shelter, which was impacted by Hurricane Harvey, came together to draw their dream playground.

"This project has literally been a dream come true for the children in our programs, particularly the Emergency Shelter," said Vita Goodell the chief executive officer of the Fort Bend Women's Center. "Our outdoor play area suffered greatly in last year's storms and was no longer fit for use."

The playground, she noted, is based off their drawings and will be used by more than 100 kids in Fort Bend Women's Center's programs.

"For the children in our programs to have had the opportunity to be involved in designing this state of the art play space and to see so many volunteers come out to make it a reality sends a powerful message to them – it is telling them that they do matter, their voice matters and that they matter to this community," Goodell added. "Understanding that is so important to them moving beyond the abuse they have experienced."

Ensuring kids have safe places to play is critical to helping families and communities heal during times of recovery, as they continue to deal with the stress of lost homes, lost loved ones and lost routines. By creating and providing playspaces, children and families can continue to regain a sense of normalcy.

This playground project is part of a broader effort led by the Rebuild Texas Fund and KaBOOM! to serve communities affected by Hurricane Harvey. It is the tenth build by the partners.

Overall, the partnership will lead 15 community-designed playground projects, and award 20 creative play products – Imagination Playground™ and Rigamjig – to organizations across 41 counties in Southeast Texas, providing new opportunities to play for more than 87,500 children over the next generation.

For more information about the Fort Bend Women's Center visit For more information, visit www.fbwec.org or @ftbendwomensctr on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. For more information about the Rebuild Texas Fund visit www.rebuildtx.org. Visit ka-boom.org to learn more about the KaBOOM! effort.



Volunteers and staff celebrate at a ribbon cutting for the finished playground.

Get income-tax-preparation assistance at the University Branch Library

The University Branch Library will offer income-tax-preparation assistance on Saturdays, Feb 2 through April 13 from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. in Conference Room 1.

Representatives from the AARP will provide free income-tax-preparation assistance for low-income taxpayers.

Patrons should bring the following information to the session if possible: photo ID; Social Security card(s) for self, spouse, and all dependents; last year's tax return; W-2, 1099s, and any other compensation received in 2018; unemployment compensation statements; and any other documents that are necessary to complete your return.

This service is free and open to the public on a first-come, first-served basis.

Income-tax forms will no longer be available at the libraries, but patrons may use the libraries' computers and printers to download and print out the forms from the IRS website, www.irs.gov, during regular library hours.

A library card is needed to use the printers, and the cost to print is 10 cents per black-and-white page.

TALK OF THE TOWN Continued on page 17

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Local troupe members break records at thespian festival

Following the Texas State Thespian Festival in November, 22 members of the George Ranch Theatre Longhorn Players are headed to the International Thespian Festival this summer.

The Texas State Thespian Festival, which was held Nov. 15-17 at the Gaylord Texas Resort, is a state-wide festival with over 7,000 delegates attending. Troupe members compete in individual and group performance events, technical events, attend workshops, and enjoy watching other troupes perform. Individuals receiving the highest score of Superior qualify to compete at nationals — the International Thespian Festival — which is held in Nebraska.

While excelling at the Texas State Thespian Festival, the Longhorn Players also broke school records in the following areas: qualifying 10 of 13 events entered for International Thespian Festival; having 22 theatre members qualifying for the International Thespian Festival; competing in 13 events, which is the maximum allowed at the competition; and having all six of the Individual Performance Events qualifying for International Thespian Festival.

Directors during the competitions were GRHS Theatre Director L. Jay Edenmeyer, GRHS Theatre Technical Director Marc Duncan, Music Director, Scott Edenmeyer and Reading Junior High Theatre Director Drew Prince.



In between performances and workshops, GRHS Longhorn Players enjoy the Ice Show's hand-carved ice sculptures inside the Gaylord Texan Resort.

INDIVIDUAL PERFORMANCE EVENTS:

- Paige Klase for Solo Musical – “Kindergarten Boyfriend”
- Reagan Scott for Solo Musical – “Cute Boys With Short Haircuts”
- Christine Bonaparte, Josie Chi, Marissa Gittens, Trinity Moody, Karli Pierson, Amor Sheffield for Group Musical – “Miss Celie's Pants”
- Cameron Krouch, Ashley Johnson, Ainsley McGee, Clairra Mangum, Lizzie Tyer, Caitlin Wilson for Group Musical – “It Doesn't Take a Genius”
- Emma Bolduc and Ethan Brandt for Duet Acting – “Dinner with Friends”
- Babacar Ba and Cyrus Fontenot for Duet Acting – “Fences”

TECHNICAL EVENTS:

- Emily Moore for Costume Design – “Seussical”
- Riley Halford for Lighting Design – “Seussical”
- Tate Mangum for Set Design – “Haroun and the Sea of Stories”
- Charis Christy for Stage Management – “Seussical”

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51 GRHS Theatre students attended the Festival, the largest amount in GRHS Theatre history.



A total of 22 students qualified for the International Thespian Festival, the largest amount of National qualifiers in GRHS Theatre history.

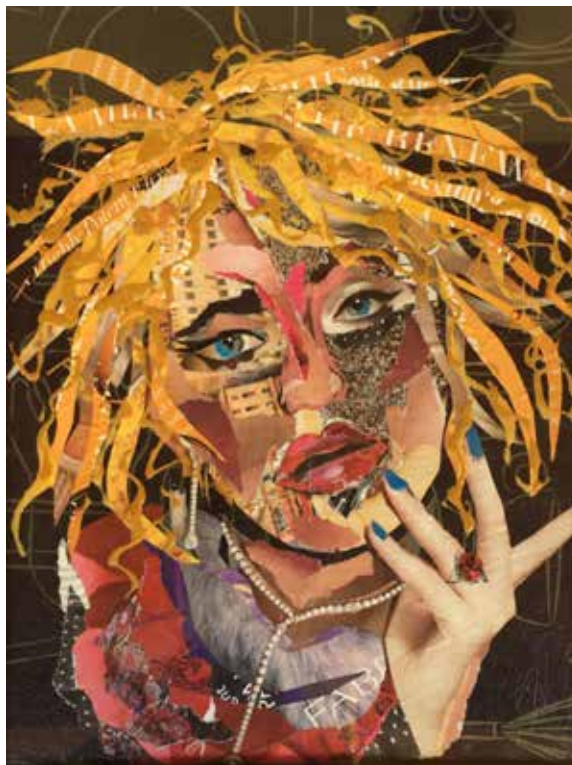
'Art I Become' exhibit showcases family's talent

Fort Bend County Libraries' George Memorial Library is reminding the public that its special exhibit, "Art I Become," will be on display through Feb. 28 in the Bohachevsky Gallery of the library, located at 1001 Golfview in Richmond.

The exhibit, which showcases the artwork of Claire Payne and her daughters Kathryn Payne Bright and Terri Payne-Bieber, may be viewed during regular library hours. For more information, call the library system's Communications Office at 281-633-4734.

Claire Payne and her daughters all discovered and explored their passion for art through their own personal life-journeys. As often happens, the journeys took them through good times as well as bad, and art gave them a means to survive, conquer, and rejoice in the celebration and joy of life.

Many of these life-battles are reflected in their work - both on canvas and in the poetic lines of verse.



"When confronting hardships along my path, I started to turn to art as a way to express my disappointment, feelings of rejection, confusion, and dismay," said Terri Payne-Bieber.

"I found I could separate myself from negative feelings, and in an act of self-expression, I could extrude those bad feelings out of myself and directly onto canvas."

Payne-Bieber admits that these paintings were not pretty, but they were a visual depiction of the physical and emotional pain and turmoil that she was battling.

"These paintings were dark, but this overall process made my spirit feel lighter, and in that lightness, I could move on," added Payne-Bieber. "This process would eventually lead me to dive deeply into a wonderful career in art and social service."

She and her sister, Kathryn Payne Bright, credit their forays into ar-



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tistic expression to their mother's love of art. Throughout her daughters' childhoods, Claire encouraged them to have fun with art as a means to discover their own personal identities.

"She showed me that creating art is a personal journey to connect your self to your soul - and that's something you do for yourself, not for other people," explains Payne-Bieber.

"Expressive art is fun and, to this day, a refreshing lifesaver in turbulent times!"

Kathryn Payne Bright is the poet of the family, but she also finds satisfaction in expressing herself through mixed-media collages.

The joy the women found in artistic expression would help each one of them through personal struggles they encountered in their lives. It was the death of her husband, Pat, that led Claire to turn to art as a means to deal with the sense of grief and loss that she felt. Watercolor is her favorite medium, but she also enjoys trying her hand at collage and abstract textures.

"Painting on different surfaces is a happy new challenge each time," said Claire. "You will see watercolor on paper, on a synthetic surface called YUPO, on clay board, and gesso surfaces."

Claire's work has been accepted into international juried shows as well as the International Society of Experimental Art.

She has been recognized at the Watercolor Art Society-Houston, and she has won numerous 1st-place awards in local art-league shows.

A cancer survivor, Payne-Bieber found physical and emotional healing through her artwork. As an extension of the healing process, Payne-Bieber was inspired to share that gift with others who were experiencing personal battles or troubling times. In 2003, she founded ARTreach as a

means to bring arts to underserved communities in Fort Bend County, such as children at risk, victims of crime, and children and adults with special needs.



Claire Payne and her daughters Kathryn Payne Bright and Terri Payne-Bieber.

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Dozens flock to first-ever bobwhite quail workshop

by **TYLER JOHNSON** | sjohnson@fbherald.com

Over the last 30 years, the bobwhite quail population has decreased by 70 percent, according to Amber Leung, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension agent.

Leung presented to a crowd of over 60 local residents and fellow master naturalists in January at the Rosenberg Civic Center about how to preserve the bobwhite quail population, the life of a quail and why quails are important to the ecosystem.

To demonstrate the decline in quail population, Leung handed out 20 quail-shaped cards for people to hold up for a portion of the presentation.

She then asked 15 of them to put down the cards, illustrating the sudden scarcity in quails.

"Where have the quail gone?" she asked the crowd. "There are a whole slew of factors."

Leung said habitat loss is the main reason, citing numerous dynamics.

Those include changing land-uses, urbanization, red imported fire ants, fragmented habitats, exotic grasses, overgrazing, monocultures, feral hogs, mowing and climatic changes.

She said the bobwhite quail often lives in coveys, which can consist of between 10 to 20 quails.

During the winter season, the coveys share warmth and protection from larger wildlife animals.

However, during the spring season, the coveys break up and

form pairs for mating.

The summer season is the peak-nesting season and then the coveys reassemble in the fall.

Quails are important to the ecosystem, Leung noted. They're a food source for a variety of different animals and critters, including fire ants.

"But that's OK," Leung said. "It's their niche in wildlife."

Other animals that prey on quails are coyotes, bobcats, foxes, cooper hawks, sharp-shinned hawks, red-tailed hawks, northern harriers, crows, grackles, western rat snakes, rattlesnakes, bull-snakes, coachwhips, raccoons, opossums, striped skunks, ground squirrels, cotton rats, mice and parasites.

"This is not the complete list of species that enjoy eating bob-white quails," Leung said.

Needville resident Julie Foytik was shocked to learn that fire ants weren't the only reason for the population decline.

Leung also said increasing popularity in quail hunting has been a factor in the quail population decline.

"It's a big source of income and tourism throughout the state of Texas," she said.

Leung mentioned several ways to preserve the bobwhite quail community.

"Let's begin with education, cooperation and restoration," she said.

ENTERTAINMENT Continued on page 24

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Friends Of North Richmond relies on volunteers to help it create a better North Richmond for all.

"We have some of the most positive, dedicated and committed volunteers that give their time and energy teaching GED Tutorial Preparation classes to families in the community," organizers said.

Two very loyal volunteers are Barry Bores-Koefoed and Ned Merchant, who are helping Friends of North Richmond introduce a GED program to the community.

Visit attackpoverty.org/locations/friends-of-north-richmond for more information.



Barry Bores-Koefoed and Ned Merchant.

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Texas Bar Foundation grant helps increasing numbers young children entering foster care

The Texas Bar Foundation recently awarded Child Advocates of Fort Bend a \$5,000 grant to support the agency's Positive Parenting Project to address the advocacy needs of babies and toddlers.

Children, 5 years old and younger, are among the most vulnerable victims of child abuse and represent the largest age cohort served by CAFB's Court Appointed Special Advocates Program. A total of 125 infants and toddlers were served as of November 12. As new children enter Texas Foster Care daily, the most basic needs for care and safety are in high demand and so are the needs pressed upon the networks of child welfare, judicial, law enforcement and other systems.

"The greatest needs are to prevent abused and neglected children from falling through the cracks of any system, to advocate for their best interests in court and reduce their chances of returning to the system," said Child Advocates of Fort Bend CEO Ruthanne Mefford. "A short-term goal is to continue to serve 100 percent of abused and neglected children ages 5 and under to ensure their safety and permanency. New program enhancements will help children reunite with family or identify and connect with previously unknown family members when possible using Collaborative Family Engagement and CAFB-sponsored Family Reunification Celebrations."

Since its inception in 1965, the Texas Bar Foundation has awarded more than \$19 million in grants to law-related programs. Supported by members of the State Bar of Texas, the Texas Bar Foundation is the nation's largest charitably-funded bar foundation.

Child Advocates of Fort Bend is the only agency in Fort Bend County exclusively dedicated to providing critical services, all free of charge, to abused and neglected children and their non-offending family members.

For 27 years, CAFB has provided a voice, healed the hurt and broken the cycle of abuse and neglect in Fort Bend County. Through its Court Appointed Special Advocates Program, Children's Advocacy Center and more than 200 trained advocates, CAFB has served more than 15,500 children since opening its doors in 1991. New Volunteer Advocates are continuously needed to help sustain its programs. For more information about CAFB, or to learn how to volunteer, visit www.cafb.org or contact Lindsey Castellanos at lcastellanos@cafb.org or 281-344-5259.

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February American Heart Month

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As far as education goes, several groups focus on the preservation of quails, such as the Texas Wildlife Association, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and Texas A&M AgriLife Extension, which has started the reversing the quail decline initiative, bobwhite brigades and quail appreciation days.

The next quail appreciation day is scheduled for March 21 at Long Acres Ranch in Richmond. Visit <https://longacresranch.org/> for more information.

"Cooperation and restoration can be tied together," Leung said.

She said that 95 percent of Texas land is privately owned so it's important for landowners to manage their land for quail and other wildlife and for them to work together to reconnect fragmented habitats.

A healthy habitat for quails is a diversity of native plants, such as early successional forbs like sunflower and ragweed, native prairie grasses like little bluestem, and seed and fruit bearing woody plants like oaks, hackberry mesquite and sumac.

Leung also said that the bobwhite quail is one of the few species of bird that do not migrate south for the winter because they need food all year long and struggle with climate change, much like canaries.

"That's why we call them the canaries of the prairies," she said.

Photo by Tyler Johnson | Texas A&M AgriLife Extension agent Amber Leung carries her female quail on her shoulder while she educates a large crowd about the preservation of bobwhite quails.



Seabourne Park announces monthly bird hike

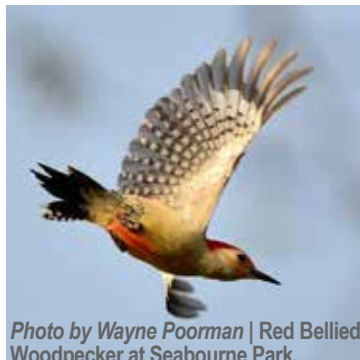


Photo by Wayne Poorman | Red Bellied Woodpecker at Seabourne Park.

On Wednesday, Feb. 6 from 8 to 10 a.m., bird watchers are welcome at Seabourne Creek Nature Park for a monthly bird hike.

All ages and levels of birders are encouraged to come and meet in the parking lot by 8 a.m. Binoculars and weather-appropriate clothing and footwear are recommended.

The monthly series of these free guided bird hikes are led by

members of the Coastal Prairie Chapter of Texas Master Naturalists.

Seabourne Creek Nature Park is located on Hwy 36 South across from the Fort Bend County Fairgrounds and next to the Rosenberg Civic Center. Turn in at the Texas Parks & Wildlife brown sign marking Seabourne Nature Park on the Texas Coastal Birding Trail with the park's 200-plus bird list.

Special thanks to organizers, Bob and Carol Schwartz. The hikes are usually led by recognized birding expert, Mark Scheuerman, E-bird compiler for our area of Texas.

The Texas Master Naturalists program is sponsored by Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service. For additional information call 281-633-7033, email mmcdowell@ag.tamu.edu, or visit website txmn.org/coastal.

Celebrate Chinese Lunar New Year with lantern festival

In recognition of the Chinese Lunar New Year, Fort Bend County Libraries will celebrate with a Chinese Lantern Festival on Sunday, Feb. 17, from 2 to 4 p.m., in the lobby of George Memorial Library, 1001 Golfview in Richmond.

Dancing lions from the Soaring Phoenix Dragon & Lion Dance Association will entertain visitors at 2:30 pm, following the welcome and introductions.

Crafts and activities celebrating the Year of the Pig are planned for families with children of all ages. Max Nguyen, a paper-crafting volunteer with the Chinese Community Center, will demonstrate the art of origami, which involves folding and twisting pieces of paper to create whimsical works of art.

Visitors may also join in playing Cai Deng Mi, or "Guessing the Lantern's Riddle," and win a prize if the answer is correct!

The celebration at the library will feature authentic red lanterns that were presented to Fort Bend County by representatives of Chancheng District, of Foshan City, China. The lanterns will hang in the lobby of the library for the day's festivities.

In 2012, county and business leaders from Fort Bend County

signed a Memorandum of Understanding with delegates from the City of Foshan, signifying an alignment between Fort Bend and Chancheng District on mutual economic, cultural and environmental issues. In November of 2012, representatives from the two entities signed a Friendship Agreement, which is in essence a contract stating that the two sides will work together to promote exchanges and cooperation in the fields of economy, trade, sports, environmental protection, science, technology, education, medical research and culture, in an effort to promote mutual prosperity and development.

Foshan is a city in central Guangdong province, located in southern China, with a population of 7.2 million. Chancheng District was chosen for the Memorandum of Understanding because of the similarities it shares with Fort Bend County, including population growth, business growth, and a focus on education, medical, and cultural amenities.

The Chinese Lantern Festival marks the culmination of the Chinese Lunar New Year celebration. The festival is part of an ancient ceremony welcoming spring, and the lantern symbolizes

the lengthening days of the season. It is also thought to ward off evil spirits.

The Chinese Lantern Festival activities are free and open to the public. For more information, call George Memorial Library at 281-342-4455 or the library system's Communications Office at 281-633-4734.



MORE ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT HAPPENINGS NEAR YOU

DARK SKY - SAVE THE NIGHT

Texas Master Naturalist Coastal Prairie Chapter will host "Dark Sky - Save the Night," on Feb. 7 from 6:30 a.m. to 8 a.m. at the Rosenberg Civic Center, 3825 Highway 36 S in Rosenberg. Dark Sky will be presented by Deborah Moran and Steve Goldberg. Debbie and Steve will explain why darkness at night is important and what we can do to bring back natural darkness. Visit txmn.org/coastal.

CHINESE NEW YEAR CELEBRATION!

The University Branch Library will host "Chinese New Year Celebration!" on Feb. 9, from 10:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. in Meeting Rooms 1 and 2. The library will have a lively festival celebrating the Year of the Pig, featuring a special Chinese New Year Story Time, traditional Chinese riddles, craft activities, and culminating with a performance by the North American Youth Chinese Orchestra. Materials and refreshments for the event are provided through the generous support of the Friends of the University Branch Library.

FOR THE LOVE OF ART

The public is invited to this free event featuring live art show, poetry, various vendors, and free food. Hosted by Collab Event Group, the event will be held from noon to 4 p.m. Feb. 9

Continued on page 27

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February

SEVENTH

UP & OUT: TEXAS WORKFORCE MANAGING STRESS

Richard Prather from Texas Workforce Solutions will talk about ways to reduce stress while searching for a new job from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. at the George Memorial Library in the Meeting Room. Learn how to control stress, time, and finances to help build resilience.

NINTH

ANCIENT CIVILIZATIONS: GREECE

In this second of three programs on different ancient civilizations, former architecture professor Sheba Akhtar will talk about the roles that topography, mythology, and science have played in the history and development of Greece at 1 p.m. in the Meeting Room of the George Memorial Library. She will talk about the country's city-states, philosophy, drama, art, and architecture of the classical period, as well as Alexander the Great, the conquest of Asia Minor, Persia, and Egypt during the Hellenistic period. She will also touch upon Mycenae, the Trojan War, and Homer.

TENTH

EARN RAILROADING MERIT BADGE

The Rosenberg Railroad Museum is offering boy scouts a chance to earn their railroading merit badge from 1:30 to 4:30 p.m. at the museum, 1921 Avenue F in Rosenberg. By earning this badge, scouts can learn about the history of railroading, its place in modern society, careers in railroading, and hobbies related to railroading. Completion of this workshop will meet the requirements to earn the Railroading Merit badge. Visit www.rosenbergrrmuseum.org/scouts.

TWELFTH

RESUMÉ WORKSHOP

The George Memorial Library will host a resumé workshop at 2 p.m. in the Computer Lab. Learn the basics of putting together a resumé. Those attending this informal program will receive one-on-one help formatting a resumé. For assistance on a pre-existing resumé, please have a digital copy available on a usb flashdrive, saved to the cloud, or have access to it via email. Registration required.

FIFTEENTH

SENIOR SERIES: PREPARING TO DOWNSIZE

Liz McNeel, a senior real-estate specialist and certified senior-housing professional, will share tips on how senior citizens can downsize, remove clutter, and create a more organized and personally satisfying space in which to live at the University Branch Library at 10:30 a.m. in Meeting Room 1. Learn about the emotional and physical aspects of de-cluttering, get practical strategies for getting started, and find out how to avoid the top 10 mistakes.

GRACE BEFORE THE RACE

At 6 p.m. in the St. Laurence Catholic School, 2630 Austin Pkwy in Sugar Land, participants can enjoy a night of fun and spaghetti before the "Steps for Students Run." Adult plates are \$10, children's plates are \$5. The spaghetti generously donated and lovingly cooked by the church's Knights of Columbus. Contact Stephanie Limbacher at stephanie.limbacher@gmail.com for more information.



SIXTEENTH

FAMILY-HISTORY RESEARCH:

FINDING YOUR FEMALE ANCESTORS

Female ancestors can sometimes be more difficult to trace since census records often focused on the male head-of-household, and women often had name changes so the George Memorial Library is offering tips on how to search for female ancestors despite these roadblocks at 10 a.m. in the Computer Lab. Reservations required.

TWENTY-THIRD

BUTTERFLY GARDENING

At 2 p.m. in Meeting Room 2 of the University Branch Library, discover ways to attract butterflies to one's garden by selecting plants that are sources of nectar for adult butterflies and plants that are common hosts for their caterpillars.

TWENTY-FIFTH

INTERNATIONAL COFFEE HOUR

Start your week off by sharing a cup of coffee, exchanging news or a corny joke, and chatting with friends during George Memorial Library's monthly social hour at 9 a.m. in the Meeting Room. Celebrate the multitude of diverse cultures found in Fort Bend County. People of all nationalities are invited to this informal gathering to get to know one another, share cultural experiences, and learn something new and fascinating about each other in a casual and comfortable environment. The International Coffee Hour will take place on the last Monday of every month.

TWENTY-SIXTH

INTRODUCTION TO CANVA

The University Branch Library will hold an "Introduction to Canva" at 2 p.m. in the Computer Lab. Canva is a free, online graphic-design tool. Canva's easy-to-use interface provides access to millions of photographs, graphics, and fonts, enabling the user to create designs for web or print. Learn how this tool can be used to create blog graphics, Facebook covers, flyers, posters, invitations, presentations, and more. Registration required.

CACHE YOUR MONEY: HOW TO FIX YOUR CREDIT

John Rebeles, Jr., will talk about credit scores. Learn how credit history can affect one's credit score, and discover ways to repair one's credit and improve a credit score at 7 p.m. in the Room 2A of the George Memorial Library.

TWENTY-EIGHTH

HYPE SUMMIT 2019

The Central Fort Bend Chamber will host its HYPE Summit from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Rosenberg Civic Center, 3825 Highway 36 S in Rosenberg.

The HYPE Summit is a chance for young professionals, or those who will be entering the workforce soon, to learn from experts in the fields of communications, networking, branding, team-building, finance management, home-buying and more. Please register through the ticket link. cfbca.wliinc18.com.



at the Center Stage Gallery 3527 Hwy 6, Ste. 250 in Sugar Land. This is a family friendly event with plenty of parking. If you would like to become a vendor visit www.1collabeventgroup.com/event-bookings for more information and to register. If you're interested in performing poetry live send us a message: www.1collabeventgroup.com/sell-with-us

BOOK CLUB

The University Branch Library's Book Club will meet in Conference Room 1 on Feb. 11 at 7 p.m. The book to be discussed is "Same Kind of Different As Me: A Modern-Day Slave, an International Art Dealer, and the Unlikely Woman Who Bound Them Together," written by Ron Hall and Denver Moore. New members are invited to attend.

FAMILY CRAFT TIME

The University Branch Library will host "Family Craft Time," Feb 18 from 4 - 5 p.m. in Meeting Room 1. Families with children of all ages are invited to enjoy an afternoon of crafting together. There will be crafts to assemble, glue, and color. Materials for this program are made possible by the Friends of the University Branch Library.

OPEN-MIC NIGHT

The George Memorial Library's popular Open-Mic Night will be held, once again on Feb. 20, from 6-8 p.m. in the Meeting Room. Open-Mic Night is a casual event for amateur performers to take the stage and express themselves. Step into the limelight

to share original poetry, music, comedy, or one-act plays, or to showcase any other unique talents. Performances are limited to five minutes or less, and they must not contain any profanity or other insensitive topics. This event is for adults and teens aged 14 and above. Registration required to perform only.

CULINARY BOOK CLUB

The theme is "Presidential Favorites" at the University Branch Library's Culinary Book Club meeting set for Feb. 20 at 1:30 p.m. in Meeting Room 1. Cooking enthusiasts of all ages and experience levels — from beginners to advanced — are invited to join. Those attending are welcome to bring their own cookbooks and recipes, or they may browse the library's collection of cookbooks. Share tips, get ideas and enjoy the camaraderie of other individuals who have an interest in cooking and good cuisine. The club meets on the third Wednesday of every month and different cooking genres are explored each month.

LET'S GROOVE TO THE DISCO BEAT GALA

The Fort Bend Boys Choir of Texas will host its "Let's Groove to the Disco Beat Gala" on Feb. 23 from 6:30 p.m. to 10 p.m. at Safari Texas Ranch, 11627 FM 1464 in Richmond. Music, food, as well as silent and live auctions will be featured. Visit fbbctx.org.



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Check out our Campbell PTO website and communication site. You don't have to be a PTO member to view the site, but membership will give you a lot of additional benefits that are only available once you log into the system with your personal PTO account. Register for your account at www.campbellpto.org. You will receive an email asking you to confirm your account. Simply click on the link to confirm your account log in information and you'll be able to explore the new system. You will love it and all of its amenities.

CAMPBELL ELEMENTARY 2019 AWARD WINNING BOOT SCOOTIN' BOOGIE, CHILI COOK-OFF & AUCTION

Please join us for a night of good clean boot scootin' family fun on Feb. 8 from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. at Campbell Elementary. There will be carnival games, a mechanical bull, boot scootin' with lively music, the Campbell chili cook-off, and silent auction.

TICKET PRICES: The cost of presale tickets — through Feb. 4 — is \$15 per child wristbands and \$10 per adult game/bull wristband. A wristband gives children ages 2-16 access to dance, games and the mechanical bull. Adults are admitted at no charge but can purchase a wristband for the games and the mechanical

bull for \$5. Children must be accompanied by an adult and have a wristband to be inside the building. Prices at the door on Feb. 8 is \$20 per child wristband and \$10 per adult game/bull wristband. Only cash or check at the event.

CHILI COOK-OFF: Do you make an incredible pot of chili? Do you and your spouse or your friend have a long-standing bet on who makes the best chili? Now is your chance to settle the score, enter our contest and have our judges name you champion. Entry fees are \$20 for adults and \$10 for students, aged 5-16 years old.

Rules for Chili Cook-off: Chili must be brought in an electric pot, crock pot, or slow cooker by 6 p.m. Open flames are not permitted. Enough chili should be made for judges to sample. Feel free to bring enough to offer everyone a taste, 4-10 quarts. Each judge must get to taste chili entries. The PTO will provide cups and utensils for the judges. Contestants will provide sample cups and spoons for any samples they want to offer. The winner will be announced at the event!

Silent Auction: There will be fabulous baskets donated by our awesome Campbell classes so don't miss your chance to go home with some great items.

Visit www.campbellpto.org to purchase your wristbands/Chili Cook-off entry or email us info@campbellpto.org for more information.

Campbell is need of student volunteers for our Boot Scootin' Boogie event on. Please contact us at info@campbellpto.org for

more information. Thank you in advance for your help!

PTO NOMINATING COMMITTEE MEMBERS NEEDED

Nominating committee members are needed to help prepare the slate of PTO Board nominees for the 2018-2019 school year! We are seeking three volunteers to serve on this committee. Committee members will be responsible for reaching out to individuals nominated for a PTO Board position to confirm willingness to serve and then, once all nominated individuals have been contacted, committee members will prepare a list of individuals they recommend for each of the PTO positions. Nominating committee members cannot be current PTO Board members or individuals interested in serving on the board next year. To be considered for the nominating committee please email your name, phone number, email address, and the grade level(s) of your child(ren) to info@campbellpto.org no later than March 1, 2019. Please put "Nominating Committee" in the subject line. Three committee members will be drawn at random from the names submitted, and those selected will be notified by March 8 via email.

OPEN PTO POSITIONS FOR THE 2019-2020 YEAR

Parent involvement is critical for a successful school so please consider volunteering as a PTO officer or a committee chair for 2019-2020. All PTO Board positions are open and we need you to fill them!

We are seeking nominations for: President, Treasurer, Recording Secretary, Communications Secretary, Website Coordinator, Room Parent Coordinator, Student Services/School Store Coordinator, Community Relations Coordinator, Membership Coordinator, Teacher Appreciation Coordinator, Fall Fundraiser Coordinator, Spring Fundraiser Coordinator, Year Book Coordinator, Volunteer Coordinator and Special Programs Coordinator.

Those elected will serve one-year terms, from June 1 through May 31. Nomination forms are available online at www.campbellpto.org. If you are interested in serving in one of these positions please fill out the online nomination form no later than March 25, 2019. You may nominate yourself or another for any of the open positions.

CAMPBELL CALENDAR

Feb.1: Box Tops Due

Feb.6: 4th Grade Swim Ends

Feb.8: Chili Cook-off, Boot Scootin' Boogie & Silent Auction

Feb.12: Teacher Luncheon / PTO Meeting

Feb.15: Early Release

Feb.19: No School (President's Day)

Feb.21: Progress Reports go home

Dickinson Elementary

by ALLISON OLIVER

PTO BOARD MESSAGE

Thanks for a magical January! We hope you have a lovely February and look forward to finishing out the year strong.

YEARBOOKS

There are so many wonderful memories being made at Dickinson this year, so be sure to get your yearbooks. Contact Giselda at yearbook@dickinsonpto.com with any questions and/or photos of Dolphin happenings. Yearbook early pricing at \$30 continues until Feb. 19. Get yours today!

SPIRIT NIGHT

Come out to Freddy's on Feb. 20 for some great eats. Thanks for supporting our Dickinson Dolphins! Stickers will be coming home with your kiddos to wear to the event so they know you are with Dickinson's Spirit Night.

TAG SALE

Tag Sale is back. Get rid of all your junk! Check out www.dickinsonpto.com for details.

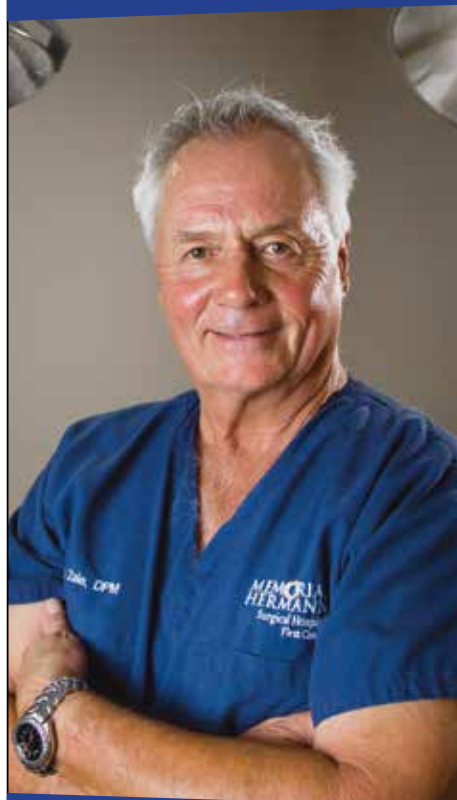
PTO MEETING

Join us for our meeting on March 4 at 3 p.m. in the science room. See you there!

DICKINSON CALENDAR

Feb. 4 : PTO Meeting, 3 p.m. in the Science room*
 Feb. 6: AR free dress (if goal met)
 Feb. 12: Jump Rope for Heart / Family Reading Night, 6-7 p.m.
 Feb. 14: Show you care!
 Feb. 15: 4th grade swimming procedure talk, early release 11:30 a.m.
 Feb. 18: NO SCHOOL - President's Day
 Feb. 19: Last day to get yearbooks for \$30*, Spring pictures
 Feb. 20: Freddy's Spirit Night, 5-9 p.m.*
 Feb. 21: Progress reports go home
 Feb. 22: Rodeo and Go Texas Day
 Feb. 26: Evening out with specials, 2:40-5:30 p.m. in the gym
 Feb. 27: 4th Grade swimming begins
 Feb. 28: First grade program, 6 p.m. in the gym
 March 2: Tag Sale, 7-11 a.m.*
 March 4: PTO Meeting, 3 p.m. in the Science room*
 March 6: AR free dress (if goal met)
 March 8: Relays, 7:30 a.m. on the track
 March 11-15: NO SCHOOL - Spring Break
 March 20: Wrangler Reader Celebration (3rd grade only)
 March 26: Spring Concert, 6-6:30 p.m. in the gym
 March 29: Kindergarten field trip - Houston Zoo

*Items with an * are PTO-sponsored events. Questions about all other events should be directed to the front office.*



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Dr. Zale has been chosen four times by Fort Bend Herald readers as Best Podiatrist in the annual Readers Choice poll.





1 Cub Scouts in Pack 941, sponsored by the First United Methodist Church in Fulshear, finished blankets for those in need during the holiday season during their December pack meeting. The Scouts are shown with the second place trophy they earned in the 2018 Fulshear Festival of Lights float competition. Cubmaster is Danny McRea.

2 The Fort Bend Chapter of the Czech Heritage Society has elected officers for the 2019 year. From left, Director Pat Parma, Parliamentarian Blanche Pater, Treasurer Gloria Mican, Secretary Shirley Myers, Director Carol Buchta, Past President Neal Adamcik, Director Joyce Lolley, President Linda Pavlicek, VP Leon Anhaier.

3 Chidozie Nwankwo's helmet shows the battering it has taken and given during the 2018 season. The 6-foot, 275-pound Foster High School junior is starting nose guard for the Falcons. He scored one of the touchdowns in the regional quarterfinal game against Alvin Shadow Creek.

4 Foster High School junior Megan O'Donnell is the Falcons team photographer. She photographed the regional quarterfinal game between the Falcons and Alvin Shadow Creek at University of Houston's TDECU Stadium.

5 George Ranch High School senior Noah Thomasson goes up for two against Alief-Hastings. The Longhorns won the match-up 50-42. Thomasson scored 28 points for the 'Horns.

6 Lamar Consolidated High School junior Dorrian Harris, No. 23, and senior Roman Punch, No. 25, attempt to block a shot by Foster High School se-

nior Kelechi Okpara during the district opener.

7 Aminah Muhammed cheers for her son, Shadeed Ahmed, and the Falcons during the regional quarterfinal game at University of Houston's TDECU Stadium. Shadeed, a senior, is a wide receiver for the Falcons. He is the 11th of 12 children and one of only two boys.

8 Photo by Tyler Johnson | Fort Bend County Judge KP George poses for a photo in the historic Fort Bend County Courthouse in Richmond with his administrative staff. Pictured from left are George, Chief of Staff Taral Patel, Advisor to the County Judge Alim Adatia and Administrative Assistant Xavier Hererra. Patel can be reached via email at taral.patel@fortbendcountytx.gov.

9 Romeo Reyes saved his chore money to buy a special watch for a special cop — Fort Bend County Sheriff Troy E. Nehls. Romeo said he gave Nehls the gift because he knows cops do a lot for people.

10 Sugar Land Mayor Joe Zimmerman, right, presents a plaque of appreciation to out-going Fort Bend County Judge Robert "Bob" Hebert during the commissioners court meeting. Zimmerman thanked Hebert for all he did for the city of Sugar Land and Fort Bend County during his term of office. Hebert, who was defeated in November, was first sworn in to office Jan. 1, 2003.

11 Rosenberg firefighter Justin White and Battalion Chief Adam Carlin share a laugh. Carlin was recently named the fire department's Employee of the Year.

GRAND OPENING PARTY!

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Lamar Educational Awards Foundation seeking men who can cook

The Lamar Educational Awards Foundation needs men who know how to cook to participate as “celebrity” chefs in the annual event that puts the fun and food in fundraising.

Sponsored this year by Johnson Development Corp., Men Who Cook provides community members the opportunity to sample culinary delights that the men (or their wives or favorite restaurant) create at home.

“This is a great opportunity to participate in this stirring event and share a favorite dish with the community,” said LEAF Executive Director Janice Knight.

Men Who Cook will begin at 6:30 p.m. on Saturday, Feb. 16 at Safari Texas in Richmond, with Ken Mondshine and the Brotherhood Band providing the evening’s musical entertainment.

LEAF helps fund Lamar CISD teachers’ dreams by providing extra money for classroom enrichment. In 2018, the organization awarded 205 educational grants totaling more than \$451,535.

“Come join us as we look forward to another successful presentation of Fort Bend’s finest chefs,” said Knight.

For more information, or to participate call 832-223-0334.



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7:30 AM	7:30 AM	9:30 AM	
8:30 AM	8:30 AM		
9:30 AM	9:30 AM		
4:30 PM	4:30 PM		
5:30 PM			
6:30 PM			

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FORT BEND COUNTY FAIR SCHOLARSHIP DEADLINE SET

The Fort Bend County Fair Association is giving back through its scholarship program and now is the time to apply. The opportunity to earn a Fair scholarship is open to a wide range of qualifying students.

The Fair will provide \$4,000 scholarships to 50 Fort Bend County students. Since 1979, the Fort Bend County Fair has given 871 scholarships to the county's youth.

The deadline to submit a scholarship application is Friday, Feb. 15.

In addition, three Fair Queen Scholarships will be awarded.

The scholarships are divided into different divisions depending on the applicants' Fair involvement and their field of study.

Students wanting to apply for a Fair scholarship must meet certain requirements: They must be a U.S. citizen and a resident of Fort Bend County or zoned to a school in Fort Bend County; be a high school senior and graduate by the spring semester of 2019.

Selection of the recipient will be based on several qualifications including: scholastic standing, leadership, citizenship, need, and Fair participation.

During the application process, candidates will declare what type of scholarship they will be applying for: Restrictive, Non-Restrictive, Open, Vocational, or Art Scholarships are some of the classifications options that candidates will have to choose.

For more information visit fortbendcountyfair.com or call 281-342-6171.

Local Events for your little scholar

LOOKING FOR YOUNG ADULT PROGRAMS FOR YOUR TEENS?

The University Branch Library will host the following programs for teenagers in grades 9 through 12:

YA SWEETS WORKSHOP: On Feb 9 at 2 p.m. in Meeting Room 2, teens in grades 9 through 12 will make sweet treats, such as microwave fudge and chocolate-covered pretzels, to share with family and friends for Valentine's Day. Reservations required.

YOUNG ADULT ADVISORY COUNCIL: Teens who are interested in an exciting new leadership opportunity and volunteer-service hours are invited to attend on Feb. 14 at 5 p.m. in conference room 1. Members will have a chance to share ideas about library programs, to help out at events, to give suggestions for teen services, books, and movies, and to meet new people. Meets on the second Thursday of every month, except during the summer.

FUNTIMES FOR THE LITTLE ONES

The University Branch Library will host the following Children's Programs:

MOTHER GOOSE TIME: Provides caregiver/infant multisensory circle-time activities – including simple sign language, folksongs and lullabies, and finger plays – that are especially designed to stimulate babies' social, emotional, and physical development through rhythm and music. Mother Goose Time is intended for infants from age 1 month to 12 months.

TODDLER TIME: Offers caregiver/child activities, stories and songs for older babies, from 12 to 36 months of age. Tuesdays and Wednesdays at 10:30 a.m.

STORY TIME: Presents stories, movies, and age-appropriate craft activities for children 3 to 6 years of age. Thursdays at 10:30 a.m.

PAJAMA NIGHT STORY TIME: Gives families an evening option for some activities presented during the day time.

Wednesdays at 7 p.m.

RISE & SHINE FAMILY STORYTIME: Families with children of all ages are invited to come and enjoy stories, movies, and crafts together. Saturdays at 10:30 a.m.

AFTER-SCHOOL BREAKS: Crafts, movies, stories, and more for school-aged children in grades K through 5. Second and fourth Tuesday beginning at 4 p.m. The schedule for January is as follows: Jan. 8 – STEAM Stations. Children will participate in various STEAM activities involving Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math. They will also enjoy a short film and a story. Jan. 22 – Game Day. Children will participate in different group activities and play a variety of board games.

CREATIVE CONNECTION: Activities for youth in grades 4 through 8. First and third Saturday at 2:30 p.m. The schedule for February is as follows: Feb. 12 – STEAM Stations. Children will participate in various STEAM activities involving Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math. They will also enjoy a short film and a story. Feb. 26 – Arts & Crafts Creations.

SPECIAL YOUTH & FAMILY EVENTS

The University Branch Library will host the following special programs:

CREATIVE CONNECTION: On the first and third Saturday at 2:30 p.m., there will be activities for youth in grades 4 through 8. The schedule for February is as follows: Feb. 2 – STEAM Game Day: Lunar New Year. Have fun with others while playing a variety of games and discovering something new during the STEAM session of the day. Learn about the history of the Lunar New Year and the math behind its calendar, and create paper art for the Year of the Pig. Feb. 16 – STEAM Game Day: The Stroop Effect. Learn about word power with "The Stroop Effect."

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mgriffin@fbherald.com
with "School News" in the subject line.**

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or call **281.612.6546**.



OAK BEND MEDICAL CENTER

—receives an "A" rating for hospital safety—



OakBend Medical Center's Jackson Street campus.

OakBend Medical Center has received an "A" rating from The Leapfrog Group for its hospital safety.

The Mission of The Leapfrog Group is to trigger giant leaps forward in the safety, quality and affordability of U.S. health care by using transparency to support informed health care decisions and promote high-value care.

"OakBend Medical Center is honored to receive an 'A' rating for its hard work and efforts to make the hospital safe for our patients and their families," said VP and Administrator Sue McCarty. "We consider our patients' safety a key factor in the healing process, and strive to make sure that they get the best quality of care."

The Leapfrog Hospital Safety Grade is the only hospital rating focused exclusively on hospital safety. Its A, B, C, D or F letter grades are a quick way for consumers to choose the safest hospital to seek care. These grades are updated twice a year.

The information on hospital performance collected through the Leapfrog Hospital Survey is unique and unavailable anywhere else. Unlike many other data sources, Leapfrog's data is available by individual bricks-and-mortar facility, providing a robust data set unlike any other.

The Leapfrog Hospital Survey uses 28 measures so assign the

grades to more than 2,600 hospitals throughout the country. A sample of the survey includes:

- Practices for safer health care, including nursing workforce, hand hygiene policies, culture of safety, leadership pertaining to safety and teamwork training
- Computerized physician order entry implementation and effectiveness
- ICU staffing to reduce mortality
- Infection rates for hospital-acquired infections
- Hospitals' Never Events policies
- Use of bar code technology to reduce medication errors

"Leapfrog's Hospital Safety Grades recognizes hospitals like OakBend Medical System that focus on advancing patient safety. This ranking provides an important resource for patients, and a benchmark for hospitals, to determine how care at one hospital compares to others in a region," said Leah Binder, president and CEO of The Leapfrog Group. "Hospitals that earn an A Hospital Safety Grade deserve to be recognized for their efforts in preventing medical harm and errors."

HEALTH HIGHLIGHTS

WEIGHT LOSS SEMINAR

Join Nabil Tariq, M.D. on Thursday Feb. 7 at 6 p.m. for a weight-loss seminar to learn about the different programs offered at the Houston Methodist Weight Management Center, get tips on grocery shopping and meal planning, and speak with a dietitian, exercise specialist and bariatric surgeon. Registration is required. Visit events.houstonmethodist.org/weightloss-sl or call 281-274-7500 for more information or to register.

BOUNCING BACK FROM LIFE'S BUMPS

Hosted by Fort Bend Hope, this is a six week course that will examine strategies for how to recover from life's stressful situations. The three remaining courses will be held from 6:30 p.m. to 8 p.m., Feb. 4, 11 and 18 at 927 3rd Street in Rosenberg. Class registration: <https://goo.gl/forms/zH29JAGfFbJnK0IR2>

USA FIT MARATHON

Celebrate the 11th Annual USA Fit Marathon, Fort Bend Kia Half Marathon, and Simon Spine Family Friendly 5K on Sunday, Feb. 3, 2019 from 4:30 a.m. - 2 p.m. This event is known as "Everyone's Marathon" because all athletes, no matter what their pace, should get the chance to enjoy the race experience. Visit usafitmarathon.com.

FREE YOGA FRIDAY

The last Friday of each month Iron Moms hosts a free Yoga class from 8:30 a.m. to 9:30 a.m.; 9:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.; and 6:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. on Feb. 22. The class is for beginners to advanced. The class is kid-friendly and is held next to the playground at Lost Creek Park to keep the kids entertained. No tickets are required. Bring: Yoga mat or beach towel and water. Visit Facebook @Ironmoms

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Strength in Numbers: Losing Weight Together

Maybe it feels like you've tried everything to lose weight. But have you unleashed the power of your family and social network? Research suggests that people have a higher likelihood of losing weight when they team up with a friend or family member to adopt healthy behaviors. More research is needed to understand the power of community and its effects on weight loss, but it's clear that friends and family have a strong influence in this area.

"When people decide to make a committed step to change their lives, it definitely has ripple effects on their relationships," said Nabil Tariq, M.D., board-certified bariatric surgeon at Houston Methodist Sugar Land Hospital. If you're planning to lose weight and considering weight-loss surgery or needing a new outlook on weight loss, partnering can improve your odds of reaching your goals. Weight loss with a partner provides motivation, support and even a little healthy competition.

MOTIVATION

"Motivation is often tied to experiences with our loved ones," said Tariq. "We want to be there for the big moments in life, and we want to go places and enjoy time together. Whatever your motivation to lose weight, you can put more power behind it when your loved ones know what you're fighting for."

Picture this: A busy mom wants to lose weight so she can set a healthier example for her kids. The changes she makes with nutrition and exercise have an impact on her whole family. **Try it:** Keep a visual reminder, such as a family photo, vacation destination, etc. in a special place so you can stay motivated when you need it.

A STRONG SUPPORT SYSTEM

"When you embark on this journey together with family members or friends, you have a built-in support system," Tariq said. "For anyone considering weight-loss surgery, it's a big decision and a lifelong commitment that affects everyone you are close with. Having a great support system can amplify the benefits of surgical weight loss."

Picture this: A husband struggling to lose weight on his own decides to explore weight-loss surgery. He signs up for an informational session. **Try it:** A spouse can provide mental and emo-

tional support by attending the orientation session, going to appointments and committing to a mutually changed lifestyle after surgery.

EAT BETTER TOGETHER

Changing the way you eat starts with meal planning, grocery shopping and a commitment to cooking meals at home. "Food is central to our day-to-day life and family interactions, so it's vital to involve others in your life when making significant dietary changes," Tariq said.

Picture this: A mother and daughter both had weight-loss surgery about six months apart. Planning meals and cooking together helped them adjust to their new diet plan. **Try it:** Attend a healthy cooking class or nutrition class with friends or family members.

TEAM UP FOR EXERCISE

Being active together and exercising regularly is the key to success with weight loss. "Having someone else to hold you accountable might be exactly what you need to show up and challenge yourself more than you would when working out alone," Tariq added.

Picture this: Two friends who played football in high school gained a lot of weight in their 20s and 30s. After one friend started a new exercise program, the other friend joined, too and they both lost weight. **Try it:** Transform couch time into something more active. Meet at the gym to watch your favorite TV shows while walking on a treadmill, or throw a football around before watching the game on TV.

TRACK YOUR PROGRESS

Keeping track of total pounds and inches lost as a group can be highly motivating. "Also seeing health numbers improve and high blood pressure, cholesterol and blood sugar go down is our top priority," Tariq said. "It's really about achieving a better quality of life and a better state of health."

Picture this: Co-workers start a weight-loss challenge to lose 500 pounds total among the group. **Try it:** Talk to your doctor about your target numbers and attend support groups, nutrition or fitness classes, or start a friendly competition among friends.

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