

August 2020

WEST FORT BEND

Living

Author
CHRIS MULLEN
introduces
ROWDY
to the world

PLUS The Fort Bend Black
Heritage Society
highlights history and culture



A publication of the
Fort Bend Herald
AND TEXAS COASTER

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WEST FORT BEND

Living™

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CHRIS MULLEN

A storyteller who is still dreaming

by MARQUITA GRIFFIN | mgriffin@fbherald.com

Chris Mullen was teaching a classroom of kindergarten students at St. Francis Episcopal School in Houston when he began to refine a creation of his own imagination. Within the 20 or so minutes at the end of the school day, Mullen captivated the class of youngsters with a character named “Rowdy” who lived in the American Old West.

“He had a horse. He had a gun. He had to make tough decisions and went on all of these adventures,” Mullen fondly recalled of those days nearly 18 years ago. “That’s where Rowdy’s story started.”

Every day Rowdy’s adventures continued and the storyline grew, even long after those students progressed to the next grade level because Mullen never quit developing the character he had created.

Then in the summer of 2011, Mullen transitioned from a viva voce storyteller to an author.

“I felt like I owed it to Rowdy to write this story,” he said. “I kept thinking, *I have to get this down on paper.*”

Unlike some authors who set aside time each day to devote to their work, Mullen wrote Rowdy’s story in the snatches of time between his responsibilities as a father and teacher.

Mullen has been a teacher for the past 23 years, the last nine as a pre-kindergarten teacher at Calvary Episcopal School. He and his wife Joellan live in Richmond with their two teenage sons, Ryan and Jackson.

“You hear about seasoned writers who talk about how they [schedule their writing], and write every day,” Mullen said. “I’ve never been to train myself to do that.

“All the stars have to align for me to write something worthwhile,” he adds with a chuckle.

He then refers to his time as a college student at Texas A&M University when he would write songs.

“I wrote *so many* bad ones,” he said laughing. “I didn’t want to do that with Rowdy. I didn’t want to write all the bad stuff to get to the good stuff. I did a lot of pre-writing in my head and I let it stew in my mind. I’d wait until I could see what is happening, where the story is going, the atmosphere and picture the events in detail.”

And when the idea was fully formed, Mullen would write it down.

Sometimes he’d be sitting in a structured environment when the moment arrived and other times he’d crank out a chapter or two on his laptop while sitting in the car, waiting to pick up his oldest son from an extracurricular activity.

“When I found the opportunity to write, I would,” he said. “It took a very long time.”

And after years of “writing here and there,” Mullen’s classroom-story-turned-novel was finally released to the public in March.

“It’s very exciting,” Mullen said of his first self-published book, *Rowdy: Wild and Mean, Sharp and Keen*.

Mullen describes Rowdy as “a clean-cut character” who doesn’t curse, doesn’t engage in violence “just because,” and learns, through tough lessons, to stand up for himself.

“He is the guy who always makes the right choices, and wonders if the choice is right for him, or if it’s right for others,” Mullen explained. “Living for others becomes his way.”

If Mullen’s character sounds like a protagonist from a traditional



Chris Mullen is excited to share his character “Rowdy” with the public in his new book *Rowdy: Wild and Mean, Sharp and Keen*.

Western tale, that’s because it is.

Written in three parts, *Rowdy: Wild and Mean, Sharp and Keen* is an 1800s Western Adventure novel that lays out the story of an orphaned boy’s fight for survival in the unforgiving wilds where life-and-death decisions force him to stand for what’s right, no matter the cost.

Although Mullen doesn’t intend for his novel to be moral tale — “I have no agenda for Rowdy, I’m simply about storytelling,” he said — he recognizes that Rowdy could play well as a role model in today’s society.

“You have to make choices in life and you have to live with those choices,” he said, explaining that’s the journey Rowdy takes in his book. “And when you put yourself before others — human beings, animals, anything — you will have to sacrifice something for that, but you can make the world a better place, even if it’s for a short amount of time.”

“There are lessons [in the novel] to be sure,” he continued. “But what’s important to me is that people to enjoy the story for the story.”

A FASCINATION WITH THE OLD WEST

Mullen reminisces over his youth when he would wake on Sunday mornings to watch Western movies, featuring iconic actors of the genre like Clint Eastwood and John Wayne. Mullen said his favorite character played by Wayne was Jake McCandle — “he was a real bad dude,” Mullen adds, admiration in his voice. “Some of that influence you’ll find in Rowdy.”

“The Western films were all basically the same— you know good guy, bad guy, gunfight, good guy winning — but I always enjoyed them.”

The intrigue with Westerns was sparked by Mullen’s father, who retired from the military in 1976 and was a middle school teacher for many years.

“My dad is an avid reader and he was really into Western novels like those by Max Brand and Louis L’Amour,” Mullen said. “He would tell me stories about the Old West and the history of that time. It was so entertaining for me.”

So it’s not surprising that Mullen, who calls himself “an adventurous kind of guy,” included a special trip as part of his research for his novel.

He had already conducted his post writing research about the period his novel is set in, but during Spring Break he took a road trip with his son Jackson and his father to Dodge City and down back roads to Lincoln, New Mexico “to see the terrain Rowdy would have encountered, experience the length Rowdy would have traveled.”

Although he didn’t grow up in that part of the country, Mullen said he has traveled there many times, and it was from those experiences that his imagination drew upon.

“I’m all about creation and imagination, about what my mind sees, but when you’re writing something like this there has to be truth in what you’re saying.”

And yet, Mullen stresses that his novel is a pure work of fiction. Although he was determined to remain true to the characteristics of that time, he cautions against reading *Rowdy: Wild and Mean, Sharp and Keen* as a historical account.

“It’s up to readers if they want to suspend their belief a little and just engross themselves in the adventure.”

MULLEN’S MINDSET

Mullen said he isn’t focused on the financial success of the book or accolades from literary critics. Sure, he does think about the possibility of becoming a full-time author one day, but just like he felt all those

years ago with that group of kindergarten children, Mullen said he simply wants “to introduce Rowdy to the world.”

In the months following his book’s debut, he said he’s enjoying — and truly listening to — feedback from the children and adults who have read about Rowdy and his adventures.

“If I could, I would print millions of copies and just give them away,” he said, the excitement in his voice almost tangible. “I just want to give this book to people and say, Here, let me share this great adventure story with you.”

His novel wasn’t written for one specific group of people, Mullen explained. It’s a story for youngsters, women, men and especially for folks who enjoyed the Western stories of days long gone.

“I do hope it brings back memories for guys like my dad and gets kids interested in the genre,” he added.

Rowdy: Wild and Mean, Sharp and Keen is Mullen’s first installment in what will be a three-part series. He’s currently working on the second book, and book three will soon follow. The novel is available on BN.com and Amazon.com.

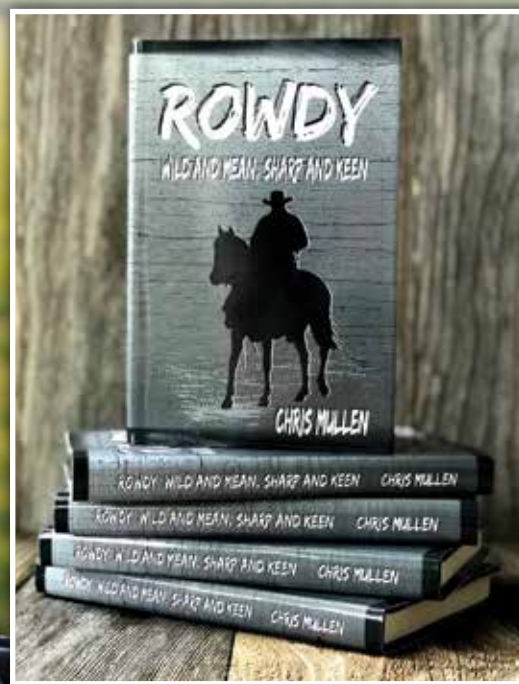
A night owl by nature, Mullen looks forward to the moments when “everything is quiet and the day is behind [him],” to complete the rest of his Rowdy series and then delve into other story ideas he has in mind.

Interestingly enough, those other ideas aren’t Western ones. Within Mullen’s imagination are different stories waiting to break free — a thriller, young adult romance and science fiction. He shares the budding plot of one them, something not fully formed but imbued with potential.

“But I can’t do anything with that one just yet,” he said. “When I start something, I get tunnel vision until it’s complete.”

He takes a moment to consider his own journey to developing an entire series around a character he created to simply entertain students.

“It’s not a dream come true,” he said. “I guess because as a storyteller, I’m still dreaming.”



Follow Chris Mullen

chrismullenwrites.com   @Rowdy2019

The Fort Bend Black Heritage Society

HIGHLIGHTS HISTORY AND CULTURE WHILE EDUCATING THE COMMUNITY

by MARQUITA GRIFFIN | mgriffin@fbherald.com



The founders of the Fort Bend Black Heritage Society: the late Saggerine Cottrell, Johnnie Mae Williams, Roberta Kirk, Rosie "Cotton" McClain and Norma Griffin. Lannis Johnson, the last surviving founder, took this photo in 1986 at Texian Market Days at George Ranch Historical Park in Richmond.

The Fort Bend Black Heritage Society may have begun under a slightly different name nearly four decades ago, however, the organization's motivation has never changed: "to highlight, promote and preserve black history in Fort Bend County," explained Sha'Terra Johnson, the organization's vice president.

Johnson, who lives in Rosenberg, is the granddaughter of Lannis Johnson, one of the organization's founding members and president.

"The Fort Bend Black Heritage Society was organized in 1984 by black citizens who were focused on community service, except back then it was called the Fort Bend Heritage Society of Rosenberg," Johnson said, explaining the name was updated about nine years ago.

And considering her grandmother was a founding member, Johnson proudly adds: "I've been a part of it since I was born in 1986."

Lannis, the last living member of the organization's founders, said to see her granddaughter take the helm with such vigor fills her with immense pride. And hope, too.

"I became president of our club about five years after it started and I was doing all I knew how to do," said Lannis, 75. "But Sha'Terra is so educated and knows how to use computers to get our message out there. It feels good watching her, the rest of my family, and the kids getting involved. It feels real good."

Lannis said the Fort Bend Black Heritage Society is driven to share the intricacies of black history — locally and nationally — "beyond what's taught in history classes."

"Even now I'm learning things about my own history," Lannis said. "It is important to know your history, keep it and share it."

REMEMBERING THE PAST

The Fort Bend Black Heritage Society started as a riding club that was "doing a little bit of everything in the community," Lannis said. But after a while, members set their efforts on purchasing land for a community cemetery in Orchard, Texas. The seven acres were

purchased in the 90s and to date, no one is buried on the land. The society is currently in the process of plotting it.

Lannis said she is quite proud of the founding member's achievement in securing the land in Orchard.

"We didn't have but one black cemetery in Rosenberg at that time and that was there before I was born," Lannis said, referring to Byrd Cemetery on Blume Road in Rosenberg.

While the society is going through the process for the Orchard cemetery, it is intensely focused on the one in Rosenberg, which happens to be the burial site of slaves, World War I and World War II veterans, and relatives of current Fort Bend County residents.

Years ago, the Fort Bend Black Heritage Society partnered with several churches, organizations and volunteers to clean the two-acre cemetery, which, records show, include graves that date back to 1906.

Through that initial process of cleaning up Byrd Cemetery, Lannis said her granddaughter "started researching the history of the people buried there and then the people in the community."

The history that was being revealed was astonishing, she said.

She pauses thoughtfully. "A lot of youngsters don't know their history and it's a shame because a lot of the ancestors have already passed away."

History, Lannis stressed, is meant to be handed down by those who lived it. And those who receive it, have the responsibility of preserving it and passing it on.

"[Original members of the Fort Bend Black Heritage Society] knew something needed to be done about our history. We needed to give it to the children," Lannis said firmly. "But sometimes history is hidden. So we wanted to bring it out into the open."

PUSHING IN THE PRESENT

Although the Fort Bend Black Heritage Society has been active for 36 years, Johnson is working on increasing awareness and support for it.

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“The founding members were getting things done,” she emphasized. “But there wasn’t a lot of marketing and publicity in the way of branding the name. Facebook wasn’t around then.”

But now, more than ever, is the opportunity for the Fort Bend Black Heritage Society to brand itself and foster interest in its efforts on social media.

The organization has a Facebook page and a website is in the works. “When I returned home from college I wanted to revamp the organization,” Johnson said.

Not only does the Fort Bend Black Heritage Society focus on local black history and culture — a current objective is to encourage and assist black residents to initiate genealogy projects — it works to support black families and businesses. It also offers financial seminars and encourages black residents to vote.

“Rosenberg has experienced a lot of economic development,” Johnson said. “I grew up here. I remember what it used to look like. I personally know how much it’s grown. But within the growth, history can be lost. We need to share that history — with the people who already live here and those moving here.

“Our history is something that should be shared on a regular basis.”

Since its inception, the Fort Bend Black Heritage Society has hosted festivals, trail rides, events honoring black community members and Juneteenth celebrations.

The most recent Juneteenth celebration was hosted in partnership with the Fort Bend Heritage Unlimited Museum in Kendleton.

Johnson considers the first time she laid eyes on the museum nearly 10 years ago. It was an experience that left her awestruck and inspired.

“It’s a wonderful place,” she said. “All of the artifacts, genealogy, and exhibits about black heritage are amazing. I was thinking, why don’t more people know about this?”

And this is why the Fort Bend Black Heritage Society was enthusiastic about this year’s Juneteenth celebration at Bates Allen Park.

In light of the pandemic, social distancing and masks were enforced, but attendees were able to experience speakers, activities and vendors.

“Celebrating Juneteenth was always so important to the founders of the Fort Bend Black Heritage Society,” Johnson said.

Hosting the celebration in Kendleton was like hitting three birds with one stone: It honored a central celebration in black culture; allowed the Fort Bend Black Heritage Society to increase awareness about its presence; and spotlighted the Kendleton museum that houses a plethora of local black history.

“The history there shows how black slaves, sharecroppers, residents and families contributed to this county,” Johnson said of the museum.

FOCUSED ON THE FUTURE

The Fort Bend Black Heritage Society meets every second Monday of the month at 7 p.m. in the George Memorial Library in Richmond, however, since the onset of the pandemic, the group meets virtually via Zoom.

“We encourage anyone to join the meeting and you don’t have to be black to join,” she said. “But black history, efforts and culture are our focus. The history of black people in this county has been glossed over and we want to make sure to pay homage to that history.

“We are like the other local heritage groups, like the Hispanic Heritage Society, the Czech Society of Texas and the Jewish Society in that we celebrate our culture,” Johnson said. “And we have a great time learning about all the heritages of Fort Bend County, too. That’s why we collaborate throughout the county — to remain unified, but also to educate.”

The society currently has 20 members “and a host of volunteers,” Johnson said. Members pay annual dues of \$240 or \$20 per month. Members can also opt to have half of the dues put toward an individual plot at the Garden of Rest Cemetery.

Johnson encourages people to connect with the Fort Bend Black Heritage Society because the organization offers many ways to give

back to the community.

“I’m a social worker and a community social worker,” she said. “My goal is to unify the black entities so we can empower our community. It’s important for us to thrive and move forward as a people. And right now, especially right now, this is something everyone is yearning for.”

Connect with the Fort Bend Black Heritage Society on Facebook, by emailing FBheritagesociety@gmail.com or by calling 832-877-2756 or 832-277-4347.



From left, Sha’Terra Johnson, former Kendleton Mayor Carolyn Jones and Lannis Johnson.



Before and after shots of Byrd Cemetery in Rosenberg after the Fort Bend Black Heritage Society collaborated with community churches, organizations and volunteers to clean up the long-ignored state of the area.



John Amadi Davis with Sha’Terra Johnson. Davis was recognized with the “For The People Award” during the Fort Bend Black Heritage Society’s Honors Awards in February 2016 at Shiloh Baptist Church.

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A Transforming Lives Summer Soiree

As is true for many around Fort Bend County, the pandemic forced organizations to revise traditional event schedules, and the Child Advocates of Fort Bend is no different.

“COVID-19 forced us to cancel and re-think our Gala and our Voices for Children fundraising breakfast earlier this year but we’re looking at this as an opportunity to help the community better understand the work that we do,” said Development Director Lisa Moore.

To continue raising financial support to fund its critical programs, Child Advocates announced it’s hosting “Transforming Lives Summer Soiree,” a socially distanced adult event will take place at the agency’s new Davis George Campus from 7 p.m. to 10 p.m. Aug. 22. The new campus — located at 5403 Avenue N in Rosenberg — opened shortly before the coronavirus shutdown.

The Transforming Lives Summer Soiree will feature a live and silent auction, raffle, wine and restaurant pulls, heavy hors d’oeuvres and live music. Johnny Bravo is the emcee and auctioneer for this event, and attire for the evening is garden party attire.

“We are shifting our format, opening the doors and moving parts of the event outside,” Moore said. “Guests will be able to walk the path a child takes when they come to our Children’s Advocacy Center, visit our CASA program area, and get a better understanding of the collaboration of partners that make up our Multi-Disciplinary Team to serve every child.”

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Sugar Land are Monarch presenting sponsors for the event.

“Our guests are going to have a fantastic time while raising much-needed funds to support abused and neglected children with immediate and long-term sustainability of our agency’s programs,” Moore said. “It will be a festive evening with all the usual gala items and a few new ones.”

Moore stressed that the nonprofit is “paying attention to the numbers and guidelines about safe distancing and working on plans and backup plans” on the off-chance guests cannot gather in person.

“Although we really hope that is not the case,” she added.

National Oilwell Varco is supporting as a Silver Emperor Sponsor with Rangeland Energy, ChampionX, Consolidated Home Health, Emerson and Next Level Urgent Care supporting as Texan Crescent Sponsors.

Sponsorship and underwriting opportunities are available ranging from \$2,000 to \$15,000. Individual reservations are available for \$150.

To attend the soiree, become a sponsor, donate an auction item or for more information on how you can get involved visit www.cafb.org or contact Lisa Moore at Lmoore@cafb.org.



An Audi for All Seasons is just one of the live auction packages for Child Advocates of Fort Bend’s Transforming Lives Summer Soiree . The winning bidder will rotate every 3 months into a new Audi - driving a total of four different Audi vehicles within a one year period courtesy of Sewell Audi Sugar Land. From left are: Spencer Clark, Robert Rathgeber, CAFB Development Director Lisa Moore, Madeline Faulkner, Kevin Kabore, CAFB Events Specialist Tarina Sheridan, Sewell Audi Sugar Land Manager Chris Childs, and Josh Santana.

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GARDENING TIPS

Common gardening mistakes

by ANITA MADDOX | Fort Bend County Master Gardener

We all make mistakes — that statement is true for all gardeners, no matter how much experience we have! To help you avoid some of the more common mistakes, here are a few tips:

TREE MISTAKES

- **Wrong location** | Make sure you consider the mature size of the tree before planting. Planting too close to your house isn't good for your home's foundation, or for the tree either. And we've all seen the results when utility companies chop off large sections of trees to protect electrical service to the neighborhood, so don't plant trees that will eventually touch electrical lines.

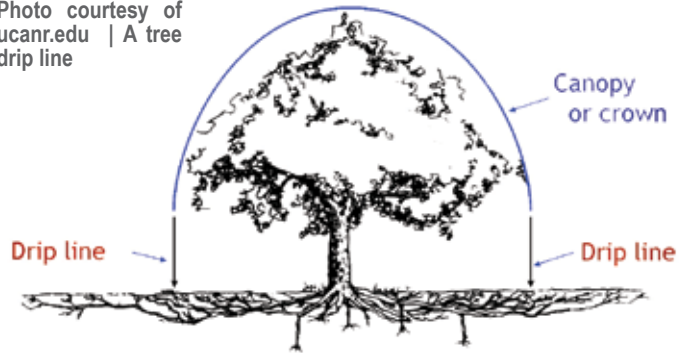
- **Planting too deeply** | Dig a hole for your tree that is no deeper than the height of the root ball, and at least twice as wide. Also, don't add any amendments to the soil where it's planted. Just refill the hole with some of the same soil you just removed.

- **The "mulch volcano"** | Piling mulch in a hill against the trunk of your trees will eventually suffocate the roots near the surface of the soil in that area. The mulch volcano will hold moisture against the tree's trunk which can lead to insect and pest disease problems.



Photo courtesy of Mississippi State University Extension/Gary Bachman | A "mulch volcano."

Photo courtesy of ucanr.edu | A tree drip line



- **Watering trees incorrectly** | Did you know the roots that absorb water for a tree are mostly located under the outer circumference of the tree branches? This is called the "drip line." The best way to water trees is to remove the sprinkler from your hose and let the water run slowly for several hours around the drip line of the tree, not near the trunk.

For more information about these tips visit textastreeplanting.tamu.edu/PlantTreeProperly.html

WATERING YOUR GARDEN PLANTS

- **Overwatering** | When we overwater our plants the soil gets waterlogged and the roots can't breathe. Plant roots require some oxygen for growth. Plants that have been overwatered wilt and turn yellow similar to plants that are too dry, so it's not easy to tell what's happening just by looking. You can stick your finger a few inches in the soil to see if the soil is too wet, or even better, buy an inexpensive moisture meter (about \$9) that you can stick in the soil for a more accurate reading.



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• **Underwatering** | When plants in your garden are dry, water them thoroughly so that the water penetrates down to all the roots. “Sprinkling” by hand every day usually won’t accomplish deep water penetration. Watering less often and more deeply is the best way to keep your plants healthy.

• **Not mulching** | Mulch keeps the soil from drying out and becoming hard, prevents erosion, and improves the soil as it breaks down.

For more information visit aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/newsletters/bortupdate

TRYING EVERY GARDEN SUGGESTION FROM THE INTERNET

You’ll see a lot of ideas on the Internet from gardeners all over the country.

The best way to find out about effective gardening techniques is to look on a land-grant university’s website for research-based information.

You can find a lot of gardening information appropriate for our area on the Texas A&M Agrilife Extension website at aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu. You’ll also find helpful information on our Fort Bend Master Gardener website at fbmg.org, and on our Facebook page at facebook.com/FortBendCountyMasterGardeners.

And remember, if you have a specific question, you can “Ask a Master Gardener” on our website!

Fort Bend County Master Gardeners are trained volunteers who assist Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service in educating the community using research-based horticultural information.

Texas Master Naturalists to offer online fall training class

The Texas Master Naturalist Coastal Prairie Chapter will offer a fall 2020 training class beginning Aug. 18.

The chapter offers residents of Fort Bend County the opportunity to join a corps of volunteers dedicated to the beneficial management of the natural resources and wildlife of our region.

The Texas Master Naturalist program provides nature lovers the opportunity to learn from leading experts, join a group of like-minded people who share their passion for the great outdoors and give back to the community through nature-related volunteer efforts.

The program is sponsored by the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department and Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service.

“Our chapter has traditionally held training once a year in the fall with Tuesday evening classes and Saturday field trips, but in February 2020, we began our first spring training with daytime classes,” chapter President Bert Stipelcovich said.

“We had about five sessions before the coronavirus pandemic forced us to suspend in-person gatherings.

“Fortunately, our amazing Spring class Director Shannon Westveer worked tirelessly to convert the remainder of the training to online classes via Zoom. We had 19 trainees complete their 40 hours of initial training and give very positive reviews, so we’re experienced now and excited to provide excellent virtual training this fall.”

The fall training will also be conducted via Zoom with in-

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The spring 2020 Texas Master Naturalists trainees take a pre-pandemic field trip to the James B. Harrison foundation's Long Point Ranch in Richmond.

person field trips added if social distancing guidelines allow.

Naturalist students will attend classes via Zoom taught by recognized experts.

They will study local ecology, native plants and wildlife, rangeland management, citizen science and more.

Certification as a Texas Master Naturalist requires that students complete 40 hours of initial training, 40 hours of community service (up to a year to complete) and eight hours of advanced training.

Graduates of the program become chapter members and volunteer for projects around Fort Bend and Waller Counties, including Katy Prairie Conservancy, Brazos Bend State Park, local school educational programs, the Fort Bend County Fair, Seabourne Nature Fest and the Chapter's signature project: Seabourne Creek Nature Park. Members are involved in a variety of projects — from prairie restoration to bird hikes, maintaining butterfly and demo gardens, trail management, educating youth

and much more. Members can choose from dozens of service opportunities based on their interests.

The classes are scheduled to end in November.

The series includes training via Zoom on Tuesday evenings from 6-9 p.m. and Saturdays from roughly 9 a.m. until 2 p.m.

Zoom training and assistance is available if needed.

The cost for the program is \$125 per person.

For more information, visit the Chapter website at coastalprairie.org or e-mail fall class Director Carol Hawkins at carol@coastalprairie.org.



Spring 2020 Texas Master Naturalist Training Class February field trip at Seabourne Creek Nature Park in Rosenberg.



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JACKIE WEHRING ALWAYS HAS SOMETHING FUN IN MIND TO PROMOTE ROSENBERG

by **AVERIL GLEASON** | agleason@fbherald.com

Since starting her position as the first tourism and Main Street manager last spring, Jackie Wehring has created events downtown, garnered relationships with local business owners and, oh yeah, been promoted to assistant director of economic development.

Wehring, who was promoted in April, said she is looking forward to continue growing with the community.

"I will be working closely with the Economic Development team on current and new projects, business retention, expansion and revitalization," Wehring revealed. "I am so proud of the relationships I have made within the city. It has been great working with stakeholders to make improvements and see things grow in a positive direction."

Economic Development Director Jeremy Heath said Wehring made "an immediate impact" on the Main Street program when she arrived in March 2019.

"We started to see an increase in attendance at annual events in the Historic Downtown District," he said. "Her digital marketing skills and her ability to build relationships with stakeholders really helped generate a lot of buzz in and for our downtown."

REMEMBER THE ARTISAN MARKET?

Last October Wehring helped organize a fall artisan's market in Historic Downtown Rosenberg. Vendors, shoppers and the



Jackie Wehring



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downtown shop owners were pleased with the turnout.

Wehring said she counted hundreds of visitors strolling along Third Street during the market, and many of them visited stores lining the streets of downtown.

"The event was a great success," Wehring recalled of the October 2019 artisan market.

Among the local craftspeople participating in the market was Ana Payne, 31, of Rosenberg, who fashions customized doormats in her home shop. She was selling mats with Astros, Texans and Dallas Cowboys logos and handed out business cards in hopes shoppers wanted custom mats for their homes and offices.

Payne said she looked forward to the next artisan market.

The artisan market was so well received that Wehring attempted to organize it again for March — "We decided to bring the Artisan Market back this spring to showcase our downtown and give our local artisans a venue to sell their goods," she explained — but the coronavirus came first.

BEAUTIFUL DRESSES & SHOWCASING OPPORTUNITIES AT THE WEDDING EXPO

Wehring was also the ringmaster at the second annual "A Day to Remember - Wedding & Quinceanera Expo."

Around 30 businesses participated in the event, sponsored by the Rosenberg Development Corp.

"A Day to Remember - Wedding & Quinceanera Expo was a successful event," said Wehring. "We had over 400 attendees and 29 excellent vendors with a variety of services offered. There were dance performances, beautiful dresses on display, fun photo booths, cake samples and so much more. The attendees had a great time and our vendors enjoyed spending the day with our awesome community."

Michelle Rollins, sales manager at Springhill Suites in Rosenberg,

said she was thrilled with the opportunity to meet potential customers.

"This [was] a great opportunity to let people know what Springhill Suites has to offer," she said. "I told them we were the only hotel in Rosenberg that offered suites only — every room is a suite — and that we were the perfect place for out-of-town visitors to stay during weddings and other special events."

Marina Ortiz and mom Maggie, who own and operate "Your Party Concierge," were equally excited about the opportunity to promote their party-planning service to potential customers. They left the three-hour event with two pages worth of contact information from possible customers.

"This is really great, we'll definitely be back next year," said Maggie.

USING COOKIES TO ATTRACT CUSTOMERS

Wehring orchestrated the first cookie walk last November — the Shope Small Cookie Walk — in hopes of attracting shoppers to the stores in downtown Rosenberg.

To pull off the event, she teamed up with the Main Street Advisory Board, Main Street event planning committees and downtown merchants.

Shoppers picked up their Cookie Walk passport at Another Time Soda Fountain and visited the participating businesses to enjoy free sweets while shopping.

After visiting at least 12 of the 24 participating locations, customers dropped off their passport at the Rosenberg Railroad Museum for a chance to win a downtown Rosenberg gift basket.

The Shop Small Cookie Walk, Wehring said, was a great way to support small businesses in historic downtown Rosenberg, and offered the public an enjoyable day of shopping.

THE TASTE OF ROSENBERG

Hundreds of people packed into the Rosenberg Civic Center last

August for the second annual Taste of Rosenberg.

The city of Rosenberg and the Rosenberg Development Corporation hosted the event, and Wehring played a big part.

This Taste of Rosenberg featured free food from approximately 15 area restaurants and businesses. The vendors were a mix of locally and nationally owned restaurants and offered an assortment of drinks, desserts, sandwiches, tacos and pasta.

WEARING A NEW HAT

As Main Street director, Wehring pushes the program's core emphasis: the restoration of historic buildings.

The Main Street Program is fueled by a coalition of volunteers who work in partnership to promote and improve downtown Rosenberg. This coalition includes property owners, merchants, representatives of nonprofit organizations and the city of Rosenberg.

"Those marketing skills have proven crucial in our role as ombudsman during the COVID-19 pandemic," Heath said. "We've been able to stay in touch with and provide resources to our businesses through social media, e-mail, and digital surveys. Her ability to build relationships will be a tremendous asset in our business retention efforts."

"We've got a lot of successful businesses in Rosenberg, and one of our most important responsibilities is to keep them here."

Wehring said she's grateful that Heath has made her transition from tourism and Main Street manager to assistant director of economic development seamless.

"We have a great team and I have loved working with this department," Wehring said.

Reach Jackie Wehring at jwehring@rosenbergtx.gov.



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ASPIRING WRITERS ENCOURAGED TO JOIN THE STORY SPINNERS CLUB

Join other aspiring writers at Fort Bend County Libraries' "Story Spinners Writing Club" on Thursday, Aug. 20, from 2 to 3 pm. The topic for August is "Flashbacks."

This program will be a virtual session presented via Zoom. Participants who register for the event will be emailed a link to a Zoom meeting, and they may join the discussion from the comfort of home.

From beginning blogger to published novelist, writers of all genres and experience levels are welcome to write, share, learn, support, network, and critique each other's work. Writing prompts, brainteasers, and brief exercises will be available to ignite the imaginations of any and all wordsmiths who wish to hone their craft.

This program is recommended for adults and teens aged 14 and up.

Free and open to the public, the Story Spinners Writing Club meets on the third Thursday of every month. Registration is required; a link to the Zoom session will be emailed to participants who register.

To register online at the library's website (www.fortbend.lib.tx.us), click on "Classes & Events," select "Virtual Programs," and find the program. Participants may also register by calling George Memorial Library at 281-342-4455.

EXCITING VIRTUAL PROGRAMS FOR YOUNG ADULTS AND TEENS

This summer, Fort Bend County Libraries will offer fun, virtual programs specifically designed for high school-age teens in grades 9 through 12.

The programs will be either live-streamed via Zoom or pre-recorded videos. Registration is required for the live-streamed programs only. An email with the link for the Zoom meeting will be sent to all who register.

The pre-recorded how-to videos can be viewed on the Fort Bend County Libraries website - www.fortbend.lib.tx.us - by clicking on the "Classes and Events" tab, selecting "Virtual Programs," and finding the virtual "class" on the dates listed.

• **YA: Baseball-String Bracelets** | Thursday, Aug. 6 (*pre-recorded video*)

In this craft demonstration video, library staff will demonstrate how to transform old baseballs and softballs into fun string bracelets! Learn how to remove the stitching from balls to create a unique, upcycled

piece of jewelry.

• **YA Advisory Council** | Tuesday, Aug. 11, 4-4:40 pm; or Wednesday, Aug. 26, 4-5 pm. This event will be live-streamed via Zoom at the designated time. Teens are invited to express ideas, organize upcoming activities, and suggest new programs and books that would be of interest to young adults at the library. Registration is required.

• **YA Book Club** | Wednesday, Aug. 12, 2 pm. This event will be live-streamed via Zoom at the designated time. Join in a discussion of *Illuminae*, written by Amie Kaufman. Registration is required.

• **YA Book Corner** | Wednesday, Aug. 12 (*pre-recorded video*) In this video book talk, YA librarians will share news from the world of teen lit! Hear about YA recent releases and recommendations of up-and-coming YA novelists.

• **YA Craft: Book-Page Rosette Letters** | Thursday, Aug. 13 (*pre-recorded video*) In this craft-demonstration video, learn how to create rosettes with recycled-book pages, and use them to make decorative letter art with wood or cardboard letters.

• **YA: Marvel Universe Trivia** | Friday, Aug. 14, 2-2:30 pm. This event will be live-streamed via Zoom at the designated time. Compete with other teens to test your knowledge of Marvel Universe films. The free Kahoot app will be used for the challenge, so be sure to have the app downloaded onto a device before the event begins. Registration is required.

• **YA: Wool/Felt Ball Coasters** | Wednesday, Aug. 19 (*pre-recorded video*) In this craft demonstration video, learn how to make a decorative coaster for placing drinks on a table. Library staff will demonstrate how to make a fluffy coaster with only corkboard coasters, craft balls, and glue.

• **YA: Diamond-Window Origami Box** | Friday, Aug. 21 (*pre-recorded video*)

Discover how these delicate origami art forms are made by twisting and folding paper into unique shapes. In this video tutorial, learn how to make a cute box with a diamond-shaped opening.

• **Sugar Land Teen Book Club** | Tuesday, Aug. 25, 3-3:30 pm This event will be live-streamed via Zoom at the designated time. Join in a discussion of *Everything, Everything*, written by Nicola Yoon. Registration is required.

• **YA: 60 Seconds to Fun!** | Tuesday, Aug. 25 (*pre-recorded video*) In this demonstration video, discover games that can be played in 60 seconds or less, with materials commonly found around the home.

• **YA Craft: Tie-Dye** | Thursday, Aug. 27 (*pre-recorded video*) In this craft-demonstration video, learn how to make a one-of-a-kind creation using tie-dye.

The meetings are free and open to the public. Registration is required for the live Zoom sessions only; a link to the Zoom session will be emailed to participants who register.

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To register online at the library's website (www.fortbend.lib.tx.us), click on "Classes & Events," select "Virtual Programs," and find the program on the date indicated.

For more information, call the Fort Bend County Libraries' Communications Office (281-633-4734).

"WHAT'S UP WITH THIS WEEK" VIDEO SERIES

Hear about fascinating facts from throughout history at Fort Bend County Libraries' "What's Up with This Week" video series in August.

Each Monday in August, library staff will share pre-recorded videos of fun and interesting facts and recollections of events that have taken place during that week from throughout history. In addition, viewers will hear about books and other online resources where they can learn more about the subjects in the video.

The videos can be viewed on the FBCL website - www.fortbend.lib.tx.us - by clicking on the "Classes and Events" tab and selecting "Virtual Programs," and then finding the video series on the dates listed.

Because the libraries will not be hosting in-person events during the current period of social distancing, special programs and classes will be hosted online through the FBCL website.

For more information, call the Fort Bend County Libraries Communication Office (281-633-4734).

ONLINE CHILDREN'S PROGRAMS RESUME FALL SCHEDULE

Because of the COVID-19 social-distancing recommendations, Fort Bend County Libraries is offering a different format for children's programming at this time - all activities are presented virtually so that families can participate from the comfort and safety of home.

Links to videos of Mother Goose Time, Toddler Time, and Story Time will be posted on the FBCL website's online calendar each week, beginning Aug. 11. Each activity includes age-appropriate stories, songs, and puppet shows.

The schedule is as follows:

- Mondays - Mother Goose Time (infants 1-12 months of age)
- Tuesdays - Toddler Time (1-3 years of age)
- Wednesdays - Story Time (preschool age)

Families of toddlers and preschoolers may pick up to-go activity packets from the library for the month. These packets - available for pick up after Aug. 10 - contain fun craft activities that can be done at home.

The schedule of virtual School-Age Programs and Middle School Programs will resume in September.

Families have until Sept. 30 to pick up Summer Reading Challenge rewards.

For more information, see the Fort Bend County Libraries website (www.fortbend.lib.tx.us), or call the library system's Communications Office (281-633-4734).

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Tips on healthy aging

Learn how to adopt healthy lifestyle habits to maintain, or potentially improve, one's health while aging when Fort Bend County Libraries hosts an online program on "Healthy Living for Your Brain & Body" on Saturday, August 29, from 10 am to noon.

This program will be a virtual session presented via Zoom. Participants who register for the event will be emailed a link to a Zoom meeting, and they may join the discussion from the comfort of home.

Amy O'Connor and Sabrina Strawn, representatives from the Alzheimer's Association, will provide tips on lifestyle choices that can help to keep one's brain and body healthy, and possibly delay the onset of mental decline, as one ages.

Learn how to incorporate diet, nutrition, exercise, cognitive activity and social engagement into a plan for healthy aging.

O'Connor and Strawn will talk about hands-on tools and steps to take now to improve or maintain overall health in each of these areas.

Amy O'Connor is a lifelong educator who has been volunteering with the Alzheimer's Association's Early Stage programs and as a community educator for two years. **Community Engagement Manager Sabrina Strawn** has more than 20 years of varied experience in academia and social service agencies and ten years of personal experience as a caregiver of someone with dementia.

The program is free and open to the public. Registration is required; a link to the Zoom session will be emailed to participants who register.

To register online at the library's website (www.fortbend.lib.tx.us), click on "Classes & Events," select "Virtual Programs," and find the program. Participants may also register by calling George Memorial Library at 281-342-4455.

Virtual 'Beat the Pack' program to help people quit smoking offered at Houston Methodist Sugar Land Hospital

Houston Methodist Sugar Land Hospital is offering the community a proven program to help people quit smoking. The complimentary program, called Beat the Pack®, was developed by Pfizer Inc. and is sponsored by Houston Methodist Sugar Land Respiratory Therapy Department and Cancer Center. The next four-week series is scheduled to start at 5:30 p.m. on July 8 virtually via Webex.

Houston Methodist Sugar Land Hospital offers program to help smokers quit



Participants will meet virtually each Wednesday for four weeks in July with a trained facilitator who will provide tools, tips and support to help smokers create and follow through with a personalized "quit plan."

"Studies show that close to 70 percent of smokers in the U.S. want to quit," said Amy Sebastian-Deutsch, director of oncology and infusion services at Houston Methodist Sugar Land. "But it typically takes a smoker between six and 11 attempts to successfully quit. Beat the Pack is a proven program that can greatly increase those odds and make it easier to give up cigarettes for good."

Even long-term smokers can benefit from quitting. "The health benefits of quitting begin almost immediately and continue indefinitely," said Sindhu Nair, M.D., board-certified hematologist oncologist with Houston Methodist Oncology Partners at Sugar Land. "Within months, former smokers will have improved circulation and reduced blood pressure, enhanced oxygen flow, the return of taste and smell and less coughing and colds. After a year, their risk of heart disease will be reduced by half. After 10 years of living without cigarettes, the risk of heart attack or cancer is similar to that of someone who never smoked."

In 2015, a thorough compilation of more than 50 smoking cessation studies that included more than 25,000 participants found that combining behavior support in a group setting with medication provides the best results.

"It isn't easy to quit, and certainly it is more difficult to do so by yourself," said Sebastian-Deutsch. "Beat the Pack provides all the tools and support needed, and it does so in an informative, friendly atmosphere that offers encouragement and camaraderie."

The four-week program is offered quarterly at Houston Methodist Sugar Land. Registration is required and space is limited. For more information or to register, contact Joan Burnham at jmburnham@houstonmethodist.org or 281.274.0188. You will receive the meeting link after registering.

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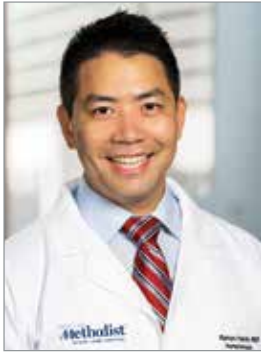
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Expanding our team of leaders in **ONCOLOGY**



Houston Methodist Welcomes Dr. Patrick Prath

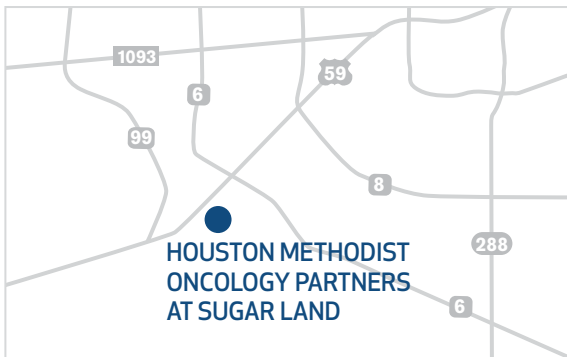
Patrick Prath, MD, board-certified hematologist and medical oncologist, joins the doctors and staff of Houston Methodist Oncology Partners at Sugar Land.

Their integrated, team approach addresses each patient's unique needs, delivering individualized therapies, innovative research and clinical trials, all backed by the advanced technology of Houston Methodist Sugar Land Hospital. They are dedicated to providing comprehensive, world-class cancer care, close to home.

Services offered:

- Oncology and hematology treatment
- Clinical trials on-site
- Genetic counseling and testing on-site
- Treatment planning
- Second opinions

COVID-19 UPDATE — Our specialists are available to safely see patients **in person** or **virtually**, as needed.



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Jorge Darcourt, MD
Hematology
Medical Oncology



Sindhu Nair, MD
Hematology
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Kirtan Nautiyal, MD
Hematology
Medical Oncology

