

FEBRUARY 2019

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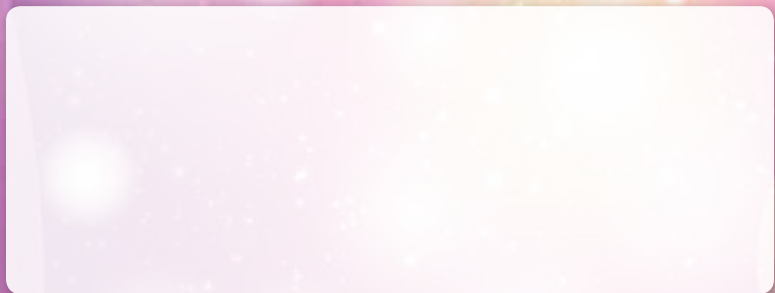
monthly

Knitowski finds
solace in her
award-winning
needlework



Plus

Valentine's Day
Luncheon supports
autism awareness



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PECAN GROVE

monthly™

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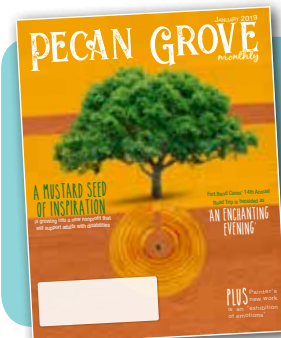
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Carissa at the Jerry Barber Awards.



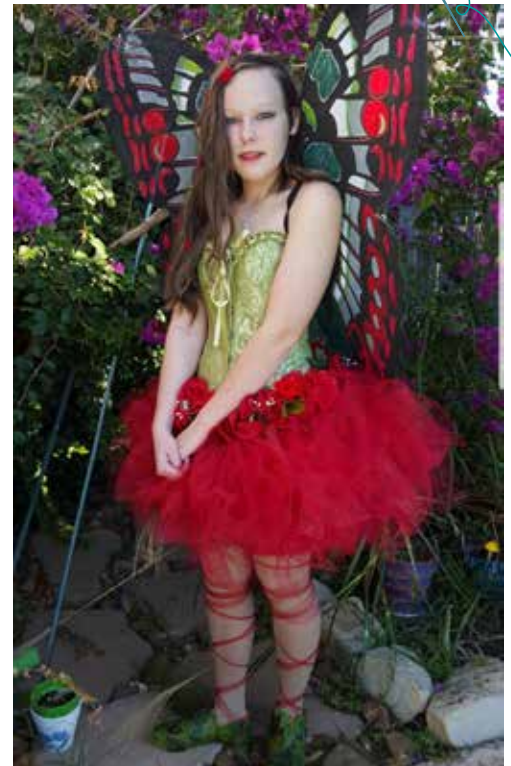
Carissa in her Ariel costume she created.



Carissa competing at the Texas Thespian Festival

Despite living with a painful disorder,
Knitowski finds joy and solace in theatre life

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



Carissa often sews cosplay costumes, and after entering the student Renaissance Day costume design contest, she earned second place out of hundreds of students.

The first costume Carissa Knitowski ever designed was a pair of tights which she decorated to complete her superhero costume for an annual musical at Pecan Grove Elementary. She loved acting in the production, but despite the joy she received from stage, following elementary, Knitowski didn't return to the theatre department until she became a junior at Travis High School.

"I was not involved in theatre during middle school, but I did help with skits at Vacation Bible School at our church," she said. "I didn't join theater until my junior year because I was a viola player in orchestra my freshmen year and had taken fashion design my sophomore year."

But the district canceled the advance fashion design course, and Knitowski longed for another class where she could sew, so she sought the familiarity of theatre where her skills could be put to good use.

Now a senior, Knitowski has her hands full designing costumes for and managing teams in the school's theatre department.

She has been the head of the costume department for every show and has repeatedly served as the properties manager.

"The props department consists of everything that isn't nailed to the floor," she said. "I read through the script finding all the necessary props — find or make them — and keep them organized back stage."

Knitowski was also recently head of the trebuchet team for the Renaissance Festival, which she called "a new and exciting challenge" considering she and the team built a functioning miniature trebuchet, which is a type of catapult.

In January she designed and created the costumes for Travis High's production of "Little Shop of Horrors," but she more prominently served as the stage manager, helping run the rehearsal, coordinating the design teams and running the sound booth calling cues.

And a few months ago, Knitowski also competed at the Texas Thespian Festival, earning a perfect score in costume construction for her work for the character Ophelia from "Hamlet."

"I had no idea what the competition was going to be like," Knitowski said, adding that it was her first time to compete. "I was never completely sure if I was doing the right thing and didn't know what type of presentation I should be giving or what questions to expect. I was very shocked when I found out [I earned a perfect score] and am extremely excited to go to nationals because I am really proud of the dress I made."

"I think it is one of the best things I have ever made," she added.

Knitowski will now head to nationals, which will be held June 24 through June 29.

She is also a semifinalist in the Possee Foundation and was chosen in October as Student of the Month for Jostens Renaissance, a leadership organization that focuses on teaching high school students important lessons in character building helping improve the culture of the school.

"I'm honestly still not sure how it happened," Knitowski said with a light laugh. "I know teachers nominate students, but I never found out who nominated me."

But behind the surface of her impressive theatre skills and accomplishments is a young woman working her way through a pain that plagues her every single day.

MAINTAINING CONTROL OF HER LIFE

Unlike the majority of her peers, upon entering high school as a new freshman, Knitowski had to make an important decision about her health, and underwent surgery to repair a patent ductus arteriosus — a congenital heart defect — that she was born with.

"I was told that if I didn't have [the surgery] I would have high-risk pregnancies and I wanted to save myself that trouble later

on," she explained.

Then during the summer between her sophomore and junior year, Knitowski was diagnosed with endometriosis, an often painful disorder caused by tissue, which normally lines the inside of the uterus, growing outside of the uterus.

"At first I was happy that they finally knew what was wrong with me, and that would mean it could be treated and fixed," Knitowski said. "However, I soon found out that there is no fix, only managing, which was harder to handle. I did go through a spout of depression when I was first diagnosed but over time I have learned to live with it."

The Travis senior lives with chronic pain, which she said has had "a large effect on [her] life."

"My pain isn't constant but I can't remember the last time I went a full day without pain. It is usually worse in the evenings which can make it difficult to hang out with friends since most teenagers always want to stay up late," she said. "This is also a struggle because most theater productions happen at night which means I have to stay up late."

But despite the pain, which often wakes her in the middle of the night, the daily struggles of adhering to a strict diet, as well as the two years worth of treatment with Lupron Depot — a shot Knitowski has to receive every three months — Knitowski refuses to let her life orbit her disorder.

"[Lupron] is used to treat prostate cancer but is also common in endometriosis treatment. There is no cure for endometriosis and Lupron is normally considered at last resort," she said. "The goal of the treatment is to make the pain more manageable, so I can go about my daily life."

"Carissa has been a fighter her whole life," said Knitowski's mother, Anna. "I believe Carissa has fought her way through the difficulties of high school and its many challenges to find the one place she feels at home and accepted by her peers."

Theatre, Anna said, provided her daughter with a place where she truly flourished, despite three years of Knitowski's devotion to MCJROTC.

"When she took up theatre and fashion it was wonderful to see her grow and blossom. It is here she gained the respect of both teachers and students," Anna added. "I think staying after school for theatre, and not MCJROTC, has helped Carissa's self esteem grow. It was hard when she was having surgeries and doctor visits three times a week at Texas Children's Hospital, but she made it work."

It wasn't easy, but Knitowski said she has been able to overcome obstacles by concentrating on what matters.

"I changed my focus onto what I like doing instead of what I thought I had to do," Knitowski said.

"This doesn't mean I stopped caring about my grades," said Knitowski, who is a member of the National Honor Society, National English Honor Society, National Spanish Honor Society and National Beta Club. "It just means that I allow myself more time for things I love doing. I used to spend all my time stressing about my classes, but I recently realized that my mental health is just as important as my grades."

So she advises other girls who may be unknowingly experiencing endometriosis to "trust themselves" and address their concerns.

"It is estimated that 10 percent of women worldwide have the condition and it is probably the most common illness people have never heard of," she notes.

"It's not just a period and the answer is not just to suck it up and take some Advil," Knitowski said. "If you suspect you have endometriosis, go see your doctor because it will only get worse without treatment. Don't let anyone make you feel like your pain doesn't matter or that you are being over-dramatic. You just have to search until you find a doctor that will listen."

A PLACE FOR EVERYONE, ANYONE

Although Knitowski has only been a member of the Travis theatre department for two years, she said it feels as though she has been with it longer.

“Likely because of all the long rehearsal days,” she said, teasingly. “And we are all like a family.”

And this family deserves attention for its devotion to the arts, Knitowski said.

“Students put in a lot of effort and work really hard to create amazing shows which I believe should be enjoyed by as many people as possible. We have rehearsals four days a week, with some added Saturday rehearsals, and often ones over holiday breaks,” she continued. “There are countless hours put in at home either memorizing lines, designing or building, which happen after rehearsals and on top of other class work.”

Whenever she is presented with the opportunity, Knitowski promotes the works of the theatre department.

“Our theater department allows anyone to learn whichever skill they are interested in learning. There are no lines drawn between acting and tech. If an actor wants to switch to tech for a show, they can, just like a techie can audition if they want to. All roles are open to anyone who is willing to learn and put in the effort.”

Theatre, Knitowski said, is a key to unlocking so many skills and talents that will benefit students long after they graduate.

A NEED FOR INTERPRETATION & FREE THINKING

“Theater is often overlooked because the major focus in high school is almost always on football teams. There are theme days, announcements and dances centered around football,” she said. “I am aware that these could not be directly translated to the fine arts departments, but it would be great to start seeing more support for the performances. There is a scream team for sports and I feel it would help fine arts students feel more important and cared about if there was a group of students like the scream team that went to all their performances.”

Theatre, she stressed, goes beyond acting on stage. “For actors, theater is an excellent way to learn public speaking, they must learn how to project, and speak in front of large crowds. For tech we learn how interviews work, what to bring, how to act, and how to speak under pressure.

“Although some will argue these skills are taught in the professional communications class the truth is there just isn’t time,” Knitowski said. “Theater also teaches students how to be quick on their feet and discover solutions to unexpected problems quickly without panicking.”

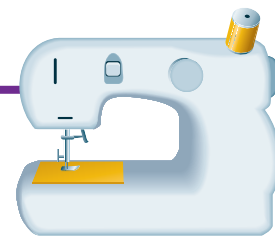
Costumes will rip. Props will break. Lines will be forgotten. But show must always go on, a solution must always be found.

“Perhaps most importantly, theater provides a way for students to be creative,” Knitowski stressed. “More and more classes are becoming familiar with exact answers for every question, with no room for interpretation, and no room for free thinking. Even classes such as English have fallen victim to this.

“No longer is a poem about each individual experience reading it, but instead only means what the creator of a test says it does,” she continued. “Theater allows students to escape this constant testing environment and express their own independent thoughts. Without classes like these, students are taught that there are only one right answer to every question and will lose the ability to develop creative solutions.”

But never forget: theatre also has an element of magic, Knitowski added. It can provide respite from the world for both the audience and the actors alike.

“Theater is amazing because it can make you forget your worries and transport to another place and time,” she said. “Even if just for a few hours.”



Q&A WITH CARISSA KNITOWSKI

Carissa's sewing skills undoubtedly shine in her theatre work, but she also impresses with her cosplay projects. So the Pecan Grove Monthly asked the Travis senior why sewing is so important to her.

Pecan Grove Monthly: How did you learn to sew?

Carissa Knitowski: I first learned to sew when I was about eight years old from my mom. I became interested in designing costumes after becoming interested in cosplay. My sewing skills I have developed from simply trying new things and teaching myself. My sewing developed for refined in fashion design because, although I already knew how to sew, my stitches were now being graded. This meant that my sewing became a lot neater and my stitches much straighter. Any new skill I want to learn I will normally look up a video and keep trying until I eventually figure it out.

PGM: Why do you enjoy sewing?

CK: Because it allows me to make anything I can think of, and I just enjoy the process of making something from start to finish. Sewing is about the process and the satisfaction of being able to see something that you made. I also like sewing because it allows me to make clothing in my style which can sometimes be difficult to find. Store bought costumes have always bothered me because they are often not accurate to the characters that they are supposed to portray. Sewing allows me to make costumes that are as accurate to the characters as possible.

PGM: What have been your favorite costumes to design?

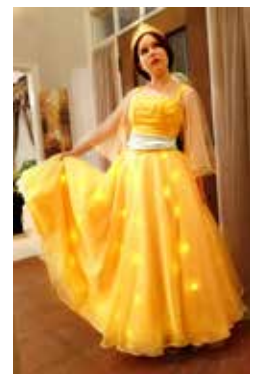
CK: My favorite costumes to design so far was the costumes for the “Triangle Factory Fire Project.” This was a historical play about the triangle shirtwaist factory fire which happened in the 1910’s era. This was fun because I love making historical costumes, however this show was also the most challenging for the same reason. We were on a tight schedule and I ended up with the task of making 14 skirts from scratch in about a week and a half. Although this was one of the most stressful shows I have done it was also my favorite to do and I am glad I can add 1910’s costumes to my portfolio.

PGM: Why do you think its important more students learn to sew?

CK: I think students should learn to sew because it is a skill that everyone should have. There have been many times where other students have been shocked when their button falls off and I know how to sew it back on. Too often I see my generation throwing clothing away because of something so simple as a missing button. I think sewing is a great way to expresses yourself and your creativity, but regardless of whether someone is interested in more complicated sewing I think everyone should know at least a few basic hand stitches.



Carissa works on her Anastasia costume.



The completed Anastasia costume.

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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.



Grant Maniér



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

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.

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) spon-

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

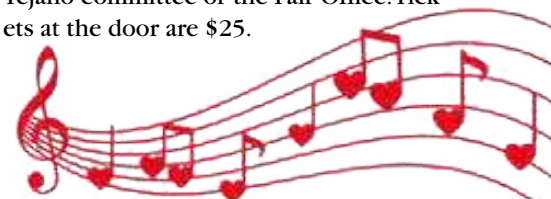
Flower Arranging

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 have provided 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



maple salmon

by STARFLOWER

Prep: 10m | Cook: 20m | Ready In: 1h

INGREDIENTS

- 1/4 cup maple syrup
- 2 tbs soy sauce
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1/4 tsp garlic salt
- 1/8 tsp ground black pepper
- 1 pound salmon

DIRECTIONS

In a small bowl, mix the maple syrup, soy sauce, garlic, garlic salt, and pepper.

Place salmon in a shallow glass baking dish, and coat with the maple syrup mixture. Cover the dish, and marinate salmon in the refrigerator 30 minutes, turning once.

Preheat oven to 400 degrees F (200 degrees C).

Place the baking dish in the preheated oven, and bake salmon uncovered 20 minutes, or until easily flaked with a fork.



pan-seared duck breast with blueberry sauce

INGREDIENTS

- 2 tsp salt
- 1 tsp fresh-ground black pepper
- 1 1/2 tbs dried thyme leaves
- 1 tbs crushed dried rosemary
- 3 tbs olive oil
- 4 potatoes, cubed
- 2 pints fresh or frozen blueberries
- 1/2 cup water
- 1/2 cup apple juice
- 1/2 cup white sugar
- 1 jalapeno pepper, finely chopped
- 3 slices pancetta or bacon, cut into thin strips
- 6 shallots, thinly sliced
- 1/2 cup sliced shiitake mushrooms
- 2 pounds bok choy, sliced
- 4 (8 ounce) boneless duck breast halves
- 2 tbs vegetable oil
- 1 tbs butter
- 2 tbs aged balsamic vinegar

DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 375 degrees F (190 degrees C). In a small bowl mix together the salt, ground black pepper, thyme, and rosemary; set aside. This will be your spice blend for seasoning the roasted potatoes and the duck breasts.

Place cubed potatoes into a 9x13 inch baking dish. Drizzle with olive oil and sprinkle 2 tablespoons of your spice blend over the top of the potatoes. Toss the potatoes in the pan until they are evenly coated with oil and seasonings. Spread into a single layer across the bottom of the baking dish and bake for 35 to 40 minutes in the preheated oven.

While the potatoes are roasting, stir together the blueberries, water, apple juice, sugar, and jalapeno in a small saucepan. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat, then reduce heat to low, and simmer until the mixture has reduced to the consistency of syrup, about 10 minutes.

Cook the pancetta in a large skillet over medium heat until crispy. Remove the pancetta to drain on a paper towel, leaving the drippings in the skillet. Add the shallots and the mushrooms to the hot skillet; stir and cook them until soft and just beginning to brown. Remove the shallots and mushrooms and set aside. Increase heat to medium-high and place the bok choy in the hot skillet. Stir and cook the bok choy until the leaves are wilted and the white stalk pieces are tender, about 5 minutes. Return the shallots, mushrooms, and pancetta to the skillet, turn off the heat and set aside.

Rinse the duck breast halves and pat dry. Rub the remaining spice blend onto both sides of the duck breasts. Preheat a large skillet over medium-high heat, when the pan is hot put in the vegetable oil and butter. Immediately place the duck breasts in the pan, skin and fat side down. Do not move the duck breasts until the skin is deep brown, about 5 minutes. Turn the breasts and cook until the internal temperature of the thickest part is 160 degrees F (71 degrees C) for well done. Remove the duck from the pan and place on a plate, covered with foil to rest for 5 minutes. While the duck is resting, place the skillet with the bok choy mixture onto a burner over medium heat to warm through.

Slice each duck breast diagonally into 1/2 inch strips. Divide the bok choy mixture among four plates and drizzle each serving with 1/2 tablespoon of aged balsamic vinegar. Arrange the sliced duck breasts on top of the bok choy mixture; ladle on blueberry sauce. Serve with oven-roasted potatoes on the side.

Simple Sweets & Valentine's Treats

chocolate-dipped sesame tutes

Makes about 48 cookies



INGREDIENTS

- 1/2 cup plus 1 tbs sesame seeds, preferably unhulled
- 1/3 cup granulated cane sugar
- 1/3 cup unbleached all-purpose flour
- 1/8 tbs kosher salt
- 2 extra-large egg whites, at room temperature
- 3 tbs unsalted butter with 82% butterfat, very soft
- 8 oz tempered 70% chocolate for coating cookies
- Flavorless vegetable oil for the pans

DIRECTIONS

Preheat the oven to 350 F. Line the bottoms of four 12-by-18-inch sheet pans with parchment paper. Lightly coat the paper with flavorless vegetable oil. Put a rolling pin on a work surface. If you have two rolling pins, ready both.

Combine the sesame seeds, flour, sugar, and salt in a medium bowl and whisk by hand until combined. Mix — don't beat — the egg whites into the sesame seed mixture with a rubber spatula. Stir in the butter with the spatula until no streaks of butter remain.

Measure 2 level teaspoons batter onto a prepared sheet pan. Using a small offset spatula, spread it into a round about 3 1/2 inches in diameter. Repeat with the remaining batter, putting 8 rounds on each pan and leaving 1 1/2 inches between the rounds.

Bake the trays, one at a time, until the cookies are a uniform golden brown, 6 to 8 minutes. Remove from the oven and, while the cookies are still warm, run the offset spatula under each cookie and place it upside down on the rolling pin so that it curls around the pin. (You should be able to do 5 cookies on a rolling pin, so by the time the sixth cookie is about to be draped over the pin, a few should be ready to be moved. Ideally, though, you will have two rolling pins.) If some of the cookies are not a uniform color, or if some cool too much and are no longer pliable, return them to the oven for another minute until evenly golden brown and again pliable.

Leave the cookies on the rolling pin until they cool completely and have become brittle, a matter of seconds. Carefully lift them off and store them in an airtight container at room temperature until you are ready to dip them. They will keep well for up to 3 days.

DIPPING THE COOKIES IN CHOCOLATE:

You can store the cookies and dip them on a day when you have tempered chocolate for another use. Or you can temper chocolate specifically to finish the cookies. Use a tempering machine to temper the chocolate.

Dip the convex (smooth) side of each cookie into chocolate and then smooth the chocolate with a small offset spatula. Place on a work surface, chocolate side up, and let sit until the chocolate sets, about 30 minutes.

Store in an airtight container in a cool place, not in the refrigerator. They will keep for up to one week.

Romantic Drinks

sweet seduction

by J. KUNKEL

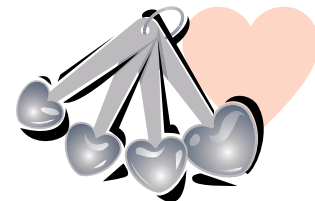


INGREDIENTS

- 1 fluid ounce Malibu rum
- 1 fluid ounce banana liqueur
- 1/2 cup pineapple juice
- ice cubes
- 1 tbs grenadine

DIRECTIONS

Measure the rum, banana liqueur and pineapple juice into a cocktail shaker. Add a generous scoop of ice. Cover and shake until the outside is frosty, about 30 seconds. Strain into a glass filled with ice and gently pour the grenadine on top. It should float.



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 Flathouse 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."

Flathouse'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.



With his hand on the Bible, KP George took the oath of office as the first Democrat county judge in Fort Bend County in 24 years. He is also the first American of Indian descent to win a countywide office in Fort Bend County. At left, District Court Judge Brenda Mullinix reads the oath of office to George while his wife Sheeba holds the Bible.



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George said he has already begun talking to the different 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.”



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

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Design and care for succulent container gardens

by **SHERYL FAIRCHILD**



The Pecan Grove Women's Club will meet Tuesday, Feb. 12, at the Pecan Grove Plantation Country Club.

We welcome you to join us at 9:30 a.m. for coffee and visiting. The program will follow after our 10 a.m. business meeting. Our program speaker will be Lisa Hadden, owner of Simply Contained, and she will be demonstrating how to design with and care for succulent container gardens. As an avid container gardener, Lisa has built a business creating custom succulent arrangements for both indoors and outdoors.

Are you fascinated by succulents but haven't had the best of luck keeping them alive? Or maybe you're an avid gardener looking for a new project? Please join us for this very fun and informative meeting.

Join us for lunch by contacting Kay McNinch at 281-238-4002 or kkmcninch@yahoo.com, or Linda Saad at 281-342-8575 or lindasaad@gmail.com to make reservations. Reservations need to be made by Friday, Feb. 8. The program is free and the cost for lunch is \$15.

Please note: A country club membership is not necessary to visit or join the Women's Club. We welcome all women in the Pecan Grove area who enjoy laughter, conversation and who want to become further involved in their community.

Get income-tax-preparation assistance at the George Memorial Library

The George Memorial Library will offer the same service Mondays, Thursdays, Saturdays, Feb. 2 through April 15 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

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.

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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' 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 www.fbwc.org or @ftbendwomensctr on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. For more information about the Rebuild Texas Fund visit www.rebuildtx.org. Visit kaboom.org to learn more about the KaBOOM! effort.



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

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From left, Fort Bend Women's Center Development Coordinator Stephanie Hoffman, Fort Bend Women's Center Chief Development Officer Leslie Wendland, and Fort Bend Women's Center CEO Vita Goodell.



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Friends of North Richmond seeks volunteers

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 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.

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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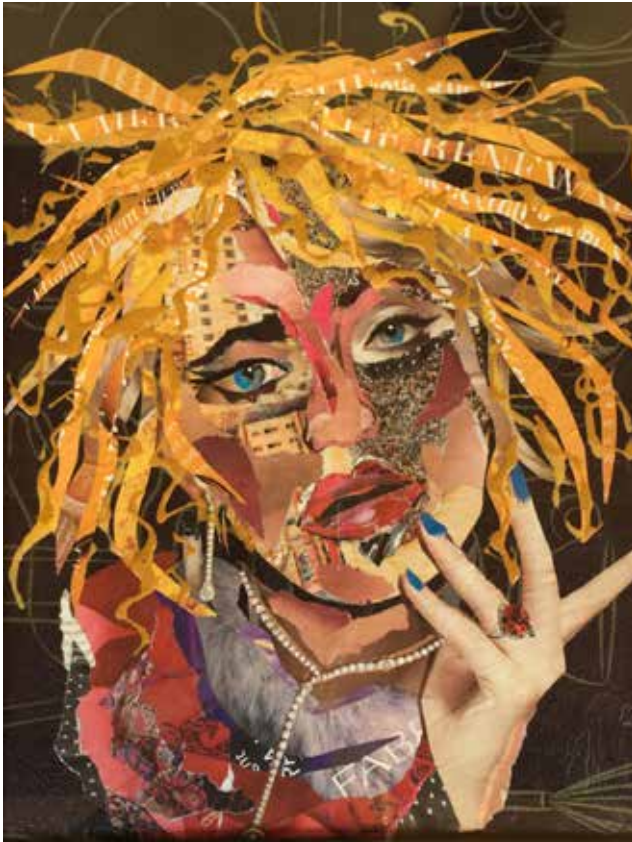
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'Art I Become' exhibit showcases family's talent



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."



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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 artistic 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



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

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.

Dozens flock to first-ever bobwhite quail workshop

Story & Photo 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.



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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, bullsnakes, coachwhips, raccoons, opossums, striped skunks, ground squirrels, cotton rats, mice and parasites.

"This is not the complete list of species that enjoy eating bobwhite 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.



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.

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Leung mentioned several ways to preserve the bobwhite quail community.

“Let’s begin with education, cooperation and restoration,” she said.

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.

Seabourne Park announces monthly bird hike

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.



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

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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.



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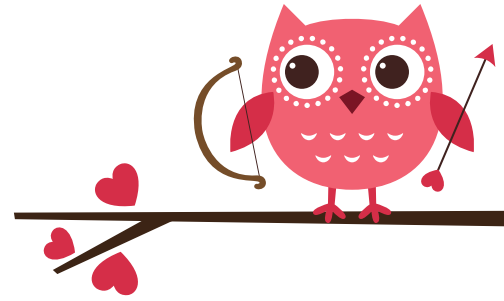
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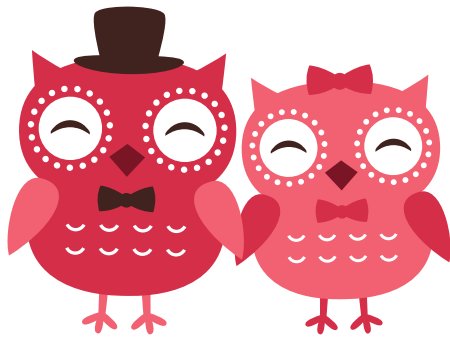
February



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.

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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 even will be held from noon to 4 p.m. Feb. 9 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.

HEAVY INKS GRAPHIC NOVEL BOOK CLUB

Feb. 16 at 11 a.m. in room 2B of the George Memorial Library, readers of all ages who enjoy illustrated novels and comic books are invited to join this book club specifically for graphic-novel enthusiasts. The book to be discussed is American Born Chinese by Gene Luen Yang.

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.

STORY SPINNERS WRITING CLUB

The George Memorial Library's Story Spinners Writing Club will meet Feb. 21 from 5:30 - 8 p.m. in room 2C. This month's topic will be "Viewpoints." 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.

BOOK BREAK

On Feb. 21, at noon in room 2A of the George Memorial Library, the book to be discussed is "Dear Life: Stories," written by Alice Munro. Readers are encouraged to bring their favorite book for discussion. Those attending may bring a lunch.

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 fbctx.org.



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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

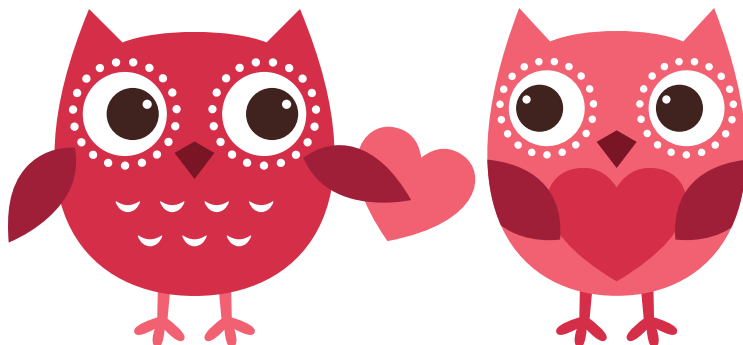
John Rebeles, Jr., will talk about credit scores. Learn how credit history can affect one's credit score, and discover ways to repair one's credit and improve a credit score at 7 p.m. in the Room 2A of the George Memorial Library.

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.





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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.



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 2018 scholarship recipient, Justin Bronsell, is off to a great start for his first semester at Blinn College.

Bronsell is thankful for the Fair scholarship.

“It is a real relief to help financially. College can be overwhelming, but I know I can concentrate on my classes and continue to work towards my dream of owning my own fabrication shop.”

Bronsell is working towards a welding technology degree and passed all his first semester classes.

The proceeds from the 2018 Fort Bend County Fair and the Fort Bend County Fair Life Membership Fund provide the necessary monies to allocate the scholarships.

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

Eligible candidates are required to submit their completed scholarship application by the February deadline.

Applicants, parents, and school counselors are urged to review the guidelines and rules carefully.

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.

“Get your applications in; this is an extraordinary opportunity for all High School Seniors. Last year we had the largest number of applicants and we are proud to be able to give back through our scholarship program,” said Cindy Schmidt, Fort Bend County Fair manager.

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 on the 2019 scholarship rules and application, visit the Fair’s website: fortbendcountyfair.com or call the fair office at 281-342-6171.

LOOKING FOR YOUNG ADULT PROGRAMS FOR YOUR TEENS?

The George Memorial Library will host the following programs for teenagers in grades 9 through 12:

YOUNG ADULT BOOK CLUB:

On Feb. 13 at 5 p.m. in room 2B, teen readers in grades 9-12 will have an opportunity to meet with others who share the same love for good books, and have a lively discussion on the reasons a book or its characters were liked or disliked. This month, readers will talk about *The Wrath and the Dawn*, written by Renée Ahdieh.

YOUNG ADULT ADVISORY COUNCIL:

On Feb. 20 at 5 p.m. in room 2B teens who are interested in an exciting new leadership opportunity and volunteer-service hours are invited to attend this meeting of the Young Adult Advisory Council. 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.



~FUN TIMES FOR THE LITTLE ONES~

The George Memorial Library will host the following children's programs:

TODDLER TIME:

Offers caregiver/child activities, stories and songs for older babies, from 12 to 36 months of age. Thursdays at 10 a.m.

STORY TIME:

Presents stories, movies and age-appropriate craft activities for children 3 to 6 years of age. Wednesdays at 10 a.m.

PAJAMA NIGHT STORY TIME:

Gives families an evening option for some activities presented during the day time. Thursdays at 6:30 p.m. in the meeting room.

FAMILY STORY TIME:

Families with children of all ages are invited to come and enjoy stories, movies, and crafts together. Saturdays at 10 a.m.

AFTER-SCHOOL BREAK:

Crafts, movies, stories and more for school-aged children in grades kindergarten through 3 grade. The program on Jan. 17 will be "Painting on Foam Board." Learn about making a catapult. Third Thursday at 4 p.m. in the meeting room.

THE CREATIVE CONNECTION:

Activities specially designed for kids in grades 4 through 8 are planned for the second and fourth Wednesday of every month, at 6 p.m., in the Middle Grades department on the second floor. The schedule of activities is as follows: Feb. 13, Loony Toons and Feb. 27, Mario Brothers.

MIDDLE SCHOOL PROGRAM:

Activities for youth in grades 6 and up. The schedule of activities is as follows: Feb. 4, Homemade Valentines and Feb. 18, Crafts & Snacks.

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1 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.

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 Anhaizer.

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 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.

5 Lamar Consolidated High School junior Dorrian Harris, No. 23, and senior Roman Punch, No. 25, attempt to block a shot by Foster High School senior Kel-echi Okpara during the district opener.

6 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.

7 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.



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If you'd like to see your photo in the next edition, email them to us! All we require is that the everyone in the photo be identified, by first and last name, left to right, and that you include a short description about what is happening in the photo. The photos can spotlight community events, efforts or just happy smiling faces. Send photos to Marquita Griffin at mgriffin@fbherald.com with "Monthly Photos" in the subject line.

1 Breaking ground on the county's medical examiner facility are, from left, Stantec Project Architect, Doug Joder; Justice of the Peace, Pct. 1, Place 1, Gary Janssen; Commissioner Precinct Four, James Patterson; Fort Bend County Judge Bob Hebert; Commissioner Precinct 1 Vincent Morales; Fort Bend County Facilities Director, James Knight; Crain Group President Brad Crain; Crain Group Vice President John Green.

2 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.

3 Twenty students recently earned their Associate of Applied Science Degree in Nursing from Wharton County Junior College. Front row, left to right, are Miranda Molina of Fresno, Hanna Balcazar of Sugar Land, Karen Erevia of Deer Park, Shannon Biles of Sugar Land, Samreen Haris of Sugar Land, Lauren Hodges of Needville and Kirsten Thomas of Houston. Middle row, left to right, are Jacqueline Williams of Houston, Vanessa Rodriguez of Lake Jackson, Claire

Carter of Bay City, Serena Shelby of Richmond, Claudia Rion of Sugar Land and Rebecca Rios of Richmond. Back row, left to right, are Lauren Mills of Palacios, Michael Valencia of Sugar Land, Skylar Mitchell of Blessing, Mark Montalvo of Rosenberg, Sarah McCoy of Sugar Land, LaTasha Smith of Fresno and Ian Evans of Houston.

4 Sugar Land Mayor Joe Zimmerman presents a plaque of appreciation to outgoing Fort Bend County Commissioner James Patterson during a recent commissioners court meeting. Zimmerman thanked Patterson for his service to the city of Sugar Land and Fort Bend County during his 20-year tenure with the county. Patterson lost his re-election bid in November. He was first sworn in as Precinct 4 commissioner on Jan. 1, 1999.

5 Photo by Tyler Johnson | Rosenberg Fire Department retiree Danny Johnson and his wife Nanette enjoy chicken fried steak, green beans and mashed potatoes, which was provided by Ben's Chuckwagon of Wallis.

6 Isabella Estes shows off a lunch bag she decorated for Lunches of Love.



1 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.

2 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.

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

4 Dr. Craig Cryer of OakBend Medical Center educated the Rotary Club of Richmond on the wide range of physical therapy technology available in today’s world.

5 Veteran Frank Cempa, left, and Ken Dillon, commander of VFW Post 3903 in Rosenberg, fold a rare 48-star American flag at the VFW Hall in

Rosenberg last moth for Richmond resident Justine Huselton. The flag, which flew before Hawaii and Alaska joined the Union, covered the casket of Huselton’s uncle, Johnnie L. Marz Jr., who was killed while serving in the Army in Italy on Oct. 1, 1944.

6 Bunky Ward of Richmond holds an oak shadow box for the 48-star American flag that covered the casket of Johnny L. Marz Jr. of DeRidder, La. Marz was killed on Oct.1,1944, at the age of 21 while serving with the U.S. Army in Italy during WWII. His niece, Justine Huselton of Richmond, left, took the flag to VFW Post 3903 in Rosenberg to have it folded properly.

7 While at the animal shelter adoption event at Rosenberg police substation at Brazos Town Center, patrol officer Rivera and Assistant Police Chief Garrett Netherly noticed Anice Divin struggling to get a large box to her car. They sprang into action and got it loaded for her.

8 Marlayna Shaw, a paraprofessional at Terry High School, dressed as Whataburger during Halloween. In return, Whataburger thanked her with a basket of goodies.

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 any-

where 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 Oak-Bend 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."



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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 emotional 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.

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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