

DECEMBER 2019

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monthly

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sisters can't  
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in this cool musical



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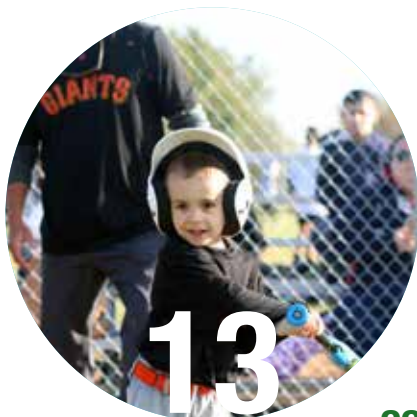
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monthly™

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Inspiration Stage is offering special holiday appearances by the "Frozen JR" cast on Dec. 6 at The Sugar Land Tree Lighting ceremony; Dec. 7 at Miracle on Morton Street in downtown Richmond; and Dec. 7 at The Sweet Jamboree at the Sugar Land Heritage Museum.



Courtesy of Sarah Patterson | Gabby Champion, 15 years old, as Elsa in a former performance of "Frozen JR"

# A great show

Director: Frozen JR returns with an 'extraordinary, incredible cast'

by MARQUITA GRIFFIN & ALISHA MCMILLEN

**T**en shows. Two weekends. And a performance perfect for the holiday season — Inspiration Stage's production of Disney's "Frozen JR."

"I am thrilled to be directing Disney's Frozen JR at Inspiration Stage this December," said Sarah Patterson, the show's director and music director. "This brilliant adaptation combines the best of the iconic Disney movie and Broadway show into a delightful, all-ages friendly, 70-minute stage production."

The show runs Dec. 6 through Dec. 15 at the historic Sugar Land Auditorium, 226 Lakeview Drive in Sugar Land.

Disney's "Frozen JR," based on the 2018 Broadway musical, brings Elsa, Anna and the magical land of Arendelle to life onstage. The show features all of the memorable songs from the animated film, with music and lyrics by Kristen Anderson-Lopez and Robert Lopez, plus five new songs written for the Broadway production.

"The show brings the fictional kingdom of Arendelle to life with your favorite characters: Elsa, Anna, Olaf, Kristoff and more," said

Patterson excitedly. "As music director for the show, I'm excited to lead the challenge of presenting well-known numbers like, 'For the First Time in Forever,' 'Love Is an Open Door,' 'In Summer,' 'Fixer Upper,' and, of course, 'Let It Go,' with new musical arrangements to our audiences.

***"Our young actors are extraordinarily talented and bring fresh energy to familiar material."***

The main roles of Anna, Elsa, Kristoff, Olaf and Hans have been double-cast in this group of 61 local youth. The McMurtrey sisters from Long Meadow Farms are two cast members eagerly awaiting the production's opening. Both McMurtrey sisters are members of the show's ensemble.

"It's a great show, with a lot of singing and dancing and that's what I love to do," said Kate, a third grader at Aristoi Classical Academy.

"I love to make new friends and that's what I get to do when I do a lot of shows," she added. "We have a great cast, and we sound really

good when we sing, and there are some great dance moves.”

A story of true love and acceptance between sisters, Disney’s “Frozen JR” expands upon the emotional relationship and journey between Princesses Anna and Elsa. When faced with danger, the two discover their hidden potential and the powerful bond of sisterhood.

“Since being in the JTF West Frozen Showcase in Sacramento in February, I have admired this show, and I can’t wait to perform it on stage again,” said Kate’s older sister Collette, who is an eighth grader at Aristoi Classical Academy. “I got to see ‘Frozen’ on Broadway last winter, and it was amazing.

**“I am just really excited to see how we are going to do the show on our stage.”**

“People should come to see ‘Frozen’ to not only hear the amazing music, but also to see the incredible cast,” Collette said. “People will love to see how much effort is put in and how much passion the kids have for theatre, which really drives their creativity.”

### COMING SOON: INTO THE WOODS, JR.

Following its “Frozen JR” production, Inspiration Stage will open the new year with “Into the Woods, JR” Jan. 3 through Jan. 5, 2020 at the Sugar Land Auditorium.

The story follows a Baker and his wife, who wish to have a child; Cinderella, who wishes to attend the King’s Festival; and Jack, who wishes his cow would give milk. When the Baker and his wife learn that they cannot have a child because of a Witch’s curse, the two set off on a journey to break the curse. Everyone’s wish is granted, but the consequences of their actions return to haunt them later with disastrous results.

“Into the Woods, JR” is a rare modern classic created by James Lapine and Stephen Sondheim who took popular storybook characters and brought them together.

“People will see some of their favorite storybook characters come to life and see a story about how characters journey and adventure in search of their dreams and to have their wishes come true,” said Fieldstone resident Alexandria Gomez, 13, a homeschooled seventh grader. “The lesson for me is to never stop wishing and following my dreams even if my journey into the woods of life is full of obstacles. I need to just keep dreaming and working hard and things will work out in the end.”

With a cast of 44 local youth, ages 10-18, “Into the Woods JR” runs four shows over the weekend of Jan. 3, 2020. Showtimes are Friday, Jan 3, 7:30 p.m.; Saturday, Jan 4, 3:30 p.m. and 7:30 p.m.; and Sunday, Jan. 5 3:30 p.m. Visit [inspirationstage.com/shows/into-the-woods-jr/](http://inspirationstage.com/shows/into-the-woods-jr/) for more information.

Inspiration Stage will take an abbreviated version of Into the Woods JR to Sacramento for adjudication at the Junior Theatre Festival West, Feb. 7 - 9.

The production staff includes: Mandy Seymore-Sensat, Inspiration Stage artistic director, and the show’s director/co-choreographer; Sarah Patterson, music director; Annelea Bootle, co-choreographer; Brianna Escobedo, stage manager; and Courtney Sackett, assistant stage manager.

“I’m so excited for my friends and family to get to see this show,” Gomez said. “It’s fantastic!”

Courtesy of JW Barker Photography | Inspiration Stage performs “Hygge” at the 2019 Junior Theatre Festival in Sacramento, California.



Collette’s McMurtrey, 14, will perform in her 12th iStage production.



Kate McMurtrey, 8, will perform in her ninth iStage production.



Courtesy of JW Barker Photography | Inspiration Stage performs “Let It Go” at the 2019 Junior Theatre Festival in Sacramento, California.



Alexandria Gomez, 13, will perform in her 12th iStage production.

#### ‘FROZEN JR’ DETAILS

##### Showtimes:

- Friday, Dec. 6, 7:30 p.m.
- Saturday, Dec. 7, 3:30 p.m. and 7:30 p.m.
- Sunday, Dec. 8, 3:30 p.m.
- Thursday, Dec. 12, 7 p.m.
- Friday, Dec. 13, 7:30 p.m.
- Saturday, Dec. 14, 11:30 a.m., 3:30 p.m. and 7:30 p.m.
- Sunday, Dec. 15, 3:30 p.m.

##### Production Team:

- Sarah Patterson — director / music director
- Mandy Seymore-Sensat — artistic director/co-choreographer;
- Annelea Bootle — co-choreographer
- Diamond Morgan — stage manager
- Lily Delahoussaye — student assistant stage manager
- Reese McGrenera — student assistant director
- and Madison Willett — dance captain

For more information visit [inspirationstage.com/shows/disneys-frozen-jr](http://inspirationstage.com/shows/disneys-frozen-jr)

# Holiday Happenings

## A home tour, miracle and festival of lights Christmas celebration are abound in Fort Bend and beyond

Since August the Child Advocates of Fort Bend's Christmas Home Tour committee was devotedly preparing for its 28th annual Christmas Home Tour happening this month for a simple, but important, reason — because the children need them to.

For the past 28 years, Child Advocates of Fort Bend, a nonprofit agency that advocates for and provides services to abused and neglected children in the county, has acted on its mission to end the cycle of child abuse by providing its Court Appointed Special Advocates Program, Children's Advocacy Center and more than 200 trained community volunteer advocates to children in need.

Since its opening, Child Advocates has served more than 16,500 children.

The agency's home tour event started 28 years ago as a means to raise money to keep the agency's doors open and has since become a Fort Bend County holiday tradition.

"A group of volunteers, many of whom are still involved, opened their homes, decorated them for Christmas, baked some cookies and charged admission in an effort to keep Child Advocates of Fort Bend's doors open," said Lisa Moore, Child Advocates of Fort Bend Development Officer and event chair. "Thanks to those generous ladies and many others who have participated through the years, this event not only kept the doors open, but it has allowed the agency to increase its programming and staff in order to meet the needs of the Fort Bend community."

Since its inception, the Christmas Home Tour has raised more than \$4 million. This year's tour will take place Dec. 13 and 14.

Over the two days of this event, more than 2,000 guests will tour private Fort Bend County homes all decked out for Christmas. The homeowners included in the tour are from Alkire Lake, Sienna Plantation, Sugar Creek and Sweetwater.

"Homeowners are so special to us," Moore said. "We wouldn't have a tour without them. Each year we are able to showcase an assortment of neighborhoods, displaying the variety of Fort Bend County. We try to find a new twist each year to keep the tour fresh. This year, nearly all of the homes are completed renovated."

One ticket allows entry to all homes during tour hours. The Tour runs Dec. 13 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. with a candlelight showing from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. and Dec. 14 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

More than 1,000 volunteers will help as hosts and hostesses in the homes, serving as entertainers or by baking cookies. While the Home Tour is a spirited community event, it is foremost a fundraiser, with 94 percent of all of the money raised going directly to programs and services that benefit the children served by Child Advocates of Fort Bend.

In 2018, the agency served 2,586 children and families, which was 23 percent higher than the prior year due to a huge increase in reports of child abuse. Nationally, one in four girls and one in six boys will be sexually abused by the age of 18 and it is estimated that only 1 in 10 ever tells anyone.

"By sponsoring or participating in the Home Tour, you can help



Shown with the door swags that she donated for the 6th Annual Wreath raffle is Lin Wooten. From left are Irene Wisner, Wooten and Lisa Moore. Participants in the wreath raffle can choose the wreath that they hope to win.

us ensure that all child victims of abuse get the therapy and healing services they desperately need," said CEO Ruthanne Mefford.

Sponsorships of \$100 - \$10,000 are available. To become a sponsor or for more information, contact Lisa at [lmoore@cafb.org](mailto:lmoore@cafb.org).

For more information about Child Advocates of Fort Bend visit [www.cafb.org](http://www.cafb.org).

## —MORE HOLIDAY EVENTS TO ENJOY—

### Miracle on Morton Street

The Historic Richmond Association is inviting the public to its 17th Annual Miracle on Morton Street. Taking place Saturday, Dec. 7 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. in downtown Richmond, the event will feature family-friendly activities throughout the day. There will be live entertainment, shopping opportunities at unique vendors in the area and the chance to grab a bite to eat at one of the food trucks. The Gingerbread House Display and a kids' zone will be on site. Plus, the association is offering tours of historic Richmond.

The day before — Friday, Dec. 6, at 6 p.m. — the association's Tree Lighting ceremony will take place at City Hall Park and Morton Street. Following the lighting, the public is encouraged to join the community Christmas Walk, complete with caroling, a Gingerbread House contest and holiday decor tours at local businesses until 8 p.m. For more information visit [HistoricRichmond.org](http://HistoricRichmond.org).

### Rosenberg Christmas Nights

Through partnerships with the Rosenberg Main Street Program and the Rosenberg Cultural District the city of Rosenberg will hold its Rosenberg Christmas Nights Dec. 6 and Dec. 7.

The holiday celebration is a weekend of nightly activities to enhance the magic of the season. Set against a backdrop of spectacular holiday lights, the city invites the public to explore downtown Rosenberg's eclectic shops, cultural exhibits and restaurants during the special season, and throughout the year. The public will also get the chance to view the works of the Deck the Downtown decorating contest. There will be 20 life-size wooden trees decorated by local artists on display in the downtown area.

Additionally, on Dec. 6 of Rosenberg Christmas Nights, the Dinner Under the Stars event will commence at 6 p.m.. Cast Theatrical Co. will provided the performance and Ol' Railroad Cafe, Old Main Street Bakery and Bob's Taco Station will cater the meals. Tickets to the performance are \$50, with limited seating.

For more information visit [rosenbergtx.gov](http://rosenbergtx.gov)



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### Festival of Lights

The City of Fulshear and the Fulshear Katy Area Chamber of Commerce will be co-hosting the annual "Fulshear Festival of Lights" on Dec. 7 at Fulshear High School from 6 p.m. - 9 p.m. The location has been changed from prior years due to the construction in the downtown area and other mobility issues.

The event, which is free and open to the public, will feature Santa Claus, vendors and live music from the band, Nick and the Groove.

The Festival of Lights Parade will begin at 6 p.m., traveling south on Charger Way, and Santa will arrive during the parade. Festival patrons can meet Santa afterwards.

The YMCA is sponsoring and featuring a large children's area, plus event will also feature vendors — crafts, clothing and jewelry — food trucks and a short Christmas themed fireworks presentation during the evening.

For more information visit [www.FulshearKaty.com](http://www.FulshearKaty.com).

### Project Noel

For more than 40 years, the Richmond State Supported Living Center has been delighting visitors of all ages with Project Noel, a collection of holiday displays featuring favorites from Santa Claus to Rudolph. These celebratory lighted displays again can be viewed starting Dec. 6, through Jan. 6, 2020.

Children who first saw the project blossom in the early 1970s now bring their children and grandchildren to see the more than 40 holiday scenes that adorn the 241-acre SSLC campus, which is located at 2100 Preston in Richmond. This festive family outing is free and will be open daily from 6 to 9 p.m.

Santa and his elves will visit this event the first two weekends in December. Give Santa your wish list and have a picture made to remember the wonderful evening. Printed pictures will be available for \$5 each - or you can bring your own camera.

### Sugar Land Holiday Lights

The sixth annual Sugar Land Holiday Lights returns to Constellation Field through Jan. 5, 2020. This sparkling wonderland features more than three million lights, a carnival and numerous themed displays throughout the ballpark. You can also get some holiday shopping done with a variety of vendors, enjoy great food, and even meet Santa Claus himself.

The hours are: Sunday through Thursday: 6 - 9 p.m.; Friday through Saturday: 6 - 10 p.m.; and on Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, New Years Eve, New Years Day: 6 - 10 p.m. It will be closed Dec. 2.

Tickets available online and at the TDECU Ticket Office at Constellation Field. Ticket discounts available for kids, military (active & retired)

and seniors. All tickets are general admission and prices vary by night.

Carnival admission is not included with ticket purchase. Full schedule and ticket prices available at [SugarLandHolidayLights.com](http://SugarLandHolidayLights.com)

### Christmas Tree Lighting 2019

Sugar Land Parks and Recreation will host its tree lighting Dec. 6 from 5 - 8 p.m. at Sugar Land Town Square Plaza. Families are invited to enjoy some of the community's most popular musical performances and theatrical acts at this magical holiday celebration. The evening includes: holiday crafts and activities; face painting; performances by local artists and choirs; photos with Santa; and food and beverages will be available for purchase. The event is free and open to the public. [www.sugarlandtx.gov/918/Christmas-Tree-Lighting](http://www.sugarlandtx.gov/918/Christmas-Tree-Lighting).

### Campfire Christmas

The Fort Bend History Association and George Ranch Historical Park will host the annual Campfire Christmas at the George Ranch Historical Park in Richmond Dec. 14 and 21 from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m., with the last entry at 8 p.m.

Journey back in time to experience Christmas celebrations of the 1830s through the 1930s. This family-friendly holiday evening tour culminates with cowboy songs, stories and hot cocoa around the campfire.

Unlike previous Campfire Christmas events, this year's format will feature holiday tours at each of the main historic sites: celebrate a simple pioneer Christmas with the Jones family in their 1830s log cabin; visit the 1860s Ryon Prairie Home to discover what Christmastime was like after Civil War; tour the 1890s Davis Victorian Mansion and enjoy its resplendent turn-of-the-century holiday trimmings; tour the George Ranch Home to see family heirloom ornaments and decorations from the 1930s and 1940s; and don't forget to join the George Ranch cowboys and cowgirls for songs, stories and hot cocoa around a roaring fire.

A tram will be circling the Park at regular intervals so you can hop on and hop off to visit each site at your own pace.

If you've been to Campfire Christmas before, you may notice a few things that are different this year. Based on visitor feedback, the park was opened to include all four of the major historic sites and lowered ticket prices to accommodate a wider range of family budgets. Unlike previous Campfire Christmases, there is no formal dinner aspect, so guests can arrive on their own schedule and tour the park via the hop on/hop off tram.

*View our calendar for more holiday themed events!*

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# So Sweet Holiday Treats

## THE SPICY APPLE CAKE

Prep: 25 m  
Cook: 45 min  
Ready In: 1h 10m

### INGREDIENTS

- 1/2 cup shortening
- 1 cup brown sugar
- 1/4 cup white sugar
- 2 eggs
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 tsp ground cinnamon
- 1/2 tsp ground nutmeg
- 1/2 cup milk
- 2 cups apple - peeled, cored, and chopped
- 1/4 cup shortening
- 2 cups sifted confectioners' sugar
- 1/4 tsp ground cinnamon
- 1 pinch ground nutmeg
- 1/4 cup evaporated milk

### DIRECTIONS

**1** Preheat oven to 350 degrees F (175 degrees C). Grease and flour a 9 inch square pan. Sift together the flour, baking powder, baking soda, salt, cinnamon and nutmeg. Set aside.

**2** In a large bowl, cream together the shortening, brown sugar and white sugar until light and fluffy. Beat in the eggs one at a time, then stir in the vanilla. Beat in the flour mixture alternately with the milk, mixing just until incorporated. Stir in the chopped apples.

**3** Spread batter evenly in prepared pan. Bake in the preheated oven for 35 to 40 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted into the center of the cake comes out clean. Allow to cool.

**4** To make the frosting: In a medium bowl, combine 1/4 cup shortening, confectioners' sugar, cinnamon and nutmeg. Beat until light and creamy. Beat in the milk, one tablespoon at a time, until desired spreading consistency is achieved. Spread over top of cooled cake.

## THE EGGNOG CHEESECAKE

Prep: 30 m  
Cook: 55 m  
Ready In: 1 h 25 m

### INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup graham cracker crumbs
- 2 tablespoons white sugar
- 3 tablespoons melted butter
- 3 (8 ounce) packages cream cheese, softened
- 1 cup white sugar
- 3 tbs all-purpose flour
- 3/4 cup eggnog
- 2 eggs
- 2 tablespoons rum
- 1 pinch ground nutmeg

### DIRECTIONS

**1** Preheat oven to 325 degrees F (165 degrees C).

**2** In a medium bowl combine graham cracker crumbs, 2 tablespoons sugar and butter. Press into the bottom of a 9 inch spring form pan.

**3** Bake in preheated oven for 10 minutes. Place on a wire rack to cool.

**4** Preheat oven to 425 degrees F (220 degrees C).

**5** In a food processor combine cream cheese, 1 cup sugar, flour and eggnog; process until smooth. Blend in eggs, rum and nutmeg. Pour mixture into cooled crust.

**6** Bake in preheated oven for 10 minutes.

**7** Reduce heat to 250 and bake for 45 minutes, or until center of cake is barely firm to the touch. Remove from the oven and immediately loosen cake from rim. Let cake cool completely before removing the rim.

## THE CHOCOLATE BOURBON PECAN PIE

### INGREDIENTS

- 1 (9 inch) pie shell
- 1 cup white sugar
- 1 cup light corn syrup
- 1/2 cup butter
- 4 eggs, beaten
- 1/4 cup bourbon
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 6 ounces semisweet chocolate chips
- 1 cup chopped pecans

### DIRECTIONS

**1** Preheat oven to 325 degrees F (165 degrees F).

**2** In a small saucepan combine sugar, corn syrup, and butter or margarine. Cook over medium heat, stirring constantly, until butter or margarine melts and sugar dissolves. Cool slightly.

**3** In a large bowl combine eggs, bourbon, vanilla, and salt. Mix well. Slowly pour sugar mixture into egg mixture, whisking constantly. Stir in chocolate chips and pecans. Pour mixture into pie shell.

**4** Bake in preheated oven for 50 to 55 minutes, or until set and golden. May be served warm or chilled.

## THE RUSSIAN TEA CAKES

Prep: 20 m  
Cook: 12 m  
Ready In: 35 m

### INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup butter
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 6 tablespoons confectioners' sugar
- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 cup chopped walnuts
- 1/3 cup confectioners' sugar for decoration

### DIRECTIONS

**1** Preheat oven to 350 degrees F (175 degrees C).

**2** In a medium bowl, cream butter and vanilla until smooth. Combine the 6 tablespoons confectioners' sugar and flour; stir into the butter mixture until just blended. Mix in the chopped walnuts. Roll dough into 1 inch balls, and place them 2 inches apart on an ungreased cookie sheet.

**3** Bake for 12 minutes in the preheated oven. When cool, roll in remaining confectioners' sugar. I also like to roll mine in the sugar a second time.

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# Tips for Baking Better Christmas Cookies

Cookies are a classic holiday treat, and some families even build entire traditions around baking Christmas cookies.

Novice bakers making cookies for the first time may be a little overwhelmed when perusing recipes. Baking is a science, and sometimes it takes practice to get the results just right. However, there are some tips that can help yield better, buttery bounties.

## Handle butter with care

Butter can make or break a cookie recipe, as butter is often the glue that holds the cookie together. Therefore, it is key to follow the directions carefully regarding how to handle

butter. Smithsonian.com says to leave butter at room temperature for 30 to 60 minutes to properly soften it. This takes patience, but fiddling with butter too much can damage its delectable integrity. While purists may say butter is best, margarine may be acceptable if it has a high fat content; otherwise, cookies may spread out and flatten.

When it comes time to cream the butter with sugar, be sure to do so thoroughly to incorporate air into the butter and remove the grainy texture of the sugar.

## Measure flour properly

Measuring flour the right way can ensure

cookies come out right. The Cooking Channel says to spoon the flour lightly into a dry measuring cup, then level it off with a knife. Do not dip the measuring cup into the flour or tap the knife against the cup. This will pack too much flour into the measuring cup and result in dry, tough cookies.

## Slow down the eggs

Add eggs one at a time to make sure each will emulsify properly with the fat in the butter. Adding eggs en masse may cause the emulsification to fail.

## Chill out

Follow recipes that call for chilling cookie dough carefully. This process is important for

making sliced and shaped cookies. By chilling, the dough becomes more malleable for rolling and even slicing.

## Use a bottom rack

Too much heat may compromise cookie integrity. The food experts at Delish say to try moving cookies onto a lower rack in the oven if they aren't retaining their shape when baked. Put an empty cookie sheet on the top rack. That will block the cookies from the most intense heat that rises to the top of the oven.

# Baking Shortcuts for time-pressed Entertainers

During the holiday rush, it's easy to get side-tracked or tired, and perhaps even a little bit overwhelmed by all the things to do in such a short period of time. Holiday baking doesn't have to add to seasonal stress. With these tips and shortcuts, there will be plenty of sweet treats for the family.

## Stick with tested recipes

Although holiday bakers may want to branch out a bit with their culinary creativity, recipes that have previously been prepared with great success can take some of the work out of holiday baking. Preparing recipes you recall preparing in the past is much easier than trying something new. If you'd like, add sparkle to old standards, such as decorating oatmeal or chocolate chip cookies with colored sprinkles.

## Cookies are fast-baking

Did you know that cookies were originally made to test oven temperatures? Culinary historians say that cookies were first made to test if an oven was hot enough to bake other goods. Today, cookies can be whipped up in mere minutes. Make a batch of dough and then freeze or refrigerate it, thawing it when the time comes to bake. Also, think about baking one day and decorating the next if pressed for time.

## Embrace colored candy melts

Icing can be tricky to master. Simply heating colored candy melts and pouring over cakes or painting onto cookies can add festive appeal to desserts. Candy melts even come in many different colors and can be combined to achieve the tint desired.

## Keep ingredients in top form

Don't let poorly performing ingredients or a lack of supplies be your undoing. Butter can be softened quickly in the microwave when needed for recipes. Eggs can be brought to room temperature by allowing them to sit in a bowl of warm water. Ensure that brown sugar stays soft by putting a piece of sliced bread in the container. Don't forget to stock up on other baking staples, such as vanilla and almond extracts, baking powder/soda, molasses, and confectioner's sugar.

## Don't bake from scratch

Not all recipes need to be made from scratch. Boxed cake mixes can be embellished and turned into delicious desserts without much fuss. Substitute melted butter for oil, buttermilk for water, and add an extra egg for a rich cake. Mix in chocolate chips or nuts or experiment with garnishes for a festive look.

## Parchment paper is key

Line cookie sheets or cake pans with parchment paper for easy dessert release and quick cleanup. Parchment paper and even foil can help lift cakes or cookie bars out of pans so they look neat and do not stick.

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## Property owners review proposals to widen FM 359

Story & Photo by **SCOTT REESE WILLEY** | swilley@fbherald.com

**D**ozens of property owners attended a public meeting in October at Briscoe Junior High School to see first-hand how state transportation officials propose to widen a long portion of FM 359. TxDOT printed out large maps of three possible proposals, which it called “alternatives.”

All three plans call for the expansion of nine miles of FM 359 from Pecan Grove to Fulshear.

In an effort to plan ahead for population growth, TxDOT officials say the expansion is necessary to improve traffic flow and increase mobility along the roadway. FM 359 is a two-lane undivided road from Mason Road near Pecan Grove to FM 1093 in Fulshear and has no sidewalks.

“This area of Fort Bend County is planned for continued residential and commercial development; with the forecasted increase in development, the current two-lane road will not be able to accommodate the required capacity associated with the increase in traffic,” TxDOT said. “There are congestion and safety concerns along the corridor.”

TxDOT proposes to improve the roadway by widening FM 359 from two to four lanes with raised grassy median separating the opposing traffic.

Deidrea S. George, a public information officer for TxDOT, said the median will prevent automobile accidents resulting from drivers making inappropriate U-turns. She said each of the three plans calls for plenty of cross overs to allow drivers to make turnarounds.

The plans also call for major intersections to have right-and left-turn lanes. The proposals also call for re-aligning several curves along the roadway. Estimated construction cost is \$80 million. However, the state has yet to fund the project, George said.



A crowd of property owners attended TxDOT’s public meeting to see first-hand how the state transportation department planned to widen FM 359 between Pecan Grove and Fulshear.

October’s meeting was conducted in townhall fashion, meaning no formal presentation was offered. Members of the public were invited to review the three proposed alternatives and comment and ask questions to TxDOT staff.

Among those doing so was Joey Lenderman, owner of Enchanted Gardens, which is located along FM 359. He was interested in how TxDOT was planning to handle drainage.

Enchanted Gardens flooded during Hurricane Harvey and also when Tropical Storm Imelda hit the area in September.

Joe Carte, who lives in the Woods Edge neighborhood, wanted to discuss steps to save two historic oak trees growing along the roadway.



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The trees would have to be removed to accommodate a wider roadway. Carte said the oaks are 150 years old and used to be the front entrance of a plantation at one time.

Another business owner asked TxDOT officials if they would consider adding a bike lane to the project.

Although the state has yet to fund the project, George said TxDOT will select one of the three alternative proposals at a later date and then call for a public hearing on the plan.

## The Golden Heirs to perform at PG Women's Club meeting

by LINDA PEASLEY

The December meeting of the Pecan Grove Women's Club will be held Tuesday, Dec. 10 at the Pecan Grove Plantation Country Club.

A country club membership is not necessary to visit or join. We welcome all women who enjoy laughter and good conversation. Join us at 9:30 a.m. for coffee and visiting. The program will start at 10 a.m. Our December program will be a performance by The Golden Heirs; a community choir composed of 53 members; all seniors 55 + years. They practice weekly at Calvary Baptist Church, but represent all denominations.

Under the direction of Rhonda Krutts and Rose Collins - both retired Lamar ISD music teachers; they will perform a Christmas Concert titled "Beautiful Star." Don't miss this fabulous Christmas event and after the program; join us for lunch by contacting Kay McNinch at 281-238-4002 (kkmcninch@yahoo.com) or Linda Saad at

281-342-8575 (lindasaad@gmail.com) to make lunch reservations. The program is free and the cost for lunch is \$15 (cash only please).

## Renovated Harlem Road Park praised for its upgrades

Story & Photo by SCOTT REESE WILLEY | swilley@fbherald.com

Precinct 3 Justice of the Peace Kelly Crow remembers when her children were young and played ball at the Harlem Road Park near Pecan Grove. They battled red ants as much as they did opposing teams, and what parking existed was very little.

Since then, the park has gone from bad to worse. But no longer.

In early November, she and other elected officials and dignitaries celebrated the refurbished park with a ribbon-cutting ceremony. Now the



Lane Fojtik, 4, of Richmond, singles to first base during a game at the newly refurbished Harlem Road Park near Pecan Grove. His parents Amanda and Travis said they were pleased with the new ball fields and paved parking lots.



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park has two state-of-the-art ballfields for softball and baseball, complete with dugouts for the teams and chain-link fencing and shiny new aluminum stands for spectators.

Next to the ballfields are two soccer fields, and next to them is a brick concession stand with restrooms and a covered pavilion with six rubber coated picnic benches. The newly-refurbished park also includes plenty of paved parking.

Lamar Little League, Fort Bend Youth Football League and Juventus Academy Houston will play games at the county-owned park, located at 701 Harlem Road.

Fort Bend County Precinct 3 Commissioner Andy Meyers spearheaded the renovation project, and was on hand Saturday to accept the acclaim. Fort Bend County Judge KP George, U.S. Rep. Pete Olson, state Rep. Rick Miller and Precinct 3 Constable Wayne Thompson thanked Meyers for leading the project from start to finish and praised the project.

"I'm kind of jealous, I never had a park like this when I was growing up — a parking lot, paved, not dirt and a whole lot of fire ants, a field where ground balls keep rolling straight and don't (bounce) up when they hit a big rock and hit you in the face," Olson told the crowd of parents, coaches and players. "Congratulations. Thank you, thank you, thank you and let's play ball."

Afterward, the dignitaries each tossed out the ceremonial first pitch. Soccer teams and Little Leagues took the fields to play ball.



Fort Bend County Precinct 3 Justice of the Peace Kelly Crow is among the dignitaries throwing out the ceremonial first pitch at the grand re-opening of the Harlem Street Park near Pecan Grove.

## OutRun Hunger 5K raises \$20,000 for local charity

For the second year in a row, the OutRun Hunger 5k Family Walk/Run hosted by Harvest Green has exceeded the organizers' fundraising goal, this year raising \$20,000 for local families living in East Fort Bend County.

This is the second year the Richmond community has hosted the race, which benefits East Fort Bend Human Needs Ministry, a non-profit organization offering assistance to families and individuals during times of temporary financial crisis.

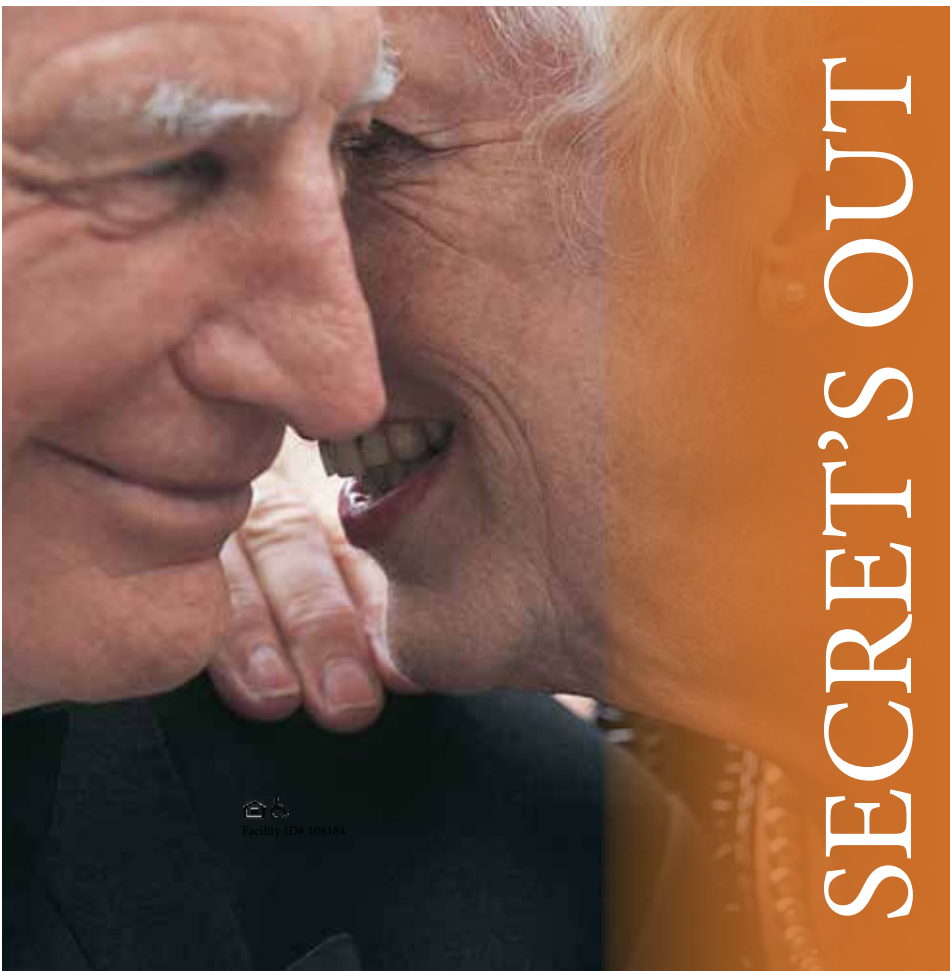
"Last year, our goal was to raise \$10,000



This year's OutRun Hunger 5k Family Walk/Run crowd included not only racers, but also supporters cheering on their friends and family.



A number of young racers were among the 386 participants in the 2019 OutRun Hunger 5k Family Walk/Run held recently in Richmond's Harvest Green.



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and we raised \$13,500," said Stacey Williams, development director for East Fort Bend Human Needs Ministry. "This year, we hoped to raise \$15,000. To surpass that goal in such a spectacular fashion speaks to the generosity of the Fort Bend community as well as our big-hearted sponsors."

The money will be used by East Fort Bend Human Needs Ministry to provide food and financial assistance to children, families and seniors. Last year, the organization served 23,548 adults and 19,476 children.

Approximately 386 runners participated this year, up from 285 in 2018. The top three male and female finishers received awards. Kids received completion ribbons for participation in a separate Kids Run.

The event attracted 50 sponsors.

"This was an amazing weekend for everyone involved," said Jerry Ulke, general manager for Harvest Green. "We appreciate everyone who donated, sponsored and came out to support the runners. It is because of them that this event continues to be a success."

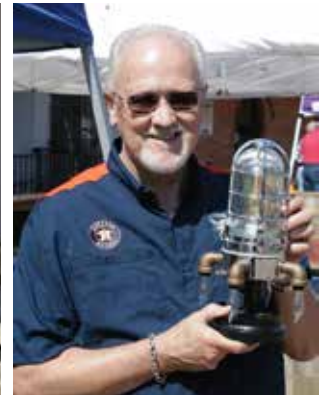
## Crafters thrilled with 1st-ever Rosenberg Artisan Market

Story & Photo by **SCOTT REESE WILLEY** | [swilley@fbherald.com](mailto:swilley@fbherald.com)

Angela Elliott of Richmond remembers growing up watching do-it-yourself programs about woodworking — and falling in love with the idea she, too, could fashion unique creations out of wood. As a teen she began making cutting boards and platters out of wood for her friends and family. By the time she was in her mid-20s



Angela Elliott makes unique cutting boards, serving platters and other objects of art out of old wood. See her crafts online at [angela@whiskey-furniture.com](mailto:angela@whiskey-furniture.com).



Doug Gant makes unusual lamps out of unusual objects, such as wine and whiskey bottles, or even industrial objects found around the garage. Email him at [sdgant@usa.net](mailto:sdgant@usa.net) for more information.

she decided to start selling her crafts.

Elliott was among 40 or so local crafters who took advantage of the first-ever Downtown Rosenberg Artisan Market to sell her creations, meet new customers and pass out business cards.

"We couldn't have asked for better weather to spend the day in Historic Downtown," said Jackie Wehring, Tourism and Rosenberg Main Street Manager, who helped organize the event. "Rosenberg Main Street appreciates the support of the community and we look forward to future events in downtown."

Wehring said she counted hundreds of visitors strolling along Third Street during the time the event took place.

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A lot of them also visited stores lining the streets downtown, she noted.

Among the local crafts people was Ana Payne, 31, of Rosenberg, who fashions customized door mats in her home shop. She was selling mats with Astros, Texans and Dallas Cowboys logos for \$30-\$40 each, and handed out business cards in hopes shoppers wanted custom mats for their homes and offices.

Doug Gant, of Rosenberg, and wife Janet, were selling his unique lamps made from whiskey and wine bottles, and “anything else laying around the house or garage.”

Newly retired from Fluor, Gant said he got the idea for the lamps by reading stories online.

“I thought to myself, hey, I can do that!”

It took him about two weeks to figure out how, he said. One day, while discussing his crafts at a bar with friends, the bartender overheard him and handed him a box of empty wine and whiskey bottles. He turned the bottles into unique lamps.

Gant said he can fashion lamps out of anyone’s favorite beverage bottle. He turned a gumball machine complete with colored gumballs into a lamp as well.

Like Gant, Elliott is self-taught.

“I didn’t have anyone to teach me, and I didn’t have any tools at first, but I loved working with wood and knew it was something I would enjoy,” she said.

Elliott, 31, makes the unique cutting boards and platters in her garage in Pecan Grove.

“I’m here to offer emotional support,” said husband Brandon. Sister-in-law Kristin Elliott-Gann helped with that day’s sales.

Later that Saturday, Angela and her husband were showing off her unique crafts at the annual Motown on Morton Street event in downtown Richmond.

## Committee formed for 2020 Census

by CHAD WASHINGTON | cwashington@fbherald.com

In its effort to encourage county-wide participation in the 2020 U.S. Census, the Fort Bend County commissioners have formed a committee to spread the word.

A Complete Count Committee was approved by county commissioners, which will advise and assist Fort Bend County to obtain the most accurate and complete count of the population through a focused, structured program.

The committee will include individuals from local governments, community and faith-based organizations, businesses and the media to get the word out about the census and why full participation is vital.

It is “so important to us to count every person,” County Judge KP George said.

The 2020 Census is key to helping the federal government determine where and how much aid an area receives in many different ways, and an accurate count is key for a rapidly-growing county like Fort Bend.

Precinct 1 Commissioner Vincent Morales said that the committee will consist of only volunteers and individuals, since the state has not sent funding to any local areas to assist the census count.

### ANTI-HUMAN TRAFFICKING LANGUAGE ADDED TO DOCUMENTS

Fort Bend County also officially came against human trafficking after commissioners approved a resolution requiring anti-trafficking language in all contracts.

County Judge KP George said that the county has spent millions of dollars to fight human trafficking.

“The commissioners court and Fort Bend County recognize the serious nature of human trafficking, which is why we’re adding this

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language,” George said. “Fort Bend County spends millions of dollars on projects and services, and adding this language to all our documents enforces our vision of a human-trafficking-free future.”

The county’s purchasing department will post the phone number to the National Human Trafficking Resource Center on its website, and all county procurements and contracts will have a disclaimer that says Fort Bend County is opposed to human trafficking and no county funds will be used with anyone involved in human trafficking.

By adding the language, the county hopes that it can promote awareness about human trafficking and encourage contractors who want to work with the county to follow proper labor laws.

If citizens have any information regarding a possible trafficking situation, they are urged to call the NHTRC 24-hour tip line at 1-888-373-7888.

## Announcing Annual Autism Luncheon

Hope For Three Autism Advocates has also announced Mary and Tom Solcher will return as Presenting Sponsors for its Annual Autism Luncheon on Feb. 13, 2020.

The Mardi Gras themed event will be held at Safari Texas Ranch, 11 a.m. to 1p.m. Guest speaker and honorary chairs, Sarah and Greg Swindell will share their personal journey living with autism. Greg, a former Major League Baseball player and World Series Winner and, Sarah, an actress and author of the recently released book, “Rounding



Presenting Sponsors Tom and Mary Solcher.

Home,” will provide a real, raw look at the challenges and rewards of having a son with severe autism.

For more information call 281-245-0640 or visit [hopeforthree.org](http://hopeforthree.org).

## Golf “Fore” Autism a hit

Cool weather and peaks of a bright sun made for a good day on the greens.

Nearly 140 golfers gathered in late October for the Fourth Annual Hope For Three Golf “Fore” Autism Tournament. The event, presented by Timewise, was held at Sweetwater



Country Club. Along with swinging the irons, golfers used the power of the pen as various items were up for grabs during the live and silent auctions, as well as, raffles.

Courtesy of Debi Beauregard, Custom Minds Photography | From left: first place winners Team Ocusoft — Steven Orphey, Elijah White, Eric Montgomery and Antonio Biggs.

Golf “Fore” Autism is one of the many autism awareness campaigns held each year to assist autism families living in Fort Bend County.

Continued on page 21



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## JOY TO THE WORLD THE FORT BEND BOYS CHOIR'S CHRISTMAS MUSICALE

by **TIANA MORTIMER**



Courtesy of Terri Cannon | Town choirboys performing in the 2018 Christmas Musicale

**D**o you hear what I hear? It is the sound of singing boys bringing you good cheer!

Attend the Fort Bend Boys Choir's annual Christmas Musicale concert on Saturday, Dec. 7 at 7 p.m. at the First United Methodist Church-Missouri City.

Three treble choirs - Training, Town and Tour - will be showcased along with Music Magic, the organization's class of six and seven year olds.

Tickets are available on the choir website or at the door. Adult admission is \$15 and children 12 and under are \$5. All proceeds from the Christmas Musicale are used for program support, operational expenses and scholarships.

Visit the Fort Bend Boys Choir's website at [www.fbbctx.org](http://www.fbbctx.org) or call 281- 240-3800 for more details.

### OPEN AUDITIONS SET FOR THE FORT BEND BOYS CHOIR

Boys 8 years old and older, with unchanged voices who love music and singing, can audition for the Fort Bend Boys Choir. No previous experience is necessary.

Open auditions will be held at the First United Methodist Church Missouri City, 3900 Lexington Blvd., Missouri City, TX from 9 a.m. to noon on Saturday, Dec. 14.

Special appointments are available if a boy cannot attend the open audition date.

The Fort Bend Boys Choir can help with scholarships and carpool assistance too. Be sure to also ask about Music Magic, the choir's music enrichment class for six and seven year old boys starting March 2020.

Boys from all over the Fort Bend and the Houston metro area have the opportunity to learn more about music and singing as well as many of life's important lessons like leadership, making friends and building self-confidence and self-esteem - all in a safe, proactive setting.

Take advantage of this life-changing activity now before your boy's voice changes.

Find out more by visiting our website at [www.fbbctx.org](http://www.fbbctx.org); or, call the choir office at 281-240-3800 to schedule an audition time.

## THE FRIDAY FILM SERIES

**T**he University Branch Library is hosting its Friday Film Series this month with the following selections, each one shown from 1 - 3 p.m. in Meeting Room 1:

**Dec 6:** In this comedy movie from 1958, an orphan goes to live with his free-spirited, eccentric, madcap aunt, who detests nonsense in others, but loves it in herself. Conflict ensues when the executor of his father's estate objects to the aunt's lifestyle and unconventional perspective on life. Based on a 1955 novel written by Patrick Dennis, a musical version of story was later adapted for Broadway. The movie is not rated.

**Dec 20:** Based on a novel by Louisa May Alcott, this 1994 romantic family drama is set in the 1860s during the American Civil War. With their father involved in the war, sisters Jo, Meg, Amy, and Beth are at home with their mother, a very outspoken women for her time. The story tells of how the sisters grow up, find love, and find their place in the world. This movie is rated PG.

## JOIN THE CRAFT SQUAD AND MAKE HOLIDAY CRAFTS AND CARDS

**P**eople who enjoy crafts are invited to join the University Branch Library's Craft Squad, where they can make new crafty friends, learn a new craft or two, and share tips, tricks, and resources with fellow crafters. In December, earn the "Holiday Crafts & Card-Making" badge by making greeting cards and gift tags for the holidays and exploring unique ways to wrap gifts at 7 p.m. in Meeting Room 2.

The Craft Squad, which has met quarterly in the past, will begin meeting weekly in January 2020.

Each month will have an instructional meeting introducing a new craft on the first Friday of the month, and badges can be earned for each new craft that is learned. The rest of the Fridays will be devoted to "Craft-Squad Meet-ups," where patrons can bring their own to craft to work on while networking with other crafters.

## Appel is remembered with life-size statue

Several hundred family members, friends and associates of the late Herbert W. Appel, longtime president of the Fort Bend Economic Development Council, were on hand for the unveiling of a life-size statue of him sitting on a bench in full fishing attire.

The statue is located in what is being called Appel Park in front of a lake on Lake Pointe Parkway near U.S. 59 in Sugar Land. Appel, who had retired from the EDC, died days before what would have been his 76th birthday in July 2018.

Funds for the creation of the statue were from personal contributions and spearheaded by past and present EDC officers Bill Jameson, Les Newton and EDC executive Jeff C. Wiley. The project was orchestrated by Sugar Land resident Sandy Levine, who promotes bronze public art.

A bronze historical marker describing "Herb Appel, Fort Bend Statesman" is adjacent to the statue.

The project also had the support of the Sugar Land Legacy Foundation, First Colony Community Association, Fort Bend Levee District No. 2 and the City of Sugar Land.



Courtesy of Gail Appel | Gary Appel, Herb Appel's younger and look-alike brother, actually was a model for the statue that was unveiled on Wednesday. Photos of Gary sitting on a bench, plus close up photos of Herb were used in creating the bronze sculpture.

Prior to becoming EDC president, Appel owned the Coors beer distributorship, located between Rosenberg and Beasley, and Trinity Church Construction Co. in Richmond. He was one of the original organizers of the EDC in 1986.

The affable Appel re-wrote the book on volunteerism, showing by example how to help people who were unable to help themselves.

Appel's brother, Gary Appel of Galena, Ill., is almost a spitting image of his older brother, and was used as a model, donning fishing clothes and a big hat for photographs from which the sculpting was done. Friends of both brothers said they were so similar that they have been mistaken for each other.

"They walk and talk the same as well as looking similar," friends and family said.

Gary is two years younger than his late brother.

Appel's wife Emelia represented the large family turnout by thanking those in attendance as well as other contributors.

"We are so grateful and humble that you would do this for our Herb," she said.

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## Lamar Consolidated ISD students named National Hispanic Scholars

Eleven Lamar CISD students have been named National Hispanic Scholars by the National Hispanic Recognition Program.

Each year, the program identifies academically outstanding Hispanic/Latino high school students and honors about 5,000 of the highest-scoring students from more than 250,000 Hispanic/Latino juniors who take the PSAT/NMSQT.

These students are from the United States, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, the Mariana Islands and the Marshall Islands, as well as U.S. citizens attending schools abroad.

Lamar CISD qualifying students are Manuel Arca, Sydney Delgado, Jake Hernandez, Bianca Jabaroghli, Marisa Liang and Andrew Reid from George Ranch High School; David Garza and Sophia Lazzcano, from Foster High School; Liany Serrano Oviedo, from Fulshear High School; and Katherine Giron and Gemali E. Martinez, from Lamar Consolidated High School.

## Local students celebrate new-age manufacturing opportunities

Monica Raumaker, a senior at Cinco Ranch High School and Miller Career and Technology Center in Katy, was one of nearly 200 local high school juniors and seniors who attended Manufacturing (MFG) Day at Texas State Technical College. The 17-year-old, said the event was an eye opener for her in regards to manufacturing in the 21st century.

"This event was a great opportunity for students like me," she said. "I learned about so many different career paths that I can take within the industry and it was amazing to see that what I'm learning in class is all applicable to the real world."

The Katy native added that she is excited to enter an industry with so much opportunity.



At least 20 industry partners visited with local high school juniors and seniors during MFG Day hosted on Friday by TSTC and the Central Fort Bend Chamber.

The community event hosted in partnership with the Central Fort Bend Chamber, is part of a national celebration that launched annually on the first Friday of October.

Among the relevant manufacturing programs offered on the Fort Bend County campus include Precision Machining Technology and Industrial Systems.

The halls at the TSTC Brazos Center were lined with nearly 20 industry partners who were ready to network with high school and college students, educators, and leaders and members of the community.

Central Fort Bend Chamber President and Chief Executive Officer Kristin Weiss said this is the first time the event has been put on by the Industrial Division of the Central Fort Bend Chamber.

"I am on cloud nine right now. The event was a great success," said Weiss. "Seeing students excited, interacting with the companies and telling us that they're learning so much makes me so happy. That is what this event was all about."

The event held from 9 a.m. to noon included campus tours, industry visits and a panel discussion with industry specialists and former career technology education students including TSTC Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC) alumnus Brandon Felts.

Kellen Dorman from Gurecky Manufacturing in Rosenberg said there is a misperception about what manufacturing careers entail, and with an increase in demand for skilled technicians in the industry this has been a great event to educate and increase awareness about how the growing industry is vital to the economy and provides a number of career opportunities.

"Hosting this type of event was a great idea," she said. "It's so important to show our future generations that there are other options outside of a four-year university and how manufacturing is evolving."

Dorman also added that she was excited to see so many young girls interested in pursuing careers in the manufacturing industry and she hopes that she was able to encourage them.

"We have two women at Gurecky, one of them is a machinist," said Dorman. "That just goes to show that there is room for women in this industry, especially as the industry's technology becomes more sophisticated."

TSTC field development officer John Kennedy said the day was wildly successful for TSTC.

"To have so many students and potential employers in one place was fantastic," said Kennedy. "The support we received from educators and the community regarding this event was overwhelming. I can already see this event grow annually."

Kennedy and Weiss said they hope to continue working together to make MFG Day even bigger and better for years to come.

## Mullen honored with Connie Wootton Excellence in Teaching award

by KRISTA KUPERUS

Calvary Episcopal Preparatory is proud to announce that one of its teachers, Chris Mullen, was honored with the "The Connie Wootton Excellence in Teaching" award.

Mullen was presented this award, specific to Early Childhood, on Oct. 25 at the SAES (Southwestern Association of Episcopal School) Convention in Houston. This award identifies an exceptional teacher working with Pre-Kindergarten students.

As stated by SAES, the recipient will: display passion for teaching

and innovation, demonstrate a deep appreciation for professional development, possess an entrepreneurial spirit, desire their school to reflect an ongoing commitment to excellence, love the students and strive on a daily basis to help them achieve their personal best and exhibits commitment to the Episcopal approach to education which can be understood as “faith seeking understanding.”

Mullen has had a positive influence on our young learners as an early childhood teacher at Calvary for the past nine years.



Mr. Chris Mullen (left) is awarded his \$5,000 check by The Rev. David Madison, the Executive Director of Southwestern Association of Episcopal School.

Courtesy of Rhonda Taormina | Lamar Consolidated High School Fillie Arianna Joseph shows “Future Fillies” Riley Hernandez (blue hairbow) and Nyla Osei (white hairbow) a routine during the halftime performance at a game between the Mustangs and A&M Consolidated Tigers at Traylor Stadium in Rosenberg.



The Foster High School marching band earned a second-place trophy at the UIL Area marching competition in October at Legacy Stadium in Katy and competed at the state marching contest the following Monday in San Antonio. The Falcons’ musicians earned a “1” at the University Interscholastic League district competition on Oct 22 to advance to the regional contest. A “1” at district is the highest mark awarded. Foster is the only Lamar Consolidated ISD band to advance to state.



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## Houston Methodist Sugar Land welcomes Dr. Margaret Umah

**H**ouston Methodist Sugar Land Hospital is pleased to welcome Margaret Umah, M.D., board-certified family medicine physician.

Umah began seeing patients last month at the Houston Methodist Primary Care Group practice located on the hospital's campus at 16605 Southwest Fwy., Medical Office Building 3, Suite 400 in Sugar Land.

She specializes in men's and women's health issues, adolescent health, preventive medicine, chronic conditions such as diabetes, high blood pressure and cholesterol disorders, and common illnesses and conditions. Umah also offers wellness exams, annual physicals and adult vaccinations.

Umah earned her medical degree from the University of Missouri School of Medicine and then completed her residency in family medicine at Memorial Hermann Hospital in Houston. She has been serving the health care needs of the Fort Bend community as a family physician since 2012.

Dr. Margaret Umah



"I have always had the greatest respect and admiration for Houston Methodist Sugar Land and its commitment to high-quality patient care," said Umah. "I share my new colleagues' approach in providing personalized, compassionate care to improve patients' overall well-being through communication and partnership. I am very pleased to be joining Houston Methodist Primary Care Group, where my patients will have access to the full range of technology, expertise and resources that the hospital offers."

To schedule an appointment with Dr. Umah, visit [houstonmethodist.org/pcg/southwest](http://houstonmethodist.org/pcg/southwest) or call 281-930-6639.

To learn more about Houston Methodist Sugar Land Hospital, visit [houstonmethodist.org/sugarland](http://houstonmethodist.org/sugarland) or our Facebook page at [fb.com/methodistsugarland](https://www.facebook.com/methodistsugarland) for the latest news, events and information.

## Fighting the Flu

**T**he muscle aches. The fever. The tiredness. No one likes having the flu. If you do catch the bug, it's important to know how to care for yourself. It's also important to learn how the flu virus spreads and how it can be prevented.

### FLU BASICS

"The influenza virus, more commonly known as the flu, is contagious and usually spreads through the air, by coughing, sneezing, talking or touching a contaminated surface," said Asisat Ope, M.D., board-certified primary care physician with Houston Methodist

Primary Care Group in Sugar Land.

People who catch the flu have different symptoms, but many complain of a fever, cough, muscle aches, headache and sore throat. Some adults feel better in a week or two, while others, including small children, the elderly and the chronically ill, may have a harder time recovering.

### STOP FLU IN ITS TRACKS

You can help guard yourself against the flu. "The best methods are getting a yearly flu vaccination and keeping your immune system healthy," Ope said.

Get a flu shot. A flu shot can lower your risk of catching the virus. It's best to get the shot by the end of October, before the flu season reaches its height. A flu shot is especially important for people at high risk for flu complications, including adults age 65 or older, children younger than age five, pregnant women and those with chronic health problems.

Steer clear of germs. Unfortunately, sick people don't always keep their germs at home. You can help keep yourself flu-free by washing your hands frequently and following a healthy lifestyle. Carry hand sanitizer with you in case you can't wash your hands right away after being around those who are showing signs of being sick. You may also want to use disinfecting wipes to wipe down surfaces or shopping carts when you're out and about.

If you do get the flu, drink plenty of fluids. Your doctor can prescribe antiviral drugs that may make the illness milder and shorten the time you are sick if you go in right away.

If you have questions about the flu shot, talk to your doctor. To schedule an appointment with Asisat Ope, M.D. or another primary care physician at Houston Methodist Primary Care Group, visit [houstonmethodist.org/pcg/southwest](http://houstonmethodist.org/pcg/southwest) or call 832-416-1678.

To learn more about Houston Methodist Sugar Land Hospital, visit [houstonmethodist.org/sugarland](http://houstonmethodist.org/sugarland) or our Facebook page at [fb.com/methodistsugarland](https://www.facebook.com/methodistsugarland) for the latest news, events and information.



Dr. Asisat Ope

## 2019 Patchwork Of Life Event Raises \$350K

**O**akBend Medical Center's seventh annual Patchwork of Life event was another very successful fundraising event for the hospital. The event raised more than \$350,000 and those funds will be used for a 3D Mammography machine for the Women's Imaging Department at OakBend's Jackson Street Campus.

With a crowd of over 650 attendees, this year's live auction brought in more than \$100,000, with popular items like a Tuscan villa vacation, and African Safari and a Houston sports ticket package causing some friendly competition.

"This year's Patchwork of Life event was a fantastically successful evening," said Beth Johnson, event chair. "The Fort Bend community continues to provide great support to OakBend Medical Center. We are so appreciative of those who made it out and for their wonderful generosity."

Guests also had the opportunity to purchase and personalize a quilt square for the annual dedication quilt made by Pat Hebert. Pat has made a quilt for each Patchwork of Life event since 2013 and this





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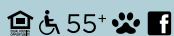
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Attendees of Patchwork of Life looking at live auction items. year's quilt will hang in the Women's Imaging Department upon completion.

"Patchwork was energetic and the audience was very generous," said May Tape, OakBend Medical Center Board President. "The personal testimonies from community members in the audience were one of the highlights of the evening for me. I love hearing how OakBend has impacted their lives. I'm proud to be associated with OakBend."



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## Four Houston Methodist hospitals recognized by Vizient

Vizient announced that four Houston Methodist hospitals have received a 2019 Vizient Bernard A. Birnbaum, M.D., Quality Leadership Award. Houston Methodist was the only hospital system in the country to receive four awards.

The award recognizes hospitals for demonstrating excellence in delivering superior quality and safety as measured by the Vizient Quality and Accountability Study, which has been conducted annually since 2005.



Representatives from Houston Methodist accepted the awards for each of our four hospitals at the 2019 Vizient Connections Education Summit in Las Vegas. From left: Chris Siebenaler, regional vice president and CEO of Houston Methodist Sugar Land Hospital; Janet Leatherwood, CNO of Houston Methodist Sugar Land Hospital; Diane McGraw, RN, MSN, CNS-CH, CPHQ, CCM, Director of Quality Management, Infection Control, Risk Management, Accreditation, and Patient Safety Officer at Houston Methodist Sugar Land Hospital; Jeffrey A. Jackson, MD, FAAN, CQO; Marc L. Boom, president and CEO of Houston Methodist.

Vizient recognized Houston Methodist Hospital in the comprehensive academic medical center category; Houston Methodist Sugar Land in the specialized complex care medical center category; and Houston Methodist Willowbrook and Houston Methodist The Woodlands in the complex medical center category.

"Having four of our hospitals on this list is extraordinary. Receiving such national recognition is an honor, but I'm most proud that the reason for these awards is our concerted focus on quality patient care," said Marc L. Boom, president and CEO of Houston Methodist.

This year, 349 participating hospitals were divided into four cohorts for the Vizient Quality and Accountability Ranking.

The ranking measured performance based on safety, mortality, clinical effectiveness, efficiency and patient centeredness. The ranking's composite scoring system uses patient-level performance data from a variety of sources including the Vizient Clinical Data Base, core measures data, the Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems survey and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Healthcare Safety Network.

The Vizient Quality and Accountability Ranking helps participating hospitals and health systems understand their performance against their peers and identifies structures and processes associated with high performance in quality and safety across a broad spectrum of patient care activity. The recognition period is for work spanning from July 2018 through June 2019.

### HEALTH HIGHLIGHTS

Houston Methodist Sugar Land Hospital's Survivors Offering Support, a breast cancer support group, will meet at 5:30 p.m. Dec. 19 at the hospital.

This group meets every third Thursday of the month in the Main Pavilion Conference Rooms B and C. Refreshments are provided.

The monthly breast cancer support groups include trained facilitators from Houston Methodist Sugar Land Hospital help women and men at any stage of diagnosis and treatment, understand that breast cancer can affect them emotionally and spiritually – not just physically.

For more information or to register, email [snbowman@houstonmethodist.org](mailto:snbowman@houstonmethodist.org) or call 281.274.7164.

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# December

## December 3

### Connections: Meet Someone New

Meet new people and make new friends at this casual, come-and-go social hour at the George Memorial Library at 7 p.m. in Room 2A. Enjoy music while getting to know one another over a game of cards, chess, checkers, or other board games the library has on hand. This activity is suitable for adults aged 18 and up. Another Connections will be held at 10 a.m. in Room 2A.

### Veteran Financial Fitness

Impact a Hero will host a free introductory course on the principals of financial fitness for veterans at the Mamie George Community Center in Richmond from 6 - 8 p.m. Visit [www.impactahero.org](http://www.impactahero.org).

## December 4

### Nature Park Bird Hike

A monthly bird hike will be held at 8 a.m. at Seabourne Creek Nature Park, 3831 Texas 36 South, Rosenberg. All ages and levels of birders are welcome. Binoculars and weather-appropriate clothing and footwear are recommended. The next hike is scheduled for Jan. 8, 2020 Visit [txmn.org/coastal](http://txmn.org/coastal).

## December 6

### Sharpen Your Marketing Message

SCORE mentor Jeffrey Jones assist small-business entrepreneurs develop or sharpen a strategic marketing plan in a special workshop at the University Branch Library from 10:30 a.m. to noon in Meeting Room 1. This program is presented in partnership with SCORE, the non-profit mentoring arm of the U.S. Small Business Administration.

### 2019 Holiday Market

Vintage Market Days of SW Houston Coastal Plains will hold its holiday market — "Merry & Bright" — Dec.

6 - Dec. 8, at the Fort Bend County Fairgrounds in Rosenberg. Visit [vintagemarketdays.com](http://vintagemarketdays.com).

### Sounds of the Season

The Fort Bend Chamber of Commerce will host its Sounds of the Season with Frank Billingsley from 11:30 a.m. - 1 p.m. at Constellation Field in Sugar Land. Visit [www.FortBendChamber.com](http://www.FortBendChamber.com) for tickets and to register.

### Needville Country Christmas

Started as a way to promote local businesses, the Needville Annual Country Christmas will be held in Downtown Needville Dec. 6 from 5 to 9 p.m.

### Candlelight Tours

The Fort Bend Museum Docents will hold its Candlelight Tours at the 1883 Moore Home 6 - 8 p.m., Dec. 6 and 4-8 p.m. Dec. 7. Festive tours of the historic home, plus cookies and wassail will be featured. Visit [www.fortbendmuseum.org](http://www.fortbendmuseum.org).

### Nutcracker on Ice

Sugar Land Ice and Sports Center is presenting its 22nd annual production of the Nutcracker on Ice at 7 p.m. Dec. 6, and 1 p.m. and 5 p.m. on Dec. 7 at the center. Tickets available at [www.etix.com](http://www.etix.com).

## December 7

### 2019 Run Houston! Sugar Land

Get in the holiday spirit by taking on the final event in Run Houston! from 5 - 10:30 a.m. at Constellation Field, with distances of 10K, 5K, and a Kids 1K, as well as a virtual option.

All registrations include free high-resolution race photos, custom shirt, custom finisher's medal for all distances, custom race bib, and complimentary parking. Participants will also enjoy special access to the Holiday Lights Festival and a post-race party inside the stadium. All ages and abilities are welcome, including strollers. Visit <http://bit.ly/RunSugarLand>.

### Jingle Bell Run - Sugar Land

The Arthritis Foundation's Jingle Bell Run is the original festive race for charity. The Sugar Land race will be held from 7 - 11 a.m. at the University of Houston- Sugar Land campus. Visit [events.arthritis.org](http://events.arthritis.org).

### Winterfest

Take a break from the hustle and bustle of the holidays with refreshments, family activities, and festive music performed by the Second Street Brass Ensemble during this fun open-house event at the George Memorial Library from 10 a.m. - noon in the Meeting Room. The performance will begin at 11 a.m. This event is made possible by the Friends of the George Memorial Library.

### Cookies with Santa

Houston Museum of Natural Science - Sugar Land will host Cookies with Santa from 10 a.m. - 1 p.m. Enjoy holiday crafts, the tradition of cookies and milk and a take away photo with Santa and Mrs. Claus. You can also stop at the reindeer station, too, for a fun holiday selfie. \$5 for members; \$5 for non-members plus purchase of \$5 exhibit halls ticket. Jingle Tree Events: [www.hmns.org/hmns-at-sugar-land/events/jingle-tree/](http://www.hmns.org/hmns-at-sugar-land/events/jingle-tree/)

### Holiday Open House

The University Branch Library will hold a Holiday Open House from 2:30 - 4 p.m. in Meeting Room 2. Music, refreshments, and craft activities will be available for the whole family to enjoy as they catch the holiday spirit. Books on holiday entertaining, decorating, and cooking will be available for check out, along with seasonal music CDs and movies.

### Read to a Cat

Fort Bend Pets Alive is hosting a Read to a Cat event at Half Price Books - Sugar Land from 1 - 4:30 p.m. Read to homeless cats and have the option to adopt one for 50 percent off.

### Holidays in the Plaza

Two of the groups from Houston Show Choir, Vocal Impact and Vox Evolution, will create a journey through the holidays with pop, country, disco, rock, show tunes, jazz, and more, with fun for everyone from 5 - 7 p.m. at 2700 N Town Center Blvd. in Sugar Land.

## December 8

### African Hymn Fest and Health Fair

New Wine Chapel invites the public to celebrate "Christmas in Africa" featuring vibrant musical performances from 4 - 7 p.m. in Sugar Land Town Square. You will also have the opportunity to browse through their health fair on site.

## December 10

### Book Exchange

The Fort Bend Chamber of Commerce will host a book exchange from 11:30 a.m. - 1 p.m. Wrap your favorite professional book to give away, and share how it has deeply impacted your life. The exchange will run similarly to a white elephant exchange. Lunch is included. Visit [www.FortBendChamber.com](http://www.FortBendChamber.com).

## December 11

### Food Bank

A food bank will be at KRB Dentistry, 5110 Ave. H in Rosenberg, from 8:30 a.m. - noon. Everyone is welcome. All this is needed is your name and phone number.

### Winter Holiday Mini-Concert

Students from the Austin Elementary School Cosmic Choir will sing an assortment of holiday carols at the George Memorial Library at 11 a.m. in the Lobby.

### Toy Giveaway

Mountain Top Ministries, 4310 Ave H, Suite #12 in Rosenberg, is hosting a Toy Giveaway from 7 - 9 p.m. All types of toys ages from 3 years to 17 years old. Visit [www.mtopm.org](http://www.mtopm.org)

### Young Adult Book Club

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 at the George Memorial Library at 5 p.m. in Room 2B. This month, readers are invited to bring their favorite nonfiction book to talk about.

## December 12

### Coffee with the Court

The Fort Bend County Bar Association is hosting its 5th Annual Coffee with the Court from 9 - 10 a.m. at the Fort Bend County Justice Center.

### Garden Railroad Run Day

The Houston Area G Gaugers will be running trains on the garden railroad, weather permitting 1-4 p.m. at the Rosenberg Railroad Museum. Regular museum admission required.

### Young Adult Advisory Council

Teens in grades 9-12 who are interested in an exciting new leadership opportunity and volunteer-service hours are invited to attend at 5 p.m. in Conference Room 1 at the University Branch Library. 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.

## December 14

### Winter Book Sale

The Friends of University Branch Library will hold its Winter Book Sale from 10 a.m. - 2p.m. in Meeting Room 1 at the library. Prices range from \$0.25 to \$3. Numerous items will be available for sale, such as DVDs, CDs, magazines, and a variety of books, including children's, teens', mystery, computer, special interest and romance.

### Holiday Dance Showcase

The public is invited to enjoy a

holiday dance showcase by local dance companies from 11 a.m. - 4 p.m. in Sugar Land Town Square.

### Christmas in Katy

Join Common Ground Community Church at No Label Brewery from noon to 5 p.m. to celebrate Christmas. The event includes live Christmas music, food trucks, market vendors, a Kidz Zone and pictures with Santa.

### Popsicle Ornaments

Teens in grades 9-12 will create ornaments using Popsicle sticks and other crafty items at 2 p.m. in Meeting Room 2 at the University Branch Library. Snacks and materials are provided by the Friends of the University Branch Library. Registration is required.

### Holiday Market

Troop 801 is hosting its Annual Troop 801 Holiday Market from 9 a.m. -4 p.m. at the KC Hall in Rosenberg. There will be vendors from our local area (Rosenberg, Richmond, Sugar Land, Needville and more) with unique gift items, holiday decor and much more. At the end of the day, there will be a drawing for a hand crafted quilt, fine writing instrument and other door prizes. Visit [www.brazostroop801.org](http://www.brazostroop801.org).

### A Christmas Night of Hope

This adult-only second annual gala is being hosted by Project Clothe A Child from 6 - 11 p.m. at a Hilton Garden Inn Sugar Land. A guest speaker, entertainment and giveaways will be featured. All ticket proceeds benefit PCAC and are tax deductible. Visit [www.projectclotheachild.org](http://www.projectclotheachild.org).

### Holiday Movie Under the Moon

"The Grinch" will be shown from 6:30 - 8:30 p.m. in Sugar Land Town Square. Free and open to the public.

## December 15

### 32nd Annual Fort Bend Kia 30K

Join Finish Line Sports for the 32nd Annual Fort Bend KIA 30K Run from 7 - 11 a.m. in Sugar Land Town Square. Register at [www.slfinishlinesports.com/sugar-land-finish-line-sports-30k](http://www.slfinishlinesports.com/sugar-land-finish-line-sports-30k).

## December 16

### LEGO Club

Families with kids of all ages will have an opportunity to get creative with LEGO building blocks at the

University Branch Library from 4:15 p.m. - 5 p.m. in Meeting Room 1. Different-sized LEGO pieces will be available for the varying ages in attendance.

## December 18

### Culinary Book Club

This club of the University Branch Library will meet at 1:30 p.m. in Meeting Room 1. This month, the group will have a Cookie Exchange for the holiday. Cooking enthusiasts of all ages and experience levels – from beginners to advanced — are invited to join in this monthly potluck and recipe exchange.

### Young Adult Advisory Council

Teens in grades 9-12 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 at the George Memorial Library at 5 p.m. in Room 2B.

## December 19

### The Spirit of Christmas Market 2019

Organization supporting students in North Richmond will host this market benefitting Pink Elementary students from 7 a.m. - 4 p.m. . Christmas gift donations will give community children an opportunity to shop for their parents and siblings for their Christmas gifts. Donations can be dropped off at Friends of North Richmond and Del Webb. Call 832-877-1084 for more information.

### Story Spinners Writing Club

This month's topic at the George Memorial Library will be "Pacing." 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 from 5:30 - 8:30 p.m. in Room 2C. This program is recommended for adults and teens aged 14 and up.

## December 22

### Photos with Santa

Sugar Land Town Square and Fort Bend Rainbow Room will host a Photos with Santa event from 1 - 5 p.m. in Sugar Land Town Square. Enjoy a free holiday photo with Santa and Mrs. Claus at 2180 Lone Star

Drive (former Z Gallerie space). New stuffed animals for the Fort Bend Rainbow Room's Christmas Project will be collected. All donations will go to children and adults referred by caseworkers from Texas Department of Family and Protective Services.

## December 24

### Christmas Eve & Childrens Mass

Holy Rosary Catholic Church and School and St. Wenceslaus Catholic Church will hold a Christmas Eve Mass and Childrens Mass from 4 - 5 p.m. at Holy Rosary Catholic Church, 1416 George Street in Rosenberg. A Christmas play will be performed by children during this Mass.

## December 27

### F-R-I-E-N-D-S Holiday Binge

Get in the spirit of the season by binge-watching 11 holiday episodes of this popular '90s sitcom at the University Branch Library from noon - 4 p.m. in Meeting Room 1. Light refreshments will be available, as well as holiday card-making activities, adult coloring sheets, and trivia.

## December 28

### Vintage Bike Ride

Handlebar Cyclery will hold a non-competitive, 28-mile, vintage bike ride, 28 miles from 7:30 - 9:30 a.m.. The ride starts at Essence House Cafe located in Fulshear. Visit [www.handlebarcyclery.com](http://www.handlebarcyclery.com).

## December 30

### Winter Craft Express

Families with children of all ages will have an opportunity to participate in different winter-related craft activities while watching a popular holiday film at the University Branch Library from 2-4 p.m. in Meeting Room 1.

## January 18

### Jigsaw Puzzle Competition

Hope for Three will hold its third annual Jigsaw Puzzle competition at Gallery Furniture, 7227 Grand Parkway South in Richmond. Teams will compete to complete a 500-piece puzzle in two-hours. Visit [visit hopeforthree.org/events](http://visit.hopeforthree.org/events)

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