

# PECAN GROVE

APRIL 2019  
monthly

Carson  
Padilla

THE COMPASSIONATE  
TRIATHLETE

PLUS Volunteers praise  
Reigning Strength  
Therapeutic Horsemanship

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monthly™

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# The Compassionate Triathlete

**CARSON PADILLA RACES FOR FUN, FOR THE CHALLENGE AND FOR OTHERS**

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

Carson Padilla has raced in 40 triathlons, more or less, and with each one, the Quail Valley School Middle School seventh grader feels he is getting that much closer to his ultimate dream of one day competing at the Kona Ironman World Championship, held annually in Hawaii since 1978.

The triathlon is a 140.6-mile journey that draws the most dedicated athletes together on a world stage, and for 12-year-old Padilla, the Kona would be the ultimate test of his abilities.

"I want to go because it would be an incredible thing for me to do," said Padilla. "It's such a big goal for me and I think I can accomplish it."

## BEYOND THE RACE COURSE

Padilla, who lives in Pecan Grove with his parents Mike and Kerry and younger sister Maggie, started competing in triathlons when he was in the second grade.

"It was Houston Kids Triathlon," Padilla recalled, explaining his coach at the time, Oakland Elementary's Lesley Ocampo, encouraged students to try it out. "I really did like it."

More than 2,000 children from around Texas participated in the triathlon that year, and it was Oakland's first triathlon.

"Being a triathlete myself, I knew my students would benefit from so many things," Ocampo said.

It wasn't just about trying to win a race. Learning to get past the fear of doing something never done before; creating friendships; understanding the power of encouragement; spending time with family while preparing; and the importance of adequate training were all lessons Ocampo knew would be provided during the competition.

"[And that] excitement on race day," she added. "To trust the work [they] put in and the feeling of accomplishment when [they] cross the finish line."

These lessons, Ocampo stressed, would serve students "beyond the race course."

"It was fun," Padilla said of that first triathlon. "I wasn't competing seriously, though. At first it was just a fun thing for me to try."

However, four years later Padilla continues to train and race.

"Knowing he has continued with triathlons after all these years makes me so proud," Ocampo said. "Mainly because he has used this particular sport to help him grow and learn more about himself and his capabilities. What started off as 'just for fun and because I know I can do it' developed his mindset to set bigger goals and to work harder to obtain those goals."

After leaving Oakland Elementary, Ocampo continued to keep an eye on Padilla's progress, watching him compete in races. She said she is pleased to see that "he has been more focused and more determined to not only cross the finish line by a certain time but to place 1st on the podium."

In 2017 Ocampo and Padilla even competed in the same triathlon.

"It was a great feeling seeing him cheering me on," she said.



## A STEP FURTHER

Coincidentally, the same year one instructor challenged students to try out triathlons, another instructor, Padilla's second grade teacher Janet Lavong, was encouraging students to think of how they could be a service to others.

It was during the holiday season when Lavong sparked such a discussion by reading the book "Fly Away Home," by Eve Bunting. The story surrounds a homeless boy who lives in an airport with his father, both of whom move from terminal to terminal trying to avoid being noticed.

"We discussed how we, as a part of the community, could help someone in need," said Lavong, who also lives in Pecan Grove.





"We watched a video about helping others and discussed the ways you could donate to the less fortunate, and Carson took [that message] as 'I need to do something to help.'"

When he returned home that day, Padilla, who was 8 years old at the time, had a mission.

"He came home and said he wanted to do something to help homeless people," said Padilla's dad, Mike. "At first he figured he could beg for money and give it to the homeless, but I told him he had to earn people's money. He couldn't just ask for it."

So Padilla decided to sell Rainbow Loom bracelets at a neighborhood garage sale for whatever price the buyer wanted to donate. Some people gave \$1 or \$5. Others even donated a \$100. Padilla raised \$1,200 from the bracelets and a local businessman matched that amount with \$1,000.

The full \$2,200 was donated to Ronald McDonald House Charities, which provides shelter and support to families of hospitalized children.

"The story was in the newspaper and I cut it out, laminated it and it's still in my room," Lavong said. "I tell all my kids about Carson, who took it a step further. I am so proud of him. Carson had always been a caring person and that year he even inspired other kids in the class [to think about people in the community who are in need.] He gets it. Not every child gets it the way he does."

From that point forward, Padilla found ways to contribute to or serve others every year, like helping with Christmas dinners for the Fort Bend Women's Center and even taking money from his own piggy bank to purchase Starbucks cards for first responders.

"He is an example of how you can do more," Lavong said.

### COMPASSIONATE FOR CAUSES

Padilla continues to serve others and his method of choice is combining his charitable nature with his athletic passion. Most recently he raced in the October 2018 Kemah Triathlon and raised \$2,100 to send a child to Space Camp in Huntsville, Alabama for a week.

The prior summer, Padilla visited the Space Academy for the first time and the experience was one he felt others, especially those without the means to go, should have as well.

Through Padilla's fundraising efforts, two students will be able to attend camp.

"[Going to Space Camp] was the most exciting thing," Padilla said. "And I'm happy I was able to raise enough money for someone else to attend the camp. I had the best time of my life and I want other kids to experience that."

The fundraising effort was done through Reason2Race, a company that connects various athletes to charitable organizations. Padilla also raised funds in 2017 to support the

Folsom City Zoo Sanctuary in Folsom, California through the organization.

Although Padilla is compassionate about every fundraiser he races for, the Folsom sanctuary project was one that was personally important to the Padilla family.

A longtime family friend, Chuck Harrison, had started the project with the zoo, but before its completion Chuck passed away. His widow, Karen, has been friends with Padilla's dad since they were 6 years old, so Padilla decided he wanted to help bring fruition to Chuck's dream.

Through Reason2Race, and as a member of Katy's Fury Tri Team, Padilla ultimately raised \$2,720 for the zoo, specifically for the completion and installation of the sluice box exhibit. This exhibit allows children to experience what California mining is like.

"I like to raise money for causes," Padilla said. "It was an incredible experience and it was great to see what I helped create."

As a former instructor, Ocampo said it brings her joy to see that Padilla still competes and "has taken his determination to now serve others."

"I know he has used the same grit to set goals for his academics and future endeavors as well," she added.

### EYES ON THE PRIZE

Depending on how long or short the event is, Padilla can complete a triathlon in about 22 minutes.

"It's fun, challenging and interesting," Padilla said, explaining that an athlete starts with swimming, transitions to cycling and ends with the running portion of the event. "Some [triathlons] are for adults, but will allow kids to compete. Normally you're competing against people your age."

Padilla currently trains with the Fury Tri team based in Katy, Texas under the instruction of certified and experienced coaches Meagan Davis, Robin Davis and Susan Abila.

Although he appreciates every transition of a triathlon, Padilla said he most enjoys the swimming portion, especially if it is in open water, like a lake or ocean.

"He just jumps in and goes," said Padilla's mom, Kerry with a laugh. "We enjoy watching him compete and it's impressive to see him and all the other kids compete at a levels like that. [Mike and I] don't compete in triathlons and I can't even imagine doing it."

"I swam 300 yards with him once," said Mike, laughing at the memory. "It's so much harder when there are so many people in the water with you. You go to take a breath, and whoa. The waves are harder than normal ... I told Carson, I'll never doubt how difficult it is when you're in the pool [competing]."



“And as long as he enjoys it, we will support him,” he added.

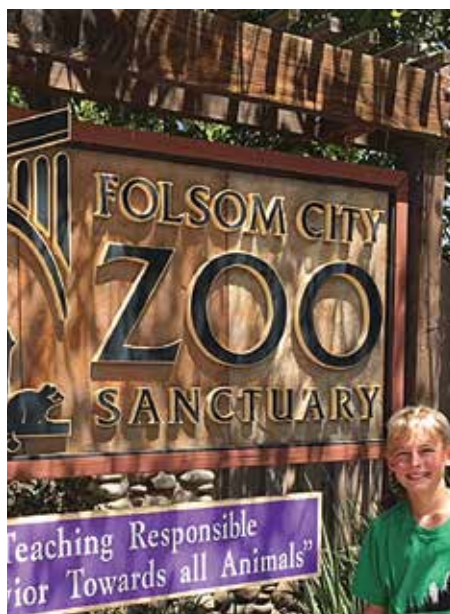
Padilla said he hopes to join the track team for his school, swim in the summer and find a cross country league to join as well. And he will most definitely remain a triathlete.

In fact, Padilla recommends that everyone give triathlons a try, at least once.

“Go for it, push yourself and do the best that you can,” he said. “I found the most important thing is to know your limits and know when to push past them.”



From left, Kerry, Carson, Mike and Maggie Padilla.





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# Volunteers praise the works of Reining Strength Therapeutic Horsemanship

by MARQUITA GRIFFIN | mgriffin@fbherald.com

Mandy Pike may have had some experiences with horses in her past, but her current comfort with Reining Strength Therapeutic Horsemanship has more to do with the atmosphere of the organization than her time in the horse world when she was a teenager.

"I've been away from the horse world for 25 years," Pike said with a laugh. "So there was a lot I had forgotten, but this place is a most welcoming organization that teaches you what you need to know. Every single day I learn something new."

For the past year Pike has volunteered, two to three times a week, with Reining Strength, a nonprofit in Richmond that provides programs for adults and children with physical, cognitive, social and emotional disabilities.

Through equine-assisted activities and therapies Reining Strength helps its clients reach milestones, overcome obstacles, and find a means to heal.

When she was first introduced to the organization through the Fort Bend Junior Service League, Pike didn't know one thing about it.

"But I was immediately taken by its purpose and mission," said Pike, who fondly recalled assisting a young girl with her first lesson at Reining Strength.

"She was so afraid," Pike said. "She didn't even want to touch the horse."

During that first lesson, Pike just introduced the girl to the horse. There was no riding, no pushing, just a sweet conversation that allowed the girl to see how gentle the horse was. Two months later Pike happened to be scheduled to work with the girl again.

"And she was sitting so tall and confident on that horse," Pike said, emotion creeping into her voice. "That

just got me. To see how her level of confidence grew ... to see how she changed, changed me."

As a volunteer Pike handles several tasks — "anything that is asked of me," she said with a laugh — from assisting with lessons as a sidewalker or leading the horse, but she is also enthusiastic about handling paperwork or cleaning.

"I respect the integrity [Reining Strength] gives to its clients," she said. "And I'm happy to do whatever they need me to do. I would tell anyone who wants to volunteer that their heart will be filled with joy because there is nothing but joy in this place."

## A Positive Experience for Everyone

Reining Strength employs a small full-time and part-time staff and is supported by nearly 60 active volunteers.

All of the instructors at Reining Strength who provide the adaptive riding lessons are PATH — Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International — certified riding instructors as well as Equine Specialists in Mental Health. The nonprofit's equine staff consists of various breeds, and each one has completed three to four months of training.

The volunteers, who are considered the backbone to the organization, are also trained to work with the horses and the clients, said Reining Strength co-founder and Executive Director Heather Hernandez-Sedillo.

"We have retired individuals, stay-at-home moms who help out while their children are in school, high school and college students looking for experience in helping professionals and [earning] service hours," she said, explaining the volunteers come from a variety of backgrounds.



Volunteers, from left, Debbie Singer, Mandy Pike, Phyllis Wolfe, Karen Harrell, Danielle Biermann, Jared Biermann and Heather Hernandez-Sedillo at the HLSR Top Hands Horse Show.



From left Verity Vonberg, Andres Cortez, Annalise MacKenzie, Lisa Rhodes, Alex Lovell and Sarah Brhlik showing off their ribbons at The Old 300 Horse Show.





To assist in lessons a volunteer must be at least 14 years old and complete volunteer orientation.

Reining Strength also draws working people as volunteers “who like to come after work or on Saturday mornings.”

“They sidewalk alongside the clients during their lessons and assist them with balance and support what the instructor is teaching,” she said. “We also have volunteers lead horses during lessons and assist in class set up and break down.”

Then there are the volunteers who help with the upkeep of the barn — cleaning tack, filling waters and sweeping.

“There is always something to do around here,” Hernandez-Sedillo said with a smile.

“Individuals do not need to have any horse experience, we will teach them what they need to know,” she stressed.

Volunteer Fran Zwick agrees.

“I find that a lot of the volunteers have never worked with horses,” said Zwick, who was one of the first volunteers when Reining Strength opened in 2014. “But the staff and the other volunteers here are always so willing to help you learn. Everyone is always sharing knowledge on how to advance and you will never be asked to do something you’re not comfortable with.

“They want everyone — the individuals, the staff, the volunteers, everyone — to have a positive experience.”

Volunteers are respected and revered at Reining Strength because it takes as many hands as possible for clients to reach goals. Hernandez-Sedillo stressed if the nonprofit had to hire leaders and sidewalkers for each class, “there is no way we could do what we do.” Some classes, she notes, requires a dozen people

to complete the lesson.

“That’s an incredible amount of help the volunteers provide,” Hernandez-Sedillo said.

“Our volunteers play such a vital role in the day-to-day operations of our programs,” said continued. “They enable us to serve more individuals [ and] without them we could not operate.”

Reining Strength is hosting four upcoming volunteer training sessions: April 9 at 4:30 p.m.; April 26 at 10 a.m.; May 15 at 4:30 p.m. and May 28 at 9:30 a.m.

Zwick, who retired from the oil industry, said she had volunteered with other charities while working in the industry and when she was retiring an opportunity arose for her at Reining Strength. The nonprofit was much smaller back then, she recalled. There were two riders and two horses.

“But that’s not the case anymore,” she said with a laugh.

As a volunteer Zwick is a leader and a side walker, grooms the horses and will help with special events, including the upcoming Derby Day Party set for May 4.

“I helped with the very first one,” she said of the nonprofit’s only fundraiser. “It started out small, 40 or 50 people were there. Now it’s up to 400.”

It’s a clear indication about how well-known and respected Reining Strength is in the community, Zwick said.

“There is just pure joy here,” she continued. “The volunteers give their heart and soul to help these individuals. It’s like [Reining Strength] gives people wings they didn’t have before.”

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## Being Valued and Celebrated

Just like its volunteers, Reining Strength continues to strive to make the community and the clients it serves proud, Hernandez-Sedillo said.

For the third year Reining Strength participated in the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo Top Hands Horse Show, which offers physically-challenged riders of all ages the opportunity to compete in six events.

Although the event does not name an overall winner, Reining Strength did win a saddle for its program.

"Which we're so excited to have because it is a size we have really been needing," Hernandez-Sedillo said.

"Our riders did so well, many [first place] belt buckles were brought home as well as trophies, but even more importantly, Top Hands allowed each of them to achieve something," Hernandez-Sedillo said. "They set goals, they competed, their skills were improved which in turn was translated into improved skills of daily living."

Hernandez-Sedillo went on to say that competing in an event like this goes far beyond awards. It's confirmation that every single rider is "valued and celebrated by our community."

"They get to compete just like everyone else, and just like everyone they had to earn what was received. They did not get first place ribbon just for showing up," she said. "Our hats are off to the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo Special Children's Committee's many volunteers who worked tirelessly to make this show so amazing."

"They really rolled the red carpet out for all the riders who



Jamie Chapman Shows off his First Place Ribbon from the Old Three Hundred Horse Show.

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Richard "RD" Sedillo and Heather Hernandez-Sedillo. RD, is a PATH Intl. Registered Instructor and Equine Specialist in Metal Health and Learning. Additionally, he trains riders as a Special Olympics Equestrian Coach. Heather, the co-founder and executive director of Reining Strength, she served as Co-Director at Texas Tech University's Therapeutic Riding Center where she was on faculty in the Animal Science Department prior to Reining Strength.

participated, and we are truly grateful," she said the pride and respect clear in her words.

Reining Strength is equally excited about the Fort Bend County Fair Old 300 Horse Show, which like Top Hands, is a show for equestrians with disabilities.

Last year was the inaugural year for the show and Hernandez-Sedillo said she, and Co-Chair Noell Myska "are thrilled that the Fort Bend County Fair readily opened their arms to welcome us to do it again."

The show is run by a committee of volunteers called The Old Three Hundred Committee. Held in the Tucker Arena, Reining Strength offers classes in Western & English Equitation and Trail.

"Noell and I were full of gratitude for all our friends and community members who stepped up to be on the committee and sponsor the show," Hernandez-Sedillo said.

"These events allow our clients to be included in major events in their community. Both the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo and the Fort Bend County Fair are large events [and] our clients are able to see that the community supports, welcomes, and accepts them as they are," she continued. "By working hard to compete in a horse show, our clients reach milestones without even realizing they are doing the work because it is fun."

Examples of such progress include: increased core strength so that individuals walk unassisted for greater distances, improved communication, better posture, improved fine and gross motor skills. Plus, having to memorize a trail pattern helps with sequencing and memory.

"The community has the chance to learn more about people with disabilities, see their strengths and support them as fellow citizens," she added. "It is a win-win for all."

### Support is Paramount

Reining Strength is truly a community organization, said Hernandez-Sedillo. And it encourages people, those in search for such services as well as those looking to support the organization to "call and schedule a 15 minute tour."



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Goals vary from client to client at Reining Strength. There is no one-size-fits-all approach to the adults and children who are in need of equine assisted activities.

Some parents are looking to have their child's muscles strengthened, others want to provide their child with a form of therapy that is not only physically beneficial but also provides them with a sense of community.

People, from those suffering from PTSD or depression to those diagnosed with Down syndrome and traumatic brain injuries, come looking to find a peace from emotional turmoil and a means to readjust to society.

To accomplish these important goals, Hernandez-Sedillo said the organization needs support.

Already, Reining Strength is a core placement for the Fort Bend Junior Service League, with its members volunteering time regularly. The nonprofit also received a grant from Fort Bend Cares, and was a beneficiary of a FBJS Sugar Plum Market funded grant.

"This grant funded the purchase of two new horse stalls, a new saddle and other equipment," she said, her gratefulness clear in her words. "Additionally, the FBJS grant covered some client assistance funds for riders in need.

"We need their support in many ways," said Hernandez-Sedillo. "Whether it be sharing their time and talent as volunteer, or coming out Derby Day and being a financial support, or being a spokesperson and telling others we are here."



Conner Cancino rides Whinny in The Old 300 Horse Show, lead by Fran Zwick, while Barbara Katsenes sidewalks.



Riders Verity Vonberg and Maddy Fleak learn about the parts of the horse from instructor Jessica Reyes.

## Details On The 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Derby Day Party



Once again Reining Strength is seeking volunteers, sponsors and guests at its annual Derby Day Party.

The 5th Annual Derby Day Party will be held from 3:30 - 7:30 p.m., May 4 in the Infinity Room at Safari Texas Ranch, 11627 FM 1464 in Richmond. Individual tickets are \$125 and sponsorships are available.

"All the excitement of the Kentucky Derby will be right here in Fort Bend County," said Hernandez-Sedillo.

The Kentucky Derby race will be live-streamed during the event and with a guest's entry, he or she will be able to get a horse to root for and if the horse wins, the guest will win a prize.

The evening will also feature a Lady's Hat Contest, a Gentleman's Boots-n-Bowties Contest, a live and silent auction and a wine pull. During the post parade guests will sing "My Old Kentucky Home" with a mint julep toast, just like what is done in Churchill Downs in Kentucky where the race is held.

"This event is Reining Strength's only annual fundraiser to help fund therapeutic horsemanship programs for children and adults with physical, cognitive, social, and emotional needs – including veterans," Hernandez-Sedillo said, adding that last year's event raised \$184,000.

"Those funds covered the costs of therapeutic horsemanship for our clients, including: caring for and managing our equine staff, all the components of a lesson such as equipment, volunteer training and management, instruction, and the cost of maintaining our facility.

"100 percent of our clients are on some form of rider assistance to make these services affordable to everyone – meaning they only pay 30 percent or less of the actual cost of a session."

**For more information about Reining Strength Therapeutic Horsemanship is located AT 7126 FM 359 in Richmond. Contact the organization at 832-451-6874, [www.reiningstrength.org](http://www.reiningstrength.org) or on Facebook at @reiningstrength.**

Whinny at sunrise at Reining Strength.



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## Support an amazing little girl named Annabelle

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

**T**he van Deursen family is seeking community support during a fundraiser for their daughter Annabelle van Deursen who was diagnosed in 2017 with a GNAO1 mutation, a rare mutation of the Protein Coding gene with about only 70 reported cases in children worldwide.

Individuals diagnosed with mutations on the GNAO1 gene suffer from seizures, mild to severe movement disorders and developmental delay. About 100 people worldwide have been identified as having a mutation on the GNAO1 gene.

"There is currently no cure for this GNAO1 mutation, but our goal is to change that through fundraising to give money to research to try to cure her," said Annabelle's mother Shelley, who added that her family is working closely with The Bow Foundation, which is dedicated to supporting GNAO1 families through enhanced research and increased awareness.

The organization is also raises funds to support research to benefit those with GNAO1 disabilities and other similar rare diseases and neurological conditions.

The van Deursen family is hosting Annabelle's Benefit — a 5K Run/1Mile Walk, raffle, and family fun morning to raise money for research for children affected by a GNAO1 mutation on April 13



Daniel and Shelley van Deursen with their children Annabelle and James. at 7:30 a.m. at No Label Brewery, 5351 1st Street in Katy, Texas.

The benefit goal is to raise \$20,000, which will be donated to The Bow Foundation.

"By giving to Annabelle's Amazing Graces, you'll be able to help us host a successful benefit for people in the community and ultimately raise awareness about the GNAO1 mutation, and help us to raise money for research to cure this mutation which has affected our daughter and other children in the world," Shelley said.

Donations can be made through the Annabelle's Amazing Graces foundation by emailing [shelley@annabellesamazinggraces.org](mailto:shelley@annabellesamazinggraces.org) or call at 281-814-7984.

Sponsorship opportunities are also available for the event. More information about Annabelle's Amazing Graces, Annabelle and the upcoming benefit visit [annabellesamazinggraces.org](http://annabellesamazinggraces.org)

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# 19 Fort Bend Martial Arts athletes headed for 2019 AAU National Championships

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

**A**fter earning 11 gold, six silver, and three bronze medals in Georgia, 19 Taekwondo athletes from Fort Bend Martial Arts in Richmond have earned the right to compete at the 2019 AAU National Championships, which will be held later this year.

The athletes competed on Feb. 16 at the AAU Taekwondo South Eastern National Qualifier held in Lawrenceville, Georgia.

Boasting gold medals were: Liam Laberge, in the 8-9 year old division; Makenzie Upton, Talvin Laroia and Nathan Oldroyd, who were in the 10-11 year old division; Yasmin Laroia, Jada Jones, Blake Laberge and Julian McCulloch, who were in the 12-14 year old division; Preston Hood and Ryan Mullen in the 15 - 17 year old division; and Madelyn Garcia, who was in the 18-32 year old division. Garcia also earned a silver medal.

Taking home silver medals were: Daniel Marcano, in the 10-11 year old division; Lauren Lauer and Taylor Garcia, who were in the 12-14 year old division; and Ty Billings and Amber Kowalowski

who were in the 15-17 year old division.

Bronze medalists were: Jayden Nelson, in the 8-9 year old division; Kane Miranda, in the 10-11 year old division; and Christian Garcia, in the 12-14 year old division.

Each of the athletes are members of Fort Bend Martial Arts which Developmental Teams, which the academy created in 2013 to maximize athletic ability, enhance and refine sports intelligence, focus on bilateral coordination and emphasize ambidexterity.

Since the creation of the Developmental Teams the academy has won 37 championship medals.

The 2019 AAU National Championships will take place in July in Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

Fort Bend Martial Arts plans to compete in two more national qualifiers, both of which will take place in Texas. One on April 13 in San Antonio and another on May 4 in Houston.



James Bowie Middle School sixth grader Yasmin Laroia, Sparring gold medalist and Pecan Grove Elementary fifth grader Talvin Laroia, Sparring gold medalist.



Houston Christian Academy sophomore Ryan Mullen, Sparring gold medalist.



From left: Blake Laberge, Sparring gold medalist; Liam Laberge, Sparring gold medalist; and Makenzie Upton, Sparring gold medalist.

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## The Pecan Grove Women's Club present details on downsizing

by **SHERYL FAIRCHILD**

**T**he Pecan Grove Women's Club will meet Tuesday, April 9 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 speaker, Liz McNeel, Downsizing Coach and Realtor, will present a program on the downsizing process.

The most commonly used word to describe the downsizing process is "overwhelming." In fact, many people find themselves paralyzed by even the idea of moving to a smaller space or just clearing out and organizing closets, attics and garages. Liz will

help remove the fear and inspire you to act — even if it's just a small step.

Please join us for lunch by calling or emailing Kay McNinch at 281-238-4002 (kkmcninch@yahoo.com) or Linda Saad at 281-342-8575 (lindasaad@gmail.com) to make reservations. 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.

## Catherine Lubbe Manuscript Prize awarded to Terry Miller

**P**ecan Grove poet Terry Jude Miller recently won the Poetry Society of Texas' Catherine Lubbe Manuscript Prize for his book, "The Drawn Cat's Dream." The book will be published later this year and will be available at Amazon.com. Miller also won the Georgia Poetry Society's Langston Hughes Award. Learn more about Miller at [terryjudemiller.com](http://terryjudemiller.com).



Miller speaking at The Honor Roll School's Career Day in Sugar Land, Texas.



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## 7<sup>th</sup> Annual “Strike Out” Autism Family Fun Day is the ‘grand slam’ event of the year

The excitement is brewing as the planning and preparation begins for Hope For Three’s Seventh Annual “Strike Out” Autism Family Fun Day. The event is slated for Sugar Land Skeeters opening weekend, April 28 at Constellation Field.

The sports anthem song “All I Do is Win” is on the playlist of the 2019 “Strike Out” Autism Team, which plans on winning not just on the field, but off the field, too. On opening weekend, there will be more than a battle on the diamond between the Sugar Land Skeeters and Southern Maryland Blue Crabs. One that day “Strike Out” Autism Family Fun Day will allow more than 7,000 fans to witness an experience for families living with autism.

During Strike Out, around 400 family members living with autism are treated to mid-afternoon fun and partake in one of America’s greatest past times — baseball. It is also an opportunity to educate thousands of spectators about autism spectrum disorders and its affect.

“I have served as a volunteer and staff member for “Strike Out” Autism Family Fun Day, and to see the impact it has on the families we serve, never gets old, said Samantha Katchy, Hope For Three Family Assistance Coordinator. “I get so excited to see the joy on the faces of the children and families, I cry happy tears every year.”

Returning as Skipper of the event is presenting sponsor Fred and Mabel R. Parks Foundation. Joining the Parks Foundation, are hundreds of volunteers, sponsors and underwriters, including the 18 Fort Bend County mayors, who, together with County Judge KP George will proclaim April Autism Awareness Month.

Autism families are treated to various pre-game festivities, food,



Signing up to ensure it is a “winning” afternoon for local autism families are several members of the “Strike Out” Autism Family Fun Day Committee. From left, standing: Pam Collins, Hope Collins Montgomery, Emily Gardner, Joan Soland and Mary Dorn; and seated: Mary Ann Gardner, Elizabeth Chipinski, Samantha Katchy and Darla Farmer.

fun and fellowship. There will also be a live and silent auction for all in attendance, including a custom designed autism Skeeters’ jersey worn by players event day. Fans will have a chance to win their favorite players jersey.

Game Day Tickets are \$12 each with half of the ticket price donated to Hope For Three. Fans must notate “H43” when purchasing tickets on Skeeters’ web site. Ticket sales and registration to volunteer, become a sponsor or attend as a guest family for “Strike Out” Autism Family Fun Day is now open, visit [hopeforthree.org/events/strike-out-autism-2019](http://hopeforthree.org/events/strike-out-autism-2019). More than 300 volunteers are needed event day. Family registration is on a first come-first serve basis. Additional information on Hope For Three can be found at [hopeforthree.org](http://hopeforthree.org) or call 281-245-0640.

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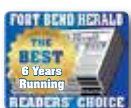
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## Rosenberg Lions Club announce vital projects

**T**he Rosenberg Lions Club, which donates to several charities in Fort Bend and supplies eyeglasses and contacts for local children, has announced it is accepting applications for the Texas Lions Camp.

This camp, made available to handicapped and diabetic children, provides a week of camp in Kerrville, Texas, with no cost to the family of these children.

Applications are currently being accepted for the various nine camps which begin in June and end in August. Camp sessions include children with physical disabilities, children with Down Syndrome and children with Type 1 diabetes. For more information contact Lion Chair Eugene Aufdembrink at [eaufdembrink@comcast.net](mailto:eaufdembrink@comcast.net) or visit the Texas Lions Camp website at [www.lionscamp.com](http://www.lionscamp.com).

Another major contribution Rosenberg Lions' makes to the community is in the form of scholarships to Lamar Consolidated ISD graduating seniors.

The scholarship is need-based and forms can be obtained from the school career facilitators at each of the schools or on the web site. The deadline for submission is Monday, April 15.

For more information contact the chairs for this program, Lion board member Judge Mary Ward and Lion President Vickie Lynn Tonn at [marymsw100@aol.com](mailto:marymsw100@aol.com) or [vickietonn@yahoo.com](mailto:vickietonn@yahoo.com), respectively.

## Child Advocates of Fort Bend announces gala theme

**E**xchange Club of Sugar Land will be the Moonlight Presenting Sponsor for Child Advocates of Fort Bend's 19th Annual Gala: "Up Up And Away" on Saturday, May 4 at 6 p.m.

Child Advocates of Fort Bend is a nonprofit agency dedicated



From left, front row: National Exchange Club President Scot Warren, Exchange Club of Sugar Land President David Lanagan and President Elect Vernon Hunt; back row row: Treasurer Duyen Le, Cookie Joe Arthur, Nora Sim, Child Advocates of Fort Bend CEO Ruthanne Mefford, Brad Porter and Secretary Vita Goodell.



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to ending child abuse by providing a voice, healing the hurt, and breaking the cycle of child abuse in Fort Bend County. Through its Court Appointed Special Advocates Program, Children's Advocacy Center and more than 200 trained community volunteer advocates, Child Advocates improves the lives of more than 400 children each month and has served more than 16,565 children since opening its doors in 1991.

The gala — a fun adult event — will take place at the Sugar Land Marriott Town Square and will feature a live and silent auction, raffle, wine and jewelry pulls, dinner and dancing. Michele Fisher will emcee for the eighth year. Johnny Bravo is joining her as auctioneer for a second time. Attire for the evening is elegant, colorful and festive. Black tie is optional.

Other early sponsors include: Blue Sky Sponsors OcuSOFT, Inc.; NOV; Sysco and Phoenix Sponsors Manmeet & Paul Likhari; Nalco Champion, An Ecolab Company; Next Level Urgent Care; The Design Firm; Rangeland Energy and many other companies and individuals. Sponsorship and underwriting opportunities are available ranging from \$2,000 to \$15,000. Individual seats are available for \$150. To attend the gala, become a sponsor, donate an auction item or for more information, visit [www.cafb.org/events/gala/sponsorship-opportunities/](http://www.cafb.org/events/gala/sponsorship-opportunities/) or contact Lisa Moore at 281-344-5108 or [lmoore@cafb.org](mailto:lmoore@cafb.org).

## Light of Hope to kick off Pinwheel Project

Child Advocates of Fort Bend, Exchange Club of Sugar Land and the Fort Bend County Sheriff's Office are collaborating to bring awareness about Child Abuse Awareness Month.

Hosted by the Fort Bend County Sheriff's Office, The Pinwheel Project will be held at Homestead Park at 1422 Eugene Heimann Circle in Richmond — directly across from the Justice Center.

This free community event is fun for the whole family. There will be food, games, inflatable bounce houses, face painting, a train, a petting zoo, music, prize giveaways and more.

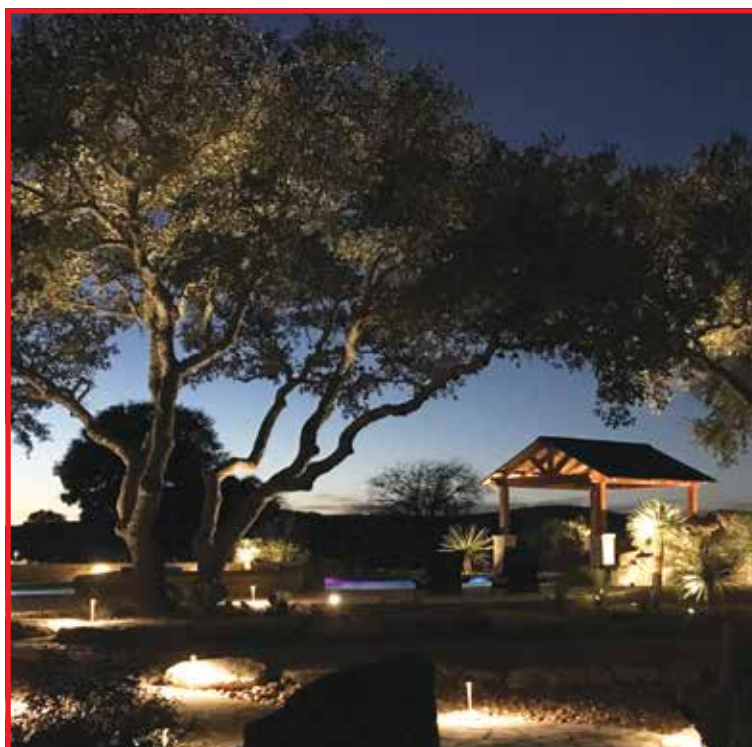
The Pinwheel Project will be Saturday, April 13 and it will open with Light of Hope. This will be the sixth year for the Sheriff's Office to host the Pinwheel Project.

"For sixteen years, Child Advocates of Fort Bend and Exchange Club of Sugar Land have partnered to bring awareness to April Child Abuse Awareness Month with Light of Hope," said Child Advocates of Fort Bend CEO Ruthanne Mefford. "We work very closely with the Fort Bend County Sheriff's Office and have supported The Pinwheel Project since its inception by hosting a booth, running games and providing materials and child abuse awareness information and we were absolutely thrilled when they offered us the opportunity to open their annual Pinwheel Project again this year."

This community event is the brainchild of Lesley Vaught, a detective with the Special Crimes Unit at the Fort Bend County Sheriff's Office.

Detective Vaught, who has been with the Sheriff's Office for 13 years, developed the project with her unit five years ago.

When they determined that they needed to do more to raise



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From left: Exchange Club of Sugar Land President, David Lanagan, Detective Dawn Welch, Sheriff Troy Nehls, Lt. Tiffaney Budnik, Detective Lesley Vaught, Child Advocates of Fort Bend CEO Ruthanne Mefford and Sergeant Tim Morris.



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awareness of child abuse in Fort Bend County, the Special Crimes Unit created the Pinwheel Project in observance of Child Abuse Awareness month.

"The Pinwheel Project is so important to me because it brings our community together and lets others know that we are here and we do care," said Vaught. "It gives people the opportunity to learn the signs of child abuse and how to report."

## Fort Bend Cares Moroccan Nights deemed a hit

Nearly 600 supporters enjoyed Fort Bend Cares' Moroccan Nights.

The non-profit's 14th Annual Road Trip gala was held at Fluor in Sugar Land. The crowd enjoyed an enchanting evening with jaw-dropping sword dancing, belly dancing and live music by Shark Bait. Party-goers also indulged in an incredible variety of delicious dishes from more than a dozen popular area restaurants.

Fort Bend Cares is thankful to Presenting sponsor Covia, Platinum Sponsors Fluor and Silver Eagle Distributors and Gold Sponsors Art Attack, Billy & Tammy Brown, Rice & Gardner Consultants, Inc, Gregg Engineering, and Don & Ellie Knauss.

The nonprofit also thanks the other generous sponsors, restaurants and attendees who helped ensure countless children

will receive much-needed services.

A silent auction, live auction, raffle, wine pull and Kendra Scott jewelry pull helped increase the fundraising total. Organizers were thrilled that the event raised more than \$150,000 that will be granted to Fort Bend non-profits serving disadvantaged children.

For more information, visit [www.fortbendcares.org](http://www.fortbendcares.org) or call 832-819-2005.



Performers from Sahira Professional Bellydancers with Vera, the Sword Dancer. See more photos on page 33.

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## SINGIN' IN THE RAIN JR.' OPENS APRIL 26

by ALISHA McMILLEN

Inspiration Stage presents Singin' in the Rain JR. at the historic Sugar Land Auditorium with four shows April 26 - 28. With a cast of young actors, ages 10 through 18, Singin' in the Rain JR. offers two evening shows and two matinees.

Singin' in the Rain JR. has the starlet, the leading man and a love affair that could change lives and make or break careers! In silent movies, Don Lockwood and Lina Lamont are a hot item, but behind the scenes, things aren't always as they appear on the big screen! Meanwhile, Lina's squeaky voice might be the end of her career in "talking pictures" without the help of a talented young actress to do the talking and singing for her.

Inspiration Stage is excited to announce a special guest director/choreographer, Michael Tapley, for this musical. Tapley is excited to work with this youth cast on one of his all-time favorite shows. He's played the role of Singin' in the Rain's Cosmo Brown three times — at the Maine State Music Theatre, Galveston Outdoor Musicals, and the Walnut Street Theatre in Philadelphia.

"We are ecstatic to welcome Michael Tapley to our artistic team for this toe-tapping journey to old Hollywood," said Inspiration Stage's artistic director, Mandy Seymore-Sensat. "Singin' in the Rain holds a special place in my heart and childhood as I watched it dozens of times as an aspiring dancer. I know Michael loves this show too and will inspire a new

generation to adore this fabulous piece of theatre."

Tapley began his professional career in 1973 at the age of 10 in Kismet starring MGM film actor Howard Keel at Theater Under The Stars (TUTS). Later he would work with other MGM greats like Eddie Bracken in HGO's Showboat in Chiro, Yvonne DeCarlo in Gypsy at The Windmill Dinner Theater, Deloris Grey in the first national tour of 42nd Street, Juliet Prowse in the National Tour of Mame, and Debbie Reynolds in the National Tour of The Unsinkable Molly Brown. Other national tours are Evita and The Who's Tommy playing the title role at DC's Kennedy Center and then on Broadway.

As a director/choreographer his work has been seen at Goodspeed Opera House, Seattle's 5th Ave., Theatre, The North Carolina Theatre, Kansas City Starlight, Lyric Theatre of Oklahoma, American Musical Theatre of San Jose, Galveston Outdoor Musicals and TUTS. Some of Tapley's favorite roles include Riff, Action, Arab and Baby John in West Side Story, Mike in A Chorus Line, Judge Turpin in Sweeney Todd, Jud Fry and Will Parker in Oklahoma, Tommy in Tommy and Alfred P Doolittle in My Fair Lady.

Tickets available for advance purchase at [inspirationstage.com](http://inspirationstage.com), or at the door before showtime. Shows run Fri. and Sat. night at 7:30, Sat. and Sun. afternoon at 3:30, April 26 - 28.

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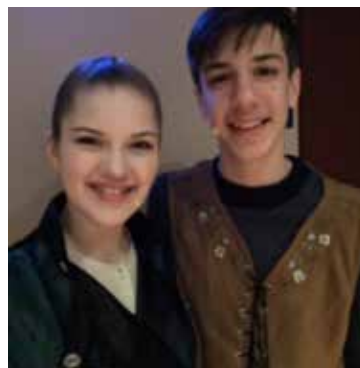
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Emily Adams received the Excellent Individual Performance by a Female Award and All-Star Award for her role as Baroness in Chitty Chitty Bang Bang JR., while Andrew Sackett received the All-Star Award for his role as Caractacus Potts.



Isabella Fish, Mia dela Garza, Patrick Cashion, Nate Sarlls, Holden Hagelberger, Madison Willett and Emily Adams received callbacks for the opportunity to appear in MTI instructional guide choreography DVDs distributed with its Broadway Jr. series of shows.



Photo by Erika Waldorf | Inspiration Stage's JTF West company performed Frozen JR. in the New Works Showcase and a 15-minute cut of Chitty Chitty Bang Bang JR. for festival adjudicators.



Inspiration Stage students with their trophies — one for performing Frozen JR. in the New Works Showcase, and one for Excellence in Music for their cut of Chitty Chitty Bang Bang JR.



## Magic was made at GiGi's Playhouse Sugar Land 4<sup>th</sup> annual fashion show

by ROBIN BEATTIE

**G**iGi's Playhouse Sugar Land 4th annual fashion show, "Make Your Own Magic" and luncheon took place March 1 at the Sugar Creek Country Club. GiGi's participants, friends, and volunteers strutted the runway in fashions provided by cabi, Tea Collection and Lululemon, and Jewels by Kendra Scott Sugar Land.

GiGi's Playhouse Sugar Land continues to receive outpouring

of community support.

This year's sold-out event was a huge success, raising more than \$50,000 in contributions.

"Today's fashion show and luncheon was really inspiring. It was amazing to see all our beautiful GiGi's participants and volunteers shine. We are extremely thankful for our generous supporters who make GiGi's Playhouse possible", said Sarah Stanfield, GiGi's Playhouse Sugar Land Board President.

Funding will be used for GiGi's Playhouse Sugar Land's free programming, education, therapies, GiGi's University, and year-round support for individuals with Down syndrome and their families. For more information about GiGi's Playhouse Sugar Land visit [igisplayhouse.org](http://igisplayhouse.org).



Photo courtesy of Saba Design Studio | Models and attendees alike, made magic happen at this year's GiGi's Playhouse Sugar Land 4th annual fashion show and luncheon. See more photos on page 32.

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## OPEN AUDITIONS AND SPRING CONCERT FOR THE FORT BEND BOYS CHOIR OF TEXAS

by **TIANA MORTIMER**

**S**inging in a boys choir is not only a time-honored ancient tradition, it is also one of the most effective ways to develop life skills in young boys.

If you know of a boy at least eight years of age or going into the third grade (with an unchanged voice) for the new 2019-2020 school year, he is eligible to audition for the Fort Bend Boys Choir.

Choristers learn many life lessons including responsibility, leadership, etiquette, citizenship, confidence and so much more. Open auditions will be held on Saturday, May 4 from 9 a.m. - noon at the First United Methodist Church-Missouri City, 3900 Lexington Blvd. in Missouri City.

Scholarships and payment plans are available in addition to carpool assistance.

Additionally, the Fort Bend Boys Choir will conclude its 37th concert season with a Spring Concert on Saturday, May 11 at 7 p.m. This event will be at Grace Presbyterian Church in Houston - just off the beltway at Westheimer. Tickets are \$15 for adults and \$5 for children 12 years old and younger.

Four ensembles - Training, Town and Tour Choirs and Music Magic (the music enrichment class of six and seven year olds) - will be showcased as they celebrate "Boy ... can they sing!" their 37th concert season's theme.

Call the Fort Bend Boys Choir office to schedule an audition at (281) 240-3800. Find out more about the audition process or how to purchase Spring Concert tickets online by visiting [www.fbbctx.org](http://www.fbbctx.org).

## 3RD ANNUAL ART WALK & MOTOR MADNESS

**H**istoric Richmond Association is announced it is partnering with the downtown merchants to bring the 3rd Annual ART WALK & Motor Madness, to historic downtown Richmond on May 4 from 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Both events will take place along the stretch of Morton Street between 2nd and 5th Streets. Classical car enthusiasts will be able to participate in the Motor Madness car show housed at City Hall, on Morton St. between 4th and 5th Streets.

Attendees will also find some of Houston's Art Cars on display, a community arts project for all ages to contribute, artisan vendors, food trucks and music throughout the day.

Morton Street merchants will open their stores for artists to showcase their works while working live and art lovers/attendees are invited to shop and sip wine while engaging with artists on the Art Walk.

Plein air painters and sidewalk chalk art competition will complete the unique experiences.

For more information, call 832-920-6769 or check us out on Facebook #artwalkrichmondtx.



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## MORE ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT HAPPENINGS

### LATINO ART NOW! EXHIBIT

At the George Memorial Library, the "Color Outside the Lines: Latino Art Now!" Exhibit will be on display in the Bohachevsky Gallery through May 19. Presented in collaboration with CAM Fort Bend, the exhibit features exquisite artwork created by 29 members of Latin American Women Artists, Houston from the Glassell School of Art of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.

### FOCUS ON LATINX ZINESTERS MINI-EXHIBIT

This mini-exhibit at the George Memorial Library features a display of zines (self-published magazines) from the collection of Anastasia Kirages, one of the organizers of Zine Fest Houston. The exhibit will be on display through May 31 in the second floor display case. Zines can provide a way to preserve personal narratives or provide a platform for marginalized voices and communities. This collection of zines portrays the extreme diversity of the Latinx community, challenging common stereotypes and illustrating true experiences and stories. Topics include activism, photography, gender, self-care, music, art, community, poetry and short stories.

### CREATING & MAINTAINING A SUCCULENT GARDEN

On April 4 at 2 p.m. in the meeting room of the Bob Lutts Fulshear/Simonton Branch Library, Fort Bend County Master Gardener Kathy Gilmore will talk about different varieties of succulents — ornamental, drought-resistant plants that have the ability to thrive on limited water sources. Get tips on picking and choosing succulents, planting them in pots, and taking care of them. Those attending this workshop will have an opportunity to create their own succulent mini-garden to take home with them.

### BOOK CLUB

On April 8 at 7 p.m., in meeting room 2 of the University Branch Library, the book to be discussed "When Breath Becomes Air," written by Paul Kalanithi. New members invited to attend.

### SPRING BOOK SALE

Friends of University Branch Library will host a Spring Book Sale, April 13 from 10 a.m.-2 p.m., in Meeting Room 1. Prices range from .25 cents 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.

### BOOK CLUB

The Fulshear Book Club will meet April 15 at noon in the meeting room of the Bob Lutts Fulshear/Simonton Branch Library. The book to be discussed is *Empire of the Summer Moon*: Quanah Parker and the Rise and Fall of the Comanches, the Most Powerful Indian Tribe in American History, written by S.C. Gwynne.

### CULINARY BOOK CLUB

The University Branch Library's Culinary Book Club will meet Apr 17 at 1:30 pm, Meeting Room 1. This month, the theme is "Asian & Middle Eastern Tea Party." 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! Meets on the third Wednesday of every month; different cooking genres are explored each month.

### OPEN-MIC NIGHT

On April 17 from 7 - 8 p.m. in the meeting room, the George Memorial Library will host Open-Mic Night, 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 is required to perform only.

### STORY SPINNERS WRITING CLUB

The George Memorial Library's Story Spinners Writing Club will meet April 18 from 5:30-8 p.m. in Room 2C. This month's topic will be "Foreshadowing." 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

The George Memorial Library will host a Book Break event on April 18 at noon in Room 2A. The book to be discussed is "Dead Wake: The Last Crossing of the Lusitania," written by Erik Larson. Those attending may bring a lunch.

### FULSHEAR NIGHT READERS GUILD

Bob Lutts Fulshear/Simonton Branch Library's reader's guild will meet Apr 22, 6:30 pm, Meeting Room. The book to be discussed is "The Ha-Ha," a novel written by Dave King.

### INTERNATIONAL COFFEE HOUR

Sharing a cup of coffee, exchange news or a corny joke, and chat with friends on April 29 during the George Memorial Library's monthly social hour — at 9 a.m. in the meeting room — celebrating 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.



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# April

## SIXTH RAILFEST 2019

The Rosenberg Railroad Museum's spring fundraiser — RailFest 2019 — will be held at 10 a.m. - 5 p.m. at the museum. Model trains, exhibits, food carnival and games will be featured. Admission is \$8 with children 2 years and younger being admitted for free. Visit [www.rosenbergrrmuseum.org](http://www.rosenbergrrmuseum.org)

## SEVENTH CAR WASH FOR KIDS

Teen volunteers from across the county "clean for a cause" to raise autism awareness for their peers. The annual Hope for Three event kicks off Autism Awareness month at C&C Dental Center, 17003 SWF, Sugar Land (behind Olive Garden on Sweetwater) from 10 a.m. - 2p.m. Visit [www.hopeforthree.org/events](http://www.hopeforthree.org/events)

## TWELVETH

### 10TH ANNUAL FORT BEND EMPTY BOWLS

Guests of the event will be served a delicious meal of soup and bread in recognition and support of our neighbors who don't have enough to eat. Fort Bend Empty Bowls will feature hand-painted bowls which have been donated by local professional artist, Albert Goldreich and other amateur artists in the area. These bowls will be available for purchase. There will also be bowl, silent and live auctions, a Wine Pull, Whiskey Pull and a Kendra Scott Jewelry Pull. Commissioner Patterson is serving as the event auctioneer. The event takes place from 6:30 - 9:30 p.m. at 1 Fluor Daniel Drive in Sugar Land.

## THIRTEENTH

### REDUCE, REUSE, RECYCLE

### & ROCK EARTH DAY CELEBRATION

From 1 - 5 p.m. in Sugar Land Town Square guests will be privy to entertainment including Andyroo & The Andyrooniverse and the Texas Snakes and more. Approximately 30 additional exhibits will provide interactive environmental activities that address recycling, upcycling, gardening, clean water, water conservation, tree care, clean air and nature appreciation. Visit [www.kslb.org](http://www.kslb.org).

### EARTH DAY CELEBRATION

The George Memorial Library will host an Earth Day Celebration from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Learn about ways to help the planet by reducing waste, and discover how to save money as well. Electric and hybrid vehicles from different automobile manufacturers will be on display in the south parking lot. Representatives from the North Fort Bend Water Authority will have their Mobile Teaching Lab on site. Representatives from METRO Star Vanpool will be in Room 2A to share information about their commuter services. Children are invited to stop by the Youth Services department for an "Earth Daisy" craft activity.

### EASTER EGG HUNT

The City of Rosenberg will host an Easter Egg Hunt from 10 -11 a.m. at Seabourne Creek Park, 3831 Highway 36 South. For children up to 12 years of age and kicks off with the arrival of the Easter Bunny, who has hidden thousands of plastic, candy and trinket-filled, colored eggs at the park. The egg hunt will be divided into four age groups: babies, children ages 4 and under, 5-8, and 9-12.

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## NINETEENTH

### MAGIC IN THE PLAZA

From 7 - 9p.m. in Sugar Land Town Square Plaze, Ted Schwank is pulling out all the stops with a brand new show called Pure Energy. This is Houston's most popular magical variety show featuring magic, juggling, illusions, balancing, singing, dancing, special effects, comedy and more. Plus celebrity DJ from 104 KRBE, face painting, games and prizes.

## TWENTY-SECOND

### EARTH DAY

The Texas Master Naturalist Coastal Prairie Chapter will celebrate Earth Day at Seabourne Creek Nature Park from 9 a.m. - 3 p.m. will all-day activities that include prairie restoration planting and walking tours with a Texas Master Naturalist. For additional information call 281-633-7033 or email mmcdowell@ag.tamu.edu.

## TWENTY-FOURTH

### ARABIA SHRINE CIRCUS 2019

With three rings of affordable family fun, "The Shrine Circus" will thrill fans of all ages. Come see the death-defying aerial acts, animal attractions including tigers and elephants. In addition to the performing acts, kids will have the unique opportunity to ride and pet different types of animals. The circus runs April 24 through April 28 at the Fort Bend County Fairgrounds.

## TWENTY-SIXTH

### AROUND THE WORLD ADVENTURE

St. Mark's Episcopal School will hold its annual gala "Around the World Adventure" from 6:30 - 9:30 p.m. Call 281-545-1296 or email schooloffice@stmarksfortbend.org for ticket information. Doors open at 6:15 p.m. at the school, 7615 FM 762 in Richmond. Food, a silent, live and dessert auction will be featured. Proceeds benefit the school's curriculum.

## TWENTY-SEVENTH

### AUTISM SPEAKS 8K AND 1K KID'S FUN RUN

With autism becoming the fastest-growing serious developmental disability in the US with 1 in 68 children diagnosed, Autism Speaks is looking to raise awareness while having a great time during the annual Houston 8K and 1K Kid's Fun Run in Sugar Land Town Square, from 7-11 a.m. Visit [act.autismspeaks.org](http://act.autismspeaks.org).

### SUGAR LAND JR. SUPERSTAR FINALE

Junior Superstar is back for its 14th summer from 7-9 p.m. in Sugar Land Town Square. Bring your lawn chairs to the Plaza and enjoy Sugar Land's American Idol-like competition for ages 9-13. The vocal battle is the Finale and one lucky winner will be named the 2019 Jr Sugar Land Superstar.



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## Child Advocates of Fort Bend swears in new volunteers

**C**hild Advocates of Fort Bend's CASA Program is a model program for foster children in the state of Texas. The agency assigns a volunteer advocate to every child in foster care in Fort Bend County to advocate for the best interest of the child while they are in care.

Eight community volunteers who completed their training last week were sworn in by the Honorable John Millard, Associate Judge of the 328th District Court. Those volunteers included: Karon Crockett, Mychelle Scott, Gayle B. Wooten, Ph.D., LaJonda McCoy, Ellie Roque, Vicky Tarpey, Carol Papenfuss and Elizabeth Hendrie.

CAFB is one of only three programs in the entire state that is able to provide an advocate for every child.



Associate Judge of the 328th District Court John Millard, swears in, from left: Karon Crockett, Mychelle Scott, Gayle B. Wooten, Ph.D., LaJonda McCoy, Ellie Roque, Vicky Tarpey, Carol Papenfuss and Elizabeth Hendrie.

## 100 trees planted at Seabourne Creek Nature Park

by MARGO JOHNSON

**A**s the year opened the Texas Master Naturalist Coastal Prairie Chapter planted trees in Seabourne Creek Nature Park in Rosenberg.

Everyone enjoyed being outdoors in nice weather and good company while improving this city park and doing something good for future generations, wildlife and the earth.

The many volunteers who made this happen included 16 Texas Master Naturalists, 11 scouts, their families and leaders from Rosenberg Troops 801 and 1630 and Fulshear Troop 941, 6 LDS young men and women and 6 other community volunteers. Thanks to rain earlier in the week the soil was wet and soft so they quickly planted around 100 large containers.

There are now many more native trees and shrubs in different areas of the park for all to enjoy including: 14 along the lake, consisting of a variety of oaks (white, water, red, shumard, overcup, willow), pecans, eastern red cedars, a green ash and an American sycamore; four in the edible garden (red mulberry, wax myrtle, dewberry, candlestick); one by the purple recycled water pipe at the marsh (wax myrtle); five in the bird sanctuary

(American beautyberry, button bushes and a red mulberry); 70 in the forested areas (pecans, wax myrtles, possum haws, button bushes, mayhaws, flowering dogwoods, Chickasaw plums, black gum tupelos, green ashes, a river birch, a white oak and a laurel oak); and eight along Seabourne creek (bald cypress).

Apache Corporation donated 85 of the smaller 5-gallon trees while the Texas Master Naturalist Coastal Prairie Chapter bought 16 larger 15-gallon trees for along the lake area.

Chapter member Linda Rippert, and son JD donated one oak tree grown in a pot from an acorn, which is already around 8 feet tall. It was planted near the butterfly garden. The Arboretum is also a work in progress.

The Coastal Prairie Chapter Texas Master Naturalists are sponsored by Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service. For additional information call 281-633-7033 or email [mmcdowell@ag.tamu.edu](mailto:mmcdowell@ag.tamu.edu). People can also visit [txmn.org/coastal](http://txmn.org/coastal).







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# Gigi's Playhouse Sugar Land 4<sup>TH</sup> Annual Fashion Show



Lily Stanfield



Alexis Villarreal



Kaleigh & Avery McDonald (right)



Sarah Brhlik

## Fort Bend County Day in Austin

*Photos by* **JOSH MERRITT** | Josh Merritt Creative



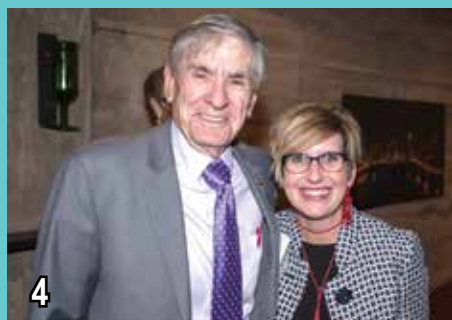
1



2



3



4



5

**1** From left: Anthony Francis-LJA Engineering, Angela Fritz, City of Fulshear, Patti Worfe, City of Stafford, Rachelle Kanak, Fort Bend EDC, Speaker of the House Rep. Dennis Bonnen, Marvin Marcell, FBC Commissioner Ken DeMerchant, Pct. 4, and Ahmad Alaswad-FBC Pct. 4

**2** Tess Doumas, Terra Associates Inc., Rick Ramirez-City of Sugar Land, and Fort Bend County Judge KP George.

**3** City of Meadows Place Alderman Terry Henley and Rep. John Zerwas.

**4** Rep. Phil Stephenson and Kristin Weiss, Central Fort Bend Chamber.

**5** David Hagy and Mac Flores, Texas Central Partners with Keri Schmidt, Fort Bend Chamber of Commerce.



# Fort Bend Cares Moroccan Nights a Hit



**1** Shane Hudson, Taft McWhorter, Jim Rice and Mary Favre.

**2** Fort Bend Cares Board Member Lisa Cohen and Board President Mary Joyce.

**3** Donna Croft, Road Trip Emcee Khambrel Marshall of KPRC and Alicia Klosowsky.

**4** Party-goers with Fort Bend Cares Board Member and FBISD Superintendent Dr. Charles Dupre (who was born in Casablanca,

Morocco) and his wife Seeju.

**5** Melanie Jackson and Amanda Heidemann

**6** Scott and Denise McKee

**7** Dr. Stephen and LeAnn Cyr.

**8** Caroline and Derek Cardno, and Sarah and Steve Webb.

**9** Kitee Valentz and Brooke Hudson.

**10** James Murray, Jen Murray, Maddy Maples and Alex Hohn

**11** Bridge Lavey, Natalie Gonzales, Chris Wilson, Val Wooters, Nick Ruiz, Dariana Soto and Brandan Spriggs of Audi Sugar Land.

## Calvary Episcopal Preparatory opens new pre-kindergarten program

by MARQUITA GRIFFIN | mgriffin@fbherald.com

Calvary Episcopal Preparatory has announced the opening of a new prek3 program for the 2019-2020 school year and just like with every one of the school's programs, the private school "will ensure that the pk3 class is staffed with qualified and certified personnel, in a safe, loving and nurturing Christian environment," said Headmaster Malcolm Smith.

Calvary Episcopal Preparatory continues to top the lists for parents looking for core enrichment classes taught by dedicated, highly trained teachers and for good reason, said Machele Delange, a CEP board member who helped research and approve the curriculum for the new prek3 program.

"Immersing children in an educational program at an early age has proven to be important," she said.

"Early childhood education is an important aspect of a child's social and academic development. So many PK3

programs are glorified babysitting and do not have a structure that prepares a child for school," Headmaster Smith added. "We can assure that the curriculum and instruction is aligned with all of the prerequisites necessary to be successful in future years."

And this is why Calvary is offering parents the prek3 program. Not only does its curriculum bridge prek3 to prek4 and then to kindergarten, it provides a smooth transition academically and spiritually.

As a parent of three children who attend Calvary and a dedicated Episcopalian, Delange remains heavily involved in the school — from helping in the classroom and leading chapel services to hosting events — so she knows firsthand the nurturing and encouraging environment of Calvary.

"Our enrichment programs at Calvary are amazing and our children have a true love for one another," she said. "The bond across all our grade levels is something truly special."

The curriculum for the prek3 program was designed to be developmentally appropriate to provide social interaction and academic challenge and engagement. Plus, the program's student-to-teacher ratio is low, with eight students to one teacher, and teacher's aids will be in the classrooms.

"The most important objective [of the program] is placing children in a school setting where they are challenged with an accelerated curriculum, build a daily routine and surrounded by a spiritual and loving environment," Delange added.

Since 1956 Calvary Episcopal Preparatory has been known as a school that provides a strong academic program in a Christian learning environment and its newest program will be an "addition to this reputation," said Headmaster Smith.

"Our hopes for the prek3 program are the same as that with all of our children at all grade levels: to dedicate ourselves to higher learning, provide superior education and instill pillars of faith.

"All encompassed with a love for learning and love for growing."

For more information about Calvary's prek3 program or the 2019-2020 Prospective Family Preview, visit [www.ces-richmond.org](http://www.ces-richmond.org) or call 281-342-3161.



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## 6 reasons your back hurts

**Y**our back is a feat of biological engineering. More than 33 vertebrae form the column that runs from your skull to your tailbone and between each is a cushiony disk, all held together by a web of ligaments and muscles. With all those moving parts, plenty can go wrong.

"Back pain is incredibly common, especially as we age," said Jeffrey B. Wood, M.D., board-certified orthopedic spine surgeon with the Houston Methodist Neuroscience & Spine Center at Sugar Land. "Fortunately, we can treat most cases of back pain without surgery."

Below are some of the most common causes of back pain:

- Heavy lifting or improper sports or exercise techniques. Repeated lifting or simply an awkward movement could cause a muscle or ligament strain.
- Bad posture. Sit at a desk all day? If you're hunched over papers or using a chair with little support, your back bears the brunt of it.
- Herniated disk. The vertebrae in your spine are cushioned by disks between each bone. When the soft material inside bulges or ruptures, it can cause pain by pressing on a nerve.
- Scoliosis. Adults experience pain from scoliosis (a sideways curve in the spine) when an existing curve worsens with age or a new curve develops.
- Arthritis. In its most common form, osteoarthritis, the cartilage breaks down around joints, making movement painful.
- Osteoporosis. Thinning of the bones, predisposes a person to fractures. Compression fractures may cause pain when bones become brittle and porous.

### FINDING RELIEF

Minor back problems — primarily those associated with strains or spasms — can be successfully treated at home with a combination of hot and cold compresses, rest and anti-inflammatory medications.

"Although you may be tempted to spend a few days recuperating in bed, movement is actually better for your pain," Wood said. "Try to keep up with your regular activities."

If your pain is debilitating, a spine specialist can perform an exam to help determine the source of your discomfort and prescribe a treatment plan that may include medications, physical therapy or injections to relieve pain. In severe cases, surgery may be needed.

"At our Neuroscience & Spine Center, our specialists work together to get you back to a productive life," Wood said. We offer expedited appointments, including second opinions, with our renowned specialists.

To schedule an appointment with Jeffrey B. Wood, M.D., or another specialist at the Houston Methodist Neuroscience & Spine Center at Sugar Land, go to [houstonmethodist.org/neuro-sl](http://houstonmethodist.org/neuro-sl) and fill out the online form or call 281.274.7979.

### BACK AND NECK PAIN SEMINAR

Join Jeffrey B. Wood, M.D., and Christian Pecorra, M.D., as they discuss causes, latest treatment options and prevention on Wednesday, April 17 at 6 p.m. in the Brazos Pavilion Conference Center. Registration is required. To register or find out more information, go to [events.houstonmethodist.org/backpain-sl](http://events.houstonmethodist.org/backpain-sl) or call 281.274.7500.



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## Houston Methodist Sugar Land offers 'Beat the Pack' program to help people quit smoking

**H**ouston Methodist Sugar Land Hospital continues to offer the community a proven program to help people quit smoking.

The complimentary program, called Beat the Pack®, was developed by Pfizer Inc. and is sponsored by Houston Methodist Cancer Center and Respiratory Therapy Department at Sugar Land.

Participants will meet once a week for four weeks with a trained facilitator from Houston Methodist Sugar Land who will provide tools, tips and support to help smokers create and follow through with a personalized "quit plan."

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

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

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

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

The next four-week series is scheduled to start on April 2, from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. in Houston Methodist Sugar Land's Main Pavilion Conference Rooms A & D. Sessions will also be offered beginning in July and November. Registration is required and space is limited. For more information or to register, visit [houstonmethodist.org/events](http://houstonmethodist.org/events) and search for Beat the Pack, or call 281.205.4514.

Visit the Facebook page at [fb.com/methodistsugarland](https://www.facebook.com/methodistsugarland) for the latest news, events and information.

## "WHAT IS GRIEF, REALLY?" —Grief support group series—

**H**ouston Methodist Sugar Land Hospital is offering a four-part series for Fort Bend and surrounding area residents who are coping with the loss of a loved one.

The series titled "What is Grief, Really? The Nuts and Bolts of Grieving" is designed to help participants learn about grief and understand the impact that grief has on survivors. Facilitated by the Department of Spiritual Care and Values Integration, these sessions are open to people of all faiths and provide a safe, welcoming environment where individuals can find support and share experiences.

The sessions are scheduled on four consecutive Tuesdays in April, beginning April 9, from 5:30 to 7 p.m. in the hospital's Main Pavilion Conference Rooms A and D. Dinner will be provided.

"Learning about grief – and hearing from others' experiences – can be a valuable part of healing for many people," said Tim Madison, director of spiritual care and values integration at Houston Methodist Sugar Land. "Too often people try to get past the loss of a loved one without fully exploring their feelings or understanding how grief can affect them both emotionally and even physically. These sessions give participants the opportunity to interact with others who have been through similar experiences and who share many of the same emotions."

The hospital's Grief Support Group series meets each fall and spring, offering participants a safe space to tell their stories, interact with each other or just sit and listen.

"Our goal is to provide an avenue for comfort and healing, recognizing that each person is different and has different needs," said Madison. "The Grief Support Group series can be beneficial to anyone who has lost a loved one – whether it was a recent loss or even one many years ago."

To reserve a place in the spring series, or to learn more about the Grief Support Group series, contact the hospital's Spiritual Care and Values Integration Department at 281.274.7164.

## HEALTH HIGHLIGHTS

### 2019 Stroke Walk

OakBend Medical Center will hold its annual "Stepping Out Against Stroke" walk on Saturday, April 13 with check-in and T-shirt pick up beginning at 8 a.m. and the festivities beginning at 8:30 a.m. Registration must be done online at [bit.ly/strokewalk2019](http://bit.ly/strokewalk2019). Registration is free and participants are encouraged to wear their superhero best. The event will include activities for children, music and information on stroke prevention and awareness.

This year, the walk will be held at George Park, 2155 Collins Road, Richmond. The route will wind through the park with opening and closing activities at the pavilion.

Fort Bend County businesses, organization and individuals are invited to partner with OakBend on this event.



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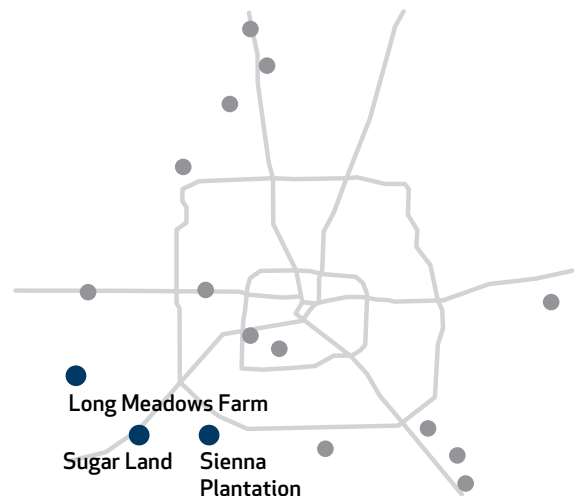
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