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Katy Times



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THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 2026

Jay Neal named Grand Marshal of 2026 Katy Rice Harvest Festival Parade

UH leader will help revive Grand Marshal tradition while celebrating continued investment in Katy's students and community

CONTRIBUTED REPORT

The Katy Rice Harvest Festival announced on September 10 that Jay A. Neal, Ph.D., Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs

and Chief Operating Officer for the University of Houston at Sugar Land and Katy, will serve as Grand Marshal of the 2026 Katy Rice Harvest Festival Parade. The parade will begin at 9 a.m. Saturday, Octo-

ber 3, in historic downtown Katy. Neal will be the first Grand Marshal honored since the City of Katy assumed leadership of the festival. "His selection renews a cherished festival tradition while recognizing an exceptional education advocate, community leader and friend of Katy," the announcement said. Neal provides executive leadership for the University of Houston's instructional sites in Sugar Land

and Katy, which collectively serve more than 6,000 students. He oversees strategic growth, academic programming, community engagement, workforce development and regional partnerships. He also serves as an Associate Professor in the Conrad N. Hilton College of Global Hospitality Leadership and has held academic and administrative leadership positions at UH



See **PARADE**, page 3 Jay Neal

HCC celebrates president's 50 years of service

CONTRIBUTED REPORT

Houston City College (HCC) recognized HCC NW President Zachary Hodges as he marked a milestone 50 years of dedication, leadership, and service to the college system and the Greater Houston community, including 31 years as president of HCC Northwest. The celebration took place on September 4 at the West Houston Institute, 2811 Hayes Road in Houston. Hodges began his career with HCC in 1976 as the institution's very first campus-based counselor. During the past five decades — 31 of which he has spent leading Northwest College—his visionary guidance

See **HODGES**, page 3



PHOTO BY SUSAN ROVEGNO

Tracy Janda, chairperson of the Foundation Board at Houston City College (left) announces a special endowed scholarship for engineering at HCC, in honor of Zachary Hodges, president of Houston City College Northwest (right) recognizing his 50 years of service to the college system. Hodges was also saluted with a declaration from the office of Texas State Representative Lacey Hull, during a special celebration held September 4 at the West Houston Institute, 2811 Hayes Road in Houston.

Harris County Precinct 4 advances \$27.3 million flood project in Bear Creek Village

FROM STAFF REPORTS

Bear Creek Village is finally getting some flood relief. The neighborhood near Clay Road at Highway 6 was hit hard during Hurricane Harvey, in part because its underground storm sewers and curb-and-gutter streets could not move heavy rainfall out of the neighborhood fast enough, Harris County Precinct 4 officials said in a September 4 email newsletter. Harris County Commission-

er Lesley Briones and the Precinct 4 team are fixing that with a \$27.3 million drainage overhaul that reconstructs streets, upsizes underground pipes, and builds dedicated stormwater channels to protect the neighborhood's 2,300 homes. On August 6, Commissioners Court advanced the second and final stage of construction. The \$15.4 million second stage builds new drainage channels through

See **RELIEF**, page 3

LOWE'S OFFICIALLY OPENS AT TEXAS HERITAGE MARKETPLACE



PHOTO COURTESY OF LOWE'S

City of Katy Mayor Dusty Thiele (center, with power tool) cuts the ceremonial board to officially open the new Lowe's at Texas Heritage Marketplace at 981 Heritage Oak Lane in Katy on September 4. Joining the mayor are (left to right) City Council member Paul Follis, Mayor Pro Tem Gina Hicks, Lowe's Store Manager Mike Spall, city council members Michael Meihls and Johnston Dietz, the Fulshear High School cheerleaders and the Lowe's Bucket. The 95,000 sq. ft. facility will employ more than 100 associates, officials said. During the grand opening celebration, Lowe's presented \$1,000 checks to the Katy Police Department, the Katy Fire Department and local nonprofit Eyes On Me, which operates The Hangar in Brookshire.



CITY OF KATY COMMEMORATES 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF 9/11/2001

City of Katy Mayor Dusty Thiele (left) presents a proclamation in honor of the 25th anniversary of 9/11 to Jeff Williams (center), senior Vice Commander of VFW Post 9182 of Katy, as Councilmember At Large Paul Follis (right) looks on. The ceremony took place at City Hall, 901 Avenue C in Katy, on September 11.

PHOTO COURTESY OF CHRIS HARRIS

Katy father urgently seeks living kidney donor

BY SUSAN ROVEGNO
PUBLISHER

Nathaniel Eguzouwa is seeking your help — and he needs it in a hurry. The Katy resident — a husband and a father of five — is urgently searching for a living kidney donor. "I am fully approved for transplant, and my medical team can move forward as soon as a donor is found," Eguzouwa said in his urgent plea to the Katy Times. Eguzouwa and his family live in Old Katy in the Falls at Green Meadows community, having moved to Katy in 2019. Four of his five children currently attend Katy ISD, and the youngest began pre K on September 8. The 46-year-old is



PHOTO COURTESY OF NATHANIEL EGUZOUWA

Nathaniel Eguzouwa (seated, far right), a Katy father of five, is urgently searching for a living kidney donor and is asking for the community's help.

See **DONOR**, page 3

Katy resident claims \$1 million scratch ticket prize

CONTRIBUTED REPORT

A Katy resident claimed a top prize winning ticket worth \$1 million in the Texas Lottery® scratch ticket game 200X The Cash, lottery officials announced on September 1. The ticket was purchased at Kroger 733 at 1550 W. Grand Parkway S., in Katy. The claimant elected to remain anonymous. This was the second of four top prizes worth \$1 million to be claimed in this game. 200X The

See **WINNER**, page 3

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Katy Pride returns for 4th annual celebration on Oct. 3 at Bear Creek Rodeo Arena

CONTRIBUTED REPORT

Katy Pride LGBTQ+ Inc. has announced its 4th Annual Katy Pride Celebration, taking place Saturday, October 3, from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Bear Creek Rodeo Arena, 3230 Highway 6, Houston.

The Pride Celebration festivities begin with the Katy Pride Kick-Off Party on October 1 at 6 p.m. at Home Run Dug-out, 22819 Mercantile Parkway in Katy, featuring a live performance by Texas country artist Paige Lewis. Tickets are now on sale at <https://givebutter.com/katy-pride-kick-off-party-2026-hzweww?gbtid=9312e6d6-3137-4811-a50e-035640dad83f>

With this year's western-inspired theme, "Stand Tall, Y'all," Katy Pride invites the entire community to come out to Bear Creek Rodeo Arena on October 3 to enjoy a day of live entertainment, family-friendly activities, local vendors, food, and community connection in a welcoming and inclusive environment. Admission and on-site parking are free, and the event will take place rain or shine.

Katy Pride will also recognize three individuals who embody the spirit of community, inclusion, and advocacy: Grand Marshal: Cameron Stodghill; Ally Grand Marshal: The Honorable Lesley Briones, Harris County Commissioner Precinct 4; and Youth Grand Marshal: Hailey Sommerfeldt. The Grand Marshals will be recognized during the October 3 celebration for their contributions to the community and their commitment to creating a more welcoming and inclusive Katy and surrounding areas. They will lead the Parade Around the Park at 11:30 a.m.

The celebration will feature performances throughout the day from acclaimed indie-folk

artist Olive Klug, along with Sweet Petunia, Sarah Golden, and crowd favorite DJ Crazy V, who will keep the celebration going all afternoon.

Families can enjoy an expanded kids zone featuring a petting zoo, inflatables, interactive games, face painting, and other activities designed for children of all ages. Guests can also explore local community vendors, enjoy a variety of food trucks, and purchase beer and wine during the event.

"We're incredibly excited to welcome the community back for our biggest celebration yet," said Kristina Shackelford, director of Pride Celebration for Katy Pride LGBTQ+ Inc. "Every year, our goal is to create a space where everyone feels welcomed, celebrated, and connected. This year's event reflects the incredible growth of our organization and the support we've received from our community."

Katy Pride extends its sincere appreciation to Harris County Precinct 4 Commissioner Lesley Briones and her staff for once again providing a space where the community can gather to celebrate diversity, inclusion, and belonging, Shackelford said.

About Katy Pride LGBTQ+ Inc.

Katy Pride LGBTQ+ Inc. is a volunteer-led 501(c)(3) non-profit organization committed to empowering the LGBTQ+ community in Katy and the surrounding areas through advocacy, education, inclusive events, and community connection. Its mission is to foster a welcoming environment where every individual can live authentically and safely while promoting acceptance, equality, and belonging for all.

COMMUNITY EVENTS



Harris Co. Pct. 4 observes 'Patriot Day' on Sept. 18

Join the Harris County Precinct 4 team from 9 to 10 a.m. on September 18 for a solemn Patriot Day ceremony. The event will take place at the Weekley Community Center, 8440 Greenhouse Road in Cypress.

'Pie a Politician' at Relay for Life of Katy's Sept. 19 fundraiser

If you've ever wanted to throw a pie in the face of your favorite local Katy politician – now is your chance. Relay for Life of Katy, which raises funds to support cancer research, will hold its "Pie A Politician" fundraiser on September 19 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Old Katy Farmers Market at The Dryer, 5339 E. Third Street in Katy. \$20 per pie. Confirmed participants include City of Katy council members Paul Folliis, Michael Meihls and Johnston Dietz, as well as former Mayor Pro Tem Chris Harris. You might say they are finally getting their "just desserts."

Red Robin in Katy to host book signing event for 'Billy Monkey Stays Up All Night' Sept. 19

Author Sheri Sanderson will sign copies of her new book – "Billy Monkey Stays Up All Night" – from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. on September 19 at Red Robin, 23318 Mercantile Parkway in Katy. Every parent knows the child who insists, with total confidence, that they are staying up all night. Author, illustrator, and Licensed Professional Counselor Sanderson has turned that familiar standoff into a warm, funny bedtime read with her new picture book. The story follows Billy, a silly little monkey who announces he is not going to bed. While his tired mom and dad head

upstairs, Billy stays up to do all the important business of a monkey who refuses to sleep. Sanderson writes from the experience that most children's authors do not have. As a Licensed Professional Counselor and National Certified Counselor, she works with children every day on anxiety, attention, behavior, and the bedtime and sleep struggles that come with them. That background shows up in the book's gentle, knowing sense of humor about a child who wants to stay in charge of the night.

"Billy Monkey Stays Up All Night" is Sanderson's return to publishing. She previously wrote the first book "Incredible Edible - Gluten-Free Food For Kids" in the United States for parents of children with gluten intolerance, a title that sold more than 18,900 copies.



Celebrate fall's arrival at The Sugar Cube on Sept. 22

Kick off the fall season at the special Fall Launch Mini Market celebration on September 22 from 4 to 8 p.m. at The Sugar Cube, 123 FM 1463 in Katy, in the Ya Ya Club courtyard, across from Katy High School. The event will feature special pop-ups from your favorite local vendors and cozy fall photo opportunities.

Friends of Willow Fork Park present 'Rails, Trails and Wildlife: Willow Fork Park Heritage Tour and Accessible Nature Walk' on Sept. 24

The Friends of Willow Fork Park will host a special program on September 24 from 9 to 10 a.m. in conjunction with the eighth annual Houston Bird Week, an annual celebration of our area's important role in the lives of billions of birds with events for all. "Rails, Trails and Wildlife: Willow Fork Park Heritage Tour and Accessible Nature Walk" will feature a guided walk through Willow Fork Park. Learn about the park's history before it became a modern green space. Visit the park's railroad exhibit, explore the unique ecosystem, and see and hear firsthand the

rich biodiversity that the park has to offer. Willow Fork Park serves as an ideal canvas for a combined tour of history and nature. It is a thriving multi-habitat refuge year-round that plays a vital role in bird migration and habitat support with features including managed bluebird nestboxes, a purple martin nesting box, bird feeding stations, a central lake, a certified Monarch waystation, and low-lying shrubs to tree canopies.

Because Willow Fork Park features wide, flat concrete paths, it is accessible to folks with mobility issues and aligns with the principles of "Birdability." Additional features of the park: rail exhibit, open lawns, 15 species of trees, free wi-fi, educational signage, pavilion, boardwalks, playground, picnic tables, restrooms, free to the public, family-friendly. This free program will also include a bilingual assistant.

The program will be co-hosted by Wild Birds Unlimited Memorial Drive Houston and Friends of Willow Fork Park. Neil Stillman, President Friends of Willow Fork Park, will lead attendees through the history of the park and will guide the nature walk with assistance from the WBU team of Richard Edie (store owner), Yarely Correa (bilingual), and Lori Coyle (YPAC member). Registration for the event is now open at birdshouston.org/birdweek. For more information about Houston Bird Week, go to <https://birdshouston.org/programs/birdweek/birdweek.html> Willow Fork Park was developed by Willow Fork Drainage District in collaboration with Katy ISD and is located at the northwest corner of 99/Grand Parkway and Cinco Ranch Blvd., north of Cinco Ranch High School.



Annual 'Friends of the Library' meeting set for Sept. 25 at Katy Library

Join the staff at the Katy Branch Library, 5414 Franz in Katy, at 1 p.m. on September 25 to learn more about the Friends of the Library and how they support the library, including ways that you can get involved. New and prospective members are encouraged to attend.

Swing 'fore' a cause at The Ballard House Charity Classic on Oct. 26

FROM STAFF REPORTS

Support The Ballard House at The Ballard House Charity Classic from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. on October 26 at Willow Fork Country Club, 21055 Westheimer Parkway in Katy.

The charity event will benefit the nonprofit which provides free housing to medical patients traveling to the Houston area for medical treatment. Sponsorship opportunities range from \$1,000 to \$10,000.

Individual golfers may play for \$250, which includes golf and cart for one as well as breakfast and lunch, or teams of four can participate for \$800 or for \$900 for the premium team package, which includes mulligans. Reserve your spot at <https://wl.donorperfect.net/weblink/weblink.aspx?name=E347559&id=27> and help make a meaningful impact for the families served by The Ballard House.

To learn more about The Ballard House, go to www.theballardhouse.org.



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WINNER

from page 1

Cash offers more than \$115 million in total prizes. Overall odds of winning any prize in the game are one in 3.41, including break-even prizes.

For selling the prize winning ticket, the retailer may be eligible for a \$10,000 bonus under the Texas Lottery’s Retailer Bonus Program.

RELIEF

from page 1

the Addicks Reservoir and regrades streets in the eastern section of the subdivision, with construction running from fall 2026 through early 2028.

The first stage, completed in fall 2024, invested \$11.9 million in street regrading, roadway and driveway re-construction, and significant storm sewer upsizing.

The project goes beyond flood protection, the newsletter said. “Preventing deep street ponding also means fire, EMS, and Sheriff’s deputies can safely reach residents during major storms,” according to the newsletter.

DONOR

from page 1

trained as a chemical engineer and cybersecurity analyst and is currently working as a project manager.

“I was born with a condition known as sickle beta thalassemia,” Eguzouwa said. “This is a lifelong blood disorder that causes red blood cells to become rigid and sickle shaped. Over many years, these abnormal cells can block blood vessels and reduce oxygen delivery to vital organs. As a result, people with sickle beta thalassemia often experience progressive organ damage, including to the kidneys, liver, and spleen, due to chronic inflammation, repeated pain crises, and ongoing strain on the body.”

In 2014, he underwent an experimental treatment that successfully cured the disease. However, by the time of the treatment, the condition had already caused significant kidney damage. His kidney function had dropped to 40 percent. Eguzouwa began seeing a nephrologist immediately, but despite excellent care, his kidney function continued to decline. Today, it is at just four percent.

“Because of this decline, my nephrologist referred me to the kidney transplant team,” Eguzouwa said. “I was officially placed on the transplant list last year, and I began dialysis this past April. In addition to media and newspaper outreach, several family members and friends have stepped forward to be evaluated as potential donors. Unfortunately, each was ruled out due to preexisting medical conditions.”

Texas has one of the largest transplant waitlists in the country, and many families like his face long delays, Eguzouwa said in the email. “My blood type is A, and potential donors can live anywhere in the United States. All testing is free, confidential, and coordinated through Houston Methodist’s transplant network. My transplant team provided a secure screening link for anyone willing to be evaluated: <https://houstonmethodistlivingdonor.org/>.”

Officials at Houston Methodist West were unable to confirm or deny Eduzouwa’s request due to confidentiality policies.

AMERICAN LEGION COMMEMORATES 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF 911



Dennis Wells, commander of Katy’s American Legion Post 164, leads special ceremonies held in partnership with the American Legion Auxiliary in recognition of the 25th anniversary of 911 at the post at 22125 Kingsland Blvd. in Katy on September 11. The event included the ceremonial ringing of the firefighter’s bell signaling the end of a duty shift that will never be completed again. City of Katy Mayor Dusty Thiele lay the commemorative wreath and also presented a proclamation. The keynote speaker was Daniel Rodriguez (inset), Chief Operations Officer for Harris County Precinct 4, who joined the Marines after 911. “My country needed me,” he said. Texas State Representative Mike Schofield also spoke at the event.

PHOTO BY SUSAN ROVEGNO

PARADE

from page 1

for more than two decades.

An active leader throughout Katy and Fort Bend County, Neal serves on numerous boards and advisory committees focused on education, economic development and workforce advancement. His work has helped strengthen partnerships among education, industry and government while expanding academic and career opportunities throughout the Greater Houston region.

His selection is especially meaningful as the University of Houston returns for the second consecutive year as Presenting Sponsor of the Katy Rice Harvest Festival. Through annual contributions of \$20,000 in both 2025 and 2026, UH has invested a combined \$40,000 in the festival and its mission.

Organized by the City of Katy in partnership with the Rotary Club of Katy, the festival directs its net proceeds toward scholarships for local students and grants supporting community organizations. UH’s continued sponsorship helps preserve one of Katy’s most treasured traditions while creating an impact that extends far beyond festival weekend.

“We could not be more excited to welcome Dr. Neal as our Grand Marshal and to bring this special tradition back to the Katy Rice Harvest Festival,” said City of Katy Mayor, Dusty Thiele. “Dr. Neal has become a valued partner and friend to our community, and this is a wonderful oppor-

tunity to recognize his leadership while thanking the University of Houston for standing behind our festival, our students and our local organizations for many years.”

Kaci Maris, Tourism and Marketing Events Coordinator for the City of Katy and festival organizer, who attended the C. T. Bauer College of Business at the University of Houston as a Terry Foundation transfer scholar, also understands firsthand the difference scholarship support can make.

“Being a scholarship recipient myself, I know firsthand just how life-changing that support can be,” Maris said. “That is why UH’s continued investment in this festival means so much to me. Their support is helping us create those same opportunities for local students while also giving back to organizations doing incredible work throughout our community. I am so excited about everything the University of Houston is bringing to Katy and Sugar Land, and we are truly grateful to have such a supportive partner right here in our own backyard.”

The parade will travel through historic downtown Katy on October 3. The celebration will continue October 10–11 when the 2026 Katy Rice Harvest Festival returns with live entertainment, family attractions, food, shopping and tributes to Katy’s rice-farming heritage.

For more information, visit katyriceharvestfestival.com.

HODGES

from page 1

helped shape HCC from its early formative years into a nationally recognized higher education institution. Under his more than three decades of presidential leadership, Hodges spearheaded key expansion initiatives across Katy, Spring Branch, and Alief, significantly broadening access to higher education and workforce development.

Key achievements of Hodges’ 50-year tenure include:

- 31 years of Presidential leadership: Serving three decades at the helm of HCC Northwest, guiding the region through exponential student growth and infrastructure expansion.
- Campus and regional expansion: Leading the development and growth of major regional facilities, including the state-of-the-art Katy Campus on Colonial Parkway, as well as the Alief Campus and the West Houston Institute.
- Academic and workforce pathways: Establishing seamless four-year degree transfer opportunities through strategic engineering academies with Texas A&M University, the University of Texas at Tyler, and the University of Houston.
- Entrepreneurship and Innovation: Champi-

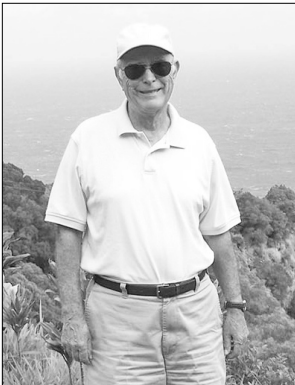
oning small-business growth by helping launch the HCC Business Plan Competition with Newspring and starting the HCC Center for Entrepreneurship and the Goldman Sachs 10,000 Small Businesses program.

• National recognition: Earning honors as the Entrepreneurial President of the Year by the National Association for Community College Entrepreneurship (NACCE) and being named a finalist for Chief Executive Officer of the Year by the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC).

Reflecting on his half-century at HCC, Hodges credits the surrounding team and community partners: “It has been the honor of my life to serve our students and help build pathways for their success during these past 50 years. Everything we’ve built—from local workforce partnerships to world-class transfer programs—is a testament to the dedicated faculty, staff, and community leaders who work together every day.”

For more information about Houston City College Northwest and its programs, visit hccs.edu/northwest.

TRIBUTE



FREDERICK IRWIN (FRED) WHITE
2026

Former Katy, Texas, resident, Frederick Irwin (Fred) White, age 93, most recently of Stallings, North Carolina, passed away peacefully, on August 9, 2026, with his wife, Carol, by his side. Born in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, Fred was the only child of Alice Bell and John Irwin White. The family later relocated to Toronto.

Fred was an honor student in his primary and secondary school years, then continued his education by earning a law degree from the University of Toronto, and an MBA from the University of Chicago.

Career highlights include working as a tax attorney for ExxonMobil in New York City, and as a tax council for the Dillingham Corporation in Honolulu, Hawaii. After retiring from Dillingham, Fred relocated to the Houston, Texas, area, becoming a licensed real estate broker, specializing in corporate properties. Fred and Carol later returned to Hawaii to spend their golden years.

In addition to his wife, Carol, and her children, he leaves to mourn his twin daughters, from his first marriage: Marie White, and grandchildren Michael (Caitlyn), Thomas (Kim), Amy (Dany), and Elizabeth (Alex); and Louise Beggs (Bruce), and grandchildren Paul (Chau), David (Diana), and Ben (Daria). He is also survived by eleven great-grandchildren. From a second marriage, Fred leaves his son, Tom White (Heather), and grandchildren Spencer, Hailey, Logan, and Lucas, as well as stepdaughters, Edith Fung (Tony), grandson, Matthew, and Clare Lin (Hans).

Fred’s family will celebrate his life privately. Donations may be made to the Hawaii Food Bank.

CORRECTION

In our September 10 cover story on the Rice Harvest Festival Parade, the date was incorrect in the headline, although it was correct in the story. The correct date for the parade is October 3. The story headline has been corrected on the online story on katytimes.com. The Times regrets the error.

THEME: MOVIE QUOTES

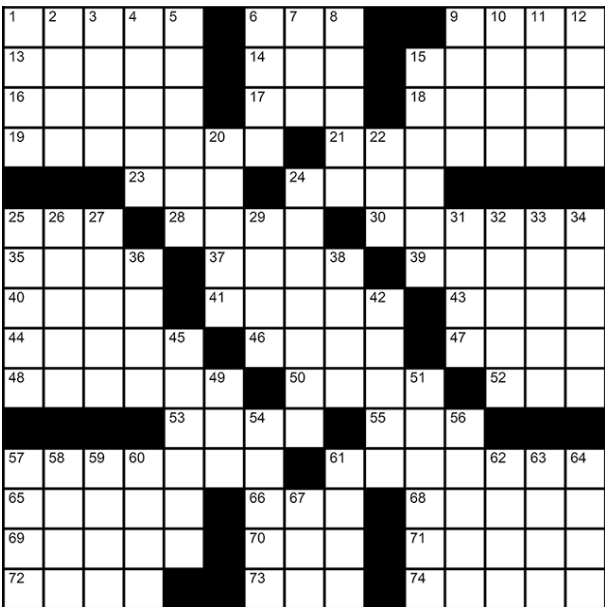
CLUES ACROSS

1. Give benediction
6. World’s oldest broadcasting company, acr.
9. Hoodwink
13. H, spelled out
14. Have a cold, e.g.
15. Dogma
16. Raja’s wife
17. Shel Silverstein’s constrictor
18. Extreme, prefix
19. * “____, my dear, I don’t give a damn”
21. * “Why so ____?”
23. “High” beverage
24. Fairytale’s second word
25. “Swan Lake” step, e.g.
28. Potassium hydroxide solution, pl.
30. Nincompoop
35. Month of Purim
37. At any time
39. Coastal town in southern England
40. Flick part
41. 4 x 4 race
43. Like most Brothers Grimm stories
44. “Peer Gynt” playwright
46. Actress Campbell
47. Please do not delay, acr.
48. Experienced sailor (2 words)
50. Dispatched
52. a.k.a. Tokyo
53. Window guards
55. Beer faucet
57. * “I’m mad as hell, and I’m not going to take it ____”
61. * “What we’ve got here is ____ to communicate”
65. Like United States Capitol
66. Food safety org.
68. Ritual basin
69. Tooth trouble

70. Husk of corn
71. Sharks’ domain
72. Fence board
73. Pastrami partner
74. Paper quantities

CLUES DOWN

1. Vomit
2. The one with pants on fire
3. Volcano in Sicily
4. * “I can smell the ____ of a woman... Honey oil, lavender, soap”
5. Israeli monetary unit
6. * “Hasta la vista, ____”
7. Life story, for short
8. Fastener
9. Hero shop
10. “Do ____ others...”
11. Paddington Bear’s homeland
12. Airport postings, acr.
15. Rutabaga cousin
20. Extra sweatshirt, e.g.
22. Long period of time
24. No-good
25. * “We’ll always have ____”
26. Hacienda brick
27. Mexican cuisine staple
29. * “She doesn’t ____ go here”
31. Party garb?
32. Not better
33. Homer’s famous poem, with The
34. * “Not quite my ____”
36. Donna or Lou
38. Techno dance party
42. Busyboddy, in Yiddish
45. * “____ puts Baby in a corner”
49. Toothy fish
51. Alterations specialist
54. Mention something
56. * “There’s no ____ like home”
57. Contributes



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58. Season to be jolly

59. Village People hit

60. Source of protein

61. Cab payment

62. Eye layer

63. #74 Across, sing.

64. Sea eagles

67. * “Go ahead, make my ____”

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Answers will be provided in next week’s edition.

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Fill in the blank squares in the grid, making sure that every row, column and 3-by-3 box includes all digits 1 through 9.

Answers will be provided in next week’s edition.

Meet the candidates for Texas House District 26

BY SUSAN ROVEGNO
PUBLISHER

On November 3, voters in Texas House of Representatives District 26 will choose their representative for the Texas legislature. Texas House District 26 covers north central Fort Bend County from Katy to Rosenberg. The position is currently held by Republican Matt Morgan, an insurance executive with ten years of experience in the oil and gas industry, who has been in office since January 14, 2025. He faces Democrat Eliz Markowitz, PhD., a corporate trainer, teacher, tutor at The Princeton Review and adjunct professor at the University of Houston.

The Katy Times posed the same questions to each candidate, and their answers are below for voters to consider. Responses have been edited for length, clarity and adherence to AP style. Incumbent Morgan's responses are listed first after each question.

Briefly describe your background and your qualifications to represent the greater Katy area in the Texas house.

MORGAN: Before I entered public service as the current State Representative for HD 26, I built my career and my small business in Fort Bend County as a public adjuster, fighting insurance companies on behalf of policyholders. In my first term I have focused on protecting Texas kids online, cracking down on human trafficking, cutting property taxes, and standing up to insurance companies, earning me praise from my Republican AND Democrat colleagues.

MARKOWITZ: I'm a Fort Bend County native with an educational background in business, healthcare, public administration, and education and a professional background in all of the aforementioned fields. I believe that my diverse educational and professional background provides me with a unique perspective on the issues that are most concerning to the constituents of HD 26, Fort Bend County, and Texas as a whole. I am ready to put forth whatever it takes to win this election and ensure that we elect individuals with honesty and integrity who are willing to work for a Texas where all individuals have the ability to thrive, not just survive.

What are your plans for your first 100 days in office and what top priority bills do you plan to introduce?

MORGAN: I plan to file and support bills that help bring down the cost of auto insurance, health insurance, homeowners insurance, property taxes, the rise of house costs and more. People are hurting and the State needs to act. I will also file a package of bills focused on reforming property and casualty insurance in Texas. Texans pay their premiums and deserve an insurance system that works when they need it most. Filing a legitimate claim should not become a battle with an insurance company. My legislation will focus on strengthening accountability, ensuring policyholders receive the coverage they paid for, and establishing standards that put Texas consumers first. When Texans keep their end of the bargain, insurance companies should be required to keep theirs.



ELIZ MARKOWITZ,
PH.D.



MATT
MORGAN

MARKOWITZ: My first 100 days would focus on the issues Texas families are already struggling with: public education, healthcare, and affordability. On education, I'd introduce legislation to increase the basic allotment, tie future funding to inflation, invest in teacher and staff pay, and make sure special education is fully funded. Our schools should not have to beg the Legislature every few years just to keep up with rising costs. On healthcare, I'd push to expand Medicaid, bring our federal tax dollars back to Texas, lower prescription drug costs, strengthen rural and community healthcare, and make it easier for working families to get affordable coverage. And on affordability, I'd support policies that increase the supply of attainable housing, lower utility and child-care costs, and hold corporations accountable when they receive state tax breaks. My goal is pretty simple: make government work better for the people who actually live here.

Describe how you will support adequate education funding for Texas public schools.

MORGAN: I voted to pass the House's version of House Bill 2 which put a large portion of the new money into the basic allotment and gives school districts more general-purpose funding. The final passage provided a record-breaking \$8.5 billion in funding for public education, including \$4 billion for teacher and staff pay raises and almost \$300 million to increase the state's allotment per student. Next session I would support funding that is directly tied to a basic allotment increase and making sure schools have more local control and say about how the funding is used.

MARKOWITZ: Texas cannot keep asking public schools to do more with less. I would support increasing the basic allotment, tying it to inflation so funding keeps up with rising costs, and fully funding special education and other state-mandated programs. I would also push for meaningful, permanent pay raises for teachers and school staff, not temporary bonuses or programs that only reach a small number of educators. Texas has the resources to properly fund public education. The issue is whether our representatives in the Legislature choose to make it a priority. I will. Period. Our schools need stable, predictable funding so districts can retain great educators, keep class sizes manageable, provide strong academic and support services, and stop cutting programs simply because Austin failed to do its job.

Describe how you will help manage the growth and regulation of AI data centers in the state.

MORGAN: I support regulation to

prevent data centers driving up utility costs on Texans or otherwise being a nuisance. I support regulation to prevent them from being built in or near our neighborhoods, to require them to bring their own power generation to support our grid, and to minimize their water usage by using air cooling or closed loop systems. I believe they need to work and share their plans with the community and allow constituents to be a part of these discussions.

MARKOWITZ: I'm not opposed to data centers, but I am opposed to making Texans pay the price for them. If these companies use massive amounts of electricity and water, they should cover those costs and the infrastructure they require so local families aren't stuck with higher bills, unreliable service, or fewer resources. I'd also support stronger water-use, noise, and environmental standards and give local communities a real voice. Texas can welcome new technology and good jobs without giving massive corporations a blank check.

Describe how you will hold TxDOT accountable for timely completion of badly-needed mobility initiatives (such as the overdue completion of FM 1463) and how you will help TxDOT secure funding for other projects important to the Katy area, such as the widening of FM 529.

MORGAN: FM 1463 is scheduled for completion in April 2027. That still doesn't change what our constituents are dealing with on a daily basis with traffic congestion. I plan to file legislation that brings stricter requirements on communication and deadlines for TxDOT, and their contractors to abide by. TxDOT and their contractors should be working in tandem with counties and cities to finish projects and not cause delays.

MARKOWITZ: I would hold TxDOT accountable by demanding clear timelines, regular public progress reports, and explanations when projects fall behind. Katy-area residents have dealt with FM 1463 construction for far too long, and they deserve more than another shifting completion date. I would work directly with TxDOT and local officials to identify delays early and keep projects moving. For projects like FM 529, I would fight to make sure our rapidly growing area gets its fair share of state transportation dollars. That means working with TxDOT, H-GAC, local governments, and our federal partners to keep these projects prioritized and funded. Katy and Fort Bend County cannot keep adding homes, businesses, and traffic while our infrastructure plays catch-up. Transportation funding needs to reflect where Texans are actually living and where the growth is happening.

Describe your strategy for strengthening the electricity grid in the state, with special attention to the development of data centers and potential location of battery energy storage systems in the Katy area, such as the Ochoa project.

MORGAN: Texas should strengthen the

grid by adding reliable generation, expanding transmission, and using battery storage where it improves reliability. With the rapid growth of data centers, we must ensure these large users contribute to the infrastructure they require rather than shifting those costs onto Texas families. BESS projects can strengthen the grid, but location matters. In the Katy area, projects like Ochoa raise legitimate concerns when proposed near schools and neighborhoods. I support locating battery storage near appropriate transmission infrastructure, with reasonable setbacks, strong fire and emergency-response standards, and meaningful local input. The goal is simple: strengthen the grid, support economic growth, protect rate-payers, and put major energy infrastructure in the right locations

MARKOWITZ: Strengthening the grid means adding generation, upgrading transmission, improving weatherization, and making sure new demand doesn't come at the expense of Texas families. Data centers use enormous amounts of power, so they should pay for the infrastructure their demand requires and be prepared to reduce load when the grid is under stress. Texans should not be stuck with higher bills or less reliable service to subsidize them. Battery storage can absolutely help strengthen the grid, but where we put these facilities matters. Projects like Ochoa should not be forced into communities without serious consideration of their proximity to schools, homes, flood-prone areas, and businesses; a project withdrawn due to such concerns. I support strong statewide safety standards, appropriate setbacks, fire and emergency-response requirements, and meaningful local input before these facilities are approved. We need more power and more storage, but we also need common sense. Strengthening the grid should never mean asking communities to sacrifice their safety or quality of life.

What else should readers of the Katy Times know about you, your candidacy and your plans for District 26?

MORGAN: I'm a small business owner and public adjuster who spends my career fighting for hardworking Texans against big insurance companies, and I've brought that same fight to the Capitol. My wife Jessica and I are raising our three kids right here in this community, where we're active members of Faith Methodist Church in Richmond. I'm an Eagle Scout, and I've spent years on the ground with the Cub Scouts, Lamar Little League, and Habitat for Humanity, plus helping lead a literacy drive that collected over 100,000 books for local kids. My priorities going forward are protecting our kids online, cracking down on human trafficking, holding insurance companies accountable when they use AI to unfairly deny claims, and continuing to fight for permanent property tax relief.

MARKOWITZ: I'm running because District 26 deserves leadership built on honesty, integrity, and accountability. I'll tell you the truth, show up, and own my decisions. You may not always agree with me, but you'll always know where I stand and who I'm fighting for: the people of this district and of this great state.

KATY AREA RETIRED EDUCATORS HOSTS FORUM FOR CANDIDATES FOR STATE LEGISLATURE



PHOTO BY SUSAN ROVEGNO

The Katy Area Retired Educators (KARE) hosted a candidate forum on September 9 at the Community Rooms at Legacy Stadium, 1830 Katyland Drive in Katy, featuring hopefuls running for the Texas state legislature. Participants included (left to right): Gary Gates, incumbent for District 28; Matt Morgan, incumbent for District 26; Mike Schofield, incumbent for District 132; Linda Howell, candidate for District 76; Liz Ramos, candidate for District 135; Dennis Geesaman, candidate for District 85; Eliz Markowitz, candidate for District 26; Odus Evbaghuru, candidate for District 135; Darlene Breaux, candidate for District 149; Sandy Ibanez, candidate for District 28 and Lawrence Brandyburg, candidate for District 85. Not pictured are Sarah McGee, candidate for District 132 and Dave Bennett, candidate for District 149. Each candidate had three minutes to speak to the capacity crowd of retired educators.

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Katy franchisee for Sports Clips honored by International Franchise Association as 'franchisee of year'

FROM STAFF REPORTS

On September 2, the International Franchise Association (IFA) named Cheston Syma, owner of Sport Clips Haircuts locations in Katy and throughout Texas, Oklahoma, Illinois, Utah and Wisconsin, as a 2026 Franchisee of the Year. Syma was scheduled to be honored at the IFA26 Advocacy Summit in Washington, D.C., Sept. 14-16 (after the Katy Times went to press for this story), for being an outstanding franchise owner with excellence in entrepreneurship, community outreach, workforce development, and service to others. Nominated by their brand, the IFA Franchisee of the Year awards are given to top franchisees and communities around the country.

"Franchisees of the Year demonstrate what franchising is all about - individuals who have committed their lives and careers to the betterment of those around them, building something bigger than themselves," said Matt Haller, president and CEO of the International Franchise Association. "Through their leadership, they create jobs and build careers, give back to their communities, and support other franchisees, all while exemplifying the entrepreneurial spirit at the heart of franchising. We are proud to recognize Cheston with IFA's highest honor for individual franchisees and celebrate his commitment to making a difference both within his business and beyond."

The Franchisee of the Year awards recognize leading franchise owners for their community involvement, fostering a strong workforce, assisting their fellow franchisees when called upon, and embodying the entrepreneurial spirit. Their outstanding performance and contributions help strengthen not only their business but also the entire franchise business model.

"Coming off winning The Logan Trophy at the Sport Clips' National Huddle, which is our brand's highest honor for a franchisee, I am so proud to see Cheston Syma recognized by the International Franchise

Cheston Syma

Sport Clips Haircuts

IMAGE COURTESY OF SPORTS CLIPS

Association as a 2026 Franchisee of the Year," said Brent Greenwood, vice president of development for Sport Clips Haircuts. "This award is a testament to his hard work and signals a growth phase as we expand into new and existing markets across the country. Franchisees like him are the kind of partners who make that expansion sustainable."

Syma lives in the Katy neighborhood of Waterside Estates, near Cinco Ranch and Tompkins High School. He has lived in Katy since 2009, first living in the Grand Lakes area after relocating from Stafford. He is single - never married and no children. His Sports Clips locations in the greater Katy area include Cinco Ranch, Katy Mills Mall, Falcon Landing, Elyson, Morton Center and Jordan Ranch.

"Finding success in business/entrepreneurship is about your ability to lead because you cannot do it by yourself," Syma told the Katy Times in an email interview.

There are approximately 832,000 franchise establishments across the U.S., providing nearly 8.8 million direct jobs and generating more than \$907 billion in economic output. According to Oxford Economics, franchising on average provides higher wages and better benefits than non-franchised businesses, as well as greater entrepreneurial opportunities to minorities, women, veterans, and other underrepresented communities.

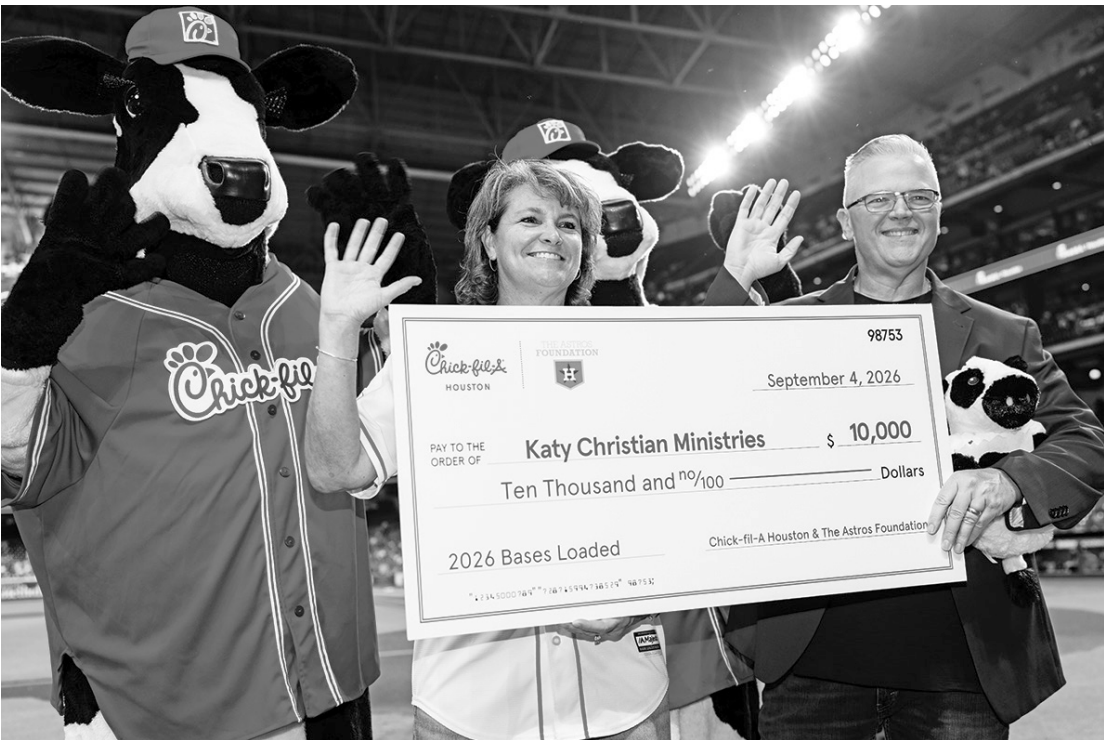
CHICK-FIL-A®, HOUSTON ASTROS FOUNDATION
HIT HOME RUN WITH \$10K DONATION TO KCM

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE HOUSTON ASTROS

Kyle Strickland (far right), executive director of Katy Christian Ministries, accepts a mock check for \$10,000 from the “Bases Loaded” campaign during pregame ceremonies at the Houston Astros’ September 4 game against the Arizona Diamondbacks at Daikin Park in Houston. Each year, Chick-fil-A® Houston partners with the Astros Foundation on the “Bases Loaded Campaign.” Every time the Astros fill the bases at home, both organizations pledge 2,000 meals to the Houston Shared Table Community. KCM was one of nine nonprofits to receive a donation of \$10,000, for a total of \$90,000 awarded during the event. “I am deeply humbled to accept this check on behalf of our entire community,” Strickland said in an email. “It is a beautiful reminder of what happens when local organizations step up to the plate to ensure our neighbors are supported.” KCM Development Director Heather Peterson thanked the Houston Astros and the Chick-Fil A on Pin Oak in Katy.

Help Clothed by Faith
meet urgent clothing need

CONTRIBUTED REPORT

Clothed by Faith is currently seeking new or gently used clothing to help meet clothing needs at its Katy location. Through partnerships with schools and community agencies, Clothed by Faith provides clothing to individuals and families facing difficult circumstances, helping restore dignity, confidence, and hope.

In 2025 alone, Clothed by Faith provided clothing to 20,407 people, including thousands of children and families throughout the community.

“As we come together to support this important need, we especially want to emphasize the need for new socks and underwear,” said a spokesperson for the nonprofit in the announcement. “These basic necessities are an essential part of every clothing package and can often be among the most needed items. Please consider including new,

unopened packages of socks and underwear in a variety of sizes with your donation.”

Current clothing needs include:

- Men: Small and medium short- and long-sleeve T-shirts; 30", 32" and 34" shorts and pants; medium joggers and athletic shorts.
- Girls: Sizes 12, 14 and 16, including short- and long-sleeved tops and shorts.
- Boys: Sizes 12, 14 and 16, including short- and long-sleeved tops, hoodies, shorts and pants.

Please remember: Socks and underwear must be NEW and are especially needed.

Donations may be dropped off at Clothed by Faith – Katy at 802 Dominion Dr., Suite 500 Katy. Drop-off hours are Monday–Friday from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

You can also support their efforts by purchasing needed items directly through their Amazon Registry.

Learn more: clothedbyfaith.org.

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NOTICE OF REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS -
CONSTRUCTION MANAGER-AT-RISK

Pursuant to the provisions of Texas Government Code Subchapter F of Chapter 2269, the City of Katy, Texas ("Owner") is seeking Statements of Qualifications ("SOQ") from firms interested in acting as Construction Manager-at-Risk for the construction of the new Katy Fire Station #4/Police Substation, which will be located on Heritage Oak Lane ("Project"). Firms interested in providing the services and work required for the Project may obtain a Request for Qualifications ("RFQ") that includes the detailed SOQ submission requirements and evaluation process. Submittal of the SOQ shall be Step One in a two-step process. Step Two shall be submittal of a response to a Request for Proposal ("RFP"). This RFP will be issued only to a selected short list of those firms deemed most qualified based on an evaluation of the responses to the RFQ.

The RFQ will be available September 10, 2026, from the City of Katy website at www.cityofkaty.com under the Government tab, "Public Documents". A copy of the RFQ may also be requested via email at bids@cityofkaty.com. The RFQ also contains attendance instructions for a Virtual Pre-submission Conference to be held on Thursday, September 24, 2026 at 9:00 AM.

STATEMENTS OF QUALIFICATIONS MUST BE SUBMITTED at the City of Katy, 901 Avenue C, Katy, Texas 77493, Attention City Secretary, BY NO LATER THAN 3:00 PM local time, Thursday, October 1, 2026 and as more particularly required in the RFQ. Names of firms which submit SOQ's will be read aloud at that time. Each response shall contain the full name of every person and company interested in the same and must be sealed in an envelope and endorsed with the identification of the appropriate contract as more particularly described in the RFQ.

Questions regarding this advertisement shall be submitted in writing by means of U.S. Mail or email only. Direct mail to Slattery Tackett Architects, LLP, Attn: David Slattery, 730 North Post Oak Rd., Suite 200, Houston, Texas 77024. Email should be sent to david.slattery@slatterytackett.com.

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

The Royal Independent School District is seeking Request for Proposals:

Onsite Childcare Services
RFP# 26-RISD-CHS-D02

RFP information and documents may be obtained by visiting our website www.royal-isd.net or by contacting the District Office Attn: Gracie Nicholas at (281)934-6901 or via email at gnicholas@royal-isd.net.

As instructed in the RFP: the sealed RFP response should be delivered to Royal ISD Attn: Gracie Nicholas at 3714 FM 359, Pattison, Texas 77466 by 3 p.m. CST on Monday, September 21, 2026.

Any proposal received later than the specified time, whether delivered in person or mailed, shall be disqualified. Royal ISD is not responsible for late proposals or non-delivery of proposals. The District reserves the right to reject any and/or all responses and waive any and/or all formalities.

KATY TIMES
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September 10
Puzzle
Answers

I	N	C	A		S	K	I		S	I	B
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1	7	9	6	8	3	5	4	2
4	3	6	9	2	5	8	7	1

INVITATION TO BIDDERS

Bids for Synova Ph. 2 – Bid Packages 5 will be received digitally through CivCast until **2:00 p.m. Thursday, October 8th, 2026**, at which time unofficial results will be posted to CivCast for the furnishing of material, equipment, labor and supervision necessary or incidental to the Construction of Synova Ph. 2 – Bid Packages 5. Proposals tendered after closing will not be opened. Scope of Project: 1. Concrete Flatwork, 2. Landscaping, 3. Irrigation, 4. Minor Site Grading and Preparation, 5. SWPPP coordination & removal, 6. Clearing and Grubbing. Bid documents in digital format will be available through CivCast. A pre-bid conference will NOT be held for this project. Bidders are to submit any questions to Civcast. Bidder questions will be received until 5:00 PM Thursday, October 1st. Questions submitted after 5:00 PM on Thursday, October 1st may not be addressed. Online bidding will be available starting at 11:00 AM on Tuesday, October 6th. This project is being privately bid and the owner reserves the right to disregard a bid at any time for any reason.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice of New Antenna Structure Registration for the Construction of Lattice Tower. Tarpon Towers III, LLC has applied for an Antenna Structure Registration for a new 90' LatticeTower. The tower will not be lit, as required by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). The tower is located at 25440 Beckendorf Road, Katy, Texas 77493, Harris County. Interested persons may review the application online at www.fcc.gov/asr/applications by entering the Form 854 File Number A Interested persons may raise environmental concerns about the structure by filing A1393825 Request for Environmental Review with the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). The FCC strongly encourages interested parties to file Requests for Environmental Review Online. Instructions for making such filing can be found online at www.fcc.gov/asr/environmentalrequest. The mailing address for interested parties that would prefer to file a Request for Environmental Review by paper copy is FCC Request for Environmental Review, Attn: Ramon Williams, 445 12th Street SW, Washington, DC 20554.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Skyway Towers, LLC has constructed a 199-foot self-support communications tower. Anticipated lighting application is none. The Site location is 16191 2/3 Woodland Hills Drive (near the intersection of Mayapple Road and Miller Road), Humble, Harris County, TX 77396, Lat: [39-57-46.6], Long: [-95-12-42.5]. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Antenna Structure Registration (ASR, Form 854) filing number is A1393847.

ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS – Interested persons may review the application (www.fcc.gov/asr/applications) by entering the filing number. The FCC requires Requests for Environmental Review to be filed electronically. Instructions for filing can be found at: (www.fcc.gov/asr/environmentalrequest).



NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING
ON ZONING

Notice is hereby given that the City of Pattison will hold a Public Hearing on Proposed Zoning. The Public Hearing will be held Thursday, September 24, 2026, at 6:00 p.m.

The Public Hearing will be held at the City Hall of Pattison, 3410 First Street, Pattison, Texas 77466. The Public Hearing will contain the following Zoning topics:

- Presentation on Zoning and input and questions on same
- Presentation of Draft Zoning District Map and input and questions on same
- Presentation of Draft Zoning District Ordinance (rules and regulations) and input and questions on same

Contact the City Secretary at 281-934-3715 or via email at citysecretary@pattison.texas.gov with any questions.

Any person may attend and may participate in the public hearing.

Ariel Harris
Ariel Harris, City Secretary

IN THE COURT OF COMMON
PLEAS OF LUZERNE COUNTY,
PENNSYLVANIA
CIVIL ACTION – CUSTODY

NO.: 2023-11737

NOTICE

TO: JUAN LIMA, II.

You are hereby notified that a **Petition for Modification of Custody** has been filed against you in the above-captioned matter concerning the custody of the minor child(ren).

The Court of Common Pleas of Luzerne County has entered an Order authorizing service of the Petition by publication.

A Conciliation Conference on the Petition has been scheduled for **October 9, 2026, at 1:00 p.m.** at the **Bernard C. Brominski Building, 113 West North Street, Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania.**

You are notified to appear at the hearing and to file any responsive pleadings or otherwise enter your appearance. **Failure to appear may result in the Court proceeding in your absence and entering an Order affecting your custodial rights.**

A copy of the Petition for Modification of Custody and related pleadings may be obtained by contacting:

Susan M. Sernak-Martinelli, Esquire
Attorney for Plaintiff
199 North Church Street, Hazleton, PA 18201
570-359-2647
info@sernakmartinellilaw.com

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Katy Times

TRIBUTE

It is with heavy hearts and great sadness that we announce the passing of Kyle Jenkins Callender, who left this world peacefully at home on August 28, 2026.

Born on November 26, 1975, in Houston, Texas, Kyle was a vibrant soul whose life was a testament to warmth, kindness, and boundless enthusiasm. Kyle was the cherished son of Doyle G. Callender and Kay Jenkins Callender, who survive him.

He was predeceased by his beloved grandparents, Thelma and John F. “Dude” Callender, O.M. and Willie Mae Jenkins, his Uncle John R. Callender, and his Aunts Linda Swinney and Sharon Jenkins, all of whom undoubtedly welcomed him with open arms into eternal rest.

A proud graduate of Katy High School, Kyle went on to earn his Bachelor of Business Administration from Texas A&M University in the class of 1999. His professional life started with Centerpoint Energy in Houston, Texas for 15 years and then formed his own consulting firm, KJC Consulting. Kyle spent most of his professional life in Houston, a place he called home and where he built lasting relationships and made countless memories.

Kyle’s life was enriched by his many interests. He was an avid collector with a passion for fossils, rocks, coins, and stamps. His love for Texas history and travel was rivaled only by his artistic talents, as he found joy and peace in painting. He took immense pride in his heritage, being a member of Austin’s Old 300 families.



KYLE JENKINS CALLENDER
1975-2026

With his boundless energy and ever-present smile, Kyle never met a stranger. His warmth and kindness left a mark on everyone he encountered, and he was known for his ability to light up a room with his presence.

Kyle leaves behind his wife, Megan Gail Callender, and three beloved children: Case Jenkins Callender, Caitlin Susan Callender and Avery Kay Callender. His memory will also be cherished by his brother, John Kennelly Callender and his wife Catherine, and Kyle’s former wife, Melanie Callender, who remain grateful for the moments they shared with him.

A service to honor Kyle’s life will be held on September 25, 2026, at 1:00 PM at Katy First United Methodist Church with a reception to follow. In lieu of flowers, the family kindly suggests donations be made to Texas A&M Mays Business School, Keep Katy Beautiful, Katy First United Methodist Church or Austin’s Old 300.

Funeral services held under the direction of Schmidt Funeral Home 1344 West Grand Parkway South, Katy, TX 77494 ~ (281) 391-2424.



PHOTO COURTESY OF KATY ISD

Katy ISD students continue to impress, earning 330 AP Capstone Diplomas.

330 AP capstone diplomas earned by KISD graduates in 2025-2026 school year

CONTRIBUTE REPORT

Katy ISD continues trailblazing academic achievement for large school districts, with 330 students earning the AP Capstone Diploma™ and 27 students earning the AP Seminar and Research Certificate™ during the 2025–2026 school year, the district announced on September 4.

“We are proud to celebrate the accomplishments of our AP Capstone students,” Director of Advanced Academics Danielle Sanchez said. “With the guidance of their dedicated teachers, these students embraced challenging coursework and pursued meaningful research aligned with their interests. The skills they developed through this program will serve them well in college, their careers and beyond.”

Katy ISD AP Capstone results

Campus	Capstone Diploma Recipients	Seminar & Research Certificate Recipients
Cinco Ranch High School	12	1
Freeman High School	1	1
Jordan High School	78	9
Katy High School	10	1
Mayde Creek High School	22	1
Morton Ranch High School	7	2
Paetow High School	4	0
Taylor High School	9	1
Tompkins High School	91	5
Seven Lakes High School	96	6

About the AP Capstone Diploma

To earn the AP Capstone Diploma, students must earn scores of three or higher in AP Seminar and AP Research as well as four additional AP Exams of their choosing. The distinction is included on AP score reports sent to colleges after the award is conferred.

AP Capstone is a College Board diploma program built around two yearlong courses, AP Seminar and AP Research. The program combines student-centered learning with performance-based assessments and develops skills in critical thinking, academic research, collaboration, presentation and time management to prepare students for college and career success.

Tompkins student launches student-led community health education initiative

BY SUSAN ROVEGNO
PUBLISHER

She’s in her senior year at Obra D. Tompkins High School in Katy and will graduate in the spring. But there’s more to Sharon Zhao than her high school course work and extracurricular activities in music and visual arts.

Zhao is already involved with scientific research. For the past two years, she has conducted academic research under the mentorship of Dr. Wei-Chen “Miso” Lee at UTMB and has co-authored two peer-reviewed journal publications and two conference publications. Zhao first became involved with Dr. Lee when the physician was looking for volunteers under the age of 60 who had both diabetes and cancer for a research study. Around that same time, Zhao’s great-uncle, who had diabetes, was diagnosed with bile duct cancer.

“That personal connection made the research especially meaningful to me and sparked my interest in learning more about the relationship between diabetes, cancer, and long-term health outcomes,” Zhao said. “Through that connection, I had the opportunity to become involved in research under Dr. Lee’s mentorship at UTMB.”

Zhao’s research has focused on complications related to type 2 diabetes among patients with three types of cancer: breast, colon, and prostate cancer. “My role in the research has included conducting literature reviews and working with health data,” Zhao said. “Under Dr. Lee’s supervision, I have worked with several research databases, with the TriNetX U.S. network serving as the primary data source for much of our analysis. Over the past two years, this experience has taught me how researchers develop research questions, work with and analyze health data, interpret findings, review scientific literature, and communicate results through academic writing. It has also helped me better understand how research can be used to identify patterns and explore important questions about disease and long-term health outcomes.”

Her interest in healthcare is also very personal. When Zhao was three years old, her grandmother suffered a sudden brain aneurysm rupture in 2011 and spent about six months in the hospital.

“The experience had a lasting impact on her health and quality of life, and as I grew older, I came to understand how important early awareness, access to reliable health information, and timely medical care can be,” Zhao said. “Watching



PHOTO BY SUSAN ROVEGNO

Tompkins High School student Sharon Zhao speaks during her student-led community health initiative on September 5 at Landon Ridge Sugar Land, 744 Brooks Street in Sugar Land. Zhao launched the “Your Health Matters” health education initiative in partnership with UTMB in order to bring research beyond academia into practical health knowledge for everyday life.

my family go through these experiences made health and disease feel very real to me and strengthened my desire to better understand both prevention and care. That personal interest eventually led me toward healthcare research.”

Through her research experience, Zhao said that she began to see how data can help identify patterns, understand risks, and potentially improve prevention and health outcomes. “I also realized that research can have an even greater impact when what we learn goes beyond academic papers and reaches people in ways they can understand and use in their everyday lives,” Zhao said. “That connection between research, health education, and real-world impact is what ultimately inspired me to create my community health initiative.”

Recently, Zhao initiated and organized “Your Health Matters,” a student-led community health initiative that brings together research, health education, and community service. In partnership with UTMB, Zhao led a health education seminar – “Your Health Matters” – for residents of Landon Ridge Sugar Land at 744 Brooks Street in Sugar Land on September 5. In addition to the presentation of Zhao’s research and UTMB’s services, the event included free health screenings and light healthy refreshments.

Zhao is now working on ways to continue and expand the initiative. “I’m currently in contact with one or two community partners about

bringing similar health education programs to residents in other parts of the greater Houston area,” she said. “I’m also exploring ways to offer parts of the program virtually, depending on the needs and interests of each community. An online format could make it easier for older adults to participate and connect with UTMB professionals without transportation or distance being a barrier. As the initiative grows, I don’t want to simply repeat the same program. I hope to listen to each community, understand what would be most useful to its residents, and adapt the program accordingly. My goal is to make reliable health information more accessible, practical, and relevant to people’s everyday lives.”

“Initiating and organizing the September 5 program showed me that students don’t have to wait until college or a future career to make a meaningful contribution,” Zhao said. “Even as a high school student, I can help connect academic research with the people and communities it is ultimately meant to serve.”

Zhao is also preparing her college applications — with NYW, Brown and UCLA at the top of her list of preferences. “I’m looking for a university where I can continue exploring science, healthcare, research, and interdisciplinary learning while also remaining actively involved in community service,” Zhao said. She is looking forward to exploring different areas of medicine as she continues her education and gains more experience.

Katy ISD’s KEYS program ‘Roadmap to Impact’ kickoff set for Sept. 25

FROM STAFF REPORTS

Katy ISD’s Partners in Education Department invites past and potential student mentors to the upcoming KEYS (Keep Encouraging Youth toward Success) kickoff event, set for September 25 from 8 to 10 a.m. at the Merrell Center, 6301 S. Stadium Lane in Katy. KEYS Kickoff is Katy ISD’s largest mentoring event of the year, welcoming current, new and prospective mentors. Come hear mentor stories, connect with others and learn more about KEYS Mentoring and the difference one hour a week can make in a student’s life.

The “Road to Impact” program will feature inspiring stories from mentors, including how their journeys began, the relationships they built, and the impact they made. It will also include breakout sessions for support and roundtable discussions with experienced mentors.

The breakout sessions include:

- Starting Your Journey (for all new and prospective mentors): Learn what you need to know to begin your mentoring journey.

- Navigating Challenges (for all current KEYS mentors): Gain tools to support mentees through life’s challenges.

- Building Pathways (for all KEYS liaisons): Practical strategies to strengthen and support your campus KEYS program.

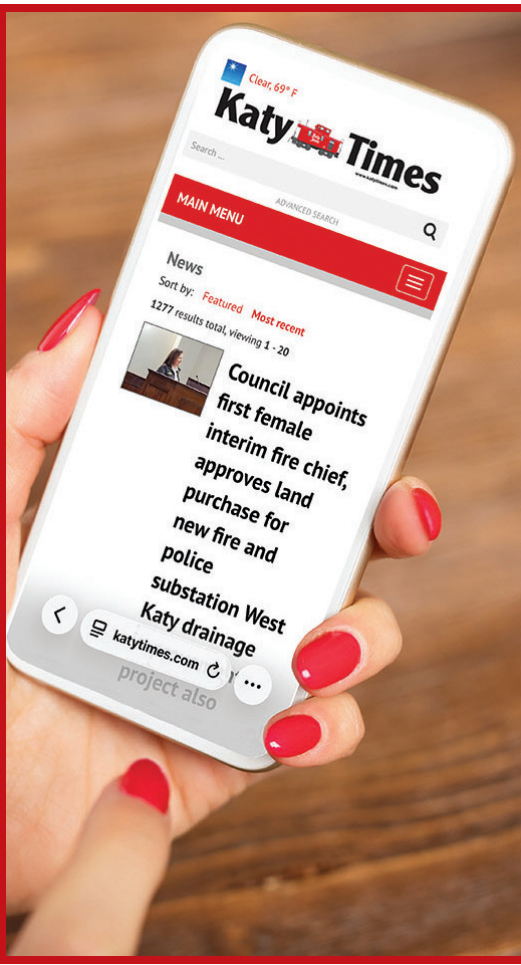
RSVP at https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdJYqciUZYo_UX-E5Oj5dNqnSAvQpv-zEeCB4FpZMfILl6exR0A/viewform.

Offered at every campus

at every grade level, the KEYS Mentor Program’s primary focus is on relationship building, rather than tutoring. Teachers, counselors and school administrators identify students who are good candidates for the program, while Katy ISD Partners in Education recruits mentors from the community.

KEYS mentors come from varied backgrounds, experiences and age groups. Each has a heart for students and a willingness

to volunteer. Each KEYS mentor must make a one school year commitment to the program, apply and pass the same criminal background check used for Katy ISD employees and attend a campus orientation. Mentors are placed with a student by the KEYS campus liaison who will support and supervise the relationship. Mentors and their mentees meet each week on campus in an open, monitored environment such as the library.



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Junior wide receiver Kenyon Roberts (#7) scored twice in Freeman High's victory over South Houston, including this memorable touchdown reception from freshman quarterback Abraham Alarcon (#2). On Roberts' second score of the night, Alarcon connected with the receiver as South Houston defenders converged, with Roberts securing the pass for the touchdown.

PHOTO COURTESY OF KB



Freeman stomps South Houston 49-0 in first district game of inaugural varsity season

CONTRIBUTED REPORT

Freeman High School made a statement in its first district game of its inaugural varsity football season, defeating South Houston High School 49-0 Friday night and moving to 1-0 in district play.

The shutout marks an important early milestone for the first-year varsity program

under Head Coach Eric Robinson, as the Golden Eagles begin their first journey through district competition.

With their first district victory secured, Freeman will look to build on the momentum when the Golden Eagles face Iowa Colony on September 17 at 7 p.m. at Rhodes Stadium.

TIGERS SHRED FALCONS 45-21



PHOTO COURTESY OF CHRIS HARRIS

The Katy Tigers prepare to take the field at Rhodes Stadium in Katy on September 10, ready to face Tompkins Falcons. The Tigers won 45-21.

AREA HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL SCORES, SEPT. 10-12			
Morton Ranch High School	7	Cinco Ranch High School	49
Paetow High School	7	Jordan High School	34
Katy High School	45	Tompkins High School	21
Taylor High School	35	Mayde Creek High School	13
Seven Lakes High School		BYE	
Freeman High School	49	South Houston High School	0
Royal High School	12	Brazosport	14

Source: Dave Campbell's Texas Football



Water District Notice of Public Hearing on Tax Rate

The HARRIS COUNTY MUNICIPAL UTILITY DISTRICT NO. 539 will hold a public hearing on a proposed tax rate for the tax year 2026 on Wednesday, October 14, 2026 at 9:00 AM at 3200 Southwest Freeway Suite 2400, Houston, TX 77027. Your individual taxes may increase at a greater or lesser rate, or even decrease, depending on the tax rate that is adopted and on the change in the taxable value of your property in relation to the change in taxable value of all other property. The change in the taxable value of your property in relation to the change in the taxable value of all other property determines the distribution of the tax burden among all property owners.

Visit [Texas.gov/PropertyTaxes](https://www.texas.gov/PropertyTaxes) to find a link to your local property tax database on which you can easily access information regarding your property taxes, including information about proposed tax rates and scheduled public hearings of each entity that taxes your property.

FOR the proposal:	David Schwarz, Ryan O Smith, Max Monzon, Matthew Strange
AGAINST the proposal:	NONE
PRESENT and not voting:	NONE
ABSENT:	James C Potter III

The following table compares taxes on an average residence homestead in this taxing unit last year to taxes proposed on the average residence homestead this year.

	Last Year \$1.50000 /\$100 Adopted	This Year \$1.50000 /\$100 Proposed
Total tax rate (per \$100 of value)		
Difference in rates per \$100 of value		\$0.00000 /\$100
Percentage increase/decrease in rates (+/-)		0.00%
Average appraised residence homestead value	\$280,806.39	\$283,417.70
General homestead exemptions available (excluding 65 years of age or older or disabled person's exemptions)	\$0.00	\$0.00
Average residence homestead taxable value	\$280,806.39	\$283,417.70
Tax on average residence homestead	\$4,212.10	\$4,251.27
Annual increase/decrease in taxes if proposed tax rate is adopted (+/-) and percentage of increase (+/-)		\$39.17 0.93%

NOTICE OF TAXPAYERS' RIGHT TO ELECTION TO REDUCE TAX RATE

If the district adopts a combined debt service, operation and maintenance, and contract tax rate that would result in the taxes on the average residence homestead increasing by more than 8 percent, the qualified voters of the district by petition may require that an election be held to determine whether to reduce the operation and maintenance tax rate to the voter-approval tax rate under Section 49.23603, Water Code.

The 86th Texas Legislature modified the manner in which the voter-approval tax rate is calculated to limit the rate of growth of property taxes in the state.

Should you have any questions concerning this notice, please contact the tax office at 281-482-0216.

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