

# **City council authorizes studies for improvement** of wastewater plant, small entertainment district

### **BY SUSAN ROVEGNO** PUBLISHER

CITY OF KATY

The Katy city council met briefly Monday

night, January 8th, in spite of bad weather including a tornado watch for Harris County which ended not long before the meeting began.

Council authorized the mayor to approve a proposal with ARKK Engineers, LLC for

a preliminary engineering design phase services for rehabilitation of wastewater treatment plant #2 at 25839 Katy Freeway. ARKK engineer David Kaspar said that this plant, which has not worked to its full capacity in several years, represents 15 percent of the city's capacity and currently serves about 2400 homes. The study is needed to get the plant to full operational status, replacing any corroded metals and machinery that may

no longer work, and ensuring that the plant works as intended, Kaspar said. Once the study is completed, decisions can be made regarding repair or possible replacement of the plant, he added.

An \$85,000.00 study to prepare a small area plan for a proposed "entertainment district" was authorized by council, in the form of a professional services agreement with Kendig Keast Collaborative (KKC). The

area under study is located north of Highway 90 and west of Katy Fort Bend Road. A presentation by the planning department depicted the proposed entertainment district as a walkable mixed-use development with commercial, retail service industry and entertainment uses (restaurants, pubs, venues, museums and so forth). The intent

See STUDY, page A3



Silver Unit returns to Katy Mills Mall with all-new show for 2024

### **CONTRIBUTED REPORT**

Have you ever dreamed of going on an epic pirate adventure and discovering a buried treasure? Cirque Italia is giving you the opportunity to come along on this thrilling quest in their BRAND-NEW production. Don't miss out on your chance to see performances in Katy January 18-28.

Cirque Italia has sought to bring a high-class experience to audiences all over the United States since its inception in 2012. This year

See **SHOW**, page A3



# A new concept in healthcare opens in Katy

Su Vida caters to Hispanic seniors with personal guides and transportation

### **BY SUSAN ROVEGNO** PUBI ISHER

Conveniently located on South Mason near I-10 in the same shopping center as Fiesta Mart is a new entrant into Katy's healthcare market. Called "Suvida" – meaning "Your Life" - the new clinic is designed to serve the 65+ Hispanic adults who qualify for Medicare or Medicaid. The facility offers not only bilingual providers and staff, but a total bicultural experience.

Suvida's goal is to provide quality health care, health

education and social events to help community members stay healthy and active during their retirement years. Suvida is different in several ways from other clinics who also seek to serve this same market. The major difference is that the company uses an entire health care team for each patient - not only the primary care physician but also a medical assistant, a scribe, and a personal "guia" or guide. The "guia" is a critical member of the Suvida care team who assists patients by serving as their own personal healthcare companion concierge, connects them with internal and external services and resources (including transportation) and who can visit with the patient in the clinic, virtually or in

See SU VIDA, page A3





When: January 18th - 28th, 2024 Where: 5000 Katy Mills Cir., Katy, TX 77494 At: Katy Mills -- Under the White & Blue Big Top Tent

January 18 – Thursday: 7:30pm • January 19 – Friday: 7:30pm • January 20 – Saturday: 1:30pm, 4:30pm, & 7:30pm

- January 21 Sunday: 1:30pm, 4:30pm
- January 22 Monday: 7:30pm
- January 24 Wednesday: 7:30pm
- January 25– Thursday: 7:30pm
- January 26 Friday: 7:30pm
- January 27 Saturday: 1:30pm, 4:30pm, & 7:30pm • January 28- Sunday: 1:30pm, 4:30pm

a glass sphere is part of the Cirque Italia's Silver Unit Show at Katy Mills Mall, 5000 Katy Mills Circle, starting January 18th. Left: The clown Raphael leads Cirque Italia's Silver Unit on an exhilarating expedition in search of a pirate's booty at Katy Mills Mall, 5000 Katy Mills Circle, beginning January 18th.

Above: A heart-stopping aerial feat using

PHOTOS BY JHOAN F PHOTOGRAPH

What to know before starting your income tax preparation

### Box office hours

The box office opens on-site on Tuesday, the week of the show.Days with scheduled shows: 10am - 9pm

SUSAN ROVEGNO

The Suvida exam room includes a specially designed chair for patients in lieu of the traditional exam table. Additional seating is provided so that several family members can attend the appointment along with the patient. A smart TV can be used to allow other family members to attend the appointment virtually.

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### **BY MARC ENZI** January 11, 2024 10 pages | \$1

SPECIAL TO THE KATY TIMES

Christmas and the New Year celebrations are behind us, kids are back in school and the yearend income statements with government form numbers are trickling in. Those W-2s, 1098s,

portant. Your next task is filing your income tax return by April 15th. Don't shove those government income forms into random drawers planning to find them again on April 14th, gather

them into one folder. The number one reason for IRS examinations and penalty letters is leaving an item of income off your tax return, or mis-reporting the income. IRS gathers up all the items of income that are reported to you on those forms and then waits to see if you come up with

the same answer. If you report more income than reported to the IRS, you may not hear about it; if you report less income, you can bet there will be an IRS notice of under reported income including tax due, interest and a 20% penalty in your mailbox within six months of filing your tax return.

If you lose documents, or one does not arrive. file for an extension to October 15th and either contact the IRS or a licensed Tax Professional and ask for your Wage and Investment income transcript and your

Tax Account transcript. IRS usually has all your income posted to your account by August 1st; armed with the transcript, you can be reasonably certain you have reported all the income that is reported to IRS and save yourself the trouble of dealing with IRS notices.

Next big item is deductions. To start, if you are a W-2 wage earning employee, you may not have to bother with deductions if you don't want to because IRS allows a standard deduction. For 2023 tax year the standard deduction for a Single filer is \$14,600, double that to \$29,200 for Married filing joint (MFJ). What this means is if you don't think you will have at least \$14,600 in itemized deductions for things like medical expenses, mortgage interest, property tax, charitable deductions, etc... you can skip adding up itemized deductions and simply take the standard deduction which reduces your total taxable income by the standard deduction amount depending on your filing status. Less than 10% of filers itemize, so do some quick round number math and if your estimated total deductions fall far short of the Standard Deduction, you can skip the deductions and use the standard.

Deductions are very important for the self -employed. Any expense incurred for the job not normally incurred were it not for the job, is deductible. Realtors for example incur a lot of mileage expenses showing homes, the mileage is deductible and there are rules to document the mileage expense. Self-employed people are a target of IRS examinations. Protect yourself with good records. ALWAYS document the date, place, and business purpose of every expense. Use a mileage log, get a separate bank account, be disciplined about keeping the business and personal separate. Use a bookkeeping system or hire a bookkeeper. Doing these things will make you more profitable and makes an IRS notice much less likely and easier to deal with.

If you do get a letter from IRS, don't panic but do open and read the letter. People often do not

See **TAXES**, page A3

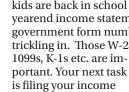
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# **COMMUNITY**

### COMMUNITY EVENTS

### Chick-Fil-A of Elyson to hold Cars, Coffee and Cocoa on January 13th

Join other car enthusiasts for Cars, Coffee and Cocoa at 22159 FM 529, Katy on January 13th starting at 9 a.m. The show is a pre-opening event for this new Chick-Fil-A location. Free admission.

### **Harris County Precinct 4 announces** "Day of Service" on January 13th with tree planting

Join Harris County Commissioner Precinct 4 Lesley Briones and #Precinct4Forward for a meaningful Day of Service on January 13th. The event will be a community tree planting from 9 a.m. to noon at Bear Creek Pioneers Park, 3535 War Memorial

Drive, Houston. Register at cp4.harriscountytx. gov/mlk-tree-planting.

### I-10 West Brookshire MLK celebration set for January 13th at The Hangar in **Brookshire**

Honor the impossible dream of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. at the community celebration on January 13th at The Hangar, 4010 4th Street in Brookshire. The event is from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. and features a block party with free food and rides for the kids. The Mardi Gras-themed festivities also feature a barbeque cook-off with plaques award to the first, second and third place winners in these categories: open, chicken, ribs and brisket. \$15.00 per entry or \$50.00 for all four entries in the contest. For information on the barbeque contest, contact host Mary Davis at 832-646-1101. A parade will start from The Hangar at 1:30 p.m. and will include floats, marching bands, equestrians, vehicles, and bikes/four-wheelers. The event is sponsored by the Greater Mount Zion Church and the Mt. Zion Church of Brookshire and the Word of Promise Church in Katy.

### Two KISD trustees to host "listening circle" event for district's teachers and staff on January 14th

Veteran Katy ISD school board members Rebecca Fox and Dawn Champagne will host a "listening circle" on Saturday, January 14th at Spring Creek BBQ at 21000 Katy Freeway in Katy. The event, which will take place from 4 to 6 p.m., will offer complimentary soft drinks. "We want to hear from you," the two board members said in a Facebook post. The pair are seeking feedback from district employees on job conditions and other factors in employee retention.

### Kitzman campaign kickoff event to feature Governor Greg Abbott at Brookwood on January 17th

State Representative Stan Kitzman, who represents Texas House District 85 covering portions of Waller and Fort Bend counties in the Katy-Brookshire-Pattison area, will kick off his re-election campaign with an event at the Brookwood Café, 1752 FM 1487 in Brookshire, on January 17th at 1 p.m. Texas Governor Greg Abbott will be a special guest.

### Faith West Academy presents two January events for students and their families

Faith West Academy, 2225 Porter Road in Katy, will put on two events in January where family members can join their students at the campus. A grandparents' lunch will take place on Friday, January 19th, serving kindergarten and first grade students from 11:10 to 11:35 a.m., second and third graders from noon to 12:25 p.m. and fourth and fifth graders from 12:35 to 1 p.m. A "Barbie"-themed father-daughter dance will be held on Friday, January 26th from 7 to 9:30 p.m. and will feature carriage rides, a photo booth, and a raffle, as well as desserts and a chocolate bar. Tickets are \$50.00 per couple if pre-purchased or \$60.00 per couple at the door. The event is open to all families – girls do not have to attend Faith West in order to attend. For more information, go to https://irp.cdn-website. com/988ae82b/files/uploaded/Barbie%20Invite. pdf.

### Wino Fest comes to Katy on January 21st

Enjoy more than 40 local Texas wines, as well as great food and music at WinoFest on January 21st. The event showcases incredible wineries

from all over the state, each bringing a selection of their most popular, unique, or new wines. Attendees will receive a wine glass and a Wino Fest sheet for notes with the wineries in attendance as well as some educational materials to enhance their wine knowledge. The information sheet outlines each winery in attendance



to write down notes about each one. The \$39.00 ticket price includes admission to the event, ALL tastings throughout the event and souvenir glass. The festival begins at 12 p.m. at Beckendorff Farms, 28533 Morton Rd, Katy, TX 77493. For more information or to purchase tickets, go to winofest.com.



Local attorney Boyd Handley of The Handley Law Office, who specializes in legal issues involving children and adults with disabilities, will be one of the presenters at the Family to Family Network's conference and resource fair on January 20th. The event will take place at the Houston Community College campus at 22910 Colonial Parkway in Katy.

COURTESY OF THE HANDLEY LAW FIRM

# Family to Family Network to host conference, resource fair

### **STAFF REPORTS**

Family to Family Network will host its 2024 annual conference and resource fair at Houston Community College's Katy campus at 22910 Colonial Parkway on Saturday, January 20th from 9 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

The resource fair offers three breakout sessions -- at 9:30 a.m., 11 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. -- on a wide variety of topics for families and high school students/young adults, including:

- At the ARD Table, Now What? How to be a Transition Star
- Considerations in Divorce
- Involving Children with Disability
- Using Cognitive Social Skills • Effective Parent Input Techniques
- ABA Therapy, an Overview and Outcomes
- A Closer Look at Texas ABLE Program

 Good Nutrition for Tube-Fed Children and/or Sensory Aversions • Innovative College Programs

Serving Students with IDD • Neurodiversity and Good Mental Health

- · Living in the Community and **Consumer Directed Services**
- The Special Needs Toolkit (A Legal Standpoint)

Presentations will be available in both English and Spanish.

Registration is \$40.00 for family members, \$20.00 for young adults with disabilities, and \$60.00 for community

members/professionals. Thanks to a grant from the Texas Council for Developmental Disabilities, FREE registration is available for the first 125 family members/50 persons with disabilities via pre-registration only.

To see the full list of presentations and to register, go to f2fn.org/event/ annual-conference-resource-fair/. Registrants must choose their breakout sessions when registering. For information, call 713-466-6304 or email conference@familytofamilynetwork.org.

The event will also feature vendor tables. Vendor registration is open until January 15th; register at bit.ly/ F2FCon2024.

According to the organization's website, Earl J. Brewer, Jr., M.D., and Tina Bentsen-Smith founded Family to Family Network in 1986. Their original mission was to help parents network with other parents, teach parents how the "system" works, and obtain accurate medical information. Dr. Brewer continued to be a staunch supporter of Family to Family Network until his passing in 2015. Family to Family strives to provide programs that empower families of children and youth with disabilities as they navigate the complex special education, health care and disabilities services systems. Family to Family Network helps individuals with disabilities and their family members define and achieve success for themselves and their loved ones.

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You're needed to save a life. Patrick is in terrible shape without you. Your problem was all over texting mistakes. He would never turn his back on you and the kids. This needs a phone call, not text.

Call him - he's now in the hospital. Please call 267-325-7625, he's got a very important job and needs to get back up

which attendees can use







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# OSSWORD PIIZZLI

### **CLUES ACROSS**

- 1. Defensive nuclear weapon
- 4. Moved back and forth
- 9. One-time coach of the
- Cowbovs
- 14. Last letter
- 15. Cause to become less intense
- 16. Genus of tree bugs
- 17. Body art
- 18. Romance novelist
- 20. Be filled with love for
- 22. City
- 23. Make vivid 24. Horses
- 28. Mauna
- \_, Hawaiian volcano 29. Atomic #18
- 30. Shortly
- 31. A type of prejudice
- 33. Whirls
- 37. Six
- 38. Old world, new
- 39. \_\_ Hess, oil company
- 41. Talk 42. Not off
- 43. Begets
- 44. Cars need them
- 46. Computing architecture
- (abbr.)
- 49. Of I
- 50. Journalist, activist Wells
- 51. Takes apart
- 55. Lists
- 58. Positively charged electrode 59. Hard, colorless compound

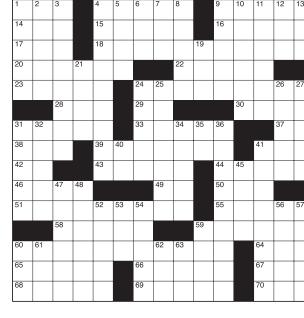
- 60. Inflammation of the peritoneum
- 64. Trent Reznor's band
- 65. Simply dry fruit
- 66. "Ivanhoe" author
- 67. Google certification
- 68. French commune
- 69. Medieval circuit courts
- 70. Soviet Socialist Republic

### **CLUES DOWN**

- 1. Indigenous people of Mexico
- 2. Dietary supplement
- 3. Having a particular sheen or
- luster
- 4. Views
- 5. Academic Bill of Rights
- 6. Automobile
- 7. When you anticipate arriving
- 8. Beef or chicken intestine
- 9. Conspiracy
- 10. Blood disorder
- 11. Long-time NBAer Shawn
- 12. Time zone
- 13. US, Latin America, Canada
- belong to
- 19. Upton Sinclair novel
- 21. What a cow does
- 24. Cavalry-sword
- 25. Ancient Greek war galley 26. Stars

Answers will be provided in next week's edition.

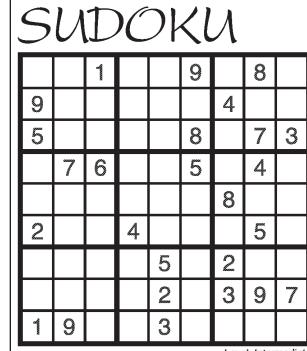
27. Rebukes 31. Billion year periods



32. Some are in a bottle 34. Tears down 35. Lethal dose 36. Humorists 40. Midwestern US state (abbr.) 41. Frameworks 45. Rocker Billy 47. More thin 48. Dog 52. Habitual repetitions

- 53. State of fuss 54. Uneasv
- 56. Chemical compounds
- 57. More cognizant of reality
- 59. A place to build
  - 60. Exclamation that denotes
  - disgust
  - 61. Supplement with difficulty
  - 62. Very slick
  - 63. Hill or rocky peak

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Level: Intermediate

### Fun By The Numbers

Like puzzles? Then you'll love sudoku. This mind-bending puzzle will have you hooked from the moment you square off, so sharpen your pencil and put your sudoku savvy to the test.

### Here's How It Works:

Sudoku puzzles are formatted as a 9x9 grid, broken down into nine 3x3 boxes. To solve a sudoku, the numbers 1 through 9 must fill each row, column and box. Each number can appear only once in each row, column and box. You can figure out the order in which the numbers will appear by using the numeric clues already provided in the boxes. The more numbers you name, the easier it gets to solve the puzzle!

Answers will be provided in next week's edition.

### **SU VIDA**

from page A1

the patient's home. The guia helps assess the patient's needs starting with the very first visit, starting with a 30-minute "deep dive" into the patient's medical history, medications and other medical concerns.

The scribe helps document the patient's visit so that the physician can look directly at the patient during the consultation, rather than at a computer screen creating a deeper human connection to the patient. "We provide patient-centered care," said Julian Toledo, associate center director. "Even though technology is paving the way in medicine, the personal touch is needed.'

The waiting area has snacks, water and coffee and there are even crossword puzzle books Equipment inside the clinic is different too - an in-floor scale in a semi-private alcove facilitates the weigh-in of patients in wheelchairs, so that they do not have to stand. Vital signs can be assessed at the same time. The exam room features a customized chair that moves up and down - again designed so that a patient with limited mobility can sit in the chair with ease rather than risking a fall by



Suvida Health Care has opened the Katy location of their bicultural and bilingual clinic at 323 Mason Road in Katy, next to Fiesta Mart.

climbing onto a standard examination table. Each exam room also features extra seating to accommodate several family members if they choose to accompany the senior patient on the appointment; smart TVs can also connect other family members who wish to attend the appointment virtually.

The clinic has its own laboratory for basic testing, including bloodwork and urinalysis and other basic tests. An ultrasound room is also onsite, along with mental health services and counselling. "The mental health services set us apart from the competition," said Toledo. There is also a room

designed for physical therapy which will have a treadmill, a bike, weights and other equipment. Classes such as Zumba and "chair volleyball" are planned for the PT room, under the direction of a "Silver Sneakers" trained instructor. The clinic also employs a clinical pharmacist who can meet with the patient virtually to provide information and education or answer questions. The building also includes a "community room" where seniors can meet for cooking classes, exercise classes or just to socialize. A "collaboration room" provides space for the care teams to meet to discuss patient outcomes and to review daily operations of the clinic.

The clinic can provide services virtually through telemedicine or in the patient's home. Toledo said that guias often visit a patient's home to help them get set up for a televisit as well as to help assess other services that the patient might require. A key service offered by Suvida is transportation to and from the clinic. Suvida works with the patient's insurance provider for this but also uses Uber Health as well.

Toledo said is goal is to grow the



An in-floor scale at Suvida Health Care is designed for patients in wheelchairs so that they do not have to stand to be weighed or to have other vital signs taken.

clinic to 2000 visits within the next year. Suvida has seen rapid growth in its other clinics in the greater Houston area, including Aldine, Pasadena and Spring Branch. The company is also expanding into the Phoenix and Tucson markets in Arizona.

The clinic plans a soft opening on January 19th from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., which will have music, food, raffles, bingo and cooking demonstrations, as well as a chance

to meet the provider, Dr. Pedro Alvarez. Toledo said that Suvida has joined the Katy Area Chamber of Commerce and plans an official ribbon-cutting sometime during the first quarter of 2024.

Suvida is located at 323 Mason Rd. in Katy and is open Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

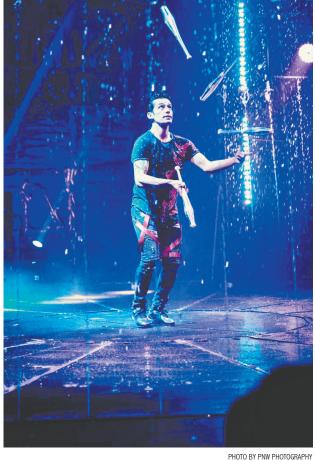
For more information, visit Suvidahealthcare.com or call (888) 4-SUVIDA.

### SHOW

from page A1

will be no exception as the company takes you on an exhilarating expedition in search of a pirate's booty.

The story begins with Ringmaster "Clown Rafinha" fishing when he unexpectedly catches a bottle with a treasure map stuffed inside. His ensuing journey takes the audience through storms on the high seas, dreams of angelic aerialists, pirate fights, and more. You will see swashbucklers balancing upside down on a rum barrel, juggling knives, and even one having a runin with a mermaid. Your jaws will be dropped and you will be hanging on the edge of your seats with our suspenseful Crossbow act and our dangerous Wheel of Death performances. Try not to flinch and look away if you don't want to miss any of the excitement! Will Clown Rafinha finally defeat the other pirates who are after his treasure and claim it for himself? You'll have to see the show for yourself to find out! Manuel Rebecchi, president and owner of Cirque Italia, is tremendously proud of his circus heritage and feels extremely privileged to be able to share it in such a fun and memorable way.



A juggling act with pins will be featured in Cirque Italia's Silver Unit Show at Katy Mills Mall, 5000 Katy Mills Circle, in performances January 18 - 28.

### STUDY from page A1

is to provide a connection to downtown and to encourage the redevelopment trend occurring around the rice dryers, officials said.

Council voted 5-0 to grant a permanent special use permit to the Iglesia Rios De Aceite-Rivers of Oil Church at 541 Pin Oak Road - renewing a special use permit originally approved three years ago. Council also voted 5-0 to consider a zoning variance for a residence at 5917 "A" Street, which would eventually allow the construction of a swimming pool to be built across the property lines of two lots both owned by Clayton Powell.

Council also approved the petition for land to be added to the City of Katy's extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ) - approximately 7.152 acres in Fort Bend County, which as a result would move into the boundary limits of the City of Katy. Of this acreage, about 2.777 acres is a portion of FM 1463 and Hoyt Lane rights-of-way. Recent changes enacted by the Texas legislature have made it easier for entities to exit Houston's ETJ and to then petition for inclusion in a different ETJ.

Via consent agenda, council approved: Approval of events and street closures for the Katy Half Marathon near Katy Mills Mall on February 10th and the Smiilin' Rylen Run on April 27th along Cane Island Parkway and along First Street.

• Final plat approval of Cantera at Katy, consisting of 1.3405 acres.

The next meeting of the Katy city council will be held on January 22nd at 6:30 p.m. at Katy City Hall at 901 Avenue C in Katy. Council meetings may also be viewed on video on the City of Katy's website at cityofkaty.com/government/ board-meeting-videos.



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For more information, visit www.cirqueitalia.com.

### TAXES from page A1

open IRS letters because they think opening the mail gives something up or admits defeat.

If you don't want to open the envelope, take it to your tax person, but please open the envelope and read it carefully. If you prepare your own tax return, double check your entries to be

certain they match what was reported to you.

If you need a tax professional to prepare your tax return, I strongly recommend you hire licensed tax professional such as an Enrolled Agent (EA) www.naea.org, or CPA, IRS has a directory where you can look up

tax preparers https://irs. treasury.gov/rpo/rpo.jsf. Check reviews and interview the person working with your sensitive financial information.

Marc Enzi, EA, CFP° of Tax Solutions may be reached at (281) 578-1040 For more information go to www.taxss.com.



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### Get to know us during our **SOFT OPENING** January 19th 10 am to 2 pm

### Who We Are

Our team at Suvida has embraced the unique opportunity to create a new primary care experience that focuses on the unique needs of Hispanic Seniors and those that care for them, to enable our patients to live "su vida" to the fullest.



### What Makes Suvida Different

We make healthcare personal, by understanding the physical, behavioral, social and cultural needs of our patients and their families - either on-site, in-home or virtually.



### What We offer the **Suvida Family:**

- Your own dedicated "Guia," a go-to health guide to accompany you and your loved ones throughout your Suvida journey
- Transportation for established patients and complimentary on-site social/wellness activities
- Caregiver support & enablement services
- Larger-than-average exam rooms built to accommodate patients and their caregivers
- More time spent with your doctor and less time in a waiting room
- Bilingual healthcare providers who are experts in senior care

323 S. Mason Rd. Katy In the Fiesta Shopping Center just south of I 10 (888) 4-SUVIDA | Open Monday – Friday 8 to 5

# **BUSINESS**

KATYTIMES.COM

THURSDAY, JANUARY 11, 2024

THE KATY TIMES

# For family-friendly healthy options, visit Lettuce Eat

### BY SUSAN ROVEGNO PUBLISHER

Is your New Year's resolution to eat wisely this year? Having trouble getting the family on board with healthier choices? Then Lettuce Eat is just the place for you.

Partners Mike Kramer and Al Massey bring a wealth of expertise in the restaurant business to this new buffet-style salad place at 1165 Katy Fort Bend Road in Katy, just off I-10. Kramer spent many years with the Golden Corral chain, opening over 20 buffet locations (including their first buffet concept which opened in Victoria, TX) for them and training thousands of their employees. He also worked



Lettuce Eat offers healthy options including a salad bar, soup bar, and fruit bar, as well as heartier fare in a homey country atmosphere.

for the Luby's and Wyatt's cafeteria chains as well.

Kramer's concept is simple: offer fresh vegetables and protein and salad options, while providing choices for other family members who might want heartier fare, such as spaghetti for the kids, or pot roast, fish or chopped steak. In addition to the salad bar, there are sides of steamed veggies such as cauliflower, broccoli, cabbage and carrots, green beans and corn on the cob. Fresh soups include French onion, broccoli cheese, beef veggie, German potato, chicken and chicken and sausage gumbo. Baked potatoes, fruit bowls and muffins round out the menu.

"People are eating lighter and healthier," Kramer said, noting that he wanted to provide a place where the entire family could get what they wanted.

The project, which opened December 19th, took over two years to get off the ground, Kramer said, due to delays caused by COVID and other regulatory factors.

The atmosphere of the restaurant is both "country" and "homey," Kramer says, pointing out the reclaimed wood which he cleaned and powerwashed. "We kept it out of the landfill," he said.

Lettuce Eat offers discounts to seniors and first responders. Kramer also fed the homeless on opening day, as he trained his staff of 22 in preparation of his family recipes. One of 11 children, Kramer came from San Antonio in 1968. "I learned to cook by being part of a large family," he said.

The restaurant is open from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday through Saturday and from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Sunday.

# <image>

PHOTO BY SUSAN ROVEGNO

Fuzzy's Pizza of Katy, where owner Jeff Hajjar (left) often hosts local politicians for "meet and greets" like this August event with U.S. representative for Texas's 22nd congressional district Troy Nehls (right), is now open for lunch Tuesday through Sunday.

# Fuzzy's Pizza extends hours to add lunch service

### **FROM STAFF REPORTS**

Fuzzy's Pizza Katy has new extended hours effective January 2nd, now serving lunch, owner Jeff Hajjar announced via Facebook. New hours are 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. Tuesday to Saturday, 11-8PM on Sundays, and closed on Mondays. Personal 6" Deep Dish pizzas start at \$9.95, with pizza by the slice starting at \$2.95. While there, be sure to visit the pizzeria's unique JFK Room featuring a vintage JFK Family Photo Album to sift through, vintage hand made rugs from 60's, historical 1960s newspapers and a life-sized JFK figure for awesome photo ops.

Find the lunch deals at www.fuzzys. pizza/lunch -- or order from the regular menu (which showcases pizzas named for area politicians) all day. Lunch hours

# Smalls Sliders adds five new "Cans" to Texas – including locations in Katy

### **FROM STAFF REPORTS**

Smalls Sliders is slidin' back through the Lone Star State, this time with five new "Cans" coming to the greater Katy area. The rapidly-growing cheeseburger slider brand recently signed a new agreement with established restauranteurs, David Higgins and Preston Cunningham, officially marking the duo's second franchise agreement with Smalls Sliders.

Higgins and Cunningham previously signed a seven-unit deal with Smalls Sliders throughout North Houston, and after seeing the booming success of the concept they've added an additional five "cans" to their roster. Smalls Sliders refers to each unit as a "can" – they are actually converted shipping containers. Having previously developed numerous locations of another popular restaurant brand in the Houston area, Higgins and Cunningham are primed as the perfect pair to continue Smalls Sliders' growth across Texas, said a press release from the firm.

"We've been impressed with Smalls Sliders since day one and knew early on that we wanted to continue growing with the brand," said Cunningham. "Given how quickly the concept is scaling, adding additional units to our pipeline seemed like the natural fit, and an avenue to make our presence in Texas known before the territory sells out. We've thoroughly enjoyed the early stages of site selection and really getting to know the Smalls Sliders leadership team, so we can't wait to see what the next year has in store for us." The pair's second set of locations are slated to begin opening in Q4 of 2024, with an aim to target the greater Katy, Bella Terra and Rosenberg areas. Exact locations are still being negotiated, said a publicist for the firm. "David and Preston are fantastic operators, and we're thrilled they're continuing to grow alongside us as we

prepare for another milestone year," said Maria Rivera, CEO of Smalls Sliders. "Texas has proven to be a state that is primed for our expansion, and we expect to see Cans dropping throughout the state in the coming months."

Menu prices can vary based on the area, but based on some existing locations, a single slider starts at \$2.49, combo meals start at \$6.49, and shakes are \$4.99, said the firm's publicist.

Smalls Sliders opened its first restaurant in 2019 and has since grown to more than 125 locations open or under development. The restaurant concept has garnered industry recognition, with QSR magazine featuring the brand in its "40/40 List for 2022: America's Hottest Startup Fast Casuals" and its 2023 QSR 50 Contenders list. Other accolades include Nation's Restaurant News naming the brand as one of the publication's "Breakout Brands of 2023," in addition to ranking on this year's Entrepreneur magazine "Top New & Emerging Franchises" list.

### **About Smalls Sliders**

Smalls Sliders is the brainchild of Founder Brandon Landry, with former pro football NFL quarterback Drew Brees joining him as an initial investor, and is backed by industry veterans at 10 Point Capital. The QSR restaurant focuses exclusively on craveable premium cheeseburger sliders, with every meal cooked to order. Smalls Sliders delivers both drive-thru and popular walk-up experiences, serviced from a unique modular construction design, allowing real estate flexibility and rapid construction of new restaurants. The brand champions deep commitment to service in the communities it operates. Community involvement in the Katy area will be more solidified once a location is set and construction is underway, the firm's publicist said. For more information, visit www. smallsliders.com.

available only at the Katy location at 613-B S. Mason Rd, Katy. For more information, call 281-579-0100 or go to www.Fuzzys. Pizza.



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6.00 pm - Midnight January 26, 2024

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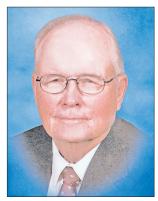
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### TRIBUTES

Milton Doyle Hines, 92, passed from this earth on January 6, 2024. He was born on November 24, 1931 at home in rural Madison County, Texas to John Edward Hines and Midget Mae (McMahan) Hines. He married the love of his life, Reta Pearl Peck on December 30, 1950 in Katy, Texas.

After completing his Bachelor and Master's degrees at Sam Houston State, Doyle took a job with San Bernard Electric Cooperative in charge of its member relations. Doyle quickly realized that the more kilowatt-hours the Cooperative sold, the less they could charge per KWh; so, under his initiative the Cooperative formed a relationship with Electro-Lux heaters and Doyle sold the dickens out of them, gaining himself a state-wide reputation. This led to a job offer by O.W. Davis, General Manager of the Guadalupe Valley Electric Cooperative (GVEC) in Gonzales, Texas; and so, Doyle and Reta packed-up and moved.

At GVEC, Doyle was quickly recognized as a leader and upon the retirement of Mr. Davis, Doyle was appointed GVEC General Manager on January 1, 1972. As at San Bernard, Doyle went about promoting all-electric homes and in short order GVEC lead the state in consumption per household; and with this



MILTON DOYLE HINES 1931-2024

level of consumption GVEC was able to lower its electric rates to one of the lowest in the State. Doyle's success at GVEC lead to numerous state-wide and national appointments to Cooperative related organizations.

Doyle's no-nonsense manner did not always make him the most popular individual, as was the case with his most memorable move at GVEC. In the late 1980's, Doyle negotiated an extremely favorable buy-out of GVEC's Rural Electrification Administration (REA) debt. GVEC was the first electric cooperative in the nation to make this move (many others have since followed), and Doyle was heavily criticized by his peers that this move would "ruin the program." As history proved, it was the right thing to do, and throughout his entire

life Doyle was a "do the right thing" kind of man.

In service to the Gonzales community, Doyle was involved with the Chamber of Commerce, Noon Lion's Club, Odd Fellows Cemetery, as well as others, however, he took a particular interest in health care. It was primarily through his efforts (and his partner in crime Dr. Bryan Denman) that the Gonzales Healthcare District was chartered, and Gonzales Memorial Hospital was constructed.

Doyle is survived by his wife of 72 years, Reta; his son Craig (Lee), his grandsons Clayton (Dawna) and Lucas (Haylee); his great-grandsons Colton, Dawson, and Mason; as well as all those in the community and at GVEC who are grateful for having known him.

The family received friends from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. Wednesday, January 10, 2024 in Seydler-Hill Funeral Home. Funeral services were held at 2 p.m. Thursday, January 11, 2024 in Seydler-Hill Funeral Home with Rev. Todd Craven officiating. Interment followed in the Gonzales Odd Fellows Cemetery. Memorials may be made to the Gonzales Odd Fellows Cemetery Association. Friends may leave their condolences to the family by visiting www. seydlerhillfuneralhome.com. Services are under the care and direction of Seydler-Hill Funeral Home.

Sarah "Sally" Francis Stewart Gillespie, 72, from Katy, Texas went to be with the Lord on Friday, December 22, 2023. She passed peacefully with her family by her side.

Sally was married to Jan Thurston Gillespie for over 50 years and lived in Greenville, SC, for most of her younger years. She has been a resident of Katy, Texas, since 1988.

Sally touched many lives as an elementary school teacher until her retirement in 2017. She taught at Nottingham and Fielder Elementary Schools, just to name a few. She was also a member of Kingsland Baptist Church.

Sally Gillespie was the daughter of the late Sudie Francis Stewart and Denton "Red" Stewart.

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SARAH "SALLY" FRANCIS STEWART GILLESPIE

Sally Gillespie is survived by her husband, Jan Thurston Gillespie, her son, Michael Thurston Gillespie and his wife, Sheri Gillespie; grandsons, Blake and Preston of Katy, Texas; her daughter, Carolyn Gillespie Drechsel and her husband, Ryan Drechsel; and granddaughters, Taylor and Quinn of San Antonio, Texas. Sally is also survived by her sister, Sudie Rushton from Greenville, SC, along with nieces, nephews, and cousins.

A memorial service officiated by Reverend Mitch Maher was held at 10:00 a.m. Monday, January 8, at the Katy Funeral Home (Dignity Memorial) with visitation for family and friends following.

A private graveside service for family was held later that day at the Houston National Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made to Stuff the Sleigh, https:// www.thesleigh.org, a nonprofit that assists kids with cancer.

Sweet Sally will be missed by so many but will remain in our hearts forever. Until we meet again...



7 AM at Church on the Rock, 433 Barker Cypress Road, 7709/ Register at https://katychristianchamber.com





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# **EDUCATION**

THE KATY TIMES THURSDAY, JANUARY 11, 2024

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COURTESY KATY ISD

# **Registration open for Katy** ISD's spring community education courses

### **CONTRIBUTED REPORT**

Have you made a New Year's resolution, or have you always wanted to learn a new skill? Get ready to embark on a journey of learning and discovery as registration is open for a variety of Katy Independent School District Community Education courses. Whether you've always wanted to strum a guitar, master computer skills, or learn to salsa dance, now is your chance to enjoy new activities and enrichment possibilities.

Courses kick off on January 22 and are hosted in the evenings at two convenient locations: Taylor and Cinco Ranch High Schools. Enrollment is open to everyone.

Explore the rich variety of offerings in the Spring 2024 Online Course Catalog at ites. google.com/katyisd.org/community-education-catalog/home, where you'll find options ranging from multi-week courses

like drawing, painting, and dance, allowing participants to develop new skills over time. Additionally, the district offer single-night courses catering to specific interests, such as targeted business and finance topics, women's self-defense, and craft nights. Take advantage of the opportunity to earn certificates of completion for most classes.

Karen Lewis, Director of Internal & Community Relations, emphasized, "Our aim is to provide a learning experience that caters to everyone's interests and schedules. Whether you're looking for a deep dive into a subject or a one-night exploration, Katy ISD Community Education has you covered.'

Registration is available online. Don't miss the chance to invest in yourself and embrace the joy of learning. For more information or assistance, please contact the Community Education Department at 281-396-6365.

# Katy ISD hosts Operations Job Fair on January 20

### **CONTRIBUTED REPORT**

**KATY ISD OPERATIONS JOB FAIR** 

# Miller CTC preview nights show career & technical education courses for junior high students

### **CONTRIBUTED REPORT**

Katy Independent School District (Katy ISD) students and families seeking information on career and technical education (CTE) courses are invited to attend the upcoming Preview Night events hosted by Miller Career & Technology Center (MCTC).

Due to the overwhelming response in previous years, MCTC will be hosting two Preview Night events to accommodate the high level of interest. Events will be held at the campus at 1734 Katyland Drive in Katy. Preview night for grades 9-11 will be held on Wednesday, January 17 from 6 - 7:30 p.m. and preview night for grades 6-8 will take place on Monday, January 29 from 6 - 7:30 p.m.

"I am thrilled to extend a warm invitation to all Katy ISD students and families to our upcoming Preview Night events. The growing enthusiasm for CTE is truly inspiring, and at MCTC, our innovative courses, led by highly experienced teachers, provide invaluable opportunities for students to explore diverse career paths," said Kelley Kirila, Principal at MCTC.

In the upcoming 2024-25 school year, MCTC is set to offer an extensive selection of over 30 courses, spanning across various industries such as business and industry, public service, and Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM). These courses aim to empower students with the skills and knowledge necessary to navigate the evolving landscape of the professional world.

Enrollment for these programs is set to open on Wednesday, January 17, and will close on Friday, March 1st. This timeframe allows prospective students and their families ample opportunity to carefully consider and select from the myriad of offerings that align with their academic and career aspirations.

MCTC offers specialized Career and Technical Education courses not available at our Katy ISD high school campuses. The MCTC's mission is to develop college and career-ready students through engaging real-world experiences.

For more information about the Preview Night events and the diverse CTE courses offered, please visit the MCTC website at katyisd.org/MCTC. For questions or immediate assistance, please contact the MCTC counselor, Kristel Green at 281-237-6331 or the MCTC Admissions Specialist, Ana Perez at 281-237-6323.

### KATY PONY BASEBALL - WHERE PLAYERS START PLAYING **BASEBALL JUST LIKE THE PROS AT AGE 9 - WHERE OPEN** LEAGUE BASEBALL IS PLAYED JUST LIKE THE PROS.

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Katy Pony Baseball features a graduated system in 2-year increments for pitching and base distance to accommodate the physical development of players.



BASEBALL

SPRING 2024

Registration League Ages - 4 to 18 (As of April 30th 2024)

Register at Dick's Sporting Goods (see below) or online at www.katyponybaseball.org

Season Starts - Week of March 18th - Ends TBD Spring Sportsfest - Baseball, games, food, fun, prizes and team pictures! Saturday, March 23rd

Walk-In Registration will take place at :

- Dick's Sporting Goods, January 13th (10am 2pm) (24600 Katy Fwy)
- or register online now thru 11:59 PM on January 17th at katyponybaseball.org Tryouts, at Four Seasons Park, (Ages 6-14) Saturday, January 20th (times assigned)
- No Tryouts Shetland 4/5
- No Tryouts Colt (Freshman Senior ): Colt Players will be placed on teams by High School.
- Player Drafts: Shetland 6 Pony Sunday, January 21st
- Teams Formed / Coaches Meeting: Shetland 4/5 Sunday, January 21st
- Teams Formed / Coaches Meeting: Colt January 25th

Mark your calendar for the Katy Independent School District (Katy ISD) Operations Job Fair on Saturday, January 20. The district is actively seeking qualified candidates within the Nutrition & Food Services, Maintenance & Operations and Transportation departments.

'We are excited to welcome prospective candidates who are eager to contribute to the continued success of Katy ISD," said a district spokesperson in a press release. "The positions available are essential in the dayto-day operations that make Katy ISD the #1 school district in the Greater Houston Area and one of the top employers in the state of Texas.

Katy ISD staff members will be present at the fair to provide assistance to individuals with language needs. "Our commitment is to support these candidates in the best way possible and express our appreciation for the time they have invested in this process," said the press release.

'Our operations team plays a vital role, and we are seeking dedicated individuals for positions such as bus drivers, kitchen staff, custodians, groundskeepers, and

• Where: Morton Ranch High School, 21000 Franz Rd., Katy, TX 77449 • When: Saturday, January 20, 2024, 9 a.m. – 11 a.m. • Contact: Nick Petito, General Manager of Media Relations,

nicholasvpetito@katyisd.org

maintenance personnel," said Ted Vierling, Chief Operations Officer. "We are excited to welcome new members to the Katy ISD family, recognizing the profound impact these essential workers have on our community's educational journey," he added.

The benefits of joining the Katy ISD team include competitive salaries, health insurance options and flexible hours for full and part-time positions.

Prospective candidates can visit the Katy ISD website and submit their application prior to attending the job fair.



For more information or details visit www.katyponybaseball.org or call the facility at 281-371-0887

teason Start and end dates are subject to change based on weather and other conditions beyond our control. Field usage and Batting cages are determined by a set schedule THIS ORGANIZATION AND ITS ACTIVITIES ARE NOT RELATED TO OR SPONSORED BY THE KATY INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT,

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THE KATY TIMES THURSDAY, JANUARY 11, 2024

# **WEEK OF JANUARY 12 SCORES & SCHEDULES**

### **GIRLS BASKETBALI**

Friday

• Paetow vs. Mayde Creek, 7 p.m. • Katy vs. Morton Ranch, 7 p.m. Cinco Ranch vs. Tompkins, 7 p.m. Taylor vs. Seven Lakes, 7 p.m.

### Tuesday

 Cinco Ranch vs. Morton Ranch, 7 p.m. Mayde Creek vs. Katy, 7 p.m. Tompkins vs. Seven Lakes, 7 p.m. Jordan vs. Paetow, 7 p.m.

### **BOYS BASKETBALL**

### Friday

• Morton Ranch vs. Katy, 7 p.m.

• Seven Lakes vs. Taylor, 7 p.m.

 Mayde Creek vs. Paetow, 7 p.m. • Cinco Ranch vs. Tompkins, 7 p.m.

Tuesday

• Seven Lakes vs. Tompkins, 7 p.m. Cinco Ranch vs. Morton Ranch, 7 p.m. • Katy vs. Mayde Creek, 7 p.m. • Paetow vs. Jordan, 7 p.m.

### **GIRLS SOCCER**

### Thursday

 Seven Lakes vs. Shadow Creek, 10 a.m. • Cinco Ranch vs. Klein, 10 a.m. · Paetow vs. Cy-Springs, 10 a.m. • Taylor vs. Dawson, 2 p.m. • Tompkins vs. Fulshear, 6 p.m. • Katy vs. Bellaire, 8 p.m. • Jordan at Vandegrift, 8 p.m.

**Friday-Saturday** 

• All teams but Jordan at I-10 Shootout

### Friday

 Jordan vs. Guyer, 12:40 p.m., at Georgetown

Saturday

• Jordan vs. East View, 2:30 p.m., at Georgetown

### Tuesday

 Paetow vs. Morton Ranch, noon • Jordan vs. Mayde Creek, 7:15 p.m. • Katy vs. Tompkins, 7:15 p.m. • Taylor vs. Cinco Ranch, 7:15 p.m.

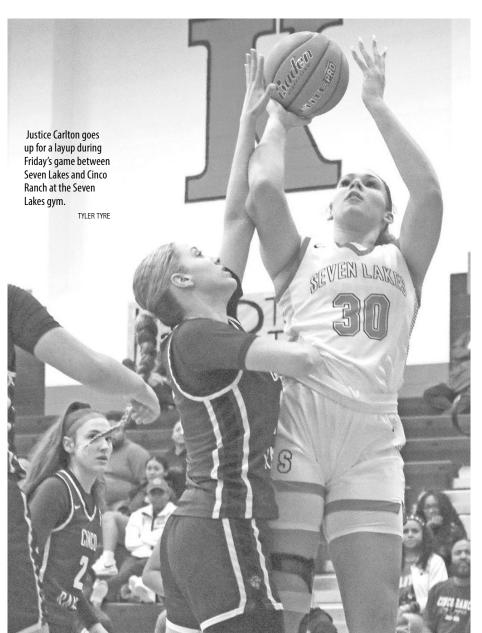
### **BOYS SOCCER**

### Thursday

 Taylor vs. Northbrook, 2 p.m. • Tompkins at Dripping Springs, 8 p.m. • Jordan vs. Round Rock, 8 p.m.

### Friday

• Tompkins at Baytown Lee, 2 p.m. • Jordan vs. Southlake Carroll, 6 p.m. Morton Ranch at Kempner, 7:30 p.m. Katy at C.E. King, 7:30 p.m.



# **Seven Lakes** surges past **Cinco Ranch**

### **BY TYLER TYRE** SPORTS EDITOR

Justice Carlton has been slowly working back to full strength.

The Seven Lakes senior wing had been grinding to get back from a torn ACL and was finally able to play shortly before the Christmas break. And with her returning to form, the Spartans have made a leap since returning from the break.

The Spartans got arguably their most important win of the season on Friday, beating Cinco Ranch, which came into the game as the top team in District 19-6A, 81-59 in a dominant performance where the Spartans never trailed.

Both Justice Carlton and Madison Carlton led the way in the win with huge games all over the court. Justice finished the game with 22 points while Madison had 28 points with both of them feasting on rebounds and making a big impact defensively as well.

"We had been killing it inside even before I got back. Maddie has just been such a force against everyone and there really isn't anyone out there that can guard her down low," Justice Carlton said. "With the health that we have now, it's just even more - there's no one who has the size we do with multiple people and then we have players on the wing who are great players too. It's just great to be a part of and we all play off each other."

See BASKETBALL, page A9

# **Texans clinch AFC South** Title to set up wild card rematch with Browns

### **BY TYLER TYRE** SPORTS EDITOR

It's been a turnaround for the ages in Houston this season.

Expectations weren't too high coming into the season with a rookie head coach, rookie offensive play caller and

beating the Indianapolis Colts 23-19 on Saturday in a game that came down to the final minutes, behind a big day from CJ Stroud and Nico Collins. Stroud finished the day 20 for 26 passing throwing for 264 yards and two touchdowns while Collins caught nine passes for 195 yards and a touchdown,



### Saturday

• Tompkins at Denton Guyer, 10 a.m. Jordan vs. Harlan, noon

### Tuesday

• Tompkins vs. Katy, 7:15 p.m. Cinco Ranch vs. Taylor, 7:15 p.m. Morton Ranch vs. Paetow, 7:15 p.m. Mayde Creek vs. Jordan, 7:15 p.m. • Seven Lakes vs. C.E. King, 7:15 p.m.

rookie quarterback taking the reins of the organization.

But whatever the expectations may have been, the Texans exceeded all of them, as they clinched an AFC South Division Title and the No. 4 seed in the AFC playoffs with a 10-7 record just a year after finishing tied for the worst record in the league.

Houston did it in dramatic fashion,

which came on the first offensive play of the game for the Texans, which was a 75-yard touchdown pass.

The win guaranteed the Texans a playoff spot and then they clinched the AFC South title on Sunday when the Titans beat the Jaguars.

"This is a special one," head coach

See TEXANS, page A9



SCOTT W. COLEMAN

Texans quarterback C.J. Stroud (7) scrambles and picks up a first down during an NFL game between the Houston Texans and Tennessee Titans on December 31. 2023, in Houston. The Texans won, 26-3.



TYLER TYRE

Daniela Sanchez Prado crosses the ball during Friday's Class 6A bi-district round game between Tompkins and George Ranch at Rhodes Stadium.

# I-10 Shootout returns with strong brackets

### **BY TYLER TYRE** SPORTS EDITOR

Another year of Katy ISD soccer is set to kick off this week with the start of the I-10 shootout signaling the start of the season.

It's another strong bracket in the I-10 shootout which will bring some of the strongest teams in the state to Katy where they will compete in brackets hosted by eight of the Katy ISD schools.

It will be a first look at some of the best teams around the area and state that will culminate with games at Legacy and Rhodes Stadium over the weekend.

Seven Lakes will lead the way among ranked teams, as they come in ranked eighth in the state and second in Region III by TASCO, behind just Ridge Point, Kingwood is ranked at No. 4 in Region III and will be at the tournament, while Tompkins is ranked No. 5. Memorial is ranked No. 6. Clear Lake is ranked No. 8, Summer Creek is ranked No. 9 and Elkins is ranked No. 20 as all will compete in the shootout.

The tournament starts Thursday, with the Katy ISD teams hosting their brackets through Friday until the finals are played at Legacy and Rhodes Stadium's on Saturday.

Cinco Ranch will host the Cougar bracket, which will include Bridgeland, Friendswood, Lamar, Klein, Pasadena Memorial. Lake Creek and Memorial. The Cougars will start the tournament against Klein on Thursday morning.

Katy will host the Tiger bracket which will have Bellaire, Clear Springs, Elkins, La Porte, St. Agnes, Foster and Klein Cain in it. Katy starts off the tournament against Bellaire on Thursday as they hope to get off to a hot start.

See SHOOTOUT, page A9



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PHOTOS BY TYLER TYRE

Gracie Hobin shoots a layup during Friday's game between Seven Lakes and Cinco Ranch at the Seven Lakes gym.



Kimora Lopez goes up for a shot during Friday's game between Seven Lakes and Cinco Ranch at the Seven Lakes gym.



Madison Carlton shoots over a defender during Friday's game between Seven Lakes and Cinco Ranch at the Seven Lakes gym.

### BASKETBALL

from page A8

Seven Lakes jumped out to a 10-0 lead in the first quarter and never looked back, building a 19-9 lead after the first quarter before making it 38-19 at halftime.

Seven Lakes did that behind a suffocating full court trap that sped Cinco Ranch up and never let them get in any kind of rhythm. That defense also led to easy transition points from the Spartans as they kept growing the lead even into the second half, as the depth of Seven Lakes kept everyone fresh despite the fast pace.

"We have some players back and it's huge for us with the way it's built our depth," said Seven Lakes head coach Doug Watson. "You're able to get more bodies in there and keep everyone fresh. When you don't have to rely on one unit for a whole game, it really helps a team and these girls come at you in waves, so it helps a lot."

Seven Lakes kept growing the lead to 62-32 after the third quarter and were able to get the bench in for a large majority of the fourth as they went on to clinch the win.

It was an important win for the Spartans as it kept them a game back of the top two in district, Taylor and Tompkins, and puts them tied for third place with Cinco Ranch as the first half of district play comes to a close. It won't get any easier though, as they will play those top two Taylor and Tompkins in their next two games as Seven Lakes looks to keep climbing the district standings.

"It was really important to get this win and to stay just a game behind those two schools," Watson said. "There's never a night off in this district and with those two coming up next, we have to be ready. We're going to keep working — this was a good one to get but we have to move on to the net one now."





Above: Justice Carlton was presented with a celebratory ball before the game against Cinco Ranch for surpassing 2,000 career points. Left: Justice and Madison Carlton celebrate after a basket during Friday's game between Seven Lakes and Cinco Ranch at the Seven Lakes gym.

PHOTOS BY TYLER TYRE

### TEXANS

from page A8

DeMeco Ryans said. "It's special to win the division and that was the goal. You know if you win the division, you're in the playoffs so that's the goal every year. We're proud of that accomplishment and proud of the work the guys put in to get to this point because they earned it even if it wasn't pretty every single week. I'm happy the way we learned it — we've grown and I feel like we're much better. We've gotten valuable experience that will carry us throughout the playoffs."

The win sets up a rematch from just three weeks ago, as Houston will host the Cleveland Browns at 3:30 p.m. Saturday at NRG Stadium, in what will be the Texans' first playoff game and first home playoff game since 2019.

The Texans will be hoping for a better performance than in their last matchup which they lost 26-22 while allowing Joe Flacco to throw for 368 yards and three touchdowns and Amari Cooper to catch 11 passes for 265 yards and two touchdowns. But Houston will get a boost in this game. Last time out the Texans did not have CJ Stroud at quarterback and were without both of their best pass rushers in Will Anderson Jr. and Jonathan Grennard on the defensive side of the ball and a big issue was the amount of time they gave to Joe Flacco to throw the ball.

But both Stroud and Anderson will be back for this matchup and the Texans are hoping that Grennard will be able to get back on the field for the playoff game as well.

"There were a lot of self inflicted wounds in that first game against the Browns," Ryans said. "We made big plays that were negated by penalties or mishaps by us. We have to play clean football because this is a good team and they'll take advantage of it. On defense we just gave up too many explosive plays and Amari had an outstanding game, we have to cover him better and we have to get off the field on third down."

But no matter the outcome of the game, this season has already gone down as a huge success for the Texans, but for the players in the locker room, they aren't satisfied yet.

"Every team that lines up at the start of the season the goal is to make it to the playoffs and that was our expectation in this locker room," said Ryans. "That's why you play the game and I don't know any other expectation. When you're a competitor, that is exactly why you do those things, so you can be in this situation. We continue to do our best and work the right way and that's how you get the opportunity. Now we're here and we are looking forward to it."



SCOTT W. COLEMAN

Texans wide receiver Nico Collins (12) carries the ball behind the block of offensive tackle George Fant (77) during an NFL game between the Houston Texans and Tennessee Titans on December 31, 2023, in Houston. The Texans won, 26-3.

### SHOOTOUT from page A8



Mayde Creek will host the Rams bracket that includes Canyon Lake, Cy-Falls, Santa Fe, Westbury, Aldine Davis, Kempner and Brenham and will start the tournament against Westbury.

Morton Ranch will host Cy-Lakes, Fort Bend Austin, Jersey Village, Westside, Manvel, New Caney Westfork and Waller in the Mavericks bracket and will start the tournament off against Westfork.

Paetow will host seven teams in the Panther bracket that includes Cy-Creek, Cy-Springs, Fort Bend Travis, Magnolia West, Kingwood and Heights with the Panthers playing Cy-Springs first on Thursday.

Seven Lakes will have a bracket consisting of A&M Consolidated, Clear Lake, Deer Park, San Antonio Churchill, Tomball Memorial, Shadow Creek and Cy-Woods and will host A&M Consolidated in its first game on Thursday.

Taylor will host a bracket that includes North Shore, Spring, Clements, Dawson, Montgomery, Memorial Red and Langham Creek, starting off the tournament against Dawson.



Valentina Gianinetto shoots during Tuesday's Class 6A area round game between Tompkins and Bellaire at Legacy Stadium.

Tompkins rounds out things with the Falcon Bracket, hosting Atascocita, Fulshear, Cy-Ranch, George Ranch, Lumberton, Summer Creek and Cedar Park.

The teams will be split into a winners and consolation bracket after Thursday. Those that make it undefeated until Saturday will play in the winner's bracket finals at Legacy and Rhodes Stadium.

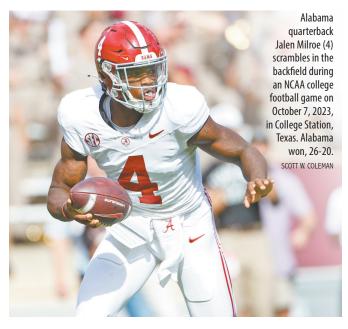
At Rhodes Stadium, the Mustang bracket final will be played at 9 a.m., the Tiger bracket finals will be played at 11 a.m., the Falcons bracket finals will be played at 1 p.m., and the Spartans bracket finals will be played at 3 p.m.

Over at Legacy, the Rams bracket final will be played at 10 a.m., the Mavericks bracket final will be played at noon, the Cougars bracket final will be played at 2 p.m. and the Panthers bracket final will be played at 4 p.m.

For more information on the tournament, go to https://i-10shootout.org/



# Milroe, Gbenda come up just short of national title game



### **BY TYLER TYRE** SPORTS EDITOR

Two Katy ISD graduates, Jalen Milroe and David Gbenda, fell just short of getting to the College Football Playoff National Title game last week, with both the University of Alabama and the University of Texas coming yards away from extending their seasons and making it to the biggest college football game of the year.

Milroe had a good day for Alabama in what ended up being a 27-20 loss to No. 1 Michigan in overtime. The redshirt sophomore completed 16 of his 23 passes for 116 yards, while adding 63 yards on the ground. Milroe led Alabama down the field on the team's final possession of the game, but the Crimson Tide came up just short, getting stuffed on a quarterback power run on a fourth and short in the redzone as Michigan came away with the win.

Texas meanwhile found themselves in just as close a game down the stretch in its College Football Playoff against the University of Washington, but like Alabama came up just short on its final drive. Gbenda had just one tackle in the game but it was a big one, stuffing Washington on a third and short before the Huskies turned it over on downs. The Longhorns were down nine with just minutes remaining in the game but came back and had a chance to win it at the end. The Longhorns drove all the way down to the redzone, but a fourth down pass to the endzone was batted down as time expired.

A big part of the Texas offensive line was Taylor graduate Hayden Conner, who finished his junior year as a two year starter for the Longhorns. He helped UT gain 318 yards through the air and 180 yards on the ground in the loss.

Milroe ended the year with 2,834 yards through the air to go with 23 touchdowns to just six interceptions. He added 531 yards on the ground and 12 more touchdowns as he cemented himself as the Crimson Tide's starting quarterback down the stretch.

Gbenda also had a big year in his senior season. He finished the season with 50 tackles, 23 of which were solos and 1.5 sacks, also deflecting two passes while helping the Longhorns to a Big 12 Title and National Semifinal appearance. Gbenda ends his college career with 109 tackles, 58 solo tackles, three sacks and an interception.

Conner started all 14 games for Texas this season at left guard.

# Mayde Creek graduate James Thomas named OU head track and field coach

### **BY TYLER TYRE** SPORTS EDITOR

Mayde Creek graduate James Thomas had a major accomplishment recently, as he was named the new head track and field and cross country coach at the University of Oklahoma, a huge accomplishment after years of hard work as an assistant coach.

Thomas joins the Sooners from the University of Georgia, where he spent the last two years as an assistant and associate head coach. He helped the Bulldogs to top 10 finishes in the 2023 NCAA Outdoor Championships, with the men finishing seventh and the women finishing 10th and top five finishes in the indoor championships, with the men finishing second and the women fifth.

"We're thrilled to welcome Coach Thomas to Sooner Nation," said OU Director of Athletics Joe Castiglione. "James has an established background in helping build championship-level programs and he holds a great vision for our track and field teams, building upon the momentum

our student-ath-

letes and coach-

ing staff have

created in the

past few years.

His pedigree is

proven having

and for some of

worked with



JAMES THOMAS in the sport,

positioning him and our program for success. Most importantly, he has an extreme focus on developing the whole student-athlete, and I know our Sooners will benefit immensely from his support and mentorship. We look forward to welcoming him, his wife Ebony, and their sons Jordan and Jameson to the Sooner family."

After graduating from Mayde Creek, Thomas graduated from Sam Houston State and got a master's degree from Texas A&M University-Commerce. Thomas went on to coach at Kentucky and TCU before joining the Texas Tech coaching staff in 2012, where he spent nine seasons until 2021, becoming the associate head coach and helping the Red Raiders to a National Outdoor Title in 2019, one of the major accomplishments of the University's track and field program.

"James Thomas has been preparing to be a head coach for a long time," said Texas Tech Director of Track and Field Wes Kittley. "He has been diligent in being a student of the game in track and field and has proven over and over he can recruit, develop and lead young men and women. He is now being given the opportunity to be a head coach. He will not be afraid to go after it full throttle. He is ready for this opportunity. I am so happy for him and his family."

# Three Katy ISD athletes named to TGCA Volleyball All-Star Team

**BY TYLER TYRE** SPORTS EDITOR

Three Katy ISD players were named to next year's Texas Girls Coaches Association Class 5A-6A All-Star Game after a terrific year in the school district and District 19-6A.

Kassidy O'Brien, Heidi Wingate and Brooklyn Merrell were all recognized for their accomplishments this school year and named to the Blue Team of the event.

O'Brian was named Co-District 19-6A MVP in her junior year at Cinco Ranch and finished the year with 1385 assists, 388 digs, 137 kills, 22 blocks and 25 aces as the Cougars setter while helping her team reach the Class 6A state final after an undefeated district championship.

Wingate had a great season in her junior year at Seven Lakes, helping the Spartans reach the Region III-6A Final; she finished the season with 194 kills, 21 blocks, 54 digs, seven assists and one ace.

Brooklyn Merrell was the final player from Katy ISD to make the team. The junior setter helped lead the Tompkins Falcons to a second place finish in district and a third round appearance in the playoffs. She had 496 digs, 134 assists, 102 aces and six kills on the season, being named the district's defensive player of the year in the process.









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