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PREVIEW
SPORTS | A8

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THURSDAY, JANUARY 4, 2024

Harris Co. eviction defense program expanded

New \$4 million ARPA investment will increase access to justice for all parties in the eviction process

CONTRIBUTED REPORT

In a unanimous vote Tuesday, December 19th, Harris County Commissioners

approved \$4 million in federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding to expand the Eviction Legal Aid Program to all 16 of the County's Justice of the Peace Courts.

Eviction filings in Harris County have continued to rise since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, in 2021, Harris County invested an initial \$1 million in ARPA funding to provide pro bono representation to low-income tenants facing eviction proceedings.

In March 2023, Harris County invested an additional \$4 million in ARPA funding to-

ward contracts with Lone Star Legal Aid and Neighborhood Defender Services to serve eight Justice of the Peace Courts that handle the largest share of eviction filings in Harris County. A great need for these services persists throughout the County. In fact, both organizations had a target to assist at least 2,000 people by November 30, 2023—but surpassed that goal, serving more than 7,200 individuals.

The latest funding expands Harris County's Community Services Division's Eviction Legal Aid Program to all 16 Justice of the

Peace Courts through awards of \$2 million each to Lone Star Legal Aid and Neighborhood Defender Services. The amended contracts will now run through December 31, 2024.

Since 2020, an estimated 30% of all eviction filings in Harris County occurred in Precinct 4, the second highest of the four Commissioner precincts. From 2020 to 2022, eviction filings in Precinct 4 more than doubled.

See **EVICIONS**, page A3



RENDERING COURTESY OF FORT BEND COUNTY LIBRARY SYSTEM

The new Fulshear Branch library -- which will be the third-largest library in the Fort Bend County library system -- will host its grand opening on Saturday, January 13th at 6350 GM Library Road off Texas Heritage Parkway, north of FM 1093, in Fulshear.

Fort Bend County Libraries announces grand opening of Fulshear branch Library

CONTRIBUTED REPORT

The grand opening and ribbon-cutting ceremony for Fort Bend County Libraries' Fulshear Branch Library will take place on Saturday, January 13, beginning at 10 a.m. at the new library, located at 6350 GM Library Road in Fulshear.

Fort Bend County Judge KP George will officiate the grand opening. He will be joined by Precinct 1 County Commissioner Vincent Morales and other county and local officials. All area residents are invited to the grand-opening reception.

The Fulshear Branch Library, which replaces the Bob Lutts Fulshear/Simonton Branch Library, is now the third largest library in the Fort Bend County library system. Designed by Huit-Zollars, the 2-story building is 41,980 square feet in size. Flintco is the general contractor.

Construction of the new Fulshear Branch Library is the final phase of a \$19.8-million bond referendum approved by voters in November 2015, which included \$13.4 million for a new library to be built on the north side of the county.

The library was designed to be

family-friendly, with individual areas for children, teens, and adults.

The library includes an outdoor patio with charging stations, a drive-through book return in the parking lot, community meeting rooms, study rooms, a puppet theater, and a computer lab for technology classes and public use. Additional computers will be available for public use outside of the computer lab. The library has free WiFi access for individuals wishing to bring their own laptop computers to the library.

See **LIBRARY**, page A3

Don't throw away that tree – recycle!

FROM STAFF REPORTS

The City of Katy Public Works Department will be picking up and recycling live Christmas trees again this year, according to the official City of Katy Facebook page. If you have a live Christmas tree, the department encourages you to recycle it after the holiday.

There's still time – a second round of dates for collection has been scheduled to begin Monday, January 8th and continue to Wednesday, January 10th

On these days, make sure your tree is placed at the curb by 8 a.m. The trees must have all decorations, ornaments, tinsel, lights and stands removed to be recycled. Flocked trees and/or artificial trees cannot be recycled.

If you are not able to recycle your trees during these collection days, alternate locations for tree recycling are:

- CMX Outdoor - 4314 Katy Hockley Rd., Katy TX 77493
- Living Earth - 27733 Katy Freeway, Katy, TX 77494
- New Earth - 6205 FM 2855, Katy, TX 77493

To check if you're inside the city limits, visit: www.cityofkaty.com/am-i-a-resident.

Toy drive receives over 5,000 donations, serves over 1,600 kids

CONTRIBUTED REPORT

Fort Bend County Judge KP George, in collaboration with the Fort Bend County Health and Human Services department, orchestrated a successful 2023 Toy Giveaway that brought joy to hundreds of children in need throughout the community.

The event, held on December 14, at the Rosenberg Annex, saw an impressive turnout with 193 registered families and over 60 unregistered families, who met the needs qualifications.

See **TOYS**, page A3

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January 4, 2024
10 pages | \$1

HARRIS COUNTY

Commissioner Briones touts first year's accomplishments

FROM STAFF REPORTS

Harris County Commissioner Precinct 4 Lesley Briones, whose jurisdiction includes much of the greater Katy area, released a year-end statement on December 4th, summarizing the accomplishments of her first year in office.

Listed among her achievements were:

- Made significant investments in the justice system — raising salaries for law enforcement officers, diverting people from the system and connecting them with mental health resources, funding six additional criminal district courts to more effectively move cases and keep up with the growing population, and providing services to help justice-involved women get back on their feet.
- Kicked off community planning efforts to renovate two major parks in the Precinct, expand mobility capacity of the Westpark Tollway, and make improvements across sidewalks, trails, and greenspaces.
- Committed federal funding to in-

See **BRIONES**, page A3



SUSAN ROVEGNO

In order to connect with her constituents in Harris County Precinct 4, new commissioner Lesley Briones (center) kicked off an 11-stop "listening tour," including this stop at Houston Community College's Katy campus, 22910 Colonial Parkway, on November 4th. The listening tours will continue in 2024 according to a statement from the commissioner's office.



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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



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COMMUNITY EVENTS

9th annual Graeme's Run on Feb. 24 will fund congenital heart research

FROM STAFF REPORTS

As part of Heart Awareness Month in February, The Graeme McDaniel Foundation will host its ninth annual fundraiser - Graeme's Run - on February 24th. The event, which features a 5K and a one-mile family walk in Old Katy, starts and ends at No Label Brewery, 5351 1st St, Katy. Registration starts at 7:30 a.m. with the run to begin at 8:30 a.m.

Organizers promise a variety of other activities as well, including face painting, balloon twisters, OMG video game trucks and baby goats from ROSE Therapeutic Farm. There will also be raffles and a silent auction. "Our participants can expect to enjoy lots of fun family activities, live music, and generously donated food and drinks from local restaurants," said foundation CEO Stephanie McDaniel.

The local nonprofit was founded by McDaniel after she lost her son Graeme to a congenital heart defect. The Graeme McDaniel Foundation funds congenital heart defect research and support heart families, just funding \$300,000 in congenital heart defect research over the summer -- double from their first year in operation, McDaniel said.

Last year's event had over 1,700 participants join and over \$185,000 was raised. "We are so proud of that and so very thankful to our community for their support and investment in this important mission," said McDaniel.

"We know everyone loves a good fun run, especially one that is close to home and brings awareness and funds to such a great cause," McDaniel said. "After losing our heart warrior to congenital heart defects, we decided to have a fun run/walk to celebrate our angel and make a difference. The continued support of many giving sponsors makes Graeme's Run a success."

To register for the event, go to graememcdaniel-foundation.org/register. For more information, contact Stephanie McDaniel at (832) 221-9116 or stephanie@graememcdanielfoundation.org.

KATY AARP Chapter Meeting January 9

The Katy chapter of AARP will meet Tuesday January 9th at Midway BBQ 6191 Highway Blvd in Katy. The meeting will start at 6:30 p.m. with a short meeting and announcements. Afterwards, entertainment will be provided by outstanding vocalist/guitarist John Steele whose rich voice and sound shines on classic country as well as pop classics and R&B. Visitors are welcome. Allow time to purchase any food before the meeting starts. For more information, contact Patty Phelps at pbpmid@aol.com.

Fulshear Katy Area Chamber presents motivational speaker Gabriel Najera at January 10th meeting

Join the Fulshear Katy Area Chamber of Commerce's monthly breakfast meeting to hear a one-of-a-kind speaker - Gabriel Najera, a motivational speaker without arms who inspires other people. He is a professional, bilingual, public keynote speaker in English and Spanish. Najera is an inspiring, motivating and humorous professional speaker who has an instinctive ability to capture and lift the spirits of people, empowering them for a renewed reach toward any goals, dreams and purpose they once thought were impossible to accomplish. The meeting will be held at Parkway Fellowship, 27043 FM 1093, Richmond, TX 77406. Networking begins at 7:30 a.m. and the meeting starts at 8 a.m.

MLK Unity Brunch to be held in Brookshire on January 13th

Come to the city of Brookshire at the Civic Center, 4029 Fifth Street, on January 13 from 10:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. for the 2023 MLK brunch and community celebration. Enjoy performances by the Royal Junior High and Royal High Dance Company and God's Creation Dance Ensemble as well as readings and awards for the "What Unity Means to Me" essay contest, and more! The brunch is free but an RSVP is



COURTESY FULSHEAR KATY AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Motivational speaker Gabriel Najera - who was born without arms - will address the Fulshear Katy Area Chamber of Commerce's monthly breakfast on January 10th. Najera's motto is "If I can, you can."

required due to limited seating; to RSVP, please email info@brookshiretx.gov. DeKarr Bradshaw will serve as the emcee for the event and additional music will be provided by DJ Jamming J.

Visit the LaCenterra Farmers Market on Sunday January 14th

The Farmers Market is BACK at LaCenterra, on the second and fourth Sundays of each month from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. There will be local vendors selling a variety of home-made goods and fresh produce in Heritage Square. LaCenterra is located at 23501 Cinco Ranch Blvd. in Katy.

Lions Club to feature multiple speakers at January 17th meeting

The Fort Bend County West Lions Club will host its monthly meeting

on January 17th at Park Place at the Boardwalk, 25551 Kingsland Blvd C102 in Katy, starting at 7 p.m. Featured speakers include:

- Mia Williams of DM Clinical Research speaking on consumer and clinical research
- Lisa Modglin of MESA Outreach sharing the food bank and community center's needs
- Judge Mike Englehardt speaking about the 151st Civil District Court and civil disputes.

To learn more about the club, its monthly seminars held by the Fort Bend Lions, and its service projects, contact Rev. David Greene, President & Executive Director - Fort Bend County West Lions Club. DGreene@beagreatlion.org (713) 714-6789.

Adopt a pet event slated for January 20th

The City of Katy Animal Control Department will partner with The Dog Stop venue for an adoption event on Saturday, January 20th from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. The Dog Stop facility, which is at 23165 Morton Ranch Road, will host its grand opening that same day, offering plenty of parking and a large indoor venue.

Enjoy "Second Chance Prom Night" at the Katy Area Chamber's annual gala on January 26th

Whether you missed your high school prom or simply want to relive the magic, this is your opportunity to make new memories and experience the enchantment of prom night with the Katy Area Chamber of Commerce's Annual Gala's Second Chance Prom. Everyone deserves a second chance to create unforgettable memories and to dance the night away! Join the Chamber from 6 p.m. to midnight at the Embassy Suites - Katy, 16435 Katy Freeway in Houston for food, fun and a silent auction. Individual tickets are \$150.00.

For more information, go to business.katy-chamber.com/events/details/katy-chamber-annual-gala-23931.

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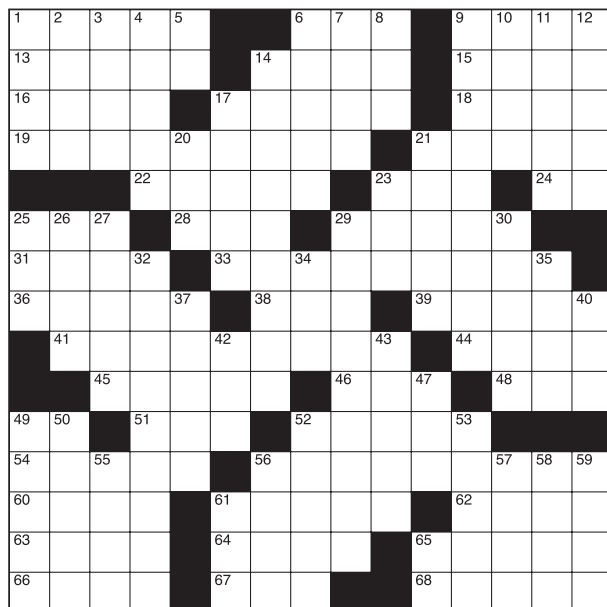
CLUES ACROSS

- Bleated
- Snakelike fish
- Database management system
- Russian-American violinist
- Wendy's founder Thomas
- Ancient Italian-Greek colony
- Negatives
- Rescued
- Self-immolation by fire ritual
- Assigns tasks to
- Island nation native
- Trade
- Detergent brand
- Famed NY Giant
- Before
- Split pulses
- Extremely angry; highly incensed
- Body part
- American state
- David __, US playwright
- Move one's head slightly
- Secret rendezvous
- Improved
- A place to exercise
- 18-year astronomical period
- Automobile
- You can take it
- A radio band
- Jaws of an animal
- Short-billed rails
- Chinese province
- Shameless and undisguised
- Horizontal passage into mine

- Adult males
- Fail to entertain
- Dried-up
- City in north-central Utah
- Southern U.S.
- German river
- Oxygen
- Make law

CLUES DOWN

- Curved segment
- Wings
- From pentane (Chemistry)
- Gradually gets into
- Commercial document (abbr.)
- Overhang
- Christmas and New Year's have them
- Type of bulb
- Lacking a plan
- Tattle
- Rockers like it "heavy"
- One who's been canonized
- Indicate time and place
- Nobel Prize winner in physics
- The voice of Olaf
- Fragmented rock
- They __
- Master of Philosophy
- Backside
- Landmark house in L.A.
- An act of undue intimacy
- From which a later word is derived



- Equal to 10 meters
- Neither
- Computer language
- Sacred book of Judaism
- A woolen cap of Scottish origin
- A way to dedicate
- Challenges
- British Air Aces
- Large, influential bank
- Portended
- Cavalry-sword
- Vaccine developer
- Napoleonic Wars general
- Italian Seaport
- Hip joint
- __ Clapton, musician
- Insect repellent
- Decorative scarf
- Delaware

Answers will be provided in next week's edition.

SUDOKU

6					9	2		
3			5			8		7
								1
	9						8	
		3			1	7		
4		7			3		6	
		2			5	9		
			7	6				
		8						4

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.

BRIONES

from page A1

crease access to free, high-quality childcare.

- Moved forward with Harris County's climate action plan and broke ground on major flood resiliency projects.
- Awarded "substantial progress" certificates on an infrastructure projects that will improve drainage at John Paul Landing Park and increase safety at the intersection of Clay Road and Katy Hockley Cut Off Road with a temporary traffic signal.
- Co-hosted fifth annual gun buyback event on Nov. 18, in partnership with Harris County Sheriff Ed Gonzales and Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner, during which Houston-area residents turned in 559 guns. Participants lined up before the gates opened at 8 a.m. for the drive-thru event at METRO's Westchase Park and Ride on Harwin Drive. Over 1,550 gift cards worth nearly \$78,000 were distributed to residents who voluntarily turned in unwanted firearms for safe disposal. The gift cards were funded by the federal American Rescue Plan Act of 2021.
- Spearheaded the formation of the LGBTQIA+ Commission which held a kick-off meeting on Nov. 16 to discuss goals for the group. Creation of this commission was spearheaded by Commissioner Briones in an attempt to amplify the voices of the LGBTQIA+ community and promote equality in Harris

County. The Commission will provide actionable recommendations that will improve economic, social, health and safety outcomes for the LGBTQIA+ community. Additional members of the Commission are expected to be appointed in December, with the first meeting set to take place in January.

- Partnered with the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA), SCORE Houston, and the Small Business Development Center to host two free workshops where representatives were be on site to answer questions about SBA loans and provide information about other community resources. One of the two December workshops was held at the Steve Radack Center at 18650 Clay Road.
- Supported Harris Hub for Small Businesses which provides eligible small businesses within Harris County with free assistance on a wide range of needs - from finances, grant applications, and legal services, to creating a logo, social media and marketing, and more. Eligible small businesses can apply for a \$5,000 working capital grant. Harris Hub is a resource which has amplified federal efforts, like the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES) and the American Rescue Plan Act, that provided billions of dollars to help small businesses recover from the pandemic.

In 2024, Harris County small businesses can also apply for loans through the Revolving Loan Fund. The microloans will range from \$5,000 to \$50,000, and growth loans will range between \$100,000 to \$250,000.

Commissioner Briones demonstrated her commitment to advocating for policies and resources that enhance the quality of life for Harris County residents, her statement said. To inform those policies, she has been meeting with community members during an 11-stop Listening Tour. The tour will continue in 2024.

"Serving as your County Commissioner is the honor of my life," said Briones in the email to her constituents. "I am grateful for the opportunity to serve and am energized by the progress we have made during this first year. My Precinct 4 team of more than 400 public servants and I have been honored to engage with so many of you, and we look forward to continuing to listen to, learn from, and serve you with heart, hustle, and higher standards. Everything we do at Precinct 4 is grounded in our commitment to serving you and your family. Our mission is to advance opportunity and justice for all. We have prioritized justice and safety, infrastructure, health, education and economic opportunity, and good government."

LIBRARY

from page A1

Children will be delighted with the interactive game table in the Youth Department, as well as with the whimsical musical elements outside the library.

The Youth Services department will offer a full range of children's programs, including Mother Goose Time for infants, Toddler Time for children from 1 to 3 years of age, Preschool Story Time for 3- to 6-year-old children, and school-aged programs for children in grades K through 8.

The library will offer book clubs and craft groups, and introductory computer classes for adults will soon be available. Patrons may learn computer basics, such as how to use a computer, how to search the Internet, and how to use Microsoft Office programs such as Microsoft Word, Excel, and PowerPoint.

A variety of books for children and adults are available for recreational reading and research. Magazines, newspapers, and audiovisual materials are also on hand. The library offers an online collection of ebooks and audiobooks, as well as e-magazines and streaming movies that can be accessed from home.

"Part of our library mission is to provide an environment of lifelong learning and enrichment for the entire, diverse community, and this new venture just reinforces our commitment to providing a continuum of service for people of all ages," said Library Director Clara Russell. "We hope the residents in the area will find the new library a pleasant and enjoyable place where they can study or just relax with a good book."

The Fulshear Branch Library is located at 6350 GM Library Road, off Texas Heritage Parkway, north of FM 1093, in Fulshear.

The hours of operation for the new Fulshear Branch Library are as follows: Monday, 12 to 9 p.m.; Tuesday and Wednesday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.; Thursday, 10 a.m. to 9 p.m.; Friday, 12 to 5:00 p.m.; and Saturday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. The library is closed on Sundays.

For more information, see the Fort Bend County Libraries website (www.fortbend.lib.tx.us) or call the library system's Communications Office (281-633-4734).

EVICCTIONS

from page A1

"As a lawyer and former judge, I am deeply committed to improving the quality of justice in Harris County and to ensuring equitable access to legal aid," Commissioner Lesley Briones said. "Expanding this investment to all 16 Justice of the Peace courts will help drive a fairer judicial process for eviction filings across Harris County. I am grateful to the Biden Administration for the ARPA funding that is being used to help our lower-income families."

"Stable housing and secure immigration status are not just moral imperatives, they are cornerstones of a thriving economy. Immigrant and eviction legal defense services keep people employed, children in school and communities vibrant," said Thao Costis, Executive Director, Harris County Community Services Department. "These services represent smart investments that generate returns in increased tax revenue, reduced strain on social services and a more productive workforce."

"Lone Star Legal Aid is dedicated to providing legal services to eligible Harris County tenants facing eviction," shared Dana Karni, Litigation Director, Lone Star Legal Aid. "As tenants with legal representation becomes more commonplace, we are seeing an exponential

impact benefiting the community. On behalf of the Eviction Defense Coalition, Lone Star Legal Aid appreciates the continued funding from Harris County for our work to support housing stability."

"Neighborhood Defender Service has long recognized the need for dedicated civil defense services as part of a comprehensive public defense program," noted Rick Jones, CEO and Executive Director, Neighborhood Defender Service (NDS). "And our partnership with Harris County underscores the indispensable role of legal services in shaping the very fabric of community health, safety, and overall well-being."

"No one should face the threat of eviction alone," stated Meenu Walters, Managing Director, NDS. "Since we opened our doors in May, our dedicated team has attended community events, hosted know-your-rights sessions, and most critically - we've provided advice, counsel, or full representation to nearly 2000 Houston residents at risk of losing their home. We're working to ensure that all individuals receive the support they need to safeguard their home and maintain stability."

In October 2023, Commissioners Court

unanimously approved a request from Commissioner Briones to create two positions for the County Civil Courts at Law Eviction Appeal docket, including an associate judge. Jermaine Thomas will serve as the associate judge and will begin hearing eviction appeal cases on January 8, 2024.

"Most evictions occur because working families have fallen on hard times and are unable to afford their rent. Yet, depending on the method of appeal, a tenant must pay at least one month of rent and continue paying at the usual rent period, often monthly, until the appeal is decided," Commissioner Briones said. "The new eviction appeal docket will shorten the wait time to disposition for eviction appeal cases, which will help avoid undue financial and mental stress from a lengthy legal process and provide tenants another opportunity to improve their outcomes. It will also support landlords looking for faster resolution to cases, as well as assist other litigants in non-eviction-related civil cases who are waiting for their day in court. The bottom line is that this investment will enhance fairness and will improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the administration of justice in our County."

TOYS

from page A1

A total of 1,158 children from the registered families and 406 children from the unregistered/walk-up families were the recipients of the generosity displayed by the Fort Bend County community.

The overwhelming success of the toy drive was made possible by the remarkable generosity of the community, as more than 2,000 toys and 3,000 plushies were donated, said a statement from George's office. Contributions allowed the county to provide over 1,600 children with toys for Christmas.

A surplus of over 300 toys and plushies were donated to Child Advocates of Fort Bend on Wednesday, December 20th.

"My office recognizes the importance of

supporting organizations dedicated to child advocacy, so we elected to donate the surplus of toys to Child Advocates," stated Judge KP George. "We are committed to extending the spirit of giving beyond the immediate event and fostering a culture of support for those in need throughout the year."

The average family household income of \$36,000 or less for the participating families underscores the impact of the Toy Drive Giveaway on those facing economic challenges. Through the collaborative efforts of Fort Bend County Judge KP George, Health and Human Services, and generous donors, the event aimed to bring joy and relief to families in need during the holiday season, organizers said.

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Last Bite is the first stop for charcuterie dining

BY SUSAN ROVEGNO
PUBLISHER

Tucked away in a small strip center in the southern portion of the greater Katy area is your first stop for new dining options in 2024...especially if you love charcuterie.

Last Bite, located at 9910 Gaston Road in Katy, is an artisan bistro that offers a variety of handcrafted sandwiches and charcuterie boxes and other delicious bites.

Staffers say the most popular item is the "Figs in Sicilia" sandwich, made on focaccia bread with fig marmalade, brie, prosciutto, pistachio mortadella, hard salami, balsamic vinaigrette and baby arugula. Second and third most requested items are the "I'm Kind of a Big Dill" sandwich and the "Spicy Gobble-icious" sandwich. Charcuterie options include cheese boards, antipasto



SUSAN ROVEGNO

Owner Alex Tome prepares a charcuterie board at his new restaurant, Last Bite, which opened in November.

boards and premium, specialty and novelty boards.

Follow all that with "sweet bites" — freshly baked cookies,

chocolate decadent or key lime pie. Waffle cones are available too.

Milkshakes and smoothies and hot or cold coffee drinks complete

your meal.

The restaurant also features a weekend brunch — Friday, Saturday and Sunday from 11 a.m.

to 3 p.m. — with choices including a breakfast waffle with scrambled eggs, cheese and choice of meats; and a "baker's choice of scones, danishes and croissants.

Owner Alex Tome opened the bistro in November 2023 along with his wife, who designed the restaurant's décor. The couple consulted with a cousin who is a chef and who assisted them in crafting the menu. The project took over four months to come together, Tome said.

"When you come visit us, you can expect the best of the best," Tome said. "We offer top service and quality ingredients, and we will go the extra mile to make sure the customer is satisfied."

The restaurant also offers catering in addition to dine-in, takeout and delivery.

To see a complete menu or for more information, go to lastbitebistro.com or call 346-387-9602.

PARIS BANH MI



SUSAN ROVEGNO

Owner Kim Phan has opened Paris Banh Mi at 2004 S. Mason in Katy, after relocating from New York in February. The shop specializes in Vietnamese sandwiches, which are affordably priced at just \$7.95 each, along with croissants, burgers and Korean corn dogs. The restaurant menu includes pho noodle soups, ramen noodle soups and bubble waffles. Choices in fresh teas (hot or cold) are flavored teas and milk teas, with slushies and coffees as well. The show-stealing dessert case is shown in this photo. The restaurant is open daily from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. For more information, go to parisbanhmi.com

Now, everything is "just peachy" in Katy as Peach Cobbler opens

BY SUSAN ROVEGNO
PUBLISHER

A restaurant that specializes in peach cobbler, along with other desserts...it's a Southerner's dream come true.

Retired military couple Troy and Jacqueline Barber held a December 23rd grand opening for the Peach Cobbler Factory — Katy at 1230 N. Mason Road, Suite 650 in Katy. The couple moved to the Houston area from Florida in order to be closer to Jacqueline's family in the Crosby area. They plan to open an additional location in Katy, along with sites in Sugar Land and Humble.

"Katy is one of the up and coming cities outside Houston — it's going to be the 'next Houston,'" said Troy Barber. The couple plan to be active in the Katy community, having joined the Katy Area Chamber of Commerce. They are looking forward to an official ribbon cutting sometime after the holidays.

Yes, the restaurant sells peach cobbler — 12 different kinds, Barber says — along with sweet potato cobbler, banana pudding, peach tea, and waffles. Any of the offerings — cobblers, puddings and waffles — can be customized with additional ingredients such as blackberries or strawberries or even Nutella. Add sprinkles or chocolate kisses if you wish. Each cobbler comes with scoops of ice cream — on the side for take-out or on top for dine-in. "There are some "red velvet" options too.

Waffles can be served with peach cobbler on top, and with a choice of add-ons.

There are also brownies and cookies and churro stix with dipping sauce and banana pudding shakes and cheesecake shakes. A "dessert flight" is also offered, with the diner's choice of up to four different toppings. In addition to the peach tea, drink



SUSAN ROVEGNO

Owner Troy Barber readies for the grand opening of Peach Cobbler Factory — Katy on December 23rd.

selections include coffee, bottled water and soda.

The restaurant offers dine-in, take-out and catering. Cobblers may be ordered by the pan.

A 10 per cent discount will be extended to veterans, first responders, and teachers with ID. Barber says that his staff of 20 employees includes high school students and he stresses the importance of their education to them. "If their grades fall, they don't get their hours," he said.

The Peach Cobbler Factory is a franchise of a Memphis-based company, which since 2013 "has been devoted to crafting delightful desserts that evoke the feeling of grandma's kitchen," according to the company's website. For more information on the Katy location, call (904) 583-1468 or (904) 583-1989 or go to peachcobblerfactory.com.

The burgers are BACK in old Katy at TMG

BY SUSAN ROVEGNO
PUBLISHER

The long wait is over. And the burgers are BACK — this time under the new direction of longtime Katy residents Mike and Teri Yates.

TMG Burger Grill has replaced beloved local institution Willy Burger at 6191 Hwy Blvd #101 in Katy — with former Willy Burger manager Mike Daniels teaming up with the Yates.

"Mike, our general manager, has been in the Katy area for years and hiring him was a no brainer," Yates said. "I took him for an interview for a lunch at a nearby restaurant. Everyone in the restaurant came up and gave him hugs. His connection within the community is amazing."

Other Willy Burger employees have stayed on as well, Yates said. "Our Kitchen Manager Estefania has been an employee for 10 years, started as a dishwasher and has moved her way up -- she is a stud."

Yates knows the Katy market, having run the first Texas Mesquite Grill (hence the name TMG Burger Grill) in Katy near S. Fry and I-10. Although that restaurant closed, Yates said that they were always looking to come back to Katy. "When this spot opened up, we felt it was a perfect fit."

Yates' success — including his Texas Mesquite Grill in Cypress — has been with "mesquite grilled" foods, but that translates to success with burgers, he said. "I've been in the restaurant business since 1995, cooking many different cuisines. My focus has always been fresh, and that's what we are doing at TMG Burger Grill. Fresh ground brisket/chuck burgers, fresh cut fries and soon to be breakfast with cage free eggs."

TMG Burger Grill uses 1855 black angus brisket and Nolan Ryan 44 Farms chuck for their burgers. Yates has added chicken wings, chicken tender basket, prime rib chili, frito pie, all beef Nathans hot Dogs, snapper fish tacos and a seared tuna sandwich to the menu. Healthy options include an array of salads, tuna sandwiches, snapper fish tacos and the portabella mushroom burgers.

And those funnel cakes? "Carnival like funnel cake dusted with powdered sugar and cinnamon is the way to go," Yates said.

The location will soon be offering breakfast on Saturdays and Sundays. "It



PHOTO COURTESY OF AUSTIN YATES

Longtime Katy residents and experienced restaurateurs Austin (left) and Teri Yates have opened TMG Burger Grill in the old Willy Burger location on Highway Blvd.



SUSAN ROVEGNO

Mike Daniels (right) has joined TMG Burger Grill as general manager.

will be all cracked in house eggs, omelets cooked to order," Yates said. "Good ole southern breakfast." Breakfast hours will be 7:30 a.m. to noon on Saturdays and Sundays to start.

As a long-time Katy resident (the Yates have lived in Katy for 25 years), the couple have partnerships with Katy High School. "Our Texas Mesquite Grill has served the Katy faculty, football team and FFA for years," said Yates. "We have an awesome relationship with and can't wait to serve them some fresh ground burgers." The Yates' two daughters attended Seven Lakes High School and were active in the FFA there.

The Yates are excited to be back in Katy. "The reception has been awesome and we could not be happier than to provide a good ole 50's diner-like atmosphere to the community," said Yates.

For more information, go to tmgburgergrill.com.

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Venture Church plans new auditorium, pre-school/daycare

FROM STAFF REPORTS

Venture Christian Church will break ground in 2024 on a new 700-seat auditorium and Christian pre-school/day care, the church announced in a December postcard mailing. Construction will take place throughout 2024, the postcard said.

According to the church's website, Venture recently closed on 10 acres of land on Morton Road just West of Katy Ft. Bend Road. "We are currently in the process of building a new facility for the express purpose of impacting more lives with the Gospel of Jesus Christ," said a statement on the website. The building will accommodate a 753-seat auditorium, state of

the art children's facility, offices available for community use, counseling center and a Christian Pre-school (<https://www.lionheartkid.org>).

The congregation currently meets at 25133 Lakecrest Manor Drive in Katy, near Legacy Stadium and close to the intersection of Katy Fort Bend Road and Franz Road. Service times are 9:30 a.m. and 11 a.m. on Sundays. The church's lead minister is Nathan Boldt, and Les Boldt is the "Gathering Point (midweek) lead minister. Doug Songer serves as the music minister.

For more information, visit the church's website at venturekaty.com or call (346) 327-6362.



SUSAN ROVEGNO

Venture Christian Church will be building a new facility in 2024 to replace their existing location at 25133 Lakecrest Manor Drive in Katy.

Members Choice Credit Union shares financial wellness strategies for new year

CONTRIBUTED REPORT

The new year offers the ideal moment to reassess life goals, health and wellness, especially financial wellness. Member's Choice Credit Union reveals simple strategies to help individuals enhance overall financial health for a prosperous 2024.

"In pursuit of financial wellness, the first crucial step is to evaluate current finances. It's important to set a budget and review spending patterns to gain insights on where money is allo-

cated," said Jessica Segura, vice president of retail experience for Members Choice Credit Union, which is headquartered in the Katy area at 18211 Katy Fwy near Barker Cypress Road.

With interest rates projected to remain steady at higher levels for the foreseeable future, Segura points to the new year as an opportune time to consolidate high-interest debt and explore checking reward programs to maximize monthly budgets.

The next step is to prioritize savings, with an emphasis on an emergency fund.

"Build an emergency fund—for at least \$1,000—for unexpected circumstances and target a fund equivalent to three months' worth of expenses," said Segura. "Establishing this safety net can provide a buffer and offer financial security during unforeseen challenges, such as needing to make home or auto repairs."

To enhance savings even further, Segura said individuals may want to explore avenues where their money can work for them, such as a high-yield savings account or a certificate of deposit.

"With interest rates the highest

they've been in years, automating savings by redirecting a portion of one's direct deposit each month provides an easy starting point for building a financial cushion," said Segura.

The new year is also an optimal time to check credit scores. You can request a free copy of your credit report from the major consumer reporting agencies. Regularly reviewing the report for inaccuracies or omissions is critical for maintaining a healthy credit profile.

The credit union also advises individuals to obtain expert guid-

ance from a professional to help navigate their finances.

"A financial advisor can serve as a valuable coach for money matters. These professionals can assist in refining financial strategies, identifying savings opportunities, managing debt, and aligning goals with actionable plans," said Segura.

For more financial literacy tools and resources, visit www.mccu.com. As a full-service financial institution based in Houston, Members Choice has served the West Houston, Katy, and Cy-Fair areas for more than 81 years.

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RISD names HAABSE “Teacher of the Year” winners

FROM STAFF REPORTS

Royal ISD announced the Falcon recipients of the Houston Area Alliance of Black School Educators* (HAABSE) Teacher of the Year award on December 19th. RISD winners at each campus were:

- Royal High School: Candice Ervin, English Teacher & Senior Class Sponsor

- Royal Junior High School: Jorge Espinoza, 8th Grade Social Studies Teacher, Coach
- Royal STEM Academy: Kelsey Wilson, 5th Grade Math Teacher
- Royal Elementary School: Andrea Cromwell, Special Education Teacher
- Royal ECC: Courtney Garfield, 1st Grade Teacher

“Congratulations to the following educators on being selected as the HAABSE Outstanding Teacher for their campus,” said the district on its website. “Thank you for the outstanding job you do in helping our Falcons soar and for your commitment to investing in our tomorrow.”

According to the district’s statement, HAABSE’s primary mission is to enhance the education of all students and to exercise leadership in providing valuable professional services and strategies to institutions, agencies, and communities engaged in creating an environment in which students, particularly black students, can achieve academic excellence.

CHRISTMAS CARD WINNER



Each year, Royal ISD invites all students to enter an artistic creation in the annual District Christmas Card Art Contest. The 2023 winner was announced on December 22nd as Royal Junior High School seventh grade student Londynn Langrum. Londynn (center) is shown with her winning entry, accompanied by Royal Junior High School Principal Marcus McLemore (left) and art teacher Bobbie Novicke (right).

PHOTO COURTESY OF ROYAL ISD

ROYAL ISD ROTC PLACES WREATHS



PHOTO COURTESY OF ROYAL ISD

Royal MJROTC placed wreaths at Houston Veteran Cemetery in honor of the nation’s heroes on December 16th. Two booster moms and 24 cadets participated. “They are gone, but not forgotten, especially during the holidays,” a district spokesperson said on the school’s website.

KISD KEYS program to host men-only mentoring breakfast on January 19th

FROM STAFF REPORTS

Katy ISD’s Partners in Education program invites men in the Katy area to attend a men-only breakfast where they can learn more about the KEYS program (Keep Encouraging Youth toward Success) and how they can make a difference through mentoring.

“This unique GUYS-ONLY event celebrates the powerful influence of men who are willing to mentor our elementary and secondary male students,” said the district’s emailed invitation. The KEYS (Keep Encouraging Youth toward Success) Mentor Program sparks hope and transforms lives

one student, one mentor at a time, the invitation said.

The event will take place at the Professional Development Annex (across from the Merrell Center) at 6361 S. Stadium Lane in Katy on January 19th from 7:30 a.m. to 9 a.m. To RSVP for the event, go to www.surveymonkey.com/r/MWM2024.

For more information on the KEYS program or for questions, contact Partners in Education KEYS Coordinator, Cydney Wright at 281-396-2468 or cydneywright@katyisd.org.

To apply to be a mentor, go to publicbiapps.katyisd.org/KEYSMentorApplication/Default.aspx.

RISD special needs students treated to golf experience

FROM STAFF REPORTS

The Be An Angel organization provided two wonderful experiences to Royal students recently.

Students were able to participate in the “Students Undertaking Challenging Courses Ensuring development of Sportsmanship and Skills” golf program (SUCCESS Golf). The unique 9-hole mini golf course designed for the district’s special angels promotes fun, learning, increased fine motor skills, and brain development.

Each year, Be An Angel also provides gifts to Royal students through their Christmas Gifts Program. According to the organization’s website, their mission is to improve the quality of life for children with special needs by providing adaptive equipment, hearing devices, select services, and support programs.

Visit beanangel.org / to learn more about Be An Angel, volunteer, or donate.



PHOTO COURTESY OF ROYAL ISD



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Notice is hereby given that the street address of the administrative office of Fort Bend County Emergency Services District No. 2 is Willowfork Fire Station, 2700 Spring Green Blvd, Katy, Texas 77494.

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NOTICE OF ESTABLISHMENT OF ADDITIONAL OUT-OF-DISTRICT MEETING PLACE OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF FORT BEND COUNTY MUNICIPAL UTILITY DISTRICT NO. 57

To the residents and taxpayers of Fort Bend County Municipal Utility District No. 57 (the "District"), and to all the persons interested in the meetings of the Board of Directors of such District:
Notice is hereby given that the Board of Directors of the District, at a meeting held December 18, 2023, established additional meeting places outside the boundaries of the District at Inframark Water and Infrastructure Services, 2002 West Grand Parkway North, Suite 100, Katy, Texas 77449 and Texas Hot Taps, 515 Pin Oak Road, Katy, Texas 77494.
Said meeting places are hereby declared to be public places and open to the public. All residents and taxpayers of the District and all other interested persons are hereby invited to attend any meetings of the Board of Directors at such location and other locations previously established by the Board of Directors as meeting places of the District.

/s/ Gina Babineaux
Secretary, Board of Directors

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STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA) IN THE FAMILY COURT
COUNTY OF YORK) SIXTEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT

Marie Madeline Chery and Benjamin Moses Chery, Plaintiffs
Vs
John Solomon Jatta, Defendant
Docket Number 2023-DR-46-1003

TO THE DEFENDANT:

SUMMONS
YOU ARE HEREBY SUMMONED AND REQUIRED to answer the complaint in the above-entitled action, a copy of which is herewith served upon you; to appear and defend the action; and to serve a copy of your answer upon the subscriber at Post Office Box 12323, Rock Hill, South Carolina, 29731 within thirty (30) days from the date of service.

NOTICE OF ADOPTION PROCEEDINGS
YOU ARE ALSO NOTIFIED, in case of your failure to do so within the time aforesaid, judgment by default will be rendered against you for the relief demanded in the complaint.

1. An adoption proceeding has been commenced pursuant to Chapter 9 of Title 63 of the Code of Laws of South Carolina.
2. You must respond in writing within thirty days of receiving this notice by filing with the court in which the adoption is pending notice and reasons to contest, intervene, or otherwise respond;
3. The court must be informed of your current address and of any changes in address during the adoption proceedings; and
4. Failure to file a response within thirty days of receiving notice constitutes consent to adoption of the child and forfeiture of all rights and obligations with respect to the child.

Respectfully Submitted,
DUNCAN AND NOBLES

S/B James David Duncan
Duncan and Nobles
Attorney for Plaintiff
306 Oakland Avenue
PO Box 12323
Rock Hill, South Carolina 29731
O 803.366.6633
james@duncanandnobles.com

May 25, 2023

December 28 Puzzle Answers

8	7	6	2	5	4	9	3	1
9	4	2	1	3	7	8	6	5
3	5	1	8	6	9	7	4	2
1	2	8	3	9	6	4	5	7
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7	9	3	4	8	5	1	2	6
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IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE NINTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT,
IN AND FOR OSCEOLA COUNTY, FLORIDA

IN THE MATTER OF THE TERMINATION OF PARENTAL RIGHTS FOR THE PROPOSED ADOPTION OF MINOR CHILD

IN THE MATTER OF THE ADOPTION OF:
ORIANNA LIYAH GREEN DOB: 11/08/2010 Case No.: 2023-DR-2892-AD
A MINOR CHILD.

NOTICE OF ACTION FOR PUBLICATION OF JOINT PETITION FOR STEP-PARENT ADOPTION AND TERMINATION OF PARENTAL RIGHTS

To: Otterway Ola Green
Biological Father
23702 Aspen Cliff Ct.
Katy, Texas 77493-3393

YOU ARE NOTIFIED that an action has been filed against you and that you are required to serve a copy of your written defenses, if any, to it on Russell J. Frank, Esq., whose address is Cordell Law, LLP, 5337 Millenia Lakes Blvd, Suite 200, Orlando, Florida 32839, rfrank@corde111law.com, on or before February 20, 2024, and file the original with the clerk of this Court at 2 Courthouse Square, Kissimmee, Florida 34741 before service on Petitioner or immediately thereafter. If you fail to do so, a default may be entered against you for the relief demanded in the petition.

Failure to file a written response to the petition constitutes grounds upon which the court may terminate parental rights. Failure to appear at the hearing constitutes grounds upon which the court may terminate parental rights. You have a right to ask that a future hearing be reset for a later date so that you may consult with an attorney; and an opportunity to admit or deny the allegations in the petition.

You are the legal father of a minor female child born on 11/08/2010 in Orlando, Orange County, Florida, to wit, O.L.G., and the birth mother describes you as being fifty (50) years old;

Copies of all court documents in this case, including orders, are available at the Clerk of the Circuit Court's office. You may review these documents upon request.

You must keep the Clerk of the Circuit Court's office notified of your current address. (You may file Designation of Current Mailing and E-Mail Address, Florida Supreme Court Approved Family Law Form 12.915.) Future papers in this lawsuit will be mailed or e-mailed to the addresses on record at the clerk's office.

WARNING: Rule 12.285, Florida Family Law Rules of Procedure, requires automatic disclosure of documents and information. Failure to comply can result in sanctions, including dismissal or striking of pleadings.

Dated: December 28, 2023

CLERK OF THE CIRCUIT COURT

By:
Deputy Clerk

Digitally signed by Carolina Garallues
Date: 2023.12.28 11:08:44 -05'00'

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Rihanna DeLeon fights through contact to shoot a layup during a game between Tompkins and Cinco Ranch at the Tompkins gym.

Katy ISD in store for another thrilling soccer season

BY TYLER TYRE
SPORTS EDITOR

Katy ISD has been a powerhouse in the soccer scene for years.

District 19-6A has consistently been one of the best in the state for a prolonged period and has cemented itself as a district that puts out quality every single year both on the boys and the girls side, and this year has a chance to be one of the best we have seen out of the school district. From a returning state champion, to rising teams on the boys side and a girls district that is filled to the brim with talent, there are things to be excited about all over the place and it has the makings for a great year.

At the top of the pack is the Seven Lakes boys. The Spartans come off their best ever season where claimed their first ever state title, as well as claiming their fourth straight district title and second straight Region III-6A title. Seven Lakes graduates some key players, but brings back some of the biggest pieces of their teams. Aidan Morrison will be back to the lead the team after being named last year's Texas Gatorade Player of the Year as a junior. The senior Liberty University commit will be hoping to continue Seven Lakes' streak atop district and will be joined by Kortay Koc up front as both make a formidable duo that will hope to lead Seven Lakes to the same heights as last year. Seven Lakes comes into the year as the top ranked team in the state and will get everyone's best shot.

But right behind them will be a number of teams hoping to take the Spartans

See **SOCCER**, page A10

DeLeon steps up

FOR TOMPKINS IN JUNIOR SEASON

BY TYLER TYRE
SPORTS EDITOR

Rihanna DeLeon knew she would have to raise her game going into her junior year.

The Tompkins shooting guard had been one of the team's best offensive weapons in both her freshman and sophomore season, but with the graduation of a strong senior class, she knew that she would have to step up this season.

DeLeon has done just that — the junior has been a focal point of the Falcons offense and has stepped up with some of the biggest performances of anyone who's worn a Tompkins uniform, and it all

comes back to the work that she has put in throughout the year.

"I've put in a lot of hours for this because I want to get better and I want to improve and help this team," DeLeon said. "I tried to get in three workouts a day during the summer and just as much as I can now. But I think just as important, my confidence has gone up a lot from last year to this year — that's helped me a lot."

It's been a historic start to DeLeon's junior season. Before district play even started, DeLeon broke the single game record for Tompkins for 3-pointers, pouring in 10 of them in a win over Fort Bend Bush

See **DELEON**, page A9



DOMENIC GREY | SPECIAL TO THE KATY TIMES

Rihanna DeLeon looks for a teammate during a game between Katy and Tompkins at the Katy gym last year.

WEEK OF JANUARY 5

SCORES & SCHEDULES

GIRLS BASKETBALL

Friday

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

Tuesday

- Mayde Creek vs. Jordan, 7 p.m.
- Cinco Ranch vs. Taylor, 7 p.m.
- Morton Ranch vs. Paetow, 7 p.m.
- Tompkins vs. Katy, 7 p.m.

BOYS BASKETBALL

Friday

- Katy vs. Taylor, 7 p.m.
- Cinco Ranch vs. Seven Lakes, 7 p.m.
- Jordan vs. Morton Ranch, 7 p.m.
- Paetow vs. Tompkins, 7 p.m.

Tuesday

- Taylor vs. Cinco Ranch, 7 p.m.
- Paetow vs. Morton Ranch, 7 p.m.
- Katy vs. Tompkins, 7 p.m.
- Jordan vs. Mayde Creek, 7 p.m.



SCOTT W. COLEMAN

Texans head coach DeMeco Ryans reacts after his defense stops the Titans on four straight downs after a first and goal during an NFL game between the Texans and Titans on December 31, 2023, in Houston. The Texans won, 26-3.

Texans down Titans, keep playoff, AFC South title hope alive

BY TYLER TYRE
SPORTS EDITOR

Houston had been waiting for a dominant performance from the Texans over the past month.

The Texans had been in a slide, losing two out of three and struggling on the offensive side of the football. But the answer to their slide came Sunday.

Home field advantage and the return of both CJ Stroud and Will Anderson propelled Houston to a huge win over the Titans, 26-3 as Houston kept its playoff hopes very alive heading into the last week of the season behind a

dominating game on both sides of the football.

Stroud led the way on the offensive side, completing 24 of 32 passes for 213 yards and a touchdown, while Anderson did some strong work on the defensive side with two sacks in his first game back from injury.

"We have a lot of young guys who have stepped up this year and provided energy to our team," said Texans head coach DeMeco Ryans. "That's what I told these young guys when I met with them in the off-season and they've done that since. They bring the

See **TEXANS**, page A9

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PHOTOS BY SCOTT W. COLEMAN

Above: Texans linebacker Christian Harris (48) leaps onto Titans running back Tyjae Spears (32) for a tackle during an NFL game between the Houston Texans and Tennessee Titans on December 31, 2023, in Houston. The Texans won, 26-3. Bottom right: 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. Bottom left: Texans tight end Brevin Jordan (9) dances after scoring a touchdown on a 12-yard pass reception during an NFL game between the Houston Texans and Tennessee Titans on December 31, 2023, in Houston.



TEXANS

from page A8

energy and set the tone and you saw that today. CJ, Will, all of those guys have stepped up and made plays. I'm happy we have this core of really good young players."

The Texans' defense and Stroud took no time to settle in, with Houston's defense opening the game with a 3-and-out before Stroud marched the offense down the field where the Texans took the lead on a short field goal. Houston's defense continued to hold Tennessee and Stroud extended the lead early in the second quarter, capping off a 13-play, 94-yard drive with a 12-yard touchdown pass to Brevin Jordan. The Texans' defense added to the lead the very next play, as they stripped Will Levis in the backfield and Sheldon Rankins returned the fumble recovery 13-yards for another touchdown. The Texans added another field goal late in the half before the Titans finally got on the board as time expired with a long field goal, with Houston going into the half leading 20-3.

It was one of the best halves of the year for the Texans, as they allowed just 79 yards of total offense and 12 yards on the ground.

"The defense played so well today and I was so happy with the strip sack," Ryans said. "That's all we talk about, taking the ball away in those situations and not being happy with just a sack. Our D-Line has produced no matter who's been in there and they play well together. It all starts up front with the line — when they play well it helps everyone else. They've been a driving force when we play well, and when they make that kind of impact we have a really good chance to win games."

The Texans came out of the half and added to the lead with their third field goal of the game and then made a huge stop on their own goal line, as Christian Harris broke up a pass in the endzone on a fourth down play to get the ball back. Houston forced another turnover on downs in the fourth quarter and Ka'imi Fairbairn nailed his fourth field goal of the day, a 51-yarder. Houston strolled the rest of the way, not allowing another point the rest of the way and finishing the game having given up just 187 yards of offense to the Titans offense, as the Texans improved to 9-7 on the year.

For Houston, it will all come down to the final week of the season. There is still a chance of winning the AFC South with a win and a Jaguars loss, while just a win would put the Texans into the playoffs regardless of results happening in the rest of the league. A loss and things get a lot trickier.

"Robert Woods came to us on Saturday and we had a big conversation about everything and the big theme was 'how bad do you want this,' because we have that opportunity in front of us to get to the playoffs," Stroud said. "We are taking this very seriously and we're excited about this chance and we came out today and played like it. We have the opportunity to control our own destiny, so we're excited about it."

DELEON

from page A8

where she scored 38 points, but that wasn't even her biggest performance of the season, as she broke the school single game scoring record with a 44-point performance against Hardin Jefferson.

"She's just become more of a total team player," said Tompkins head coach Tamatha Ray. "She understands that she's going to get her opportunities and that she has to be locked in on both ends of the floor. The glitz and the glamor is when she's able to just splash in three's from behind the line, but she's becoming more of a complete player. Rihanna has a super high basketball IQ and she knows that certain nights when teams take her out of it, she can impact the game in other ways. That's where she has really stepped up — she understands how influential both ends of the floor are."

DeLeon has done this while being targeted by other teams as the person they need to stop on Tompkins. She's been a nightmare for opposing coaches and has been a huge part of Tompkins' success. Even in a win earlier this year, Taylor head coach Blair Ary singled out DeLeon and her ability on the offensive end.

"Rihanna is one of the best offensive players I've ever coached against in 20 years," Ary said. "She's just able to do everything and is such a weapon and is without a doubt one of the hardest players I have ever had to coach against."

DeLeon has helped Tompkins get off to a hot start in District 19-6A and an early hold on one of the top spots overall. But for



TYLER TYRE

Rihanna DeLeon shoots a layup during a game between Taylor and Tompkins at the Tompkins gym.

her, the job isn't finished. She wants to get a district title back to Tompkins and continue to improve as the playoffs get closer.

"We're working towards our goals still, but when we get it all figured out and get everything down this is going to be a great team," DeLeon said. "The goal here every year is to win district and this team can do that. This is a team that can compete with anyone in district and in the playoffs."



Rihanna DeLeon shoots a layup during a game between Tompkins and Elkins at the Jordan gym last year. TYLER TYRE

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Ben Bucic clears a ball with a header during a Class 6A Regional Quarterfinal between Jordan and Paetow at Legacy Stadium.

SOCCER

from page A8

throne. Jordan returns talent all over and after making it to the regional semifinal in its first year in Class 6A, the Warriors finished third in district but overcame strong teams from the first playoff game on to make it four rounds deep last year and come into this season as the third ranked team in region III.

Last year four Katy ISD teams made it to the third round of the playoffs and the two teams that made it there along with Seven Lakes and Jordan, Cinco Ranch and Paetow, both bring back talent as well and will be determined to challenge in district this year. Cinco Ranch is ranked No. 8 in region III coming into the year and has more determination than ever after coming two seconds from knocking off Seven Lakes last year and making the regional tournament, Paetow meanwhile comes into the season third for ninth in the preseason Region III rankings after finishing second in district last year and making it three rounds in the playoffs.

On the girls side, Seven Lakes will once

again be the team to beat in district. The Spartans have won three district championships in a row coming into this year and are ranked No. 8 in the state and No. 2 in Region III behind only Ridge Point. The Spartans have some big shoes to fill this year in a few positions, but they consistently are one of the best in the state and bring back talent that will look to keep their run going. But they will have stiff competition in the district. Tompkins is ranked No. 5 in the region and always is one of the best teams in the area, while Jordan is ranked No. 7 and has been steadily improving heading into its second year in Class 6A.

And while those are the front runners in the district, they are not the only ones who have a chance this year.

There is talent all around Katy ISD and teams could come up and compete from anywhere, I believe we will be in for one of the most exciting district seasons we've seen in a long time, and I can't wait to watch it all play out.

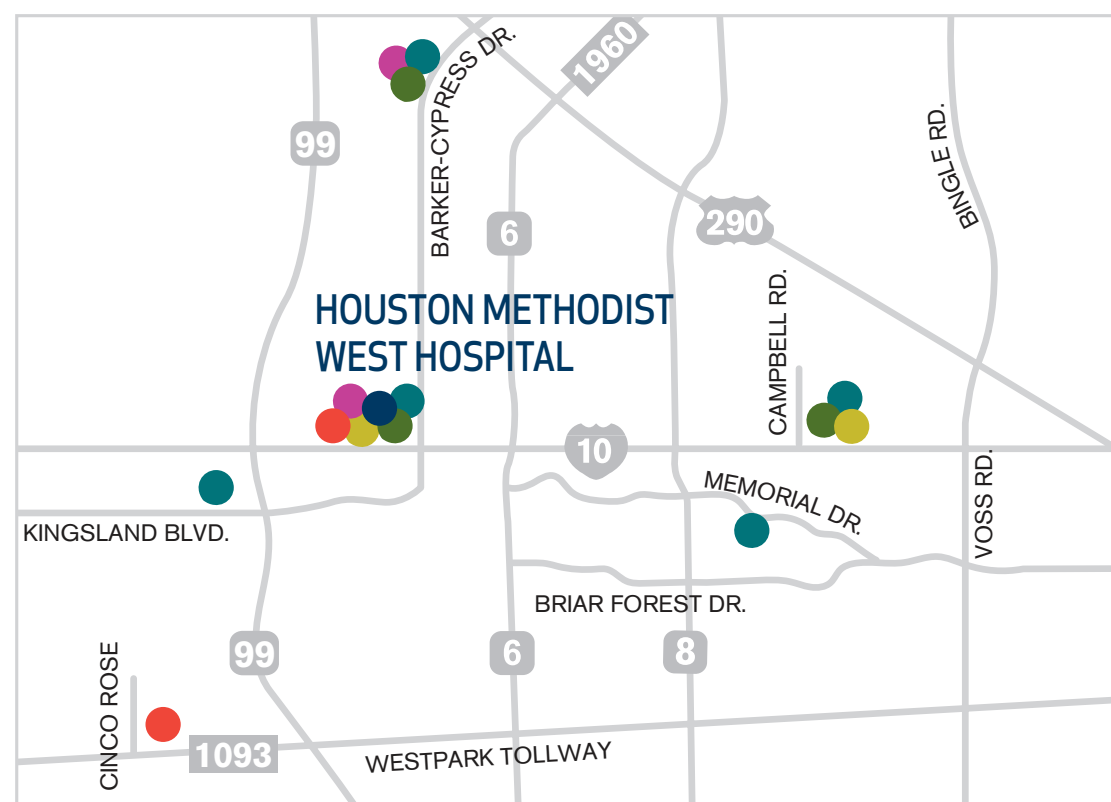


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