CCISD reforming special education

BY COLLEEN FERGUSON

One year after a consultant’s audit on Clear Creek ISD’s special education program, the district is progressing with reforms and aiming to improve its relationships with parents, some of whom have said they feel CCISD’s efforts still have not gone far enough.

The district hired Gibson Consulting Group in August 2018 after several parents raised concerns and protested against CCISD, claiming its special education students are abused by district staff and that staff are not properly trained to best educate their children.

In March 2019, Gibson released its report, which showed the district has many strengths as well as highlighting several areas in need of improvement. These areas include professional development, data usage and parent-administrator relationships, among others.

The report also compiled and presented continued on 30

Of the 27 recommendations in the Gibson report, 12 are complete. Three are being worked on, four are being completed over multiple years, and eight will be completed by the end of this summer.

Making progress

Of the 27 recommendations in the Gibson report, 12 are complete. Three are being worked on, four are being completed over multiple years, and eight will be completed by the end of this summer.

Astronauts train underwater at the Neutral Buoyancy Lab near Ellington Field and learn how to move in space and perform repairs on the International Space Station.

Johnson Space Center training astronauts for missions to moon, Mars

Some of the country’s most dedicated, intelligent and motivated people live, work and recreate in the Bay Area.

They are astronauts, and they spend their days at the Johnson Space Center in Clear Lake furthering NASA’s mission to explore space and eventually reach Mars.

But before astronauts ever strap into a rocket and blast off to the International Space Station, they must first spend two years in basic training as astronaut candidates followed by years of mission-specific training. Before that, they must be among the talented few NASA selects from a pool of thousands of wannabe space explorers.

In January, the latest group of astronaut candidates graduated and were officially added to the Astronaut Corps. This class of 11 was the first continued on 30
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Businesses that have recently opened or are coming soon, relocating or expanding

NOW OPEN

1 Stomp’s Burger Joint opened in December at 300 W. Bay Area Blvd., Houston. The restaurant, which has locations in Pearland and Bacliff, serves appetizers, such as nachos, mushroom slices, hot dogs and cheesesteaks, in addition to several different types of burgers. 281-724-9297. www.stompsburgerjoint.com

2 DeliverIt Pharmacy Clear Lake opened Dec. 11 at 600 N. Kobayashi Road, Ste. 112-113, Webster. The locally owned pharmacy, which delivers medications for free, offers outpatient infusion medication and can provide flu and vaccine immunization services on-site. The location also includes a coffee shop. 281-724-4828. www.deliveritpharmacy.com

3 Little Fairy’s Pet Ride & Groom opened Jan. 16 at 218 S. Egret Bay Blvd., League City. The salon offers grooming and bathing services as well as self-bathing stations. Other services include boarding, doggie day care and a pet taxi. 832-932-5761. www.thelittlefairysagency.com

COMING SOON

4 Aroma’s Italian Grill Fast Food opened Jan. 6 in the League City Plaza at 1601 W. Main St., League City, a 2,691-square-foot space. The restaurant is owned by a family from New York that specializes in authentic Italian food, including lasagna, spaghetti and baked ziti. Aroma’s also has a La Porte location. 281-724-9118. www.aromasitaliangrill.com

5 Nova Wellness Center Clinic & Medspa opened in January at 400 N. Texas Ave., Webster. The clinic was opened to be an alternative to the “fast-paced and impersonal” medical experience most people are used to, according to the business’s website. The clinic takes a holistic approach to medicine. 281-542-7800. www.novawellnesscenter.com

6 Headz Up Haircuts opened a second location at 2951 Marina Bay Drive, Ste. E1, League City, on Feb. 1. The business offers haircuts for men, women and children and also specializes in fades. Headz Up Haircuts’ first location is at 2121 W. Main St., Ste. B, League City. 281-672-7103. www.headzuphaircuts.com

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and opened her first full-service bakery baking and decorating cakes since 1982.

The owner lease from Weingarten Realty. The owner opened her first full-service bakery baking and decorating cakes since 1982.

The business previously sold store-bought bakery items, but baked goods such as cake balls to cookies are now made and decorated in-house, co-owners Mark Bystry and Vic Trent said. “We’re doing that [baking and decorating] on our own now, and we’re also including keto versions of things,” Trent said of the menu’s expansion.

In the future, the co-owners hope to also serve decorated cakes but want the business to remain primarily a spot for beverages. 281-549-7986.

www.thedrinkstation.com

**NEW OWNERSHIP**

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**ANNIVERSARIES**

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**IN THE NEWS**

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**CLOSINGS**

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**RELOCATIONS**

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**IN THE NEWS**

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**ANNIVERSARIES**

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**NEW OWNERSHIP**

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**IN THE NEWS**

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**IN THE NEWS**

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**ANNIVERSARIES**

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**NEW OWNERSHIP**

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**CLOSINGS**

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**RELOCATIONS**

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**IN THE NEWS**

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“Breast cancer, I beat you on my terms”
Rashe Bowie | Cancer Survivor

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Choose MD Anderson first. Call 1-844-870-9032 or visit MDAndersonBreastCare.com.
MARCH
26 CONNECT WITH HEALTH, WELLNESS EXPERTS
League City Regional Chamber of Commerce is hosting the Health & Wellness Expo to connect area residents with various local health and wellness vendors. All ages welcome. 4-7 p.m. Johnnie Arnoflo Civic Center, 400 W. Walker St., League City, 281-338-7339. www.leaguecitychamber.com/events/calendar

26 ENJOY CRAFT BEER IN LEAGUE CITY
League City Rotary will host Brews ‘N More IV to support its outreach projects, which include mobile food pantry distribution and flu immunization clinics. The event will include craft beer tastings from eight breweries, a cash bar for wine and spirits, food and live music. All ages are welcome. 5:30-8:30 p.m. $45. South Shore Harbour Resort & Conference Center, 2500 South Shore Blvd., League City. 281-334-1000. www.leaguecityrotary.com/event/brews--n--more-iv

28 GO TO A COMMUNITY GARAGE SALE
The city of League City will host a garage sale in Hometown Heroes Park, where community members can get to know each other while doing spring cleaning. Rent a booth and part with items from your garage, attic or closet, or come and see what others have to offer. 10 a.m.-noon. Free (park admission), $25 (booth fee for residents), $36 (booth fee for nonresidents). Hometown Heroes Park, 1001 E. League City Parkway, League City. 281-554-1180. www.leaguecity.com/2036/parks-cultural-services

28 CELEBRATE THE BLESSING OF THE FLEET IN SEABROOK
Lakewood Yacht Club will host its 65th annual Blessing of the Fleet, marking the official opening of the club’s boating season, with a brunch, ceremony and post-blessing parties on participating boats. Traditional Irish bagpipers, as well as the Clear Brook High School Marching Band, will be present to help observe the occasion. Each Blessing participant will be introduced, have information about their boat shared with the crowd, and then receive a Lakewood Burgee, commemorative plaque and a bottle of champagne to bathe the bow. The event is for members and guests only. All ages welcome. 9:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m. Free. Lakewood Yacht Club, 2322 Lakewood Yacht Club Drive, Seabrook. 281-474-2511. www.lakewoodyachtclub.com

30 PARTICIPATE IN A GOLF TOURNAMENT
The 31st annual Spring Fever Golf Classic is open to teams and individuals and will be played as a four-person Florida scramble. The entry fee includes lunch and dinner, beverages on the course, cart and green fees, and a goodie bag. All ages are welcome. 10 a.m.-5 p.m. $25 (nonplaying guests), $175 (individual players), $650 (team). Bay Oaks Country Club, 14545 Bay Oaks Blvd., Houston. 281-488-7676. www.clearlakearea.com/events/annual-events/spring-fever-golf-classic

31 TURN AN OLD BOOK INTO ART
League City will host a book folding event at Helen Hall Library, where participants can recycle an old book into a piece of art. Space is limited to 15 people. Ages 18 and up. Free. 6:30-8 p.m. Helen Hall Library - Susan Mathews Theater, 100 W. Walker St., League City. 281-554-1102. www.leaguecity.com/1280/events

APRIL
01 ADOPT A PET AT A FASHION SHOW LUNCHEON
Bay Area Turning Point will host the fifth annual Dogs and Divas fashion show and luncheon, which will include a silent auction and a wine pull drawing as well as adoptable pets. Bay Area Turning Point provides a full range of programs and services for survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault. All ages are welcome. 10 a.m.-2 p.m. $75 (general admission), $600 (reserved table for eight). South Shore Harbour Resort & Conference Center, 2500 South Shore Blvd., League City. 281-338-7600. www.events.Idonate.com/dogsanddivas2020

03 SUPPORT THE WOUNDED WARRIOR PROJECT AT A FOUR-COURSE DINNER
League City will host Salute to Heroes V benefitting the Wounded Warrior Project and presented by UTMB Health. The event includes a four-course dinner, an open bar, and live music from Gary Puckett and the Union Gap. Attendees must be over age 21. 7-11 p.m. $275. South Shore Harbour Resort & Conference Center, 2500 South Shore Blvd., League City. 281-334-1000. www.facebook.com/events/522997411655193

04 EAT CRAWFISH FOR A CAUSE
BCBF Inc. will host the sixth annual BigAss Crawfish Bash, which includes all-you-can-eat crawfish, a crawfish cook-off competition with more than 80 teams, vendor booths, a children’s area, live music, a veteran VIP tent and food from various restaurants. Proceeds go to PTSD Foundation of America Camp Hope, Texas Special Olympics and Local Area Texas Education Foundations. All ages welcome. 11 a.m.-11 p.m., 1-6 p.m. (crawfish). $23 (presale), $35 (day of at gate). Gulf Greyhound Park, 1000 FM 2004, La Marque. www.bigasscrawfishbash.com

04 GO FOR A WALK TO SUPPORT SENIOR CITIZENS
The annual Walk for Wellness 1K/5K Walk/Run returns, hosted by League City and the Friends of League City Seniors Foundation. The event is designed to increase awareness of the needs of seniors and encourage citizens of all ages to develop healthy lifestyles. All ages are welcome. Starts at 7:30 a.m. $25-$30. Walter Hall Park, 807 Hwy. 3 N., League City, 281-554-1180. www.raceentry.com/races/walk-for-wellness/2020/register

WORTH THE TRIP
MARCH 21: Get colorful at Holi in Bellaire
Celebrate the arrival of spring with entertainment, music, dancing, vendors, photo booths and Indian food for purchase. Tickets include color packets to use for the traditional throwing of colors. All ages welcome. 11:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m. $5-$15. Bellaire-Zindler Park, 7008 Fifth Street, Bellaire. www.facebook.com/bellaireholi

MARCH 21 THROUGH 22: Celebrate Palestinian culture
Houston’s Palestinian American Cultural Center will host the 10th annual Palestinian Festival, the largest in North America, including Middle Eastern food, dance and musical performances, and a showcase of a traditional Palestinian wedding. There will also be a grand bazaar with authentic Palestinian goods from embroidery and art to clothing and henna tattoos. All ages welcome. 1-10 p.m. (Sat.), 1-9 p.m. (Sun.). $3-$10. The Water Works in Buffalo Bayou Park, 105 Sabine St., Houston. www.pacchouston.org/festivals/hp2020

MARCH 28: Eat macaroni and cheese
Houston Mac Attack will take place in Midtown Park and feature a variety of gourmet twists on classic macaroni and cheese. Tickets include a commemorative spork, unlimited samplings and an open bar. Attendees must be over age 21. Noon-8 p.m. $54-$69. Midtown Park, 2811 Travis St., Houston. www.facebook.com/events/548686590285651

APRIL 4: Slurp up some oysters
The inaugural Houston Oyster Festival will feature cooled oyster bites and signature seafood dishes from several Houston restaurants; beer, wine and vodka bars; live music, cooking demos, a raw bar, educational exhibits and more. All ages welcome. 11 a.m.-4 p.m. $35-$150. Silver Street Studios at Sawyer Yards, 2000 Edwards St., Houston. 281-332-1389. www.houstonoysterfestival.org
Grab Fluffy and Fido on Saturday, April 11

Two events for you and your pet!

Grand Opening of
League City Animal Care and Adoption Center
755 W. Walker Street
10 a.m. Ribbon cutting
10:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Tours and Adoptions
 Paw Pet sitting station while you tour the facility
 Paw $10 adoptions
 Paw Photos with the Easter Bunny
 Paw Shelter program demonstrations every half hour
 Paw Pet resale shop

2nd Annual Pet Fest
at the Civic Center
400 W. Walker Street
10:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.
 Paw Pet vendors
 Paw Small dog races
 Paw Free microchipping
 Paw Reduced price vaccinations from Animal Alliance (first 50 for $24)
 Paw Food trucks
 Paw Demonstrations and prizes
ON GOING PROJECTS

1 El Dorado Boulevard widening
Crews throughout the summer removed and replanted about 10% of the more than 1,000 trees along El Dorado Boulevard from Clear Lake City Boulevard to Horsepen Bayou to make room for CenterPoint Energy to relocate power poles from the road’s existing median to the west edge of the road. CenterPoint determined not enough trees were removed, so workers had to remove more, putting the project start behind schedule. Trees will be replanted after construction ends. Workers are in the process of relocating power poles and putting up temporary street lighting, and the street widening will begin in earnest when that is complete. Once complete, El Dorado will have a 17-foot median, 12-foot driving lanes and a 10-foot hike and bike trail.

Timeline: September 2019-fall 2021
Cost: $4.6 million
Funding sources: Harris County ($3.1 million), city of Houston ($1.5 million)

2 Calder Road improvements
This project, which went out for bid Oct. 21, includes the design and construction of improvements along Calder Road from Ervin Street to Cross Colony Drive. Crews will modify the existing asphalt and open-ditch roadway into a two-way concrete curb-and-gutter roadway. The project will result in widened lanes, an additional turning lane, new sidewalks on the west side of Calder Road and increased drainage capacity. A new water line will be added during the project as well. League City City Council in mid-January approved a construction contract for a total of $8.71 million. Crews are relocating utilities before road work begins. A two-year project to improve Calder Road from Ervin Street to Turner Street was completed in February 2019. Unlike that project, the city will keep two-way traffic open during the duration of the project, city officials said.

Timeline: fall 2019-fall 2020
Cost: $8.71 million
Funding source: city of League City

3 Ervin Street connector construction
This new four-lane arterial roadway will connect Calder Road to the new Hobbs Road extension to the south. The street will provide better accessibility for Sedona subdivision residents, other neighboring communities and future development in the area. The project includes a drainage channel connecting the improved section of Ervin Street to Magnolia Bayou. Due to nearby road construction, city officials late last year decided to expedite this project. At least two lanes of this road will be built by April. In the meantime, the city will work on improving Turner Street and Butler Road to the north without lane closures until the Ervin Street connection is complete. The Texas Department of Transportation is improving the intersection of I-45 and League City Parkway through the spring, which is causing overflow traffic to Turner Street and Butler Road, preventing the city from closing lanes to improve those roads until Ervin is complete.

Timeline: September 2019-August 2020
Cost: $5.83 million
Funding source: city of League City

4 West Walker Street improvements
This road between League City Parkway and FM 646 will be enhanced with modifications to improve traffic flow. Turn lanes will be added to enter subdivisions, traffic signals will be installed, and the road’s intersections at League City Parkway and FM 646 will be improved. The city will add a dedicated right turn lane for north- and southbound Walker Street, add an extra through lane on Walker Street in both directions and extend the left turn lanes along League City Parkway by 250 feet. Phase 1 of this three-phase project finished in December.

Timeline: fall 2019-late 2020
Cost: $6.17 million
Funding source: city of League City

UPCOMING PROJECTS

5 FM 270 widening
This project, which will not start for another year, will widen a 2.7-mile stretch of FM 270 from south of FM 518 through the Hwy. 96 intersection to the south from a two-lane road to a four-lane, divided, curb-and-gutter street. All construction will be within the existing Texas Department of Transportation right of way. Once the design is complete, city staff will partner with the Houston-Galveston Area Council and TxDOT for funding. This project is included in Phase 1 of League City’s Master Mobility Plan.

Timeline: construction starts 2021 at the earliest
Cost: $22.8 million
Funding sources: Houston-Galveston Area Council ($18.24 million), city of League City ($4.56 million)

6 North Landing Boulevard extension
About 1.7 miles of a four-lane, urban-divided boulevard will be constructed to connect Landing Boulevard to I-45. Two bridges are included in this project, including one that will go over Clear Creek. Work will begin after I-45’s widening is complete.

Timeline: construction starts 2022 at the earliest
Cost: $49.5 million
Funding sources: federal government ($31.3 million), city of League City ($18.2 million)
League City Fire Department adds recruits

BY JAKE MAGEE

Over a year ago, League City officials were clamoring for more residents to join the volunteer-based League City Fire Department. After months of campaigning, the department last year saw its biggest jump in new volunteers yet.

“Best year ever,” Chief Gary Warren said. “There’s nothing more rewarding to spend a year working on something and then at the end of the year you have something to show for it.”

The recruits join the department as the city prepares in the coming weeks to open a new $5.6 million fire station to expand services and better serve newer neighborhoods on the city’s southeast side.

A total of 121 residents applied to join the fire department in 2019, thanks in part to billboards and other advertisements the city ran to encourage people to volunteer. Of those 121, 24 graduated from the department’s new recruit class in the spring, 12 graduated in the fall, and up to 20 will graduate this May, Warren said.

“Getting 56 new people is a big boost for us,” he said.

Over a year ago, the department had about 120 firefighters. Now, it has about 165, Warren said.

“The increase has helped us with scheduling the day crew and night crew because there’s more people that are willing to do it,” he said.

Assistant Chief Tommy Cones said more volunteers lead to faster response times to emergencies.

Despite the jump in volunteers, the city’s efforts are not over. Going forward, the department will focus on recruiting volunteers from specific areas of the city that are underserved. The downtown and historic districts, for instance, have fewer firefighters because many who live there are older and incapable of being firefight- ers, Cones said.

Recruiting and maintaining firefighters is always a challenge. Many who apply fail background checks, physicals or training and do not end up graduating. Established volunteers retire, and young ones sometimes quit after they start a family. Some fail to keep up with required training and are suspended, Warren and Cones said.

“You’re always in need of volunteers,” Cones said. “It’s always a balancing act. It’s very demanding.”

But active volunteers who live on the southeast side of the city have something to look forward to: In the coming weeks, the department will open Fire Station No. 6 at 7505 South Shore Blvd. The three-story station includes offices, study rooms, a living room and kitchen, a patio, and several bathrooms and showers.

For several months, Fire Station No. 6 has been temporarily housed at a water tower along South Shore Boulevard farther north from the new station. The tower is cramped and barely has room to park a fire truck. Warren and Cones are excited for firefighters assigned there to soon have a real station to work from.

“I really can’t wait for the firefighters to move in because they really deserve it,” Warren said. “They’ll finally have something to call their own.”
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COMMUNITY IMPACT NEWSPAPER • COMMUNITYIMPACT.COM
Exploration Green provides nature center in practical space

BY COLLEEN FERGUSON

Exploration Green, the Clear Lake City Water Authority's project to turn a former golf course into a detention pond that will eventually hold 500 million gallons of stormwater, began as a drainage facility with added amenities. Now, the project is viewed as a nature conservatory that also helps drain stormwater, Exploration Green Conservancy Chair Frank Weary said.

“The real gratifying part is seeing communities come together around this thing,” he said. “People feel good about what’s going on in the community.”

Efforts to turn the 200-acre project, located between El Camino Real, Bay Area Boulevard and Space Center Boulevard, into a reality started nearly 15 years ago with the process of purchasing the old Clear Lake Golf Course. In that time, Weary said, community spirit has been revitalized and public perception of the conservancy has changed significantly. “The area was definitely sliding into blight,” he said. “[But] since we started doing construction, people perked up.”

Residents can walk or jog around both completed phases, each of which have more than a mile of concrete trails. The athletic fields next to Phase 1 are completed and can now be used as practice fields for local youth sports. Exploration Green aims to host more community events, starting with sunset yoga March 19.

Phase 2 was completed in early 2020, and phases 1 and 2 are connected so stormwater drains from Phase 2 to Phase 1. Construction is now underway on the first part of the third phase, Weary said. Permitting is being completed for Phase 4 as well, and construction should start on that phase within the next two months, he said.

While Phase 2 is complete, the lake on Phase 2 will have to be drained so crews can replace some pockets of sand found during excavation with clay. This will be done in the next few weeks and will mean the public cannot access Phase 2 for six to eight weeks while the process is completed, Weary said.

This is not the first time Exploration Green leaders have had to adapt project plans. Phase 2 initially fell behind because the project’s proximity to Ellington Airport violated a Houston ordinance. Work resumed in September 2018 after the project was granted a variance.

Upon completion, lakes will take up about 8 of the 200 total acres, and wetlands will take up another 8. The on-site nursery where plants are kept is maintained by volunteers, who play an integral part in planting trees and shrubs during the late fall and early spring. Planting should be completed by the end of 2022, Weary said.

When finished, the project will protect 2,000 to 3,000 surrounding homes from flooding in 12 to 15 inches of rain, leaders said. Exploration Green is funded entirely by grants and donations. In total, the project will cost between $40 million to $50 million to complete. The last piece of the puzzle will be an entry plaza on Phase 1 estimated to cost between $1.5 million to $2 million, Weary said.

Volunteer maintenance crews use few to no chemicals on the property aside from the occasional ant killer, Exploration Green leaders said. Exploration Green is home to all native plants, from spider lilies and irises to arrowheads and maidencane. Trees are watered with reuse water, which Weary said is significantly better quality than regular stream water.

The project has played a large part in driving up housing costs over the last three years, volunteer leaders said. Data from Paige Martin of Keller Williams Realty shows the price per square foot of Clear Lake area homes went from $9 in 2016 to $17 in 2017, then $28 in 2018.

Home prices in the Clear Lake area are generally influenced by job growth, available inventory and interest rates, Martin said. Clear Lake has performed above average over both the last 5 and 10 years for Houston’s top suburbs thanks to growth in the area, new construction, and a growing number of professionals who live in the area and commute to the Houston Medical Center, she added.
League City raises water and wastewater rates citywide

BY JAKE MAGEE

LEAGUE CITY After League City City Council’s unanimous vote Feb. 25, water and wastewater rates will rise steadily over the next four years, starting in April, though commercial businesses will see greater increases than residents.

“A lot more burden is put on the larger meters and the commercial customers,” Council Member Larry Millican said.

The existing base water rate for all water users, residential or commercial, is $7.13 per month. Users are charged $1.50 per 1,000 gallons per month for the first 3,000 gallons used, then $5.50 per 1,000 gallons per month for using 3,001 to 10,000 gallons, $7 per 1,000 gallons per month for using 10,001 to 25,000 gallons, $9.85 per 1,000 gallons for using more than 25,000 gallons.

Under the new water rates, which start in April, water rates will be based on water meter sizes. Those with smaller meters, such as residents, will be charged less, but larger meters, such as those for businesses, will be charged more. This was done to put more of the cost burden on those who use water the most, city officials said.

Under the new rates, by 2024, those with 3/4-inch meters will see a base charge of $20 and a charge of $2.50 per 1,000 gallons used per month for the first 3,000 gallons used, then $6.38 per 1,000 gallons per month for using 3,001 to 10,000 gallons, $8.11 per 1,000 gallons per month for using 10,001 to 25,000 gallons and $9.85 per 1,000 gallons for using more than 25,000 gallons.

Under the commercial side, those with 8-inch meters by 2024 will see a base charge of $85 and a charge of $4.50 per 1,000 gallons used per month for the first 3,000 gallons used, then $6.84 per 1,000 gallons per month for using over 3,000 gallons.

By 2024, the monthly base wastewater rate of $13.88 will rise to $15.32. Residents and businesses will see increases based on monthly wastewater rate usage as well.

NUMBER TO KNOW
$501 MILLION
is how much it will cost the city over the next decade to perform maintenance to its water system, prompting water rate increases.

Clear Creek ISD approves $2 million allocation for language curriculum

BY COLLEEN FERGUSON

LEAGUE CITY Clear Creek ISD’s board of trustees approved $2 million in state funding to provide resources for students in a variety of English Language Arts and English as a Second Language classrooms at the Feb. 24 regular meeting.

Several subject area subcommittees completed the process of reviewing and selecting instructional resources. The subcommittees were made up of teachers—including representatives from English as a Second Language, special education and technology—and a parent or community representative per committee, said Steven Ebell, deputy superintendent of curriculum and instruction.

The criteria for evaluating resources included alignment to the district’s curriculum and philosophy as well as flexibility of implementation. Some of the recommended English Language Arts materials include books for classroom libraries across various genres and accessibility levels, subscriptions to Scholastic magazines and subscriptions to contemporary plays via an online database, as well as course-specific technology, equipment and instructional materials for advanced placement courses and electives.

The process of securing titles for individual classroom libraries will vary based on factors such as student interest, so not every library at each grade level has to have the same books. Several board members expressed concerns about this lack of consistency, including President Laura DuPont.

“That whole area is just concerning to me,” she said. “Are children getting the same experience because of different books being read?”

Anthologies and educational class sets would be the same across all grade levels, Ebell and Susan Silva, the executive director of curriculum and instruction, said in response.

“There really is a wide variety of literature and accessibility in all these classroom libraries,” Ebell said.

The classroom libraries and their structure are a result of the district’s strategic plan, district officials said. The process of letting students pick books themselves allows them to independently practice the skills required to read the text, as opposed to measuring those same skills with a classwide book that individual students may not be as interested in, Ebell and Silva said.

The subcommittees recommended the use of curriculum-building tool StudySync for English language learner students.

The subcommittees will provide the Texas Education Agency’s Instructional Materials Allotment Committee with their recommendations, and the district will initiate negotiations with selected vendors now that the allocation has been approved. The vendor selection will go before the board in March.

NUMBER TO KNOW
1,903
students in CCISD are bilingual.

SEVEN
CCISD campuses offer dual-language programs.

Clear Lake Shores hires interim police chief as permanent chief

BY JAKE MAGEE

CLEAR LAKE Clear Lake Shores has hired a permanent police chief after the retirement of former Chief Kenny Cook, who had served the city for 26 years, according to a news release from the city.

Clear Lake Shores City Council appointed interim Chief Tracy Keele to the permanent position Feb. 18.

Keele has 31 years of experience in law enforcement. He graduated from the Montgomery County Sheriff’s Academy in November 1988 and became a licensed Texas Peace Officer. He retired 21 years later from the Dickinson Police Department, the release reads.

Following that, Keele served as patrol commander of the Galveston Sheriff’s Office and commander of its tactical response team. Clear Lake Shores Police Department hired him in May, and he was named interim police chief Nov. 22, 2019, according to the release.

Keele’s main goal is to provide a safe community for residents, business owners and tourists. He believes community policing, transparency, integrity, recruitment and retention are key factors to a secure city, according to the release.

QUOTE OF NOTE

“IT IS MY PLEDGE TO YOU THAT WE WILL PROVIDE THE MOST PROFESSIONAL LAW ENFORCEMENT SERVICES POSSIBLE AND DO OUR PART TO CREATE A SAFE ENVIRONMENT FOR ALL TO ENJOY.”

CLEAR LAKE SHORES POLICE CHIEF TRACY KEELE
Coastal Texas Study changes, no longer includes miles of floodwalls

BY JAKE MAGEE

SEABROOK The $23 billion-$32 billion plan to build 76 miles of floodwalls and levees along Galveston Island and Bolivar Peninsula to prevent flooding during storms has undergone significant changes.

The two biggest changes include the fact the the Texas General Land Office and Army Corps of Engineers—the two organizations involved with the Coastal Texas Study, a plan to reinforce the Bay Area against hurricanes—are no longer proposing to build the floodwalls and levees or what would have been the world’s largest navigable gate between the island and peninsula.

Both organizations shared an update on the yearslong study during an open house event in Seabrook on Feb. 13.

Project manager Kelly Burks-Copes said the proposed floodwalls and levees have been replaced with beaches and dunes. Officials received over 13,000 public comments about the project last March, and the floodwalls and levees were “not well-received.”

Instead, the organizations are proposing to build beaches that stretch 250 feet from the water to 14-foot-high manmade dunes. Both the beaches and the dunes, which would stretch down a total 35 miles of Galveston Island and the Bolivar Peninsula, would help prevent flooding during major storms, Burks-Copes said.

While the dunes are more environmentally friendly and aesthetically pleasing than concrete walls, they will not be as effective at holding back water, she said.

Additionally, the organizations were considering building a massive set of moveable gates between Galveston Island and the Bolivar Peninsula. The gates would have remained open to allow ships to move from the Gulf of Mexico to Galveston Bay into the Houston Ship Channel but close during storms to hold back water.

“These are monster gates,” Burks-Copes said.

After meeting with officials from around the world who have built similar gates, the GLO and Corps decided instead to propose building a few smaller versions of the navigable gates. Additionally, a different type of gate that can lift out of the water to let boats pass will be installed throughout the remainder of the gap between the islands, Burks-Copes said.

Finally, the organizations are proposing building a ring around part of Galveston Island of levees and floodwalls and repairing the existing seawall that faces the Gulf.

In the event of a hurricane, not even the gates would stop water from entering the bay, and that water would eventually flow back into the backsides of Galveston Island. The protective ring would help reduce flooding in such an instance, Burks-Copes said.

The dunes, gates and ring are three lines of defense that would make Galveston Island and the entire Bay Area more resilient to major storms, said Tony Williams, director of planning coastal resources for GLO.

“They’re all designed to work together,” he said.

The 5 1/2-year study is one year from finishing. The organizations in late summer will hold another public comment period in which residents can share their concerns. In October, the organizations will hold more open houses about the plan and a new environmental impact study. The organizations hope to present the plan to Congress by May 2021. After, the plan will enter design for two to five years, and then it will take at least five to 10 years to construct, Burks-Copes said.

Officials estimate it will cost $100 million to $300 million annually to operate and maintain the project.

League City approves variance for gas well

BY JAKE MAGEE

LEAGUE CITY After a lengthy discussion Jan. 14, League City City Council approved a variance for a gas well that has been the subject of controversy and debate for years.

The Tidwell well is a gas well directly south of the Magnolia Creek subdivision that has been operating since March 2019. In October 2019, the well’s operator, Lynn Watkins, requested a variance to a city ordinance that requires the gas lines be odorized.

Odorizing a gas line is the process by which odors are added to gas so leaks can be detected by smell, making any leaks easier for neighbors to detect and report. Instead of odorizing the gas, Watkins’ proposal was to set up a system with several safeguards in place that automatically and instantly cut off valves and stop the flow of gas should a leak or other problem ever occur.

The council debated about the safety of odorization compared to the proposed shutoff system. A drilling and gas well consultant the city hired said he believes the shutoff system is safer. If he lived near the well, the consultant said he would prefer the shutoff system because it instantly stops the well in case of a leak whereas odorization merely informs anyone within smelling distance that a leak is occurring.

After hearing more information, Council Member Greg Gripon and others agreed.

“I definitely feel much safer knowing the system will be shut down immediately,” Gripon said.

Not all were convinced, however; Council Member Todd Kinsey was the sole member to vote against the variance, saying he has been against the well every year he has been on council. If the well operator truly cared about the safety of neighbors, the company would put in every safety measure possible, including both the shutoff system and the odorization, Kinsey said.

The council in April 2016 and July 2017 granted the well about 25 variances.

Officials share League City’s wins at State of the City

BY JAKE MAGEE

LEAGUE CITY Mayor Pat Hallisey and City Manager John Baumgartner had plenty of good news to report during League City’s annual State of the City luncheon Jan. 31.

Two problems have resulted from the city’s growth: increased traffic and flooding. In May, voters approved a $145 million bond and 0.25% sales tax rate increase will pay for several traffic and drainage improvements, 13 of 21 of which are underway, Hallisey said.

In a recent randomly sampled survey, about 91% of residents indicated they are satisfied living in League City and with the city’s services. However, many of the over 400 respondents indicated they are upset with congested traffic.

“I drive in the same traffic all of you do, and I get a little frustrated sitting there for 10 minutes, 15 minutes, but the price of progress is the traffic,” Hallisey said.

Baumgartner said the city is working on several projects to alleviate traffic congestion. The widening of I-45 will be done in a couple years, and the next big project will be the extension of Landing Boulevard north to I-45.

The city is also working on drainage solutions. The League City City Council tasked Baumgartner with coming up with regional solutions to drainage issues, and Baumgartner worked to get the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to start a regional study that should conclude by early 2021. Several municipalities have chipped in to get the study done, Hallisey said.

MEETINGS WE COVER

League City City Council
300 W. Walker St., League City
Next meetings: March 10 and 24 at 6 p.m.

Clear Creek ISD board of trustees
2425 E. Main St., League City
Next meeting: March 23 at 6 p.m.
TAKE ACTION AND OVERCOME JOINT PAIN

START YOUR JOURNEY TO LIVING PAIN-FREE.

Staying active is key to staying healthy. That’s why Joint Center specialists use the most advanced treatments to get you moving again. From new prescription options, to minimally invasive surgical interventions, our affiliated specialists are ready to get you back to the active life you want to live.

Advancing health. Personalizing care.

MEMORIAL HERMANN Joint Center

memorialhermann.org/joint
HOUSTON LIVESTOCK SHOW AND RODEO

Know before you go

- NRG Park opens daily at 8 a.m. Shopping, dining and rodeo displays are open from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m.
- Rodeos begin at 6:45 p.m. (weekdays) and 3:45 p.m. (weekends). Concerts begin about two hours later.
- Tickets are available at www.rodeohouston.com or at NRG Park during rodeo hours.

Grounds passes:
- $5 for children
- $15 for adults
- $35 for season passes (20 days)

Individual performance tickets start at $20. Season tickets start at $400 (includes every rodeo and concert event).

Riding from the Woodlands

For the second year in a row, The Woodlands Township approved a weekend shuttle service to carry residents to and from the rodeo this March.

Available days in March: 7, 8, 14, 15, 21, 22

The Park and Ride service will run between the Sawdust Park and Ride at 701 Westridge Road, The Woodlands, and NRG Stadium. Round-trip service will cost riders $13, and advance reservations will be required.

Ticket information
281-590-8800
www.thewoodlandstownship-tx.gov/1467/rodeo-shuttle-service

What to leave at home

- air horns
- alcohol
- banners bearing advertisements
- beach balls
- firearms
- fireworks
- footballs
- Frisbee and other sports discs
- hover boards
- laser pointers
- professional camera equipment (photography lenses over 3 inches in length)
- selfie sticks
- weapons
- whistles

CONCERT LINEUP

The RodeoHouston 2020 concert lineup features 20 nights of performances by a mix of country, hop-hop and pop stars. Concerts are held daily in NRG Stadium following rodeo events.

MARCH
3  Midland  8:45 p.m.
4  Armed Forces Appreciation Day Willie Nelson  8:45 p.m.
5  Becky G  8:45 p.m.
6  Chance the Rapper  8:45 p.m.
7  Maren Morris  5:45 p.m.
8  Go Tejano Day Ramon Ayala  5:45 p.m.
9  First Responders Day Chris Young  8:45 p.m.
10  NCT 127  8:45 p.m.
11  Kane Brown  8:45 p.m.
12  Cody Johnson  8:45 p.m.
13  Black Heritage Day Lizzo  8:45 p.m.
14  Jon Pardi  5:45 p.m.
15  Dierks Bentley  5:45 p.m.
16  Keith Urban  8:45 p.m.
17  Gwen Stefani  8:45 p.m.
18  Khalid  8:45 p.m.
19  Chris Stapleton  8:45 p.m.
20  Marshmello  8:45 p.m.
21  Brad Paisley  5:45 p.m.
22  Luke Bryan  5:45 p.m.

The Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo runs from March 3-22 and features daily rodeo displays, live entertainment, food contests, shopping and recreation opportunities. The annual rodeo has been held since 1932 and includes events around the city and NRG Park centered around western heritage and family entertainment. In recent years, the rodeo has attracted well over 2 million annual visitors across its full season.
The University of Texas Medical Branch (UTMB Health) now has the most comprehensive network of pediatric care in the region, including the largest number of pediatric primary care physicians, along with the pediatric specialties you need most—like cardiology, ear, nose and throat, orthopedics; and many more. UTMB Health now offers a new Pediatric Inpatient Unit and a Pediatric Emergency Department at our Clear Lake Hospital Campus. It’s a level of innovative care not offered by anyone else in the region—just minutes from where you live, work and play.

For more information about pediatric services or to schedule an appointment 24/7, call (832) 632-7991 or visit www.utmbhealth.com/kids
As the communities we serve grow, The University of Texas Medical Branch (UTMB Health) is expanding access to care for Bay Area residents. We offer our innovative care close by at the UTMB Health Clear Lake Hospital Campus, League City Hospital Campus, and primary and specialty care clinics located throughout the region. Services include: primary care; urgent care; comprehensive pediatric services, including our new pediatric emergency department and inpatient unit at our Clear Lake Hospital Campus; and much more. Learn more at utmbhealth.com/BayArea

COMPILERS: COLLEEN FERGUSON AND JAKE MAGEE

Whether their kids are looking to spend some time outdoors, hone their athletic skills or study up over the break, parents searching for summer camps have a variety to choose from in the Bay Area. This list is not comprehensive.

ACADEMIC

1. Code Ninjas
   - Dates: May 25-Aug. 14
   - Cost: $100-$450 per week
   - Location: 3725 E. League City Parkway, Ste. 140, League City 713-743-7482
   - Website: www.codeninjas.com

   Code Ninjas’ camps teach children ages 7-14 a variety of skills related to science, technology, engineering and math, including building robots, programming drones, game development, coding, creating in “Minecraft” and more.

2. CompuCamp
   - Dates: June 1-July 31
   - Cost: $269-$495 per two weeks
   - Location: 4800 Calhoun Road, Houston 713-743-2255
   - Website: www.compucamp2020.com

   The camp for ages 7-14 features engaging and rewarding challenges related to several engineering disciplines, including aerospace, biomedical, chemical, civil and environmental engineering. Students will learn engineering with hands-on investigations and activities.

3. Explorer Camps
   - Dates: June 1-Aug. 14
   - Cost: TBD
   - Location: Space Center Houston, 1601 NASA Parkway, Houston 281-283-4755
   - Website: www.spacecenter.org

   Children ages 4-11 spend four to five days exploring science, technology, engineering and math and completing engaging activities that develop and encourage STEM skills and interest.

4. Hawk STEAM Academy
   - Dates: June 1-July 31
   - Cost: TBD
   - Location: University of Houston - Clear Lake, 2700 Bay Area Blvd., Houston 281-283-3529
   - Website: www.uhcl.edu

   Children ages 4-11 interested in the zoo are welcome to attend this camp for ages 4-11 interested in a variety of activities, complete labs and help take care of animals. Campers will learn about ecosystem, complete labs and help take care of giant river otters.

5. Kids U
   - Dates: June 1-July 31
   - Cost: $119-$159 per week
   - Location: University of Houston - Clear Lake, 2700 Bay Area Blvd., Houston 281-283-3529
   - Website: www.uhcl.edu

   This summer program features various academies for ages 5-17 with specific themes, such as digital photography, science, technology, literacy and more.

6. Language Kids World
   - Dates: June 1-12, July 6-17
   - Cost: $229-$317 per week
   - Location: Pump It Up of Webster
   - Website: www.languagekids.com

   Those ages 3-10 who wish to learn Spanish can spend several hours a day for a week learning about the language and Hispanic culture. Campers will learn a second language through music, play, arts and crafts, and other activities while also learning about different Latin American regions, animals, customs and more.

7. Language Camp
   - Dates: June 1-July 31
   - Cost: $269-$495 per two weeks
   - Location: University of Houston - Main Campus, 4800 Calhoun Road, Houston 713-743-2255
   - Website: www.compucamp2020.com

   The camp includes science concepts presented with experiments, interactive projects and science-based games for children ages 6-12. This camp appeals to students who think outside the box.

8. SummerAcademy
   - Dates: June 1-July 31
   - Cost: $599 for three-week camp
   - Location: University of Houston - Main Campus, 4800 Calhoun Road, Houston 713-743-2255
   - Website: www.compucamp2020.com

   SummerAcademy is a five-week camp for students who think outside the box.

   Students may choose from various academies focused on science, technology, literacy and more.

9. Wild Marvels
   - Dates: June 15-19, July 13-17, Aug. 3-7
   - Cost: $200-$250 per week
   - Location: Moody Gardens, 1 Hope Blvd., Galveston 409-683-4325
   - Website: www.moodygardens.com

   Children ages 5-14 interested in the biological field can attend this camp as a wildlife engineer to learn about the nitty gritty jobs necessary to take care of animals. Campers will learn about ecosystems, complete labs and help take care of giant river otters.

ARTS

10. Bay Area Arts Conservatory
    - Dates: June 1-21, June 22-July 19, July 20-Aug. 9
    - Cost: $599 for three-week camp, $699 for four-week class
    - Location: 400 Hedricks Rd., Ste. 202, League City 281-938-1344
    - Website: www.baactx.com

   The three- to four-week camps are designed for students who think outside the box.

   The camp includes various themes, such as digital photography, science, technology, literacy and more.
CONTINUED FROM 21
where the students ages 6-18 audition, rehearse and perform the show.

14) Bay Area Youth Singers
Dates: July 13-17
Cost: $150-$195 per week
Gloria Dei Lutheran Church, 18220 Upper Bay Drive, Nassau Bay
832-425-2329
www.bayareayouthsingers.org
This weeklong camp for ages 13-17 provides a musical theater experience complete with a Friday performance. Campers will take singing and beginning instrumental music classes.

15) Purple Box Theater
Dates: June 8-19, July 13-31
Cost: $225 per week
1309 W. Parkwood, Friendswood
281-642-4665
www.thepurpleboxtheater.com
Cost: $110-$200 per week
Texas A&M University Galveston Campus,
4800 Calhoun Road, Houston
713-743-2255
www.campuscamp2020.com
Young writers ages 7-18 can find and develop their writing voices at Writing-Camp, where students will learn creative, high school and performance writing. The workshops are offered in conjunction with the organization Writers in the Schools.

16) Summer Dance Camp
Dates: June 8-12, 22-26, July 20-31
Cost: $180-$200
Amy Blake’s Academy of Dance, 410 E. Edgewood Ave., Friendswood
281-482-0600
www.amyblakedance.com
At this weekly camp, students ages 3-12 will dance, choreograph and rehearse for a show that will be put on at the end of the week. Dancers will learn ballet, tap, jazz, hip-hop and theater makeup.

17) WritingCamp
Dates: June 1-July 31
Cost: $269-$495 per two weeks
University of Houston - Main Campus, 4800 Calhoun Road, Houston
713-743-2255
www.campuscamp2020.com
Young writers ages 7-18 can find and develop their writing voices at Writing-Camp, where students will learn creative, high school and performance writing. The workshops are offered in conjunction with the organization Writers in the Schools.

18) Camp by the Creek
Dates: June 1-Aug. 14
Cost: $265-$397.50 per two weeks
Hometown Heroes Park, 2105 Dickinson Ave., League City
281-554-1180
www.leaguecity.com/parks
This day camp for ages 6-12 provides group games and activities, arts and crafts, field trips, swimming and sports.

19) Camp Clear Lake
Dates: June 1-Aug. 7
Cost: $135-$165 per week
Clear Lake City Rec Center, 16511 Dianna Lane, Houston
281-488-0360
www.clcc.org
Daily activities include swimming, outdoor play, arts and crafts, sports, movies and games. Each week, campers ages 6-12 will take field trips. Weekly camp themes include sports, game shows, creativity and more.

20) EcoCamp
Dates: June 8-Aug. 7
Cost: $145-$310 per day
Armand Bayou Nature Center, 8500 Bay Area Blvd., Pasadena
713-274-2668
www.abnc.org/ecocamps
At Armand Bayou Nature Center’s Eco-Camp, students ages 4-13 will learn about nature through a variety of events and activities themed weekly. Campers will investigate vertebrates, learn about trees and their ecosystem, study moths and butterflies and more.

21) Kids ‘R’ Kids Learning Academy
Dates: May 31-Aug 7
Cost: $200-$250 per week
151 W. Texas Ave., Webster
281-557-0062
www.kidsrkids.com/programs/summer-camp
These weekly camps have a focus on fun and cover a gamut of activities and weekly themes, including escape rooms, stop-motion animation, entrepreneurship, road trips, art, games and more.

22) Sea Campus Kids
Dates: June 1-July 30
Cost: $110-$200 per week
Texas A&M University Galveston Campus, 200 Seawolf Parkway, Galveston
409-740-4525
www.tamug.edu/seacamp
Campers ages 4-11 will take workshops where they will learn about various topics related to the sea, including invertebrates, marine animals, fishing and more.

23) Sea Star Base Day Camp
Dates: May 31-Aug 7
Cost: TBD
1089 W. League City Parkway, League City
281-338-1177
170 W. Bay Area Blvd., League City
281-332-6611
450 Constellation Blvd., League City
281-535-8555
151 W. Texas Ave., Webster
281-557-0062
www.kidsrkids.com/programs/summer-camp
These weekly camps have a focus on fun and cover a gamut of activities and weekly themes, including escape rooms, stop-motion animation, entrepreneurship, road trips, art, games and more.
Sea Star Base Galveston, 7509 Broadway 
St., Galveston 
409-572-2560 
www.ssbgalveston.org 
Campers ages 8-17 will experience a variety of adventures, including sailing, paddle sports, kayaking, scuba diving, oceanography and more.

24 St. Thomas the Apostle Episcopal School Camps
Dates: June 8-Aug. 7 
Cost: $150-$250 per week 
18300 Upper Bay Road, Nassau Bay 
281-333-1340 
www.stesnb.org/explore-our-school/summer-camp
Campers ages 3-12 can attend camps that teach everything from STEAM skills using Lego and “Harry Potter” to chess to soccer skills. Camp Invention is a full-day camp that promotes character building and problem solving.

25 Webster Way Summer Camp
Dates: June 8-July 31 
Cost: $75-$220 per week 
Webster Civic Center, 311 Pennsylvania Ave., Webster 
281-316-4137 
www.cityofwebster.com
Campers ages 6-12 will spend their days doing arts and crafts, at computer labs, cooking, playing games and sports, skateboarding, swimming, taking field trips, hearing educational speakers and more.

26 YMCA Day Camp
Dates: June 1-Aug. 14 
Cost: $160 per week 
1700 W. League City Parkway, League City 
281-338-9622 
www.ymcahouston.org
Once a week, students ages 5-11 will go on field trips to local destinations, such as Main Event or the Museum of Natural Science. They spend a lot of time swimming and doing activities indoors and outdoors.

27 Aquatic Adventure Camp
Dates: May 31-Aug. 7 
Cost: $400-$500 per week 
Sea Star Base Galveston, 7509 Broadway St., Galveston 
409-572-2560 
www.ssbgalveston.org
Campers ages 10-17 will experience a variety of adventures, including sailing, paddle sports, kayaking, scuba diving, oceanography and more.

28 Sea Camp
Dates: May 31-Aug. 1 
Cost: $940-$995 per week 
Texas A&M University Galveston Campus, 200 Seawolf Parkway, Galveston 
409-740-4525 
www.tamu.edu/seacamp
Campers ages 10-18 will have access to research vessels, oceanographic equipment and personal staff to help them learn about the ocean through hands-on experience. Camp themes include studying coral and crabs, learning about coastal ecology, fishing, ocean conservation and more.

Sports

29 Above the Bar
Dates: June 3-28, July 8-Aug. 16 
Cost: $225 per week, $50 per day 
431 Columbia Memorial Parkway, Kemah 
281-672-7198 
www.abovethebargym.com
Weekly camps for ages 5-12 include gymnastics, tumbling, in-line skates, games, skating and more with three field trips per week.

30 Bailey Oaks Farms Horse Riding Camp
Dates: June 1-26, July 6-17 
Cost: $400-$575 per week 
Bailey Oaks Farm, 7220 County Road 128, Alvin 
281-756-7254 
www.baileyoaksfarms.com/camps
Campers ages 6-12 ride every day and also learn how to groom, tack, and care for their horses. In addition to riding, campers will participate in a variety of horse-related activities and games on the over 40-acre facility.

31 Bushi Ban
Dates: June 1-Aug. 14 
Cost: $169-$189 per week 
2465 Bay Area Blvd., Houston 
281-218-8989 
103 Davis Road, Ste. V, League City 
832-632-1342 
www.bushiban.com
The Bushi Ban Summer Camp Program is a high-energy fitness and self-defense program for children ages 4-13. Children will learn multidisciplinary techniques that cover several types of martial arts including karate, jujitsu and kickboxing.

32 Sports Divers of Houston
Dates: June 8-12, 22-26; July 6-10, 27-31; Aug. 17-21 
Cost: $550 per week 
20814 Gulf Freeway, Ste. 60, Webster 
281-338-1611 
www.sportsdivers.com
The weekly camp for ages 10-17 is designed as an educational experience leading to scuba certification. The skills discussed in class are practiced in a pool.

Pyramid Kids: Camps, Birthday Parties, Sleepovers & Scout Activities

Explore and Learn! Kids grades K-8th are invited to participate in a unique variety of camps that are fun and educational.

Preschool Camps for Ages 3-5
Camps include games, crafts, presentations or stories, themed snacks, and entry to the corresponding pyramid or attraction.

10 a.m. – 12 p.m.
April 4: Sea Lion Scientists
June 6: Forest Ranger Frogs
August 1: Coral Construction Workers

Week Long Day Camps
June 15 - 19 • July 13 - 17 • August 3 - 7 
8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
Grades K - 2nd Seaside Safari Camps
Grades 3rd - 5th Nature Rangers Camps
Grades 6th - 8th BioQuest Camps

For info or to register, call 409-683-4325 or e-mail education@moodygardens.org
MOODYGARDENS.ORG
Infinity Float Center

Couple provides flotation therapy to stressed residents

BY JAKE MAGEE

Jennifer Gurley invites those who do not experience stress relief from meditation, massages or acupuncture to try something different: flotation therapy.

Jennifer, the owner of Infinity Float Center with her husband, Mark Gurley, said flotation therapy is a way for customers to leave behind distractions, even their own bodies, and simply relax for 60 to 90 minutes in a stress-free environment.

Infinity Float Center features several 6-by-8-foot tanks filled with about 10 inches of water that contain hundreds of pounds of dissolved salt. The high-density water is similar to the Dead Sea and allows customers to effortlessly float on the surface.

After a few minutes in the dark, body-temperature tanks, customers feel like they are floating in space, free from distractions—including gravity, Jennifer said.

“It’s truly an hour where you don’t have to do anything,” she said.

Regular customers and newcomers have been coming to the center since it opened in March 2017. Before that, the Gurleys bought a float tank for their home they let friends and family use.

“Pretty soon we were getting calls from strangers,” Jennifer said.

It was around that time the Gurleys decided to open a full-time business. Jennifer said she can easily spot the difference in customers’ moods and stress levels after they float.

“They don’t realize how good it is to be that disconnected,” she said.

The Gurleys said they hope to one day expand their business with additional locations so more people can experience float therapy.

“This is exactly what everybody needs,” Jennifer said. “They do it once and fall in love with it.”

WHAT IS FLOTATION THERAPY?

1. An Infinity Float Center customer spends time in the business’s dimly lit lounges before entering a tank.
2. In the tank room, the customer showers to remove skin and hair oils.
3. The customer enters a 6-by-8-foot tank filled with 10 inches of water. Lying on their back, the customer effortlessly floats on the body-temperature water.
4. The tank’s lights and music slowly fade out, and the customer feels like they are floating in nothingness.
5. After a 60- or 90-minute session, the customer can journal, color or chat in the lounges until they want to leave.

Infinity Float Center

479 Bay Area Blvd., Houston
281-486-1864
www.infinityfloat.com
Hours: Mon., Wed.-Thu. 9 a.m.-7 p.m.; Tue. 2-7 p.m.; Fri-Sat. 9 a.m.-9 p.m.; Sun. 9 a.m.-6 p.m.
At Noah’s Ark Bar & Grill, the phrase “Thanks for living on island time!” is sprinkled across the menu.

Fred and Beverly Lyttle, the original owners of Noah’s Ark, set out in 1999 to create a spot where patrons could enjoy quality food and drink while taking in the sights and sounds of Galveston Bay just across the street. Two decades later, the eatery has become a destination.

Guests come from as far away as Humble, Katy and The Woodlands, stopping for a drink or a meal on their way to or from Galveston, current owner Steve Tolhurst said. Patrons fall in love with the restaurant staff and the family-like atmosphere they create, he added.

“We just love to sit here and talk. It’s a great place to hang out,” he said. “We’re a destination. We’re not on the beaten path.”

It is not uncommon for a small party to double or triple in size as they dine together. The menus, therefore, all have notes to patrons that they can expect up to a 45-minute wait for food during busy hours. The restaurant, with its live music and Texas Hold ‘Em tournaments, is meant to be a hangout spot, Tolhurst said.

The location of Noah’s Ark is essential to the business’s success, the Lyttles said in a letter. Motorcycles and golf carts have their own reserved parking spaces out front, and Tolhurst said some diners come by boat as well.

The bar is the largest of its kind—made with palapa leaves—in Galveston Bay, complete with a hand-painted ark scene behind both the upstairs and downstairs stages.

Since Tolhurst bought into the business six years ago, he said he has increased the number of items made from scratch and added various specialty drinks to the menu. The eatery has nearly doubled in revenue during that time, he said.

Noah’s Ark tries to keep up with trends when it comes to menu selections, he added. The meatloaf and the seafood gumbo are two of the most popular homemade items, he said.

“It’s a little bit of a different taste, but people love it,” Tolhurst said of the gumbo with its nearly black roux. “You won’t find it anywhere else.”
to graduate from training under the Artemis program, which is NASA’s designation for the manned spacecraft program that will land crews on the moon and Mars.

These unique individuals will spend years helping other astronauts with their missions before eventually being selected for missions of their own, after which they will spend years preparing, said John Charles, a Clear Lake resident and NASA scientist who retired in 2018.

“It’s glamorous, heroic, historic, and it’s also exceedingly dangerous to be an astronaut,” he said. “I cannot imagine a more exciting, challenging, rewarding and daunting career to have.”

‘Special, different people’

The open secret at Johnson Space Center is every NASA employee wants to be an astronaut. The reality, Charles said, is very few have what it takes to actually become one, and that is why Bay Area officials and residents often laud the Johnson Space Center, astronauts’ workplace, with pride.

Since the 1960s, tens of thousands of Americans have applied to be astronauts. In over 50 years, NASA has selected only 350 for the job. With such a high bar for entry, only the best of the best are picked for the task, Charles said.

“The people they select are not world-famous test pilots or world-famous astronauts; they’re world-famous test pilot/astronomers/gourmet chef/concert pianist/brain surgeons,” Charles said. “NASA gets so many applicants they can afford to be extremely picky.”

In 2017, NASA received thousands of astronaut applications. Officials parsed through them all and picked out the few hundred that stood above the others. Applicants who made it this far in the process were already among the very best America had to offer, Charles said.

“You know, they’re all stellar, but some are more stellar than others,” he said of the applicants.

Eventually the group was narrowed to dozens who were called to come to the Johnson Space Center for several interviews and a physical.

NASA looks for several qualities in potential astronauts. They need to be able to handle danger without being risky. They need to be no-nonsense leaders but also obedient followers. And they need to be lucky, even though luck does not exist in the aerospace business, Charles said.

“They want people who have shown they know how to live on the edge but not be foolish about it... because that’s what this is all about,” he said.

Of the 18,300 who applied three years ago, only 12 Americans were selected for the most recent round of astronaut candidate training.

These selected few moved to the Bay Area, reported to the Johnson Space Center and became official astronaut candidates. Then the real work began.

Clay Anderson, a League City-based astronaut who retired in 2013, knows well the challenge of becoming an astronaut. He applied 15 times for the appointment, and he was eventually selected with 24 other Americans from a pool of about 4,600 applicants, he said.

“To apply that many times and to finally find success was pretty thrilling,” he said. “There are not many jobs that have a specific pathway to becoming an astronaut. Instead, those who end up becoming astronauts realize they have the skills, intelligence, motivation and work ethic necessary for the job and apply, Charles said.

“Astronauts are supremely self-confident, supremely self-motivated, and that’s why they do so many things. To be an astronaut, you’re not shy; you’re not uncertain of yourself,” he said. “We like to think it’s people off the street, but it’s not. They are special, different people.”

**Moon and beyond**

As NASA has set its sights on returning to the moon and traveling to Mars, the space agency in recent years has begun training larger classes of astronaut candidates for space missions.

The Johnson Space Center is working to return to the moon in four years. Because it takes two years for astronauts to complete basic training and training is not done every year, class sizes have increased, Charles said.

Additionally, more women are being trained. Traditionally, about 1 in 6 astronaut candidates were women. Now, the ratio is closer to 50-50, he said.

Of the Astronaut Corps’ 48 people, 16 are women, and one of them will make history in the next few years as the first woman to walk on the moon, Charles said.

“She’s here,” he said. “Any of those women will be candidates.”

Because the most recent astronaut class includes people who may go to the moon, their training had a larger concentration on working and living on the lunar surface, which is why they spent time training in geology and other related fields, Charles said. For instance, the class visited and studied a meteor crater in Arizona.

“They go off and do geology training, which is something they didn’t do during the shuttle and early space station [eras],” he said. “It really hearkens back to Apollo astronauts going off to craters and deserts and things like that learning to do geology on the moon.”

Of course, the moon is just a stopping point for NASA’s ultimate goal: Mars. NASA hopes astronauts will reach the red planet in the 2030s, and those who live and work in Clear Lake today could be among those selected for that historic mission.

“Thank God we have astronauts because we can pick the cream of the crop, and they will deliver every time,” Charles said. “They’re a tremendous resource that I don’t think people really appreciate.”

**Basic training**

Astronaut candidates undergo two years of basic training, and most of it happens at the Johnson Space Center. Astronaut candidates learn everything from survival skills to the correct way to don a space suit to how to live and work on the ISS, the moon and Mars. Astronaut candidates also spend a lot of time aboard T-38s, which are supersonic jets, to learn how to handle high G forces, said Ken Cameron, an astronaut who retired in 1996.

Kaci Heins, the director of Space Center University, a part of Space Center Houston dedicated to educating the public about space exploration, said astronauts have to learn even relatively simple tasks, such as how to escape from a crashed helicopter, before they can start flight school. Unlike space shuttles, capsules that return to Earth from space can land anywhere, so astronauts are grateful for such training because emergencies can happen anytime and anywhere, Heins said.

“If your capsule, when you return to Earth from space can land anywhere, so astronauts are grateful for such training because emergencies can happen anytime and anywhere,” Heins said.

“If your capsule, when you return to Earth, lands somewhere you didn’t plan on, you have to be able to survive in those different situations, whether it’s on land or it’s on water,” she said. “Astronauts must be prepared for everything.”

Jim Fuderer, a safety instructor with Bastion Technologies, a company that, in part, helps train astronauts, said astronaut candidates spend hours sitting in capsules and learning how to enter and exit the capsule safely and then enter a helicopter to fly home. Apollo-era astronauts
Interviewees spend time at the Johnson Space Center meeting NASA officials including astronauts, scientists, engineers and others. They undergo physicals and several rounds of interviews.

NASA calls a handful of applicants the agency wants to be the next round of astronauts. These astronauts move to the Clear Lake area and become astronaut candidates.

Astronaut candidates spend two years in training at the Johnson Space Center, Neutral Buoyancy Lab and other locations. They learn how to survive in space, how to operate parts of the International Space Station and other basic skills.

JOHNSON SPACE CENTER FACILITIES

who returned from the moon were the last astronauts to use capsules, but they will make a comeback in the form of Orion as NASA returns to the moon, making the training important, he said.

“[Astronaut candidate training] is really learning systems, learning Russian, learning where your office is and where the bathroom is,” Charles said. “It’s just taking someone that’s totally naive and making them minimally qualified to fly in space.”

American astronauts learn Russian so they can more easily communicate with Russian crews. Today, astronauts must launch from Russia to reach the ISS, though that could change soon with commercial space companies that would allow American astronauts to reach the ISS aboard American-made and -launched rockets, Charles said.

“I would say it’s not necessarily difficult training, but there’s a ton of things you’re exposed to with the expectation you’ll maintain some recollection of what you’re exposed to when you need it in space,” Anderson said.

Building 9 of the Johnson Space Center is the Space Vehicle Mockup Facility, which includes a full-scale mockup of the habitable modules of the ISS. Astronaut candidates spend a lot of time in this building learning the ins and outs of the International Space Station, a spacecraft government around the world use for zero-gravity science experiments and research, Charles said.

“The astronauts have to understand all the components on all the systems. So even though you can’t float into (the ISS mockup) like you can in weightlessness, they have to go inside there and know where the connections are and the switches are that they have to be adjusting and maintaining,” Charles said.

Another popular training spot is the Neutral Buoyancy Lab near Ellington Airport north of the Johnson Space Center.

The lab comprises a 40-foot-deep pool that contains a second full-scale replica of the ISS underwater. Astronaut candidates are put into space suits filled with lead weights and then lowered into the water. The weights are adjusted until

CONTINUED ON 29
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After graduating, astronaut candidates become a part of the official Astronaut Corps and help other astronauts on missions.

Eventually, astronauts are assigned a mission to the International Space Station as a backup and then a primary role.

Astronauts fly to space, spend months aboard the ISS performing experiments and repairs, and return to Earth.

CONTINUED FROM 27

the candidates become neutrally buoyant, which means they neither sink nor float, to simulate the weightlessness of space. Astronaut candidates will spend up to eight hours in the lab practicing maneuvering through the ISS and performing simulated spacewalks where they move components of the space station around and do mock repairs.

“This is not [a] vacuum. It’s high resistance, very viscous fluid, so it’s best for training slow—a low-range fluid, so it’s best for repairs.

They wanna practice moving around and do mock spacewalks where they move and performing simulated hours in the lab practicing of space. Astronaut candi-

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similar districts and state and national averages. The audit cost the district $149,500.

There were a total of 27 recommendations in the report. As of November, 12 have been completed, and plans are in place to complete all remaining recommendations by mid-2022, said Steven Ebell, CCISD deputy superintendent of curriculum and instruction. Three more recommendations are in progress as of press time, CCISD officials said.

The district serves nearly 5,000 special education students and more than 7,000 students in special services overall.

“We can fairly well meet the variety of needs that we have,” Ebell said. “Our focus with this review, really, is just getting better.”

**Steps forward**

Parents of some special education students feel there is still a disconnect between what CCISD officials say they are doing in terms of reform and what actually happens.

“They talk the talk and don’t walk the walk,” said Dawn Lynd, a parent of a special-needs student who she said suffered injuries while in CCISD care due to improper seclusion and restraint.

The Gibson report did not address specific, measurable action items the way special education parents asked for, several said. Parents originally requested a full investigation of past alleged infractions, but the audit did not do that.

The audit also did not include children or families who had since left the district due to problems with CCISD’s special education program, which Lynd said means it cannot be truly reflective of the issues at hand.

“It’s all toothless stuff,” special education parent Alice Machin said.

The Gibson report recommended changes related to CCISD’s approaches with students, culture around special education, administrative practices and accountability measures.

Two of the major reforms already completed are the addition of a special education parent resource center and the formation of a districtwide Special Education Parent Advisory Committee.

However, some parents said neither of these allow for accessible, two-way communication between parents and the district.

The center opened in September, and its hours are 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Monday through Friday. Amparo Chacon, whose special-needs son graduated from CCISD in 2015, said more parent trainings are needed at the center at more accessible hours.

“For the most at-need families ... [they] are offering classes during the day when a minimum amount of parents can do it,” she said.

CCISD Chief Communications Officer Elaina Polsen said in an email that she plans to speak with the center’s director about adjusting hours to better accommodate parents.

“We ... certainly can understand how that can be limiting for working families,” she said.

SEPAD comprises one randomly selected parent from each of the district’s 44 campuses serving as advisers to Superintendent Greg Smith and the district’s special education leadership team. The last SEPAD meeting was held in November, but minutes are not available online.

Meetings are held four times a year and are for committee members only. CCISD officials said SEPAD is “one of many opportunities” for parents to interact with district and campus staff. Since the information from the committee seems to stay between SEPAD members and administrators, the reform is insufficient, said Jane Kline, whose son is a special-needs CCISD senior.

“This is a joke,” she said. “They’re not giving this priority; they’re not giving us attention.”

Contrarily, Marta Brain, one of the parents serving on SEPAD, called the committee “a really great tool for parents.” She said meetings have been positive and productive, with administrators genuinely listening to input from committee members. She recalled a SEPAD parent asking a question at a meeting and said administrators diverted significantly from the agenda to ensure the topic was addressed.

Brain will be on the committee a total of two years, but some parents serve for only one based on the random drawing.

Brain said she has seen follow-through from CCISD with points she previously brought up that are now being executed, including increasing disability education efforts, she said.

“It’s a step in the right direction,” she
said.
While the existence of SEPAC is in itself a positive step, Brain said, there is a major need for better communication between special education parents and better communication at a district level, including between SEPAC representatives and other CCISD parents.

This also means making involvement as easy as possible for special education parents, many of whom may not physically be able to attend meetings, with amenities such as livestreaming or video conferences. Better communication between CCISD officials and parents would help resolve a lot of the issues most parents have, she added.

Special education parents face additional unique challenges because of their children’s needs since special-needs students cannot always communicate what happens to them at school, Brain said.

“We’re placing more trust in the district,” she said.

**Rebuilding trust**

Administrators said parent feedback throughout the reform process has been positive, but there is still work to be done.

Ebell encouraged concerned parents of special education students to immediately contact officials at their child’s campus if they feel there are issues. If a parent is not satisfied with the resulting campus investigation, they can work with district-level officials through various avenues, he added.

“It’s very difficult having to walk that path with families when their child ends up in special education, and so, we want to really be aware of those needs,” he said. “We admit that we do make mistakes, but our goal throughout this whole process is to make sure that we’re taking actions in the best interest of the student and the family.”

One of the program’s biggest current challenges is a transition in leadership following the retirement of Cynthia Short, the former executive director of special services, Ebell said. The transition may cause interim delays in the completion of the remaining recommendations. The CCISD board of trustees approved Michele Staley, principal of Clear Brook High School, as her replacement at the board’s Jan. 20 regular meeting.

“When there’s concerns, she is very willing to sit down with parents and hear their concerns and then, take action,” Ebell said. “That was a big attraction for [Smith] recommending her for that position.”

Several parents expressed concern with Staley’s lack of experience in special education. Staley has state certifications in secondary biology and physical education and is a certified principal but does not have any certifications related to special education, according to the Texas Department of Education’s certificate database.

“I have been a leader in public education for the past 21 years for both general education and special services students,” Staley said in an email. “I am thrilled that CCISD is allowing me to broaden my horizons by serving the 7,000-plus special services students in our district and will continue to work for their success.”

Another group of community stakeholders interested in tracking CCISD’s efforts is the board of trustees, which Ebell said expects updates on special education reform.

Trustee Scott Bowen said it will be imperative to keep these conversations going once all the recommendations have been implemented. He said he will want substantial evidence that these recommendations made a difference.

“What I don’t want us to do is say ... ‘We implemented all of the recommendations, and now, we’re done,’” he said. “We can’t just say, ‘Well, we did it.’”

Board of trustees President Laura DuPont said district-level communication and execution of reforms has been and still is a challenge but that the program reforms tie into targets monitored by the board on an ongoing basis.

“Special education and those services— it’s the same as other units within the district,” she said. “Those children are no different; we want the same thing of all of our children.”

**INPUT**

The Special Education Parent Advisory Committee aims to foster collaboration between parents and district leadership.

**44 PARENTS**

- 22 of whom serve for 1 year
- 22 of whom serve for 2 years

SOURCE: CLEAR CREEK ISD/COMMUNITY IMPACT NEWSPAPER

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- **Median square footage:** 2,393
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- **HOA dues (estimated):** $730 annually
- **Schools:** Gilmore Elementary School, Victory Lakes Intermediate School, Clear Springs High School
- **Property taxes (in dollars):**
  - Galveston County: 0.52983
  - MUD 6: 0.25000
  - Clear Creek ISD: 1.40000
  - County road/flood: 0.00207
  - League City: 0.56380
  - Total (per $100 valuation): 2.7457

*AS OF 2/1/2020

**Recently sold homes**

- **2897 Concordia Court, League City**
  - 4 bedroom/3.5 bath, 3,565 sq. ft.
  - Sold for $370,001-$420,000 on Feb. 10

- **2107 Trailbrooke Court, League City**
  - 4 bedroom/3.5 bath, 3,468 sq. ft.
  - Sold for $325,001-$370,000 on Dec. 20

- **15507 Greens Cove Way, Houston**
  - 3-4 bedroom/2.5 bath, 2,938 sq. ft.
  - Sold for $420,001-$482,000 on Feb. 10

- **1703 Reseda Drive, Houston**
  - 4 bedroom/2 bath, 2,361 sq. ft.
  - Sold for $215,001-$250,000 on Feb. 4

**NEW LISTINGS PER ZIP CODE**

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**Market Data Provided by Sinta Fuhrmann, Better Homes & Gardens Real Estate Gary Greene - Bay Area**

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