NW Houston communities prone to flooding

Story Highlights
- Copperfield Coalition advocates for the residential community’s flood prevention
- Hearthstone community experiences street flooding in areas near Horsepen Creek

By Kimberly Stauffer

In Harris County, flooding is a constant occurrence as the flat landscape across Southeast Texas allows the ample rainfall each year to quickly swell bayous, creeks and, most damaging, streets.

Northwest Houston communities depend on the creeks and tributaries of the Cypress Creek Watershed to handle the rain. The area is outlined with designated 500-year and 100-year or less floodplains that actually only cover a small portion of the area.

Local projects
The Harris County Flood Control District began the Cypress Creek Stormwater Management Program in 2001, a six-part project in response to concerns from the Cypress Creek Flood Control Coalition, a grassroots organization that works with state and local officials. The district has examined the overall watershed to identify where additional channels could be created to continue facilitating drainage. Using a $600,000 Flood Protection Planning Grant and in partnership with the Texas Water Development Board, the district is outlining stormwater management.

CONTINUED ON | 10
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Market Publisher’s Note

My wife and I have what has turned into a weekly discussion of where to spend our Saturday with our 16-month-old son to “run him,” or get his energy out. We started a weekend tradition of taking one Saturday a month to pick a local restaurant for family breakfast and then spending the morning at some type of outdoor activity. This allows us to discover the places that make Houston unique, such as the Houston Zoo, the Oil Ranch and Miller Outdoor Theater.

One recent Saturday adventure was to Buffalo Bayou. We were both raised in Houston and have never walked along this downtown destination. It is free, outdoors and provides walking paths along the bayou with waterfalls, and area buildings act as a backdrop. The paths wind through the edge of downtown and along Allen Parkway. If you are looking to take your adventure to the next level, rent a canoe, kayak or take a boat tour and see the skyline views from a different perspective.

If you look for activities such as this, or just new places to get out and enjoy your free time, you will find them in our Family Impacts Guide on Page 16. Most of the places listed are free or have a nominal fee. Lack of time is always going to be an issue, but I hope this listing gives you inspiration to visit one or two of these places in the coming months.

Jason Culpepper
jculpepper@impactnews.com

Reader Feedback

Have you seen an increase in the last year in crime in the northwest Houston area?

Yes 50%
No 24%
Not really 26%

Results from an unscientific web survey collected 2/19/2010–3/12/2010
See more poll results at impactnews.com/polls

Are you more inclined to drive to The Galleria or Houston Premium Outlet for upscale shopping?

The Galleria 13%
Houston Premium Outlet 33%
Both 27%
Neither 27%

Results from an unscientific web survey collected 2/19/2010–3/12/2010
See more poll results at impactnews.com/polls

For the latest community news, follow us on Twitter at impactnews_nwh.

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Who We Are

What is Community Impact Newspaper? Publisher John Garrett began Community Impact Newspaper in 2005 after recognizing the need for intelligently reported news covering north Austin. Four years and eight newsletters later, the northwest Houston newsletter brings the same well-rounded coverage, providing detailed maps, illustrated graphics and in-depth stories exploring important local issues.

Why is it free? Readers will not be billed because the paper is ad supported. Editorial content is never paid for and has a journalistic integrity uncommon for a free publication.

Who gets it? Our paper is mailed monthly to all homes and businesses in the coverage area. We do not mail to post office boxes, but copies are available at the Cy-Fair Chamber of Commerce and the Community Impact Newspaper office on Jones Road. The articles are available online at www.impactnews.com.

February correction
On page 21, the “Average days on market” in the Market Data section is incorrect. This information has been updated online.

more.impactnews.com/7052

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Local, unbiased reporting in the fast-growing Cy-Fair area. Community Impact Newspaper is northwest Houston’s first direct mail news organization aimed at local, unbiased reporting in the fast-growing Cy-Fair market.
**Just Opened**

1. **C&T Mortgage LLC** opened its first office in December at 25250 Hwy. 290, Ste. 260. Specializing in mortgage lending and refinancing, company president Tami La Coe said the business's dual roles as broker and bank works to clients' advantage as C&T Mortgage can choose from several different lenders to find the lowest rate and closing costs. The company moved to the 1,550-sq.-ft. office after working out of Channel's home since 2007. Call 832-220-1480 or visit www.cntmg.com.

2. **Don Julio's Mexican Restaurant** opened March 2 at 25250 Hwy. 290, Ste. 190. A two-story Mexican restaurant with an upscale bar scene upstairs and restaurant service downstairs, the Cypress location will feature karaoke, drink specials every day, salsa dancing nights and a projector to show UFC fights and games. The 8,700-sq.-ft. restaurant with an upstairs deck and 800 sq. ft. patio will allow residents to experience the downtown bar scene in their own backyard. Call 281-758-4000 or visit www.donjulios.com.

3. **The Haston Law Firm, P.C.** opened a new office in February at 12807 Jones Road. Moving two doors down from a four-story building where the office leased space, the firm now operates out of its own 4,000-sq.-ft. building practicing family law. Call 281-890-1300 or visit www.hastonlaw.com.

4. **Kumon of Fairfield** opened in January at 15202 Mason Road, Ste. 500 and is owner Sue McLean's second location in the Cy-Fair area. An after-school educational program developed in Japan 50 years ago, Kumon teaches reading and math to students age 3 through adults with elementary through advanced college mathematics. Students enroll in the program for remedial work and learning enrichment. Call 281-703-1955 or visit www.kumonfs.com.

5. **Made Ya Smile Dental** opened a new office March 17 at 24324 Hwy. 290. Dr. Mike Kesner's second location, the office offers all phases of dentistry, including general and cosmetic dentistry. A specialty of the office is cosmetic lumineers, which in two weeks give patients permanently white and straight teeth without shots or grinding down teeth. Dr. Kesner's office does not charge for exams, X-rays or consultations. The office accepts most dental insurance. Call 281-213-9000 or visit www.madeyasmile.com.

6. **Mathnasium** will open March 22 at 12344 Barker Cypress Road, Ste. 150. A math learning center that provides after-school supplemental learning for second grade through pre-calculus students, owners John and Catherine Labuda opened the franchise to expand their tutoring program to a broader audience in the Cy-Fair area. Students complete assignments on-site at the 1,750-sq.-ft. facility with customized lesson plans twice a week. Call 713-786-2032 or visit www.mathnasium.com.

7. **The Cypress Creek Flood Control Coalition** will hold its annual meeting at 6:30 p.m. March 24 at the Ponderosa Forest Fire Station at 17061 Rolling Creek Drive. Open to members and the public, the meeting will feature speaker Michael D. Talbott, P.E., the director of the Harris County Flood Control District, who will present an overview of the district's local activities and projects in the Cypress Creek area. Visit www.ccfcc.org.

8. **Mackel Private School at 12811 Cypress North Houston Road will host an open house and kindergarten roundup at 6:30 p.m. March 31. The school offers before- and after-school tutoring for children 18 months to 5 years old. Call 281-955-2002 or visit www.mackelprivateschool.com.

9. **Air Depot Air Conditioning relocated to 11911 Windfern Road. The company installs air conditioning and heating systems and also services equipment in both residential and commercial properties. Expanding from 3,650 sq. ft. to 8,750 sq. ft., the business will expand its inventory of Bryant, Amana and Lennox products. Call 281-477-3700 or visit www.airdepot.com.

10. **Reeder Flooring LLC relocated to 11911 Windfern Road. The company offers free consulting and measurements with a free pad with carpet purchase. Owner Wayne Reeder said the company can complete a flooding remodel in about three days at a home or business and is one of only a few businesses to carry Karndean products. Known for working with Realtors to prepare homes for sale, Reeder is expanding his family-owned business to include more retail. Call 713-896-8030 or visit www.reederflooring.com.

11. **The Cy-Fair Houston Chamber of Commerce** will host a ribbon cutting and Business After Hours event at Reveal Cosmetic Surgery 5 p.m. March 24 at 9533 Huffmeister Road.

Texas college. The submissions must be postmarked by April 16 and mailed to the Don’t Mess with Texas Scholarship Program c/o EnviroMedia Social Marketing at 1717 W. Sixth Street, Ste. 400, Austin, TX 78703. Visit www.txdot.gov.

News or questions about northwest Houston? E-mail northwestimpact@impactnews.com.
**Community Events**

### March

**Through March 21 “South Pacific”**
The Tony Award–winning musical tells the story of two couples on a tropical island in the midst of World War II and how their love is threatened by war and prejudice. The production features a full orchestra and cast of 84 performing songs like “Some Enchanted Evening,” “I’m Gonna Wash That Man Right Out My Hair” and “This Nearly Was Mine.”

Hobby Center for the Performing Arts, 800 Bagby St. Ste. 200 • 713-558-2600 • www.tuts.com

**“World Music Festival”**
The Lone Star College-CyFair choral spring event will include song and dance exploring different cultures with art and costumes.

9115 Barker Cypress Road • 7-2 p.m. • 281-290-5201
www.lonestar.edu/boxoffice

**Through March 27 “Waiting To Be Mended”**
The play, presented by Theatre Suburbia and directed by Judy Reeves, is about a young woman who arrives as a boarder at a family home, and the household soon erupts with hate, as the past becomes the present.

Theatre Suburbia, 4106 Way Out West Drive 3 p.m. and 8:30 p.m. • $14 (adults), $13 (seniors and students), $12 (matinees) • 713-682-3525
www.theatresuburbia.com

**21st Annual Miss Cy-Fair Houston Pageant**
The event will feature girls ages 15 to 19 being judged on beauty and poise with the winner of the inaugural show receiving a $1,000 scholarship. The Cy-Fair Houston Chamber of Commerce will host the event.

Copperfield Church, 8350 Hwy. 6 N. • 1–5 p.m. • $12 (adults) and $9 (ages 3–19) • for online tickets, $15 (adults) and $10 (ages 3–19) • for tickets at the door 281-373-1390 • www.misscyfairhouston.com

**Spring Blood Drive**
To schedule an appointment, visit www.giveblood.org or login to Digital Donor and enter sponsor code L389.

Rose Hill United Methodist Church, 21022 Rosehill Church Road • 8:30 a.m. • 12:30 p.m. • 281-252-0720
www.giveblood.org

**Texas Roadhouse Golf Classic**
Hosted at the Houston National Golf Course, the event benefits Birks Elementary and Aragon Middle School. For sponsorship or player information, call 832-257-3015. For information on volunteering or to donate a raffle item valued at $10 or more, call 281-855-1660.

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**April**

**24th annual Rise and Shine Fun Run**
Benefiting the Rise School of Houston, the children’s run/family walk event will feature live music, children’s booths, refreshments and a rock wall. The walk will begin at 8 a.m. and the 5K run at 8:30 a.m.

George R. Brown Convention Center, 1001 Avenida De Las Americas • 7–10:30 a.m. • Registration is $20 (adults), $12 (children) • 713-558-2600 • askers@riseorganization.org

**25th Annual Spring Festival**
The event will feature a grand raffle for a new car, dancing, face painting, games, rides, bingo, a flea market and barbecue dinner with live entertainment, including music and clown shows.

Christ the Redeemer Catholic Church, 11507 Huffmeister Road • Sat. 6–11 p.m., Sun. noon–7 p.m. • 281-469-5533
http://ctrcc.com/festival

### Live music venues

**Baker St. Pub & Grill**
Live music Tuesday through Saturday evenings.

17278 Hwy. 249, Houston
281-517-0828 • www.sherlockspubca.com

**Makel Private School** will host an open house and kindergarten roundup March 31.

**Don Julio’s Mexican Restaurant** opened March 2 and features an upscale bar scene on its second floor.

**The Haston Law Firm, P.C.,** which specializes in family law, opened a new office on Jones Road.

**Kumon of Fairfield** provides remedial and enrichment learning.

**Air Depot Air Conditioning** will be expanding its inventory after relocating to a larger building.
By Josef Molnar

With winter’s stubborn grip finally beginning to loosen on the Gulf Coast, residents are ready to add life and color to their yards, and local landscaping and gardening companies are prepared to supply the spring flora.

At Beyond Paradise Nursery, Alicia Banos is already fielding calls from area residents about planting shrubs and trees. She recommends homeowners invest in trees for the long-term benefits.

“Trees are really good for your yard and your house because [they] provide a lot of shade that can help you save on energy costs,” she said. “It also makes the value of your house go up, especially if you mix it with some landscaping.”

Banos should know about the value of a good tree: The 24-year-old grew up in a tree service company where he took down oak trees, and we took the acorns and grew oak trees. From there we now have different types of trees and now have 30 acres where we farm our trees.

She meets with customers at their 3-acre lot and educates them on the best types of trees and landscaping plants to place in their yards.

“It really depends on the kind of landscape they have. We take them on a little tour and give them ideas. We have plants with labels, and it gives them an idea of how tall they grow, what kind of temperature they can handle, and the sun and shade,” Banos said. “I use a little notepad to keep notes and recommend plants based on their ideas.”

Banos also warns people about the long-term effects of the plants, such as trees with deeper and longer roots, and plants that grow much larger over time.

“Oak trees grow long roots, and they can mess up the foundation [of the house], so we tell people to plant them at least 15 to 20 feet away from the house,” she said.

“The recent drought and especially cold winter is pushing people toward hardier native plants that can survive the weather extremes.

“For the past three years, we’ve been doing tropicales, but due to the freeze this year, people are moving to more native plants,” she said. “We also have some people who want to start growing their own fruit trees, so we’re thinking about adding those, too.”

When it comes to landscaping, sometimes the recommendations include some restraint.

At The Yard Depot, Josephine Garcia tells people to keep the beautification in line with the design of their homes. The business sells mostly gravel, flagstones and decorative additions, such as retaining wall materials.

“With the simple house designs, you don’t want to do too much because it will be too messy,” she said. “You want to work with what you have and make it fit to the house. You don’t want to outdo your house; you want to make it look good.”

She recommends homeowners with smaller yards pick a couple of improvements from a short list, such as a few well-placed shrubs around windows; a garden; a tree; a decorative walkway or plants around existing trees.

“Some people go all the way, though,” Garcia said. “They’ll gut out the front landscape just to make it look better.”

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Josef Molnar, Fry Rd.
Telge Rd.
Grant Rd.
Spring Cypress Rd.
Spring Cypress Rd.
Kluge Rd.
Cypress North Houston Rd.
Huffmeister Rd.
Cypress Rosehill Rd.
Barker Cypress Rd.
290
1960

yard and remake it into what they want. It doesn’t cost too much; if you have a 1-acre to 5-acre tract, you’ll spend more money, but if you have a quarter-acre lot, there’s not a lot to redo.”

Whatever their customers choose, both women said they focus on clients’ needs. “We try to give the best service,” Garcia said. “We’re not the cheapest, but we’re also not the most expensive and we have quality products. The biggest thing for us is quality in everything.”

Q&A with local landscaping expert

What are the benefits of garden mulching?

It keeps weeds down, keeps the moisture in your flower beds and it looks good. We have different grades of mulches, depending on what people want. Cedar repels bugs and snakes, but some people like brown native for its color. This is about the time of year that people start putting it in their gardens.

What are the benefits of garden mulching?

What do you recommend for walkways?

Flagstones are really good for walkways; it depends on the thickness and color, but most of them will work well. We have different thicknesses and stones, from peach to white, and we get them from all over.

What about using gravel instead of mulch?

That’s what we call “lazy gravel.” People who do that usually don’t want to mulch, but it doesn’t work; the weeds will still grow in between the rocks. Gravel is good for aerating the soil, especially if you have a lot of clay, but mulching looks better and helps control weeds.

Any advice about putting them in?

Be sure to trim out the grass where you’re going to put the flagstones first. If you lay the stone on top of the grass, it will die out, turn to hay and deteriorate, and the flagstones will sink and get mud on top of them. What you should do is cut out the grass and place some granite gravel at the level you want, usually an inch and a half deep, and put the flagstone on top.

Local garden centers

1. Anything Outdoors Inc. 12930 Grant Road, Cypress 281-655-4446
2. Beyond Paradise Nursery 21206 Hwy. 290, Cypress 281-955-0281 • www.beyondparadisenl.com
3. Buds & Blossoms Inc. 14120 Cypress North Houston Road, Cypress 281-469-3378 • www.budsandblossoms.net
4. Houston Garden Centers 23260 Hwy. 290, Cypress 281-373-2239 • www.houstongardencenters.com
5. Houston Plants & Garden World 7100 Hwy. 290, Houston 713-983-7006 • www.houstonplantsandgardenworld.com
6. Town Center Nursery 17207 Telge Road, Cypress 281-351-1128
7. The Yard Depot 21202 Hwy. 290, Cypress 281-807-4567 • www.theyarddepot.com

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Sunday, April 4
8:00, 9:30 & 11:00 am

Free breakfast before 8:00 am service

Egg Hunt after each service for preschool thru 5th grade

8350 Highway 6N
Houston, TX 77095

copperfieldchurch.com

281-856-2273
Dogwood Dog Training

By Molly Ryan

Any dog owner knows that whoever coined the term “man’s best friend” must have had a well-trained dog.

However, training a canine is not always an easy task. Luckily, Dogwood Dog Training and Sports Center in northwest Houston has a staff of dog training and competition experts to help any novice or champion dog and its owner perfect their obedience, agility and companionship skills.

Dogwood first opened its doors in 1999 when Debby Quigley, a dog trainer and competitor for more than two decades, decided to turn her hobby into a business. Since then, Quigley has trained hundreds of dogs in her classes, which range from “Basic Dog Obedience” to “Beginning Competition” and “Agility.”

In basic obedience classes, dogs and owners learn to communicate effectively with one another. In addition, students learn traditional dog training skills such as how to heel, come and recognize commands. More advanced classes teach dogs and owners skills for competitions and how to run through obstacle courses.

Many of Quigley’s students go on to compete in dog competitions throughout Texas and the United States, but Quigley said the most rewarding part of teaching at Dogwood is “working with all the individual owners and helping them obtain their goals.”

Quigley also takes pride in helping owners who are having trouble training and living with their dogs keep them at home.

“To me, that’s the biggest help [to the community]—helping to keep dogs out of shelters,” Quigley said.

Besides dog training classes, Dogwood offers private lessons and has a dog massage therapist, a dog chiropractor and a dog behavioral specialist on staff. In the future, Quigley plans to have video training and consultations to help dog owners around the country.

Students like Jodie Broussard travel three hours with her golden retriever, Flip, from Lake Charles, L.A. once a week for a beginning competition class.

“They are the best,” Broussard said. Another student, Lesley Young, is a professional dog trainer who teaches classes in The Woodlands. Young said she comes with her border collie, Paddy, or “The Padinator,” because “you still need teaching even if you instruct.”

Dogwood Dog Training and Sports Center separates itself from the pack with highly skilled instructors and quality facilities.

“One thing that makes [Dogwood] special is we have a good program for any endeavor,” said Dogwood instructor Judy Ramsey, who has trained dogs for around 30 years. “There are common threads through all of our classes in concept and philosophy. Also, there are not a lot of facilities in Houston that have the caliber of instructors we do.”

Notes for Fido

- Dogwood dog training classes are offered Monday through Thursday. Most classes take place after 7 p.m., but a few select classes are offered during the day.
- Dogwood offers more than 10 types of dog training classes and has expansive indoor and outdoor facilities.

Dogwood Dog Training
8425 West Road, Houston
713-849-9115
www.dogwood-dog-training.com

Dog massage therapist Sarah Dow pampers Beau with a full-body treatment.

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plans for the nine major tributaries within the watershed.

During the extreme rainfall in April 2009 that measured between 8 inches and 10 inches, 70 percent of the 2,300 homes in the Copperfield and Hearthstone communities that were flooded were not in a floodplain.

“What we saw was primarily the design parameters for street systems were simply obliterated and overwhelmed given the intense rainfall,” said Fred Garcia, communications director for HCFCD. “The street systems are not designed to handle that amount of water.”

**Copperfield**

Jan Perino with Copperfield Coalition said the community organization plans to meet with county officials this spring to discuss street flooding issues.

“It used to be that the streets [of Copperfield] would flood and then drain, but what we’re finding now from all the residents is the high water that used to drain is staying in the street as the infrastructure is unable to take it away in the existing system,” Perino said.

Copperfield Coalition completed a resident flooding survey in March that identified if homeowners experienced flooding during Hurricane Ike in 2008 and the severe rainfall in April 2009. The coalition is investigating whether nearby commercial and residential construction has impacted the subdivision’s drainage capabilities.

**Hearthstone**

Another community reporting flooding problems is Hearthstone. Mike Looney, chairperson for the Hearthstone Homeowners Association Flood Committee, said 186 homes received water or flooded last April when 8 to 10 inches of rain fell in a matter of hours. Looney said the HOA believes the cause of the flooding is nearby Horsepen Creek topping its banks.

Looney, who has lived in Hearthstone since 1978, said he has never seen this type of flooding before and pointed to area construction like the widening of Hwy. 6 and FM 529 as well as commercial developments laying too much concrete.

But Heather Saucier, media relations for HCFCD, said while the flooding is a problem, it may not be because of the creek. Horsepen Creek has a 100-year floodplain capacity, meaning it can handle vast amounts of water before overflowing its banks. Street flooding, she said, is often due to sheet flow, which is when water begins to pool and rise when it cannot find a bayou or detention pond.

Looney said he wants Harris County to de-silt the areas of the creek that run through Hearthstone.

“Horsepen Creek may have the same ability to handle the same amount of water, but it’s receiving a lot more runoff now,” he said. “We’d like to see the county take some action and not take the position that we don’t have a problem.”

Garcia said the agency has evaluated Horsepen Creek three times in the last 10 years—above average for a creek with superior capacity.

“I don’t dispute that there have been some flooding issues out there, but our evaluation of Horsepen Creek through [Hearthstone] has told us time and again that there is not an appreciable build up of silt reducing its capacity,” Garcia said. “This is our engineering opinion, not just somebody sitting back and saying, ‘Oh, it’s fine.’ It’s based on technical evaluation.”

HCFCD has started a project along the Hearthstone section of the creek not to de-silt it but to fix collapsed areas and ensure there is no further deterioration. Garcia said they have begun surveying the area from Hwy. 6 through Hearthstone down to FM 529 and West Little York.

“We’re doing a rehabilitation to make sure the integrity of the channel is there,” he said.

**History of HCFCD**

HCFCD is a special entity separated from the city and county but answerable to Commissioners Court. Saucier said the district was formed in 1937 in response to two massive flood events in 1929 and 1935, both of which devastated the city and convinced officials they needed government intervention.

“We needed the Army Corps of Engineers to come down here to build projects to stop the water from coming out of [Buffalo Bayou’s] banks,” Saucier said.

The Army Corps of Engineers needed a local entity to sponsor it to begin designing and implementing flood reduction plans; so HCFCD was born. The district has jurisdiction over 22 watersheds with 2,500 miles of open channel and streams, the distance from Los Angeles to New York City.

“Floodling remains our No. 1 natural threat. We get about 4 feet of rain each year. It’s our climate plus being vulnerable to hurricanes and tropical storms,” Saucier said. “The soil is made of heavy clay impermeable to water. It doesn’t absorb much water, so water basically just ponds or pools.”

**Community organizations**

- **Copperfield Coalition**, created in 2005, is a grassroots advocacy group that works to develop the Copperfield community in a way that retains its small-town atmosphere and preserves residents’ property values. The coalition has taken an interest in the neighborhood flooding by posting a community survey online to gather information from residents to present to local authorities. The information is intended to help build a plan to prevent future flooding and flood damage. [www.copperfieldcoalition.org](http://www.copperfieldcoalition.org)

- **Hearthstone Homeowners Association Flood Committee** represents residents’ interest in reducing flooding and flood damage caused by street flooding and nearby Horsepen Creek, which residents report topping its banks during severe storms. [www.hearthtonehaoa.org](http://www.hearthtonehaoa.org)

- **Cypress Creek Flood Control Coalition** works with local government agencies, such as HCFCD and Harris County commissioners, to reduce flood damage in neighborhoods and prevent erosion of creeks and bayous. The coalition also works to preserve and promote recreational areas, forests and parkland in the Cypress Creek watershed. [www.ccfc.org](http://www.ccfc.org)

**Sub-watershed study areas for the Cypress Creek watershed**

- Harris County Flood Control District began the six-part Cypress Creek Watershed Stormwater Management Program in 2001 to reduce flood damage throughout the area.
- Beginning with conceptual plans of the nine tributary watersheds, HCFCD used the information to design better management plans for future urban growth and drainage methods.
- The program will use the data to create flood damage reduction strategies and provide planning guidance.

**White Oak Bayou project**

HCFCD is building a new channel to divert flood waters from Jersey Village.

In the Cy-Fair area, HCFCD is constructing a $5.3 million channel that will divert water around the city of Jersey Village from White Oak Bayou during severe rainfall.

“The channel will primarily benefit residents of Jersey Village, much of which lies in a 100-year and 500-year floodplain,” said Heather Saucier, media relations for HCFCD. “Working in conjunction with two stormwater detention basins recently excavated upstream of the city, the channel will further reduce flooding risks and damages from White Oak Bayou spilling its banks.”

Designed to carry 30 percent to 40 percent of stormwater from the bayou during high flow, construction on the 1.2-mile channel began in June 2009 and is expected to be completed by the end of this year. Saucier said the channel will run from White Oak Bayou west of Jersey Meadow Golf Course eastward paralleling Honolulu Street to just west of Gessner Road and then south to reconnect with White Oak Bayou north of West Gulf Bank.
Neighborhood Dining | Del Pueblo Mexican Restaurant

By Kimberly Stauffer

Silvia Rincon never knew she wanted to own and run a restaurant until she started Del Pueblo Mexican Restaurant.

Rincon opened the eatery in 1996 with her husband, Alfonso Rincon Jr. Always a dream of his, Rincon said he decided to take the plunge after 20 years working in the restaurant industry.

The couple opened in a storefront on the end of a shopping center complex at Jones and Grant roads and were successful from the start.

“It was great because since the beginning, when we opened on the first day, it has been a success,” she said.

Five years later in 2001, Rincon and her husband decided to expand the business and moved farther back into the center to a larger space to accommodate their growing clientele.

While Alfonso accomplished his dream to own a restaurant, he died five years ago, leaving Rincon to handle the everyday responsibilities of the business after years working behind the scenes as an accountant.

“He always wanted to have his own restaurant. He loved what he did,” Rincon said of her husband. “When he passed away, I talked to the employees and said, ‘Well, maybe I need to hire a manager,’ but they said, ‘No, we can help you.’”

Most of her customers have no idea Rincon is the owner as she works daily with the staff on the restaurant floor, handling the business with her two sons.

She has minimal turnover with employees, Rincon said, because she runs the restaurant with a light touch and trusts the staff.

“I’ve learned everything about running a restaurant,” she said. “I could not picture myself any other place. [My employees] are like my family now. I don’t have to say anything because they know what to do.”

Rincon opened a second location in Pearland last October.

The restaurant’s popularity all stems from the quality of its food and drink, Rincon said, which includes its well-known margaritas.

“We always have the best quality meats, and the margaritas are awesome,” she said. “We have the best liquor and tequila.”

A meal at Del Pueblo always starts with tasty tortilla chips and a choice of mild and spicy salsas. The “Tres” option ($5.99) off the lunch menu consists of a juicy and crispy chicken flauta with a tasty cheese enchilada bookended by small islands of refried beans and Mexican rice.

Another lunchtime dish, the "Cinco" option ($5.99) is a pork tamale paired with a crispy beef taco. The cook does not skimp on meat, as the restaurant is known for its specialty chicken and beef fajitas, and the platter is complemented by refried beans and rice.

The restaurant’s dinner menu boasts its fajita dishes, a variety of enchiladas and combo platters.
SBA

The SBA-backed loan guarantee is insurance for banks hedging against losing money on startup or expanding businesses, said Al Johnson, senior vice president and manager of the SBA division at Westbound Bank in Houston. If a business, like a restaurant, which has a 90 percent chance of failing within 15 months, closes, the government will cover 90 percent of that loss.

“The banks have more of a comfort level [with the 90 percent guarantee], and the borrowers won’t have to spend as much money to get a loan,” Johnson said.

JeVaughn Sterling, vice president of Amegy Bank at Coles Crossing in northwest Houston and the SBA loan manager, said the guarantee acts as encouragement to area banks to continue lending money during the recession but does not simplify the process for prospective borrowers.

“I don’t believe it’s necessarily been easier on companies because they still have to meet the bank’s credit requirements,” Sterling said. “Bank requirements would be more stringent in this credit market, so looking at it from the standpoint of a bank, it’s easier to deal with the impact of the recession on companies when there is a higher guarantee.”

Lending

In the current economy, Hughes said banks would rather lend money to expanding businesses or an acquisition, but that is exactly why the SBA was created—to entice banks to be more flexible. “A startup business in good times is difficult and most lenders want collateral,” he said. “That’s a major risk compared to an existing business that has a clientele.”

Sterling said Amegy Bank, like most, is generally interested in making loans and quality assets. In the absence of a higher guarantee, he will still make loans and hold to a higher credit standard. “I doubt we would be less willing to lend money. We knew the [guarantee] increase was temporary, so we didn’t become overly aggressive.”

Hughes said while the stimulus was “well-thought out,” the SBA program has a long history of achievement with or without a 90 percent guarantee.

“The program was very successful before the recession and it will continue to be so,” he said.

SBA loan helps family start business

Joe and Linda Hutson opened a Kids ‘R’ Kids childcare center with their daughter, Jessica, in October 2009 with the help of a Small Business Administration–backed loan from Amegy Bank.

Joe said the process to acquire the loan was meticulous, but worth it, as the family received better interest rates on the loan. “Without a SBA loan, we wouldn’t have been able to buy the property,” he said. “It really came in handy.”

The Hutsons bought an existing childcare center on Fry Road, but startup costs piled up. The SBA loan allowed them to keep more money in the business and avoid large payments. “When starting a new business, the SBA loan leaves more money in the coffers every month to pay your people and suppliers,” Joe said. “It’s a huge help, in my opinion.”
Program aids small businesses in northwest Houston

By Kimberly Stauffer

Whether starting a new business or expanding an existing one, the Lone Star College System Small Business Development Center is a resource for entrepreneurs in need of guidance and assistance.

The center, based at the community college’s system office in The Woodlands, will counsel anyone who walks in about his or her shop, restaurant or business plan. Sal Mira, director of the center, said his staff provides an unbiased view of a client’s ideas and business plans.

“We provide an objective assessment to their dreams because we don’t have an emotional attachment,” Mira said. “We tend to peel the onion back and give them a realistic assessment of what owning a small business really is.”

Mira and his team understand the small-business world from a personal perspective, as each member owned a business before joining the SBDC. A consultant serves each of LSCS’ five campuses— Cy-Fair, Montgomery, Tomball, North Harris and Kingwood.

“The community doesn’t really know who we are and what we do, but we provide a tremendous service,” Mira said. “It’s free. A business that is in trouble can’t afford to go to a consulting business. And that’s why we’re here.”

The SBDC is one of 15 centers that report to the University of Houston SBDC. The university provides access to several resources beyond what is available at any one center, including UH-LAW, a program that for $100, third-year law students work to resolve real-world problems, and UH-IT, which can design clients’ websites to elevate them from amateur to professional.

The U.S. Congress created the SBDC program in the 1980s to help small businesses grow and compete in the market with training and professional guidance. Mira said when the program first started at LSCS there was an overwhelming percentage of clients wanting to start a new business. Now, many business owners are seeking training opportunities, avenues for loans and ways to survive the recession. One of the center’s more difficult roles, Mira said, is knowing when to give a client a good dose of reality and when to encourage them.

“The thing we have to avoid is providing our bias on whether a business will succeed,” he said. “We don’t want to discourage the next Bill Gates.”

The center can lay out data on area demographics, per capita income and local competition—all-important information for startup entrepreneurs.

“[Clients] overestimate sales and underestimate costs and as a result are undercapitalized,” Mira said. “That’s why they say there is a 90 percent fail rate. You can do it; we can help.”

Karen Cavallaro, a senior consultant serving the Magnolia and Cy-Fair area, said she helps facilitate the process of finding lenders, gathering the appropriate documents and helping clients write a good business plan to attain a bank loan. Cavallaro also assists clients with research and hundreds of leads each year to help them achieve a thriving business.

“Knowledge is power,” she said. “I try to give them enough information so they can run their business better.”

While the SBDC provides business owners the information and guidance they need, Cavallaro said what people want most is encouragement.

Small business impact

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<td>Business starts</td>
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<td>73</td>
<td>67</td>
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</tbody>
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What is the SBDC?
The Lone Star College System Small Business Development Center works with existing companies to help them grow and compete in today’s global economy. SBDC services are available for companies in every phase of the business life cycle, helping entrepreneurs make sound decisions and succeed. The SBDC also works with individuals to assist them with the development of new businesses and their operations. The resulting improvement in business performance leads to job creation, investments and economic growth in our community.

Loan application process

Obtaining a bank loan is a difficult prospect in today’s economic climate even for borrowers with good credit. Here is a guide to acquiring the necessary financing to start a business.

**STEP ONE**

Check your credit score. A good score should be a minimum of 700. A credit score can be obtained for a nominal fee through several outlets, including www.annualcreditreport.com, which also provides a free annual credit report.

**STEP TWO**

Borrowers need adequate collateral against the value of the loan. A lender requires assets they can liquidate to pay the loan value if the business fails. Assets could include equipment, commercial real estate, real estate that is not your homestead and cash accounts.

**STEP THREE**

Borrowers must be able to provide at least 20–30 percent of the startup costs from their own funds. For example, if a business requires $100,000 to start up, the owner needs to be able provide $20,000–$30,000 of personal funding. Additionally, many banks now require at least six to eight months of available working capital after startup expenses are incurred.

**STEP FOUR**

Lenders like for potential borrowers to have experience in the business they want to start. Without any experience, borrowers need to have someone on the management team who does.

**STEP SIX**

Contact the Lone Star College Small Business Development Center at 832-482-1067 or karen.s.cavallaro@lonestar.edu for help.

Source: Karen Cavallaro, LSC SBDC senior consultant for Cy-Fair and Magnolia.

STOP BY FOR A SNEAK PEEK AT LONE STAR COLLEGE CYFAIR

meet the friendly staff
learn about college programs and courses
get financial aid and college application help
free food, t-shirts, give-aways and more while supplies last

5 p.m. – 8 p.m.
Tuesday, April 6
Lonestar.edu/SneakPeek

May mini-semester and summer registration under way.
Lonestar.edu/registration
Visitors to the Hot Wells Shooting Range in northwest Houston would never guess the land was once the site of a unique resort.

It all began in 1904 when wildcatters lost their drill bit while looking for oil in Cypress. During a two-week search for their tool, they discovered a hot artesian well. A two-story hotel was built near the artesian well with two large concrete basins to hold the water—the beginning of the Houston Hot Well Hotel and Sanitarium. The mineral waters were said to heal the sick and bring general good health to all that bathed in them.

"People came from Houston and all over the country to the sanitarium and pools—they were very soothing and people thought they were healthful," said Jane Ledbetter of the Cypress Historical Society. "[Hot Well] was advertised as being a health spa, so to speak ... it was also a picnic area and a nice place to visit."

The two basins held the water at two different temperatures. One was for hot water, as it flowed from the ground; the other was an overflow basin for the water that had cooled. The temperature for the hot pool ranged from 95 to 102 degrees. Later, a large Olympic-sized pool, complete with a high dive and several lower diving boards, was added.

The hotel included a large dance hall with bingo games. On weekend nights, it became one of the more popular meeting places for locals.

"When we were in high school, there would be class parties at Hot Well," Ledbetter said. "I remember having my eighth-grade banquet in that hotel."

Over time, renovations and improvements were made to the land. A picnic area, two lakes, rowboats, dancing and food were just a few of the attractions, which made Hot Well a popular place for an outing.

"I can remember I got the worst sunburn of my life there," said Joyce Kleb, also of the Cypress Historical Society. Hot Well not only provided recreation, but jobs for residents as well. Some of the women got jobs cleaning rooms or making beds in the hotel. Others served food in the dining room.

"My mother worked there when I was a child," Kleb said. "She made one dollar a day renting lockers and bathing suits."

The hotel burned down in the 1950s. By the mid '60s, the swimming pool was still operating, but was not as popular as in previous times—homeowners had their own pools or residents used neighborhood pools. The artesian springs stopped flowing completely in 1981. The shooting range opened in the 1980s.
When confronted with continuing care options for a parent or loved one that is hospitalized, terms such as Skilled Nursing, Transitional Care and Long Term Care can be quite overwhelming as the vast majority of consumers are not familiar with these terms.

The combination of an aging population and the emergence of Medicare eligible baby boomers have created the need for Transitional Care facilities, which have become a necessity in assisting people in their transition from a hospitalization back to their home.

Legend Healthcare’s Transitional Care model raises the bar of excellence for rehabilitative care through customized care plans that are unique to the individual and the specific illness or medical procedure that required hospitalization. These care plans are updated and adjusted regularly by the Transitional care team. Healthcare services delivered during the Transitional care stay include but are not limited to:

- The highest level of skilled nursing care
- Physical, Occupational and Speech Therapy
- State of the Art Rehabilitation Gymnasium and equipment
- Exclusive, advanced therapy systems such as the “Pneumex” machine which supports all body weight, eliminating the “fear of falling”.
- Dedicated Social Service representative
- Dietary Consulting

The dedicated team of professionals at Legend Healthcare understands each individual and their condition is unique. For those individuals that require a longer placement scenario, Legend Healthcare facilities provide the most modern, home like setting for residential needs.

Regardless if you goal is to return home or for residential care, Legend Healthcare facilities and professional staff are committed to providing you with world class care with a personalized touch.
**FAMILY IMPACTS**

Compiled by Jason Culpepper

**Family activities in the Houston area**

Whether you want to act like a kid or just want to experience the city through the eyes of your kids, we have compiled a list of activities that are within the community or close by.

1. **Blackberries of Houston**
   19531 Cypress Church Road, Cypress
   281-373-5357 • www.blackberriesofhouston.com
   Hours: Season runs for 30 days, usually late May to June; 7 a.m.–noon, seven days a week
   Cost: Cash only
   Info: Buckets and take-home containers provided

2. **Blue Bell Creamery**
   1101 S. Blue Bell Road, Brenham
   1-800-327-8135 • www.bluebell.com
   Hours: Monday–Friday 10 a.m.–1 p.m., 1:30 p.m.–2 p.m., 2:30 p.m.–3:30 p.m., no weekend tours
   Cost: $5 (general admission); $3 (children 6–14), children 5 and under are free; includes scoop of ice cream

3. **Brazos Bend State Park**
   21901 FM 762 Road, Needville
   979-953-5102 • www.tpwd.state.tx.us/parks/brazos_bend
   Hours: Friday–Sunday 7 a.m.–10 p.m.
   Monday–Thursday 8 a.m.–10 p.m.
   Cost: $5 per day, per person 13 and older
   12 and under are free
   Activities: Great place to see alligators

4. **Chappell Hill Lavender Farm**
   2250 Dillard Road, Brenham
   979-251-8114 • www.chappellhilllavender.com
   Hours: Open weekends from March through October
   Cost: Free

5. **Monastery of St. Clare**
   9300 Hwy. 105, Brenham
   979-836-9622 • www.monasteryminiaturehorses.com
   Hours: Tuesday–Saturday, 1:30–4 p.m.; open Fridays and Saturdays only in January, February and September
   Cost: Self-guided tours of the Miniature Horse Farm, Art Barn Gift Shop and Monastery Chapel are available for families, individuals and small groups.
   Admission is $4 (adults), $2 (children ages 3–12), $3 (seniors). Guided tours are given Monday through Friday by reservation only for groups of 15 adults or more. The fee is $5 per person, and the tour lasts approximately one hour.
   Info: New foals are born March through May.

6. **Oil Ranch**
   23501 Macedonia, Hockley
   281-859-1616 • www.oilranch.com
   Hours: Weekdays 10 a.m., 12 p.m., 1 p.m.; open Fridays and Saturdays only in January, February and September
   Cost: $12.95 per person 2 years and older
   Activities: Pony rides, cow milking, baby animal farm, train rides, hayrides and swimming

7. **Showboat Drive-in Theater**
   22422 FM 2920, Hockley
   281-351-5224 • www.theshowboatdrivein.com
   Hours: Friday and Saturday evenings gates open at 6 p.m. and showtime is 6:30 p.m.; Sunday evenings gates open at 6 p.m. and showtime is 6:30 p.m.
   Cost: $5 (adults), $4 (children ages 3–12), 2 years and under are free; cash only (ATM located in snack bar)

8. **Zube Park**
   17400 Roberts Road, Hockley
   8 a.m.–dusk, daily
   Hours: Vary by season
   Cost: Free
   Info: 140 acres of parkland with jogging trails, playground, picnic area and a railroad track with a miniature steam engine that carries passengers

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  Cost: Free
  Info: 140 acres of parkland with jogging trails, playground, picnic area and a railroad track with a miniature steam engine that carries passengers
woodlands and formal gardens, the house features 4,800 various works of art. Children under 10 are welcome in the gardens but are unable to view the house. Family Day is the third Sunday of the month, with free afternoon performances, activities and crafts.

10 Children’s Museum of Houston
1500 Binz, Houston
713-522-1138 • www.cmohouston.org
Hours: Tuesday–Saturday 10 a.m.–6 p.m.; Sunday noon–6 p.m.; open select Mondays
Cost: $7 (adults and children older than 1); 1 year and younger is free; free family night every Thursday
Info: includes playroom for toddlers only

11 Discovery Green
150 McKinney St., Houston
713-400-7336 • www.discoverygreen.com
Hours: Open daily from 6 a.m.–11 p.m.
Cost: Free; fees apply to certain activities
Activities: One-acre lake, children’s playground, interactive water features, amphitheater stage and slope, dog runs for large and small breeds, public art works, green lawns and restaurants

12 Downtown Aquarium
410 Bagby St., Houston
713-223-3474 • www.aquariumrestaurants.com
Hours: Monday–Thursday 10 a.m.–9:30 p.m., Friday–Saturday 10 a.m.–11 p.m.; Sunday 10 a.m.–10 p.m.
Cost: $9.95 (adults), $6.25 (children age 2–12)

13 Hermann Park
6201 A Hermann Park Drive, Houston
713-524-5876 • www.hermannpark.org
Hours: Open daily 6 a.m.–11 p.m.
Cost: Free (fee required for train ride); includes Buddy Carnuth Playground, Hermann Park Railroad, Garden Center (including sculpture garden), Japanese Garden, Molly Ann Smith Plaza (includes interactive fountains for children), Lake Plaza (paddle boat rental) and McGovern Lake (catch and release available for children under 12)

14 Houston Arboretum and Nature Center
4501 Woodway Drive, Houston
713-681-8433 • www.houstonarboretum.org
Hours: Grounds 8:30 a.m.–6 p.m.; daily; Discovery Room 10 a.m.–4 p.m.
Cost: Admission is free (donations appreciated)
Info: 155-acre nature sanctuary with 5 miles of trails

15 Houston Museum of Natural Science
1 Hermann Circle Drive, Houston
713-639-4629 • www.hmns.org
Hours: Vary depending on season and exhibit
Cost: Permanent exhibits $15 (adults), $10 (children 3–11); butterfly center, planetarium, IMAX and special exhibits require additional entry fees
Info: 13 permanent exhibits including Paleontology, African Wildlife and Space Science

16 Houston Zoo
6200 Hermann Park Drive, Houston
713-533-6500 • www.houstonzoo.org
Hours: 9 a.m.–6 p.m.
Cost: $11 (adults), $7 (children 2–11), free for children 2 years and younger
Info: Rated one of the 10 best zoos in the nation by Parents magazine, newly renovated jaguar exhibit

17 Kemah Boardwalk
Bradford Avenue and Second Street, Kemah
281-334-9880 • www.kemahboardwalk.com
Hours: Vary by season and attraction
Cost: Vary by attraction
Info: 40-acre Conroe Island–style boardwalk

18 Miller Outdoor Theatre
100 Concert Drive, Houston
281-373-3386 • www.milleroutdoortheatre.com
 Hours: All performances are free, with some offering ticketed assigned seating in the covered area on a first come, first serve basis. Lawn seating allows for lawn chairs on left, picnic blankets on right
Info: All performances are family friendly, but special children performances are available on occasion

19 Moody Gardens Galveston
One Hope Blvd., Galveston
1-800-522-1265 • www.moodygardens.com
Hours: Daily 10 a.m.–6 p.m.
Cost: vary by attraction

20 Moorhead’s Blueberry Farm
19531 Moorhead Road, Conroe
281-572-1265 • www.moorheadsblueberryfarm.com
Hours: Daily, 7 a.m.–9 p.m. during May–July season
Cost: $1.51 per pound
Info: 20 acres of 20 different varieties of blueberries

21 Museum of Fine Arts
1001 Bissonnet St., Houston
713-639-7700 • www.mfah.org/bayoubend
Hours: Tuesday–Saturday 10 a.m.–5 p.m.
www.mfah.org/bayoubend
1-800-OLD TOWN (8696)
$10 for adults, children under 12 are free

22 Museum of Health and Medical Science
1515 Hermann Drive, Houston
713-521-1015 • www.mhms.org
Hours: Tuesday–Saturday 9 a.m.–5 p.m., Sunday 12 a.m.–5 p.m.
Cost: $8 (adults), $6 (children ages 3–12)
Info: All exhibits designed from a perspective of teaching kids about health; free family Thursdays

23 Space Center Houston
1601 NASA Parkway, Houston
281-483-2100 • www.spacecenter.org
Hours: Vary depending on season, check website
Cost: $19.95 (adults), $15.95 (children ages 4–11)

24 Washington on the Brazos State Historical Park
FM 1155, Washington
936-878-2214
www.birthplaceoftexas.com/visitor_info.htm
Cost: vary by attraction

25 Children’s Museum of Houston
1214 Polk St., Houston
713-639-4629 • www.mcohouston.org
Hours: Open daily 10 a.m.–6 p.m.
Cost: $7 (adults), $5 (children 3–11)
Info: All exhibits designed from a perspective of teaching kids about health; free family Thursdays

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Info: Rated one of the 10 best zoos in the nation by Parents magazine, newly renovated jaguar exhibit

27 Kemah Boardwalk
Bradford Avenue and Second Street, Kemah
281-334-9880 • www.kemahboardwalk.com
Hours: Vary by season and attraction
Cost: Vary by attraction
Info: 40-acre Conroe Island–style boardwalk

28 Miller Outdoor Theatre
100 Concert Drive, Houston
281-373-3386 • www.milleroutdoortheatre.com
Hours: All performances are free, with some offering ticketed assigned seating in the covered area on a first come, first serve basis. Lawn seating allows for lawn chairs on left, picnic blankets on right
Info: All performances are family friendly, but special children performances are available on occasion

29 Moody Gardens Galveston
One Hope Blvd., Galveston
1-800-522-1265 • www.moodygardens.com
Hours: Daily 10 a.m.–6 p.m.
Cost: vary by attraction

30 Moorhead’s Blueberry Farm
19531 Moorhead Road, Conroe
281-572-1265 • www.moorheadsblueberryfarm.com
Hours: Daily, 7 a.m.–9 p.m. during May–July season
Cost: $1.51 per pound
Info: 20 acres of 20 different varieties of blueberries

31 Museum of Fine Arts
1001 Bissonnet St., Houston
713-639-7700 • www.mfah.org/bayoubend
Hours: Tuesday–Saturday 10 a.m.–5 p.m.
www.mfah.org/bayoubend
1-800-OLD TOWN (8696)
$10 for adults, children under 12 are free

32 Museum of Health and Medical Science
1515 Hermann Drive, Houston
713-521-1015 • www.mhms.org
Hours: Tuesday–Saturday 9 a.m.–5 p.m., Sunday 12 a.m.–5 p.m.
Cost: $8 (adults), $6 (children ages 3–12)
Info: All exhibits designed from a perspective of teaching kids about health; free family Thursdays

33 Space Center Houston
1601 NASA Parkway, Houston
281-483-2100 • www.spacecenter.org
Hours: Vary depending on season, check website
Cost: $19.95 (adults), $15.95 (children ages 4–11)

34 Washington on the Brazos State Historical Park
FM 1155, Washington
936-878-2214
www.birthplaceoftexas.com/visitor_info.htm
Cost: vary by attraction

26–28 German Heritage Festival
Old Town Tomball, 201 S. Elm St.
www.tomballchamber.org
Free admission

April 9–11, 16–18, 23–25
Old Town Spring Crawfish
& Music Festival
Old Town Spring, Spring
1-800-OLD TOWN (8696)
www.texascrayfishfestival.com
$10 for adults, children under 12 are free

April 10–11
Bluebonnet Festival
5145 Main St., Chappell Hill
www.chappellhillmuseum.org/festivals
10:30 a.m.–6:30 p.m. • Free admission, $5 parking

April 10–11
Houston Children’s Festival
Downtown Houston
www.houstonchildrensfestival.com
Rated one of the world’s unmissable events by Frommer’s Travel Guide.
10:30 a.m.–6:30 p.m. • $8 per person, children under 3 are free

May 13–16
Festival of Greece
1100 Edridge Parkway, Houston
281-451-5999 • www.festivalofgreece.com
$3 admission, children under 12 are free
Before hybrid cars, cloth grocery bags and trash recycling became popular, Jennifer Armentrout was interested in protecting the environment.

“My whole life I have been concerned about the environment, from watching trash burn in burn barrels, the litter that built up on the roads and explosive growth in cities during the ‘80s,” said Armentrout, director of Sustainable Living in Houston. “I have always recycled, even when it wasn’t easy; used cloth bags when stores wouldn’t let me in for fear I would shoplift; and picked up others’ trash.”

This concern led Armentrout, along with husband Darrell and Laura Ellason, to form SLiH in 2008. SLiH is a small grass-roots organization in northwest Houston that provides education and resources to those with little or no knowledge of the environment and sustainable living. The organization also answers questions from the public regarding recycling and waste, how to clean a home with natural ingredients and general living while protecting the environment, Armentrout said.

Co-director Monica Johnson joined SLiH because of her interest in recycling and the environment. She said she enjoys talking to people at events and providing them with information.

“Education is our No. 1 priority,” Johnson said. “It’s rewarding to me to know that I’m educating these people, and they will start doing these things once they know how.”

SLiH holds many events in northwest Houston, but the most popular is the annual Drop and Swap! The event is two-part: The first part begins in the morning when people drop off electronics, household batteries, paper, plastic, aluminum cans, glass, clothing, household items, books, athletic shoes and more. All but the clothing, household items and books are taken to local recyclers. Then, in the evening, people can shop for free.

“All the clothing, household items and books are up for grabs,” Armentrout said. “People bring in wheel barrels and wagons, making several trips to load up their vehicles.”

In 2008 and 2009, SLiH facilitated the recycling of more than 40 tons of electronics, 15 tons of paper, 10 tons of aluminum and four to five 28-foot trucks of clothing.

Small steps, instead of radical changes, can help northwest Houston residents with sustainable living.

“Rather than asking everyone to reach utopia, especially in the suburbs, we would rather ask that each person, not just households, participate in eliminating one aspect of excess disposal,” Armentrout said. “Eat locally one day a week, use alternative transportation one day a week, completely cut out littering and buying for long-term use. Even with that, the impact is huge.”
By Kimberly Stauffer

The new Veterans Affairs Center at Lone Star College-University Park provides all necessary educational, financial and counseling services for veterans attending the community college programs.

The centralized location allows veterans to visit the center to be certified to receive their GI Bill education benefits, talk with a clinical counselor from the VA who visits weekly and find answers to any pertinent questions concerning their education and status.

Tony Castillo, director of the center, said the catalyst to open the center was the number of veterans enrolled at LSCS. In spring 2009, LSCS enrolled 931 veterans, and in fall 2009, the college reported an enrollment of 1,576 veterans. Castillo said when certification is completed this semester, he expects to see more than 1,700 veterans attending LSCS.

"This is one-stop shopping," Castillo said. "It’s important for them to have these services here instead of driving downtown to the VA. And as a college system, why shouldn’t we have these services?"

Castillo said the center is instrumental in helping veterans transition back into the community.

"It’s hard enough to transfer from military to civilian life. Why make it more difficult?" he said. "I’m trying to help create a center where the services are here and convenient to them just like on a military installation."

Castillo said the center is also concentrating on helping veterans take advantage of the new Post-9/11 GI Bill, which provides educational and housing financial support effective Aug. 1, 2009. The bill also offers the ability to transfer benefits to dependents, such as a spouse or child.

The center includes work-study areas, a computer lab, break room and conference room for veterans’ use. Castillo said the VAC is the first of its kind in Houston and has already received a "tremendous" response from the community. Its services eventually will extend out to the other five colleges to serve all veterans within LSCS.

Sheena Sharma, a Marine discharged in 2006, is involved in the center’s work-study program while taking classes at University Park. When she first started at LSCS several years ago, she was left on her own to discover necessary information to become certified to receive her education and disability benefits.

"I think it’s mandatory to have a place like this," Sharma said. "It’s a centralized location that you can go to for anything now, not just education benefits, but any benefits for veterans in general. The people here are more than ready to help."

Castillo said many Houstonians are unaware of the number of veterans in the city and surrounding communities, including northwest Houston, that come here for job opportunities.

"They’ve served us, and now we’re serving them," he said. "LSCS is ready to serve our veterans so they can succeed in whatever goals they set."
Copperfield Estates makes Independent Retirement Living simple and enjoyable by taking care of life’s daily details, leaving our residents free to pursue their passions. And with all of the many benefits included in one convenient monthly fee, retirement living at Copperfield Estates is an incredible value. Welcome to Holiday. Welcome home.

**Transportation Report | Mueschke Road and Perry Road**

**Mueschke Road construction**

Phase two of the Mueschke Road construction runs from 1 mile north of Hwy. 290 to Sandy Hill Circle. The two-lane asphalt road will be replaced with a four-lane concrete boulevard with a raised median and an underground storm sewer system. The construction is part of a four-part series of projects that runs to Wilks Drive. Phase one, completed last year, ran from Hwy. 290 one mile north to the phase two project starting point.

**Second phase:** The second phase was a rebuilding of the road from Hwy. 290 to Sandy Hill.

**Third phase:** The third phase runs from Sandy Hill to Little Cypress Creek.

**Fourth phase:** The fourth phase runs from Little Cypress Creek to Wilks Drive.

**Timeline:** The second phase of the project is 60 percent finished and is scheduled for completion in August. The third phase is in the design phase and will begin this fall. The fourth phase is also in the design phase, with bids expected in 2011. A target bid date has not been finalized.

**Funding:** Harris County Precinct 3

**Budget:** $5.5 million

**Perry Road construction**

The two-phased Perry Road project runs from FM 1960 to south of Hwy. 249 and will include the widening of Perry Road from a two-lane asphalt roadway with open ditch drainage to a four-lane concrete boulevard section. The work will also include a storm sewer system and the installation of traffic signals on Perry Road at Lou Edd Road and Perry Road at Mills Road, including traffic signal modifications along that length to accommodate traffic.

**First phase:** The first phase runs from FM 1960 to just past Mills Road.

**Second phase:** The second phase runs from north of Mills Road to south of Hwy. 249.

**Timeline:** The first phase is scheduled for completion in November. The second phase is in the design phase and has not yet gone to bid. Bids are expected to be placed in early summer.

**Funding:** METRO General Mobility Program

**Budget:** $3.2 million
By K. Jenney

In March, the U.S. is taking roll call as the country (and Puerto Rico) undergoes its 23rd census. More than 120 million homes will receive a 10-question survey that determines the characteristics of the population by asking for information such as name, gender, race and ethnicity.

Mandated by the U.S. Constitution, the census is designed to count the number of people living in the country every decade and also provide statistics used for allocating more than $300 billion in federal funds to local, state and tribal governments; distributing congressional seats to states; and making decisions about what community services to fund.

“It’s important to complete the census,” said Jenna Steormann Arnold of the U.S. Census Bureau, Dallas Regional Census Center. “The future of individual communities and states depends on it.”

Since many federally funded programs are based on income and need, the amount of money the government offers a community is proportional to its population. “Residents may ask for the name and telephone number of the census taker’s supervisor at the local census office if they are uncomfortable or would like verification,” Arnold said.

She said census takers should not ask for personal information like social security or credit card numbers. Nor should they solicit donations or e-mail information.

The Census Bureau must deliver population counts to the president no later than Dec. 31, 2010. Redistricting data to states will be delivered by March 2011, and 2006–2008 Census data will be delivered by March 2013.

The Census Bureau began the 2010 process in spring 2009 when bureau employees canvassed every street in the U.S. Using hand-held computers with GPS tracking capabilities, they identified every existing and potential residence.

In mid-March, printed census forms will be mailed. Residents are asked to complete and return the data in the postage-paid envelope by April 1—Census Day. Households that do not respond will be visited between April and July by a census taker who manually records data.

Census takers will carry badges that contain a U.S. Department of Commerce watermark and expiration date. They may also carry bags with the census logo on it.

For more information on the 2010 census, visit www.census.gov.
Inside Information | Preparing for tax season

By Kara Vaught and Kimberly Stauffer

After the holiday parties and presents, the bills begin to arrive. Scattered among them are documents that have the potential to consume even more time and effort than holiday shopping: tax forms.

Charles Garcia, a certified tax preparer and owner of Liberty Tax Service in Cypress, said there are several documents that, depending on the individual, are needed for tax returns.

• W-2 forms from employers
• 1099 forms for interest, dividends, miscellaneous income and/or sale of securities
• K-1 forms from partnerships, estates, trusts and S corporations, which elect to pass corporate income, losses, deductions and credit to their shareholders for tax purposes
• Social security information
• Mortgage interest and property tax figures
• Documentation of charitable giving
• Documentation of auto purchases and sales tax
• Health Savings Accounts information
• Tuition figures
• Settlement statements for property sold or purchased

To make tax season smooth, Garcia suggests creating a file to store tax documents during the year.

The next hurdles to tax preparation are the several new tax rules.

Estimated tax payments

Individuals who own small businesses may be qualified to reduce their annual estimated tax payment to the lesser of either 90 percent of the tax shown on their 2008 return or to 90 percent of the tax shown on their 2009 return. Qualified individuals must have more than 50 percent of their gross income from a business with an average of 500 employees or less in 2008 and an adjusted gross income of less than $500,000 or $250,000 if married and filing separately for 2009.

Motor vehicle tax deduction

State, local and excise taxes on the first $50,000 or $25,000 if married and filing separately for 2008, and to $65,000 or $32,500 if married and filing jointly for 2009, are deductible depending on the purchase date.

Motor vehicle tax deductions for first-time homebuyers

Homeowners who purchased certain energy-efficient household equipment on or before April 15, 2010, may deduct the amount paid for the equipment. The deduction is limited to $500 for purchases made in 2009 and before May 1, 2010, and to $250, if married and filing a joint return.

Penalty for failure to file increased

Not filing a tax return by more than 60 days after its due date, including extensions, will result in a minimum penalty of $135 or 100 percent of the unpaid tax, whichever is less.

Residential Energy Property Credit

The tax credit for homeowners who make energy-efficient changes to parts of their homes, such as windows and HVAC systems, increased to 30 percent of the cost of qualifying modifications. The maximum credit is also raised to $1,500.

Homebuyer credit

A federal housing act increased the first-time homebuyer credit to $8,000 for purchases made in 2009 and before May 1, 2010, and closed on before July 1, 2010. Individuals are not required to pay back the credit unless they move within three years after the purchase.

Filing

Once prepared, individual tax returns or requests for extensions must be filed electronically or mailed by April 15. Business returns are due March 15. Individuals who are granted an extension must file by Oct. 15 and businesses by Sept. 15.

An extension on filing a return does not enable a delay of payment. All or part of the estimated taxes must be paid by the due date to avoid penalties and interest.

Individuals earning an adjusted gross income of less than $75,000 may qualify to e-file their tax return at no charge through one of the authorized IRS e-file partners. People making more than $75,000 may also e-file, but are subject to fees imposed by providers.

Refunds

If filing electronically with direct deposit, Garcia said residents can expect to receive their refund in as little as eight to 15 days. A mailed return can take four to six weeks if expecting a paper check.

TAX INFORMATION

Where to get tax forms

Barbara Bush at Cypress Creek Library
6817 Cypresswood Drive
281-376-4610

Cy-Fair College Branch Library
9191 Barker-Cypress Road
281-290-3210

Westtrek Branch Library
7122 North Gessner
713-466-4438

Northwest Branch Library
11335 Regency Green Drive
281-890-2665

IRS Forms and Publications

Where to get help

Taxpayer Advocate Service
1919 Smith St., Room 1650
Houston
713-209-3660
Free IRS problem assistance for individuals and businesses

Taxpayer Assistance Center
12941 I-45 North
Houston
281-721-7021

For more information, meet with an IRS representative or visit www.irs.gov.
Community Impact Newspaper • impactnews.com  March 2010  |  23

Residential Real Estate | Neighborhoods at a Glance

Wortham Park - 77065

The community is conveniently located near Hwy. 290 and FM1960 as well as the West Road park and ride.

Cy-Fair ISD schools:
- Adam Elementary School
- Arnold Junior High School
- Cy-Fair High School

Cy-Fair ISD schools:
- Moore Elementary School
- Hamilton Middle School
- Cy-Creek High School

Lakewood Forest - 77070

Nestled among the trees, Lakewood Forest provides residents opportunities for peace and quiet.

Cy-Fair ISD schools:
- Adam Elementary School
- Arnold Junior High School
- Cy-Fair High School
- Nestled among the trees, Lakewood Forest provides residents opportunities for peace and quiet.

Cy-Fair ISD schools:
- Moore Elementary School
- Hamilton Middle School
- Cy-Creek High School

Featured homes

12819 Apple Forest Trail
4 Br/2.5 Ba | 2,864 sq. ft. $199,000
Agent: Ruth Post 281-856-0808
Keller Williams Realty

12902 Magnolia Leaf
4 Br/2 and 2 Half Ba | 2,540 sq. ft. $179,500
Agent: Sandra Petermann 281-367-7770
RE/MAX The Woodlands & Spring

12515 Grove Hollow Court
4 Br/2 Ba | 2,322 sq. ft. $184,900
Agent: Katie Kohlhauff 281-893-8400
RE/MAX Northwest Realtors

12907 Azalea Creek Trail
5 Br/3.5 Ba | 3,345 sq. ft. $219,900
Agent: George Kawaja
Broker information not available

11814 Pebbleton Drive
5 Br/3.5 Ba | 4,826 sq. ft. $465,000
Agent: Ellen Proctor 281-444-5140
Prudential Gary Greene

12210 Moorcreek Drive
4 Br/3.5 Ba | 3,684 sq. ft. $259,900
Agent: David Brown 713-722-7653
Sage Properties

11714 Pebbleton Drive
4 Br/2.5 Ba | 2,582 sq. ft. $184,900
Agent: Nadeen Rhoades-Stepp 281-376-9900
RE/MAX Surburban Northwest

12902 Quail Creek Drive
4 Br/3 and 2 Half Ba | 5,425 sq. ft. $420,000
Agent: Denise Flores 281-444-5140
Prudential Gary Greene

11780 Quail Creek Drive
4 Br/3 and 2 Half Ba | 5,425 sq. ft. $420,000
Agent: Denise Flores 281-444-5140
Prudential Gary Greene

11210 Azalea Creek Trail
5 Br/3.5 Ba | 4,826 sq. ft. $465,000
Agent: Ellen Proctor 281-444-5140
Prudential Gary Greene

12819 Apple Forest Trail
4 Br/2.5 Ba | 2,864 sq. ft. $199,000
Agent: Ruth Post 281-856-0808
Keller Williams Realty

Market Data

The residential real estate listings were added to the market between 2/1/10 and 2/28/10 and were compiled from www.har.com. Although every effort has been made to ensure the timeliness and accuracy of this listing, Community Impact Newspaper assumes no liability for errors or omissions. Contact the property’s agent or seller for the most current information.

Featured homes

On the market* (February 1–28)

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<th>Price range</th>
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<th>Avg. days on market NW Houston</th>
<th>Avg. days on market Cypress</th>
<th>Number of sales NW Houston</th>
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<th>Number of sales Cypress</th>
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Monthly home sales*

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<th>Number of sales Cypress</th>
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<td>$134,728</td>
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<td>February 2009</td>
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<td>January 2010</td>
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<td>169</td>
<td>$145,045</td>
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<td>$225,585</td>
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<td>December 2009</td>
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<td>$143,141</td>
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<tr>
<td>November 2009</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>$139,605</td>
<td>177</td>
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<td>October 2009</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>$146,198</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>$216,148</td>
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Zip code guide

77040 NW Houston
77064 NW Houston
77065 NW Houston
77070 NW Houston
77095 NW Houston
77429 Cypress
77433 Cypress

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Market Data provided by Mark Dimas

The Professional Group Realty | 281-861-6199 | www.markdimas.com

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832.334.0001

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Northwest Houston

1. **5858–5890 Cunningham Road**
   - (5) at 12,000 sq. ft.
   - Agent: Ron Roberson
   - Caldwell Companies
   - $58/sq. ft.
   - 713-690-0000

2. **12700 Grant Road**
   - 1,844 sq. ft.
   - Agent: Susan Roark
   - Risk Properties
   - 713-203-9830

3. **9503 Jones Road**
   - 6,704 sq. ft.
   - Agent: Charlotte Blocker Farchi
   - Global Realty & Management
   - 713-252-6380

Commercial Real Estate

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<th>Sq. Ft.</th>
<th>Price</th>
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<td>Ron Roberson</td>
<td>Caldwell Companies</td>
<td>713-690-0000</td>
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<tr>
<td>77204</td>
<td>Houston</td>
<td>8430 E. Sam Houston Parkway West</td>
<td>15,625</td>
<td>Negotiable</td>
<td>Lane Goins</td>
<td>ELM Commercial Advisors</td>
<td>713-784-7770</td>
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<td>77204</td>
<td>Houston</td>
<td>39540 W. Sam Houston Parkway North</td>
<td>2,364</td>
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<td>Paula Murray</td>
<td>Beto Company</td>
<td>281-873-4444</td>
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<td>31307 FM 1960 West</td>
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<td>Bill Legg</td>
<td>Caldwell Banker Commercial</td>
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<tr>
<td>77365</td>
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<td>11024 Neeshaw Drive</td>
<td>27,125</td>
<td>$1.55 million</td>
<td>Joel C. English</td>
<td>CEC Brokerage</td>
<td>281-897-9555</td>
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<tr>
<td>77365</td>
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<td>5614 FM 529</td>
<td>1,200</td>
<td>$17/sq. ft.</td>
<td>James Carter</td>
<td>Prudential Gary Greene Realtors</td>
<td>713-818-6273</td>
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<tr>
<td>77365</td>
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<td>7929 – 7946 Louetta Park Drive</td>
<td>6,000</td>
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<td>Wilford Joff</td>
<td>Bernstein Partners Properties</td>
<td>713-604-7071</td>
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<td>9,184</td>
<td>$7.26/sq. ft.</td>
<td>Bill Legg</td>
<td>Caldwell Banker Commercial</td>
<td>281-364-8000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77365</td>
<td>Houston</td>
<td>5401 Stumpmeister</td>
<td>6,200</td>
<td>$18/sq. ft.</td>
<td>David E. Hammel</td>
<td>Caldwell Banker Commercial</td>
<td>281-840-5000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77369</td>
<td>Cypress</td>
<td>12700 Grant Road</td>
<td>1,844</td>
<td>$18/sq. ft.</td>
<td>Susan Raff</td>
<td>Risk Properties</td>
<td>713-203-9830</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77369</td>
<td>Cypress</td>
<td>13040 Louetta Road</td>
<td>5,655</td>
<td>$18–$35/sq. ft.</td>
<td>Megan Burke</td>
<td>First Allied Corporation</td>
<td>800-359-3000</td>
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<tr>
<td>77369</td>
<td>Cypress</td>
<td>Hwy. 290 and Fairmont Place Drive</td>
<td>50,000</td>
<td>Negotiable</td>
<td>Joshua Jacobis</td>
<td>Page Partners</td>
<td>713-595-9537</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77369</td>
<td>Cypress</td>
<td>3705 Barker Cypress Road</td>
<td>1,600</td>
<td>$15/sq. ft.</td>
<td>Jessica Ivan</td>
<td>Realty Management Company</td>
<td>281-531-5300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77369</td>
<td>Cypress</td>
<td>11808 Barker Cypress Road</td>
<td>1,200</td>
<td>$17/sq. ft.</td>
<td>Jim Rayner</td>
<td>Investor Real Estate Services</td>
<td>713-273-1361</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pad Sites & Land

NOW AVAILABLE

(6) 1 Acre Pad Sites @ Barker Cypress & Lakecrest View Dr.
25 Acres @ West Road and Greenhouse (can be subdivided)
12 - 30 Acres @ Barker Cypress and Tuckerton Rd.

Caldwellcos.com

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713.690.0000 | kgrothaus@caldwellcos.com