

The Senior CHIT★CHAT

Summer 2010



A Publication for Precinct2gether from Commissioner Sylvia R. Garcia



Precinct2gether Launches Web Site

Precinct2gether was created as a non-profit organization to provide a broad scope of community services for the citizens of Harris County Precinct Two. Senior, Youth and Veterans Services as well as the Precinct's Transportation Department and Project Stars have been combined under one umbrella in order to facilitate stronger programs for all community members.

Recently, Precinct2gether debuted its own Web site - www.precinct2gether.org - that showcases each of the major services within the organization. "Our Web site is a place where any resident of Precinct Two can go to learn more about our programs, events and services," explained Helen Berrott-Tims, General Superintendent of Community Programs and Special Projects for Precinct Two. "Community members also can visit us online to learn more about how they can share their talents through volunteering within Precinct2gether."

For example, one of the Precinct2gether service areas that currently is in need of more volunteers is Veterans Services. "We are looking for retired veterans who would like to assist with veteran activities such as our annual veterans picnic, food drives and other events," said Berrott-Tims. "As with all our service areas, volunteers can become involved with one-time projects or recurring opportunities."

To become a volunteer with Precinct2gether, visit the Contact Us section of the Web site (www.precinct2gether.org/contact_us.html) to download the volunteer application or call 281-862-9531.

The section of the Web site devoted to senior services includes information on all senior activities, calendar, description of each community center, coordinator listing, special programs, frequently asked questions and fund raisers. Electronic versions of the Chit-Chat also are available online.

PROJECT STARS PROMOTES RICH HERITAGE OF REGION

In 2004, Harris County Precinct Two Commissioner Sylvia R. Garcia and the Economic Alliance Houston Port Region joined forces to establish Project Stars, a community-driven initiative aimed at celebrating the rich Texas heritage of this region as well as the important economic engines that support the community today.

Over the past several years, Project Stars has made amazing strides toward reaching its goals. The San Jacinto Texas Historic District was created in 2007 to bring together 16 communities located in this region. The Historic District includes the two most recognized historic elements of this region - the San Jacinto Battleground and the Battleship Texas - but many other important pieces of southeast Texas history also are being highlighted through Project Stars.

The main thoroughfare of this area, Battleground Road, has been renamed Independence Parkway (running from the I-10 Gateway to SH 225 Gateway). Drivers on Independence Parkway and SH 225 now can enjoy amazing Epic Art as part of the "Museum Without Walls." On display are "Destiny," "Discovery" and the double mural "Two Storms Passing" with each artistic vision being depicted on giant oil storage tanks and illustrating the Texas Army's final approach to the battle that would determine its fate.

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Mark Your Calendar

Following are some events for seniors taking place during June, July and August. If the event is hosted at one of Harris County Precinct Two's community centers, the center's name follows the activity. An * indicates this event is not at a Precinct Two community center:

June

- June 1** Lunch & A Movie, EHCAC
- June 2** North Channel Network Meeting, Flukinger
- June 3** Gospel Night, Flukinger
- June 4** Lunch & A Movie, Bay Area
- June 7** South Channel Council Meeting, Bay Area & EHCAC
- June 8** Gospel Night, San Jacinto
- June 11** South Channel Men's Brunch, Bay Area
- June 11** Birthday Party, Walker
- June 15** North Channel Breakfast with the Guys, Flukinger
- June 15** Gospel Night, Grayson
- June 16** Fathers Day Party, Flukinger
- June 16** Town Hall Meeting, Grayson
- June 18** Inner City Network Meeting, Martinez Annex
- June 18** Juneteenth Celebration, Barrett
- June 23** Nursing Home Party, Grayson

June 24 North Channel Garden Party, Baldree Building

June 25 Hometown Opry "Legends Night" EHCAC

July

- July 1** Gospel Night, Flukinger
- July 1** Fourth of July Party, San Jacinto
- July 1** Lunch & A Movie, Bay Area
- July 9-10** Christmas in July, Bay Area
- July 13** Nursing Home Party, Flukinger
- July 13** Gospel Night, San Jacinto
- July 16** Inner City Network Meeting, Martinez Annex
- July 20** North Channel Ladies Lunch & A Movie, Barrett
- July 20** Nursing Home Party, EHCAC
- July 20** Gospel Night, Grayson
- July 21** Uncle Sam Party, Flukinger
- July 23** Lunch & A Movie, EHCAC
- July 30** Hometown Opry, EHCAC

August

- Aug. 2** South Channel Council Meeting, Bay Area & EHCAC
- Aug. 4** North Channel Network Meeting, Flukinger
- Aug. 5** Gospel Night, Flukinger
- Aug. 6** Lunch & A Movie, Bay Area
- Aug. 10** Gospel Night, San Jacinto
- Aug. 11** Nursing Home Party, Grayson
- Aug. 12** Ice Cream Social, North East
- Aug. 13** Birthday Party, Walker
- Aug. 17** Gospel Night, Grayson

Aug. 19 North Channel Bingo Party, Baldree Building

Aug. 20 Inner City Network Meeting, Martinez Annex

Aug. 20 Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon, EHCAC

Aug. 23 Lunch & A Movie, EHCAC

Aug. 27 Hometown Opry, EHCAC



Monthly Birthday Celebrations

Second Tuesday: San Jacinto

Third Thursday: Barrett

Last Wednesday: Flukinger, Grayson, North East

Community Center Dances:

Proceeds benefit Precinct2gether, Inc.:

Second Thursday: Grayson

Third Tuesday: Bay Area (ballroom dancing)

Third Thursday: East Harris County (EHCAC) (country-and-western dancing)

Fourth Friday: San Jacinto - no charge to attend (Pick 'N Grin Band)

Fourth Tuesday: EHCAC (Latin Rhythm)
June/July

Fifth Tuesday: EHCAC (Latin Rhythm)
August

About the Chit-Chat:

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A Message from Harris County Precinct Two Commissioner

Sylvia R. Garcia



Sylvia R. Garcia

In this issue of the Chit-Chat is information about Precinct2gether's new Internet site. I want to congratulate the staff who worked so hard to make this online resource a reality.

I also want to encourage all of you to go to www.precinct2gether.org to take a look (or, surf, as is the common term today) this new tool that will benefit ALL of us.

One thing I have learned about seniors in our Precinct2gether programs is that you don't sit still. This new Web site is a perfect indicator of that. The Chit-Chat has changed and grown over the years. Our new home on the World Wide Web is simply another indicator that we must all continue to grow and learn new things – no matter what our age!

Not only does this Web site give you a resource to check on services and programs, it gives us an opportunity to tell others -- around Precinct Two and around the world -- what great things we are doing together here in Harris County.

One of the best parts about our new home on the Internet is that it allows us to be even more interactive. We want to hear from you! Our Precinct2gether staff has put together a great Web site that is there for you.

Take a look at the site. Become familiar with it. And, tell us what you think.

PROJECT STARS PROMOTES RICH HERITAGE OF REGION

continued from the cover

"Precinct Two has such a rich history and heritage," said Helen Berrott-Tims, General Superintendent of Community Programs and Special Projects for Precinct Two. "The beautification of the major roadways and development of historical sites that is being done through Project Stars will be enjoyed for generations to come."

Another completed element of Project Stars is David G. Burnet Park. Named for the first president of the Republic of Texas and located just one mile south of I-10 going toward the Lynchburg Ferry, the site is the actual homestead of Burnet. Today, the park not only features cast metal markers with interesting facts on the history of Texas but it also contains a marvelous green space that includes a walking trail, picnic areas and a playground.

"It has been our pleasure to work with Chad Burke, President & CEO of the Economic Alliance Houston Port Region, and the mayors of all the cities in Precinct Two for the betterment of the east side," said Charles Grant, Ph.D., Chairman of the Board for the Economic Alliance and Precinct Two Education and Special Projects Liaison. "The cities are involved in gateway projects which will enhance and beautify each of the cities with similar standards as Project Stars."

Project Stars also has identified several other projects that currently are in progress or are planned for future development that include the Lynchburg Ferry, Town Site and Cemetery; Harris County John Phelps Court House Annex #4; Juan Seguin Park; John R. Harris Park; and the Washburn Tunnel.

To learn more about Project Stars, visit www.precinct2gether.org/project_stars.html.



Things to Know



Sylvan Beach Park great place for summer fun

Did you know that Precinct Two has the only public park in Harris County with access to a Galveston Bay beach? Thanks to the Sylvan Beach Shoreline Protection and Beach Nourishment Project, a joint venture between the City of La Porte, Harris County and the Texas General Land Office, residents and visitors can enjoy 2,000 feet of Texas Shoreline dotted with benches and walkways in La Porte.

Designed to give easier and safer access for swimming and fishing, the refurbished Sylvan Beach Park also includes a skate park, boat launch ramp, playground and picnic areas. Visitors to the park also can learn more about history of the area by visiting the old Sylvan Beach Depot that serves as a museum for the La Porte Heritage Society. Later this year, construction on the Sylvan Beach pier, which was heavily damaged during Hurricane Ike, will be completed and the pier will be re-opened.

Sylvan Beach Park is open daily from 7 a.m. - 10 p.m. and is located at One Sylvan Beach Drive in La Porte. For more information, call 281-470-7275.

Man's best friend has a new Precinct Two park

Dog lovers and their pets now have a second dog park to enjoy in Precinct Two. Located within Gene Green Beltway 8 Park (east side of Beltway 8 just south of Highway 90 and north of Wallisville Road), the new dog park has more than four acres for the dogs and includes walking trail, water fountains, benches, shaded canopy, waste disposal stations and wash bays. The park is divided into sections for small (under 20 pounds) and large dogs.

Precinct Two's first dog park opened in spring 2009 at Bay Area Park, 7500 Bay Area Blvd., and has become a popular locale for many dogs and their owners.

Pasadena Senior Health & Fitness Fair

Maintaining a healthy lifestyle and obtaining regular health screenings is very important for seniors. On Wednesday, Aug. 18, from 9 a.m. - 1 p.m., the Senior Health & Fitness Fair will take place at the Pasadena Convention Center, 7902 Fairmont Pkwy. This event provides seniors with free medical screenings, including blood pressure, glucose, bone density and cholesterol checks. Agencies, businesses and other organizations will be on hand with information about resources available to seniors.

Centers celebrate Juneteenth

Juneteenth is a holiday that celebrates the announcement of the end of slavery in Texas. Several Precinct Two community centers are hosting events to recognize Juneteenth. The Barrett Center's event is scheduled for June 18 from 11 a.m. - 2 p.m. and will include DJ, music and table games as well as a meal featuring BBQ chicken, brisket, sausage, dirty rice, red beans and more. For additional information, call 281-328-4713.

On June 19, the J.D. Walker Center is hosting a celebration from 8 a.m. - 9 p.m. at Edna Mae Washington Park, 7613 Wade Road in Baytown. The family-oriented day includes a parade, food, entertainment and vendor booths. For more information, call 281-426-3551.

Making a list, checking it twice...

Get a jumpstart on your holiday shopping at the annual Precinct2gether Christmas in July, arts, crafts and antique market, set for July 9-10 at the Bay Area Community Center. This free admission event -- which will be open from 9 a.m. - 5 p.m. on July 9 and 9 a.m. - 3 p.m. on July 10 -- features live entertainment, music and food as well as a market with a wide variety of items. A BBQ brisket and sausage plate also will be available with sides of baked beans, potato salad, condiments, bread and a cookie for just \$7 each day from 10:30 a.m. - 1 p.m. Call 281-326-2955 for more information.



Enjoy time with the guys

On Tuesday, June 15, from 8:30 a.m. - 10:30 a.m., all senior men in the North Channel/Baytown area are invited to the Flukinger Community Center for the annual free "Breakfast with the Guys." While there is no cost for this program, reservations are required and must be made by June 10 by calling 281-452-7598.

South Channel senior men also can enjoy a men's brunch during this region's first such program on June 11 from 10:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. After brunch, Wii bowling games will be played. Reservations must be made by June 4 for this free event that will take place at the East Harris County Activity Center by calling 281-479-4232.



North Channel hosts garden party

On June 24, the Grayson Community Center's Baldree Building will be the site for the annual North Channel Garden party. Scheduled from 9 a.m. - noon, this program includes music, door prizes and lunch as well as recognition of the garden contest winners. There also will be a prize for the "best decorated corn." While this event is free, reservations are required to be made by June 17 by calling 281-452-7598.



Precinct Two introduces new buses

With matching funds from the Local Initiatives Program, Precinct Two has been able to retire three buses and replace them with vehicles that have better emissions standards. Precinct Two has purchased two 13-passenger buses for the community centers and one 16-passenger bus with two wheelchair spots for the transportation department.



Have you visited Armand Bayou Nature Center?

In 1974, Armand Bayou Nature Center (ABNC) was established on 2,500 acres of land at 8500 Bay Area Blvd. and is one of the largest urban wildlife refuges in the United States. Harris County owns the land inhabited by ABNC but the Center has a 99-year lease to manage the property.

ABNC encompasses three ecosystems -- grasslands, hardwoods, and wetlands -- and within each ecosystem, visitors can experience an array of wildlife and botanical environments preserved in their natural habitat. Visitors to ABNC can enjoy a walk on one of four nature trails, canoe tours, pontoon boat rides, owl prowls and many special events.

To learn more about ABNC, call 281-474-2551 or visit www.abnc.org.

Are you ready for another Texas summer?

Summer in southeast Texas always means a lot of heat and the threat of a hurricane developing in the Gulf of Mexico. While there isn't anything we can do to stop the heat or a hurricane, there are steps you can take to be better prepared for summer 2010.

Hurricane preparation

- Do you have an emergency supply kit? Ready.gov is an excellent resource to help you develop or update an existing kit (<http://www.ready.gov/america/getakit/index.html>).
- Have you developed an evacuation plan? It is important to decide well before a hurricane lands how you will leave and where you will go if an evacuation is ordered. If you have no family or friends to help you evacuate, make sure to register with 2-1-1 Texas, a free, confidential information and referral program that coordinates evacuation transportation. Remember: you must re-register with 2-1-1 every year.
- Do you have a list of family, friends, doctors and pharmacy phone numbers? Also, you'll want to have a packet of important documents to take with you that can include this list of phone numbers; medical, home and life insurance; mortgage paperwork; and Social Security information.
- How much gas is in your car tank? During hurricane season (June 1-Nov. 30), always fill your tank when the tank reaches only one-quarter full.

Staying cool

- High temperatures coupled with humidity can be dangerous for anyone, including seniors. There are several steps you can take to beat the heat:
- Drink plenty of fluids. Drink at least six eight-ounce non-caffeinated/non-alcohol drinks every day. Check with your physician to find out if any of your medications are diuretics, which means they remove salt and fluid volume from the body. If you are taking a diuretic, ask your doctor if you should increase your fluid intake.
- Wear lightweight, light-colored, loose clothing. When outside, wear a light hat to deflect the sun from your face.
- Use sunscreen to avoid sunburn, which can increase body temperature.
- Run errands or do any outside chores in the early morning or evening when it is coolest.
- Spend time in air-conditioned places. If you can't afford to run your air conditioner all day, visit your community center during its operational hours, the library, a shopping center or other air conditioned facilities to cool off.
- During peak hours, fans alone are not enough to keep you cool. Without a cooling unit, fans simply blow hot air.

For more information on disaster preparedness or how you can beat the summer heat, visit the Harris County Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Management at www.hcoem.org.

It's the coolest exercise this summer!

There's no doubt that exercise is a key component to a healthy lifestyle. During the long Texas summer, outside exercise can come to a halt because of the region's heat and humidity. For Precinct2gether seniors who are looking for a way to stay cool while exercising outside this summer, consider water exercise!

There are numerous benefits that seniors can obtain through water exercise including building muscle strength, improving balance, relieving tension and stress, and better sleep. There also is minimal joint impact while exercising in the water and it's a form of exercise that can be done by seniors of all fitness levels.

For more than 20 years, seniors in Precinct Two have been able to enjoy a summer water workout. During this time, Shelly Cooper, Precinct2gether special programs coordinator, has led the annual water exercise program. Unlike many Precinct2gether programs, water exercise is not held at one center but at the Jacinto City Pool (10215 Challenger 7 Drive) and seniors from various centers attend this free class twice a week.



"Each summer, buses will bring seniors from several of our centers to the Jacinto City Pool for this class," said Cooper. "Jacinto City Pool provides us with a lifeguard at every class and this outside pool easily holds the 35-40 seniors who sign up. The class is co-ed and is open to any seniors who wants to try it."

Cooper does emphasize that this is not a swimming class but truly exercise in the water. "The goal of this program is to keep seniors moving," explained Cooper. "If you're not able to do a specific exercise that I'm demonstrating, just keep moving to your own beat."

"There are numerous benefits that seniors can obtain through water exercise including building muscle strength, improving balance, relieving tension and stress, and better sleep."

Water exercise is one of the longest running classes in Precinct2gether that is a mix of new students with those who have attended for years. Because of the popularity of the class, Cooper often is finding new water exercise routines and music to keep the program fresh.

The response from seniors who participate in water exercise has been very enthusiastic. "Last year, a brother and sister attended water exercise together," remembered Cooper. "At the end of the session, they told me they each had lost 20 pounds! Other seniors

also have shared stories of feeling better and the new friends they have made through this class."

For summer 2010, water aerobics will be offered Tuesdays and Thursdays from 10:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. beginning on Tuesday, June 1 Registration is required and can be done by calling any of the Precinct Two community centers. Seniors also are invited to participate in senior swim free of charge every Tuesday through Friday from 4 p.m. - 5 p.m. at Jacinto City Pool.



Joyce Hendrix

Continuing a family legacy in Precinct Two

In 1981, Cressie Hendrix was one of the founding members of the Ramsey Community Center. An active member of the center, Hendrix often called on her daughter-in-law, Joyce Hendrix, to help out at various functions. Almost 20 years later, Joyce Hendrix has become one of the most recognized volunteers for numerous programs both at Ramsey/Flukinger and activities throughout the Channelview area.

An avid cook, Hendrix has whipped up countless meals throughout the years for programs. One of her first activities was fixing lunches and purchasing produce several times a week for homebound seniors involved in the center's homebound and congregate meal program. She also has created many breakfasts for early morning programs and spent many years making food for monthly Gospel Nights.

Hendrix's generous spirit is seen in many programs she has been a founder of or active participant in over the years. One is the Veterans' "Shoe Box" Program. Each year, Hendrix and her team creates shoe boxes filled with gifts for local veterans and then serves them a complete Christmas dinner at the DeGeorge Hotel. She also spent several years working with her mother-in-law on a Thanksgiving dinner for the Channelview area. Originally housed in several local home kitchens, the event became so popular that it had to be moved to the center's kitchen to cook 65 turkeys that feed hundreds of people.

In addition to her time spent at Ramsey/Flukinger, Hendrix also has been a valued volunteer in her children's schools as they grew up and at First Assembly Church in Channelview. Her volunteer spirit also has been passed on to her four children. "We always have helped out in the community," said Hendrix. "Our family autoparts house was in Channelview and our children were raised here so we always have wanted to do what we could for others."

"Joyce is such a dynamic person that people love to get involved and help her in any endeavor she comes up with," explained Toni Drews, director of the Ramsey/Flukinger Center. "She really is the best motivator of volunteers."

Hendrix does encourage any local senior who is not a member of the Ramsey/Flukinger Center to become involved. "Don't just sit at home and stare out the window," said Hendrix. "We have a lot of fun at our center, playing Bingo or the Wii and just meeting other seniors. It's a great place to meet friends and stay active."



REVITALIZED BY HER SENIORS' ENERGY

The Chit-Chat's featured employee: Cassandra David

"I've always really liked spending time with seniors as they just have so much energy," explained Cassandra David, director at the Barrett Station/Riley Chambers Community Center. "It amazes me how many of my seniors have more energy than I do. I feel so lucky that I have a job that lets me focus on helping them enjoy themselves."

David has been employed by Precinct Two for more than 11 years and always worked at the Barrett Center. She began as a driver for the homebound meal program, moved on to being the center's custodian, was promoted to assistant director and then named center director three years ago. As a director, her days are spent on programming for her seniors, making sure that everyone is aware of all the services and opportunities available through Precinct2gether and planning special events. "My seniors really love to travel!" said David.

A native Texan and resident of the Crosby area, David is the mother of two children and the grandmother to her wonderful granddaughter. When she's not working with her seniors, David's favorite activity is spending time with her granddaughter. David also has quite an artistic streak and enjoys drawing, singing and listening to music.





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Houston, TX 77015

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Precinct2gether serves Harris County Precinct Two seniors in Barrett Station, Baytown, Channelview, Clear Lake, Crosby, Deer Park, El Lago, Galena Park, Highlands, Houston, Jacinto City, La Porte, McNair, Morgan's Point, Nassau Bay, North Shore, Pasadena, Seabrook, Sheldon, Shore Acres, South Houston, Taylor Lake Village and Webster.

Precinct2gether, Inc. is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization.



★ DIRECTORY ★

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Precinct2gether TDD
713-755-8919

Department of Community
Centers & Senior
Programming
713-455-4869

Inner City Program
713-514-0185

North Channel Program
281-452-7598

Nursing Home Program
281-479-7199

South Channel Program
281-479-4232

Barrett Station & Chambers
Community Centers
281-328-4713

Bay Area
Community Center
281-326-2955

East Harris County
Activity Center
281-479-4232

Grayson Community Center
713-455-3660

North East
Community Center
281-442-7950

Ramsey & Flukinger
Community Center
281-457-1810

San Jacinto & Highlands
Community Centers
281-426-7561

Walker Community Center
281-426-3551

**Harris County Precinct Two
Transportation Department**
281-452-6071

Voucher Transportation
281-326-6013

Veterans Services
281-426-2832 or
281-843-2019