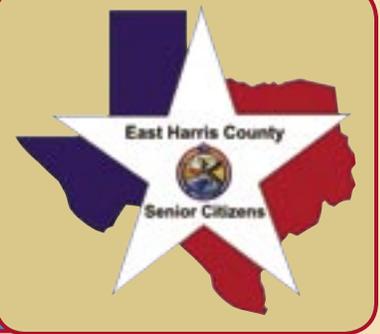


# The Senior CHIT★CHAT



A Publication for East Harris County Senior Citizens from Commissioner Sylvia R. Garcia

Fall 2006

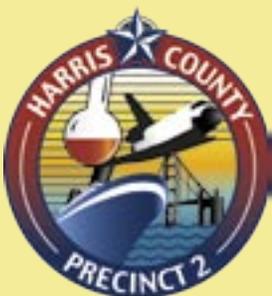
## Things to Know

### Centers to Administer

**Flu Shots:** Several of the Precinct Two community centers will have flu shots available for seniors. The schedule currently is as follows:

- > Barrett Station & Riley Chambers Community Centers: Wednesday, Oct. 4
- > Bay Area Community Center: Tuesday, Oct. 31
- > East Harris County Activity Center: Monday, Oct. 30
- > Flukinger & Ramsey Community Center: Monday, Oct. 2
- > Grayson Community Center: Wednesday, Oct. 4
- > North East Community Center: Friday, Oct. 13

*continued on page 2*



## Check Out the Grayson Center

It was in spring 1982 that the East Harris County Senior Citizens (EHSC) had access to a new community center, the Leon Grayson Center located at 13828 Corpus Christi near the intersection of I-10 and Beltway 8. For almost 25 years, this center has been a gathering place for seniors in the surrounding community.

The Grayson Center became so popular with local seniors that a second building, the Baldree Building, was added to the facility. With a large campus, the Grayson Center is able to serve the 300 seniors who frequently visit the facility. The original building includes a main room that can accommodate up to 150 guests plus a ceramics room and a room for table games. The Baldree Building can host events with up to 500 participants. It also has an exercise room and an activity room that accommodates sewing machines, a quilting frame and a pool table.

“The members of the Grayson Center are a truly diverse group so we focus on providing a lot of different activities to meet a variety of interests,” said Shelly Cooper, director of the Grayson Center. “We offer classes in



*Seniors at the Grayson Center get their day off to a healthy start.*

aerobics, dance, chair exercise, line dancing, rhythm walk, ceramics, crafts and sewing.”

In addition to classes, between 55 and 85 seniors come to the Center every weekday to enjoy a congregate lunchtime meal, plus the staff delivers 30 to 40 meals to homebound seniors.

Activities are plentiful at the Grayson Center including a monthly dance that features live country and western bands, sing-alongs, bingo, bunco and bridge. Special programs, such as health screenings and defensive driving classes, also are offered at the Center.

EHSC members at Grayson have the opportunity to participate in off-site activities including water

*continued on page 3*

## ➤ Mark Your Calendar

The following are some major events for seniors taking place at Harris County Precinct Two community centers during September, October and November. The community/activity center which is hosting the event follows the name of each activity:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Sept. 7</b> Gospel Night: Flukinger                     | <b>Sept. 18</b> Gospel Night: North East                     |
| <b>Sept. 8</b> Grandparents Day Brunch: North East         | <b>Sept. 19</b> Grayson-Flukinger Volunteer Banquet: Grayson |
| <b>Sept. 8</b> Ms. Golden Years: East Harris County        | <b>Sept. 28</b> San Jacinto Volunteer Banquet: San Jacinto   |
| <b>Sept. 11</b> Grandparents Day Breakfast: Grayson        | <b>Sept. 29</b> Hometown Opry: East Harris County            |
| <b>Sept. 12</b> Gospel Night: San Jacinto                  | <b>Oct. 5</b> Gospel Night: Flukinger                        |
| <b>Sept. 13</b> Grandparents Day Party: Flukinger          | <b>Oct. 10</b> Gospel Night: San Jacinto                     |
| <b>Sept. 14</b> Grandparents Day Party: San Jacinto        | <b>Oct. 11</b> Nursing Home Party: Grayson                   |
| <b>Sept. 15</b> Fiesta Mexicana con Mariachi: North East   | <b>Oct. 12-13</b> Fall Fund Raiser: North East               |
| <b>Sept. 18-21</b> Baytown Sr. Olympics: various locations | <b>Oct. 16</b> Gospel Night: North East                      |

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Oct. 20</b> Hometown Opry: East Harris County              | <b>Nov. 14</b> Gospel Night: San Jacinto                                   |
| <b>Oct. 25-27</b> Bay Area Senior Olympics: Bay Area          | <b>Nov. 14</b> Thanksgiving Celebration: San Jacinto                       |
| <b>Oct. 31</b> North Channel-Fall Fest 2006: Walker           | <b>Nov. 15</b> Thanksgiving Celebrations: Flukinger, North East and Walker |
| <b>Oct. 31</b> Inner City Halloween Party: East Harris County | <b>Nov. 16</b> Fall Party: Grayson   |
| <b>Nov. 2</b> Gospel Night: Flukinger                         | <b>Nov. 17</b> Hometown Opry: East Harris County                           |
| <b>Nov. 3</b> North Channel Big Band Gala: Bay Area           | <b>Nov. 20</b> Gospel Night: North East                                    |
| <b>Nov. 8</b> Veterans Luncheon: North East                   | <b>Nov. 21</b> North Channel Brisket Sale: Barrett                         |
| <b>Nov. 10</b> Inner City Senior Gala: Bay Area               | <b>Nov. 28</b> Precinct-Wide Holiday Party: Pasadena Convention Center     |

**Monthly Dances** – These dances are fund raisers for the East Harris County Senior Citizens:

<b>Second Monday:</b>	North East
<b>Second Thursday:</b>	Grayson
<b>Third Tuesday:</b>	Bay Area (ballroom dancing)
<b>Third Thursday:</b>	East Harris County (country-and-western dancing)
<b>Fourth Friday:</b>	San Jacinto (Pick 'N Grin Band), no charge to attend

## Harris County Precinct Two Commissioner Sylvia R. Garcia East Harris County Senior Citizens President

Commissioner's Message

One of the things I've learned from our seniors in East Harris County is that not only are they very involved in their communities, but they are also keenly interested in the history of our area. I recently had the opportunity to meet with the mayors and other community leaders of Precinct Two when we gave them a preview of a very exciting new initiative you will be hearing a great deal about in the coming months.

Project Stars is a program designed to comprehensively brand our area around our rich heritage as the home of Texas independence. This project, along with the creation of the newest and largest historic district in the state, the San Jacinto Texas Historic District, will be a major effort to not only recast the image of our region, but to capitalize on our place in Texas history.

I am most excited about the visual elements of Project Stars. We are well along in the planning to erect iconic stars atop monumental pillars and other structures at key points through the area. The idea is to give the major thoroughfares through East Harris County a common identity, and to make the drive more pleasant and historically relevant.

The old Battleground Road will become "Independence Parkway," with greatly improved aesthetics; new parks will be built at

historically significant sites; and "epic art" will be seen along freeways where now one may see only tank farms. This project has the potential to not only change the way others view us, but the way we see our own communities.

On another note: does it seem to you like the summer break for your grandkids is getting shorter and shorter? When did schools begin going back into session in early August? Of course, I always looked forward to school beginning because I loved it, and because it meant I didn't have to spend quite as many hours doing chores on the farm.

Anyway, summer vacations are nearly over, so I will be returning to my schedule of hosting Town Hall meetings throughout Precinct Two. I love to hear from our seniors and learn how we can better serve you.

The next meetings are scheduled for: Sept. 21 at the Bay Area Community Center and Oct. 26 at the Grayson Community Center. Hope to see you there. Until then, keep cool.




### Things to Know

*continued from the cover*

To learn more about a center's specific flu shot details/reservations, please call the center directly (a phone list is on the back cover of this newsletter).

#### Houstonian Represents Needs of Seniors in Washington

Local resident Elia Mata traveled to Washington, D.C., last December to represent District 29 at the 2005 White House Conference on Aging. This conference happens once every 10 years and makes recommendations to the President and Congress on issues impacting senior Americans. Mata was recommended for this position by Congressman

Gene Green because of the extensive amount of volunteer work she does for seniors and the entire community in East Harris County.

#### Read the Chit-Chat online

Did you know that the Chit-Chat can be viewed online? Simply visit the Harris County Precinct Two Web site at [www.co.harris.tx.us/comm\\_garcia](http://www.co.harris.tx.us/comm_garcia). The current issue can be viewed by clicking on the link on the homepage under the News and Events heading. Back issues can be found under the publications tab on the left side of the homepage.



### Check Out The Grayson Center

*continued from the cover*

exercise, shopping excursions, field trips and ticketed events. The Center participates in community programs such as a Multicultural Festival and National Night Out, and works with the North Channel Assistance Ministries.

On evenings, various service and self-help organizations utilize the

center's meeting rooms. Both the Grayson and the Baldree buildings are available for weekend rentals.

If you are a senior who lives near the Grayson Center and would like to learn more, please stop by to take a tour or call 713-455-3660 for more information.



## A Life Dedicated to Nursing Home Residents

### The Chit-Chat's Featured Employee: Barbara Cowart

Since August 1992, residents of Precinct Two's nursing homes have had a guardian angel looking out for them and

doing all she can to enrich their days and maintain dignity in their lives. This dedicated Houstonian is Barbara Cowart, Nursing Home Program coordinator for Harris County Precinct Two.

"I've always wanted to work in a program that is larger than I and I've really been able to meet this need through the nursing home program," said Cowart. "I truly believe I have one of the best jobs in Harris County."

In the past 14 years, Cowart has developed an amazing program that serves hundreds of residents in the 22 nursing homes located in the precinct. Together with Freda Morris, a full-time employee, and Tom Scardino, a part-time employee, Cowart works to develop and implement programs that will have a positive impact on this group.

"The programs I create for the nursing home residents range from very intimate gatherings to large events," said Cowart. "In addition, my staff visits each of the Precinct Two nursing homes once a month and performs in-room visits and assists the staff in many ways."

Cowart oversees several major events for the Nursing Home Program that residents look forward to every year. One of these programs is Ms. Golden Years where each nursing home has a representative compete in a fun-filled pageant. Another popular program is the Nursing Home Olympics which Cowart has designed to be accessible for all residents. "When I go into a home after the Nursing Home Olympics and see the residents wearing their Olympic medals, I know that our program is making a difference in their lives."

The annual Adopt-A-Nursing Home Resident for Christmas is a needed project for those residents who don't have family or friends in their lives. "Last year, we had close to 400 residents who were 'adopted' by retiree and church groups, community centers, Precinct employees and numerous individuals," explained Cowart. "It's amazing to see our

conference room almost filled to the roof with gifts."

Cowart and her team's efforts are not only appreciated by the nursing home residents but have been recognized by Gov. Perry with a 2002 Achievement Award for the program's work in the community.

As busy as she is with the Nursing Home Program, Cowart has found time to create and sponsor the East Harris County Activity Professionals, a networking and educational organization; be an active member of Caring for Elders, a group that is working to revolutionize elder care in Harris County; and speak to church groups, seniors clubs and civic organizations about the Nursing Home Program. She also is the co-chair of the EHCSC's Black & White Ball.

When her day is done, you'll often find Cowart and her husband busy with an active social life that includes attending theatrical productions and being very involved with their church. Cowart also belongs to a monthly book club and loves spending time with her three children and eight grandchildren, which includes a set of triplets!

Not only has the Precinct Two Nursing Home Program flourished with Cowart at the helm but she also has been enriched from her involvement with this program. "I have such a passion for the lives of the elderly so this job is truly perfect for me."



Barbara Cowart (left) and her son Chris congratulate Leverta Homer as Ms. Golden Years 2004.

## Informative Resources for Seniors

An advantage of the World Wide Web is there's a whole world of information at your fingertips. Following are some organizations that provide information or services to seniors (you also can contact these businesses via the telephone):

### > National Do Not Call Registry

<https://www.donotcall.gov>  
888-382-1222

The Federal Trade Commission created the National Do Not Call Registry to give consumers the opportunity to not receive most telemarketing calls. Though you will still receive calls from charities, political organizations and companies you already have an existing relationship with, the amount of telemarketing calls will be reduced dramatically.

### > Protect Your Credit

<http://www.AnnualCreditReport.com>  
877-322-8228

One of the best ways to protect yourself from credit fraud is to obtain an annual credit report which every American can receive for free under the Fair and Accurate Credit Transaction Act. By reviewing this report, you'll be able to see all the information in your credit file that would be provided to a third party, such as a lender, who would order a consumer report on you. AnnualCreditReport was created by Equifax, Experian and TransUnion, the three U.S. consumer reporting companies.

### > Register to Vote

<http://www.hctax.net/voter/voterintro.asp>  
713-368-VOTE (8683)

Have you moved recently and not registered to vote or maybe you've never voted? Election time is just around the corner and the Harris County Tax Office can explain to you how easy it is to register. In order to vote in the November 2006 election, you must register 30 days prior to the election.

### > Take Charge

<http://www.takechargeweb.info>  
713-558-6391

Care for Elders has created Take Charge, a Harris County program that provides free informational, educational and personal resources about aging issues and gives tips on how to make informed decisions.

### > White House Greetings

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/greeting>  
Mailing address: The White House Attn: Greetings Office, Washington, D.C. 20502-0039

If you and your spouse are celebrating your 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary or an 80<sup>th</sup> birthday, would a greeting from the White House make the day even more special? U.S. citizens celebrating their 80<sup>th</sup> or older birthday or their 50<sup>th</sup> (and subsequent) anniversary can receive a greeting from President Bush. Just make sure to submit your request at least six weeks in advance.

### Chit-Chat info:

The Senior Chit-Chat is a publication of the East Harris County Senior Citizens, a non-profit corporation, chartered under Texas law and granted exemption from federal income tax under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. This publication may not be reproduced without written permission from EHCSC. Questions about the Chit-Chat should be directed to Sylvia Medina, director of senior programming, at 713-455-4869 or send her a letter at 13828 Corpus Christi, Houston, TX 77015.

## Frances Christian: *A Senior Living Life to the Fullest*

Many people truly look forward to retirement and all the time they'll have to try new things and enjoy life. No one is perhaps a better example of living each day to the fullest than local senior Frances Christian.

After Christian retired from the Houston Independent School District in 1998, she was set to enjoy her retirement years with her husband. His sudden passing in June 1999 was devastating for her. The following spring a passion was reintroduced into Christian's life that has brought her unexpected pleasure.

"I began taking a tap dancing class at the Madison Jobe Senior Center in Pasadena and I just loved it," said Christian. "A couple of years into the class, the instructor went on vacation and didn't return so I took over the class. Today, I'm the teacher and choreographer of the Silver Star Tap Dancers, a group of about 30 tappers who perform more than 60 shows a year. Not only do we tap but we've added Hawaiian Hula and Tahitian dancing to our repertoire!"

In addition to the Silver Stars, you'll also find Christian in a clogging group, square dancing and ballroom dancing. She is a regular at the

Bay Area Community Center's monthly dance, often attends the Center's line dancing and ballroom dancing classes, and is an active participant in the Senior Olympics.

"Dancing is great exercise and I wish that everyone could experience the joy dance brings to one's life," said Christian. "It was very good therapy for me after my husband died. Recently, I was diagnosed with cancer and dancing, once

*"I would like to urge everyone to be open to new ideas, seek new adventures and embrace new surprises."*

again, has been good for me as I've continued with my teaching, performing and ballroom dancing."

### **And the winner is...**

Dancing isn't the only activity that keeps Christian busy. With encouragement from a friend, she began entering senior pageants and has done amazingly well. Her pageant titles include Ms. Pasadena Senior 2002, Ms. Senior Houston 2003, first runner up in the national Ms. Senior Sweetheart pageant 2003 and Ms. Texas Senior Classic 2004. With these titles have come opportunities to be in numerous parades and functions throughout the state.

On June 29, 2004, Houston Mayor Bill White declared it to be "Frances Christian Day" to thank her for all she had done in representing Houston. In 2005, Christian's face could be seen on 22 billboards throughout Harris County in observance of Older Americans Month.

Christian reminds all seniors that life after 50 should be fun, fulfilling and rewarding. "I would like to urge everyone to be open to new ideas, seek new adventures and embrace new surprises," said Christian. "My philosophy is think positive and you'll be a happier person. Live each day to the fullest, share your talents with others and remember age is only a state of mind."

*Frances Christian enjoys an evening of dancing at an EHCSC dance.*



## I could have danced all night... *Dancing Opportunities Abound for EHCSC*

When you hear music, do your feet start tapping? Have you always wanted to take a dance class but simply never gotten around to it? Whether you're a novice or an accomplished dancer, there are many opportunities for seniors in Precinct Two to either attend dance classes or a monthly dance.

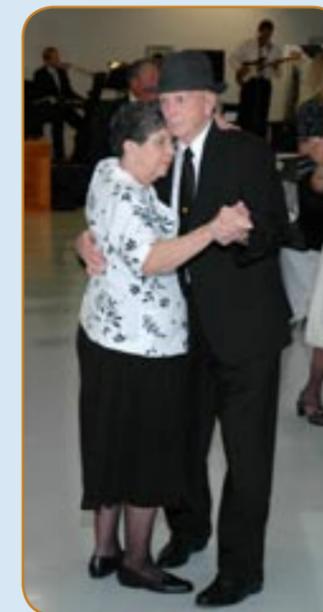
### **Learn a new dance**

Currently, 18 dance classes are being offered at Centers throughout the Precinct:

- Ballroom class: Bay Area
- Beginner dance: Grayson
- Country & Western: Bay Area
- Dancercise: Barrett
- Hawaiian: Bay Area
- Line Dancing: Bay Area, East Harris County, Flukinger, Grayson, North East, San Jacinto
- Tap: Bay Area

Line dancing is, by far, the most popular dance class currently being offered and no partner is needed. Classes range from beginner to advanced so make sure to sign up for the class that would work best for you. Experienced line dancers who are seeking a challenge should try one of the advanced line-dancing classes at Grayson, Flukinger or San Jacinto Centers.

"Both our ballroom dancing and line dancing classes are very popular and are led by Eileen Bauerline who is 85 years old and is in amazing condition," said Elizabeth Williams, acting



director of the Bay Area Community Center. "Our advanced tap class has taken on performing at nursing homes and special events."

Dance is a fun way to exercise and meet new friends. To find out about dance classes, please check with your center.

### **Dances held almost every week**

If a night out on the dance floor appeals to you, then check out one of the dances held at the Precinct Two community centers. Monthly dances include a ballroom dance at Bay Area, Country & Western at East Harris County, Pick 'n Grin at San Jacinto and general dances

at Grayson and North East.

Not only can you have a great time on the dance floor at these dances but you can also benefit EHCSC as some of the monthly dances are fund raisers. Rotating bands, snacks, door prizes and raffles add to the fun

Come join the fun at an EHCSC dance. To learn more, check out the calendar on page 2 of the Chit-Chat or contact your Center directly.



*Seniors enjoy line dancing through the EHCSC.*



*What could be more fun than an evening of dancing and mingling with friends?*



EHCSC  
13828 Corpus Christi  
Houston, TX 77015

Non-Profit  
PRST STD  
U.S. Postage PAID  
Deer Park, TX  
Permit No. 182

**The East Harris County Senior Citizens welcomes all new participants!**

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

*East Harris County Senior Citizens is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization.*

★ **DIRECTORY** ★

**Department of Community Centers & Senior Programming**

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

Inner City Program  
713-514-0185

North Channel Program  
281-452-7598

Nursing Home Program  
281-479-4232

South Channel Program  
281-479-4232

Transportation Voucher Program  
281-326-2955

Barrett Station & Riley 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

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