

# The Senior CHIT★CHAT



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

Summer 2007

## Things to Know

### Start Your Holiday Shopping Early

If you want to get a jumpstart on the Christmas season, stop by the Bay Area Community Center on July 13-14 for the annual Christmas in July arts, crafts and antiques market.

There will be a host of gifts and decorations available for sale including jewelry and accessories, quilts, candles, clothing, toys, yard ornaments and much more.

There is no charge for entry to the market. For more information, call 281-326-2955.

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**F**riendly faces and a lot of fun activities are at the heart of Precinct Two's North East Center. Since July 1999, this Center, which is located near U.S. Highway 59 and Little York, has been a gathering place for seniors in this area of the county.

"Our team is always looking out for new programs that our seniors will be interested in," explained Lisa May, acting director of the North East Center. "Every month, we try to bring in entertainers, health speakers, a gardening program and a cooking class. We also have several ongoing classes in art, ceramics, scrapbooking and line dancing. Evening aerobic classes just started being offered this May. Our seniors also enjoy playing games and visiting with each other but I would venture to say that the weekly lunch and social hour is our most popular activity."

A favorite class for many seniors at the North East Center is computers. "Our computer instructor is bilingual and we always have a waiting list for this class," said May. "Our computer lab is open during the day in case any seniors want to use the computers for research or hobbies. One of our seniors who still is in the workforce recently took her test to renew her cosmetology license in our Center's computer lab. I'm just thrilled that our seniors can access the Internet via our Center."



**Seniors staying active  
at the North East Center**

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# ▶ Mark Your Calendar

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

## JUNE

**June 6** Garden photo contest entry deadline: North Channel Office

**June 7** Nursing Home Party: Grayson

**June 13** Hot Dog Social: EHCAC

**June 15** Father's Day Breakfast: North East

**June 15** Father's Day Breakfast: San Jacinto

**June 16** McNair Juneteenth Celebration: Walker

**June 22** Garden Party: Grayson

**June 29** Ladies Lunch & Movie: Grayson

## JULY

**July 3** Patriotic Picnic: North East

**July 3** 4th of July Party: San Jacinto

**July 9** Nursing Home Party: Walker

**July 9-12** EHCSC Summer Celebration Food Baskets

**July 11** Grayson & Flukinger's Uncle Sam Party: Flukinger

**July 13-14** Christmas in July Craft Show: Bay Area

**July 21** Health Fair & Barrett Station Homecoming: Barrett

**July 25** Murder Mystery Party: Grayson

**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)

**July 27** Breakfast with the Guys: Barrett

## AUGUST

**Aug. 3** Bingo Party: Grayson

**Aug. 7** National Night Out: Barrett, Grayson, Flukinger, North East, San Jacinto and Walker

**Aug. 15** Pasadena Health Fair: Pasadena Convention Center

**Aug. 17** Ice Cream Social: North East

**Aug. 24** Summer Social: Grayson

**Aug. 31** Nursing Home Party: Flukinger

## SEASONAL DANCES

**June 8, Aug. 10** Tejano Dance: North East

**June 28, July 26, Aug. 30** Latin Rhythm Dance: EHCAC

## **Chit-Chat info:**

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## **Congratulations Ms. Pasadena Senior!**

Mary Arceneaux-Wyche recently represented the J.D. Walker Community Center in the 2007 Ms. Pasadena Senior Pageant and was crowned as the winner. Arceneaux-Wyche is described by J.D. Walker Center director John Kennedy as part of his group's "Super Seniors" for her support of their program. Her next pageant will be in Dallas competing for the Ms. Senior of Texas title.



Mary Arceneaux-Wyche and John Kennedy celebrate her crowning.

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

I have finally seen our “Destiny” – literally. This is the name of the first piece of EpicArt to go up on Highway 225 as a key element of Project Stars. This exciting program is the centerpiece of the newly created San Jacinto Historic District that will allow our area to capitalize on our pivotal role in Texas history.

Our vision is to transform the experience of traveling modern highways to San Jacinto in that motorists will feel they are approaching a truly important place where Texas’ destiny was fulfilled. The giant oil tanks that line the road will host enormous digital “canvases” that create a Museum without Walls to tell our story.

The first of these massive art works was unveiled in April on the side of a Lyondell tank on Highway 225 at Scarborough. It was fascinating to see this project come to life. It started with the actors in authentic period piece in the field being photographed. The photos then were transformed into a 40x70’ piece of original art of stunning clarity.

As you can imagine, getting the art on the side of a petroleum storage tank was a bit more complicated than hanging wallpaper in the dining room! Monumental sized scaffolding was erected, complete with wind barrier, so each piece of the giant jigsaw puzzle could be precisely applied using space-age materials and solvents.

And, it’s not cheap. My thanks go to the good folks at Lyondell for allowing us to “go to school” with the first installation. Other installations won’t happen overnight, but I hope to see many more tanks become art soon, thus transforming a rather stark driving experience into one which will attract visitors as they experience the way to Texas’ destiny.

EpicArt is just one element of Project Stars. You’ll be hearing a lot more about new parks, visually enhanced roadways and, of course, the monumental stars themselves yet to come.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sylvia R. Garcia".

## Helpful Resources on the Internet

*The World Wide Web makes it easier for everyone to get information without having to leave the computer. Following are some organizations that provide information or services which may be useful to you:*

> **Energy Savers: Tips on Saving Energy & Money at Home**

<http://www1.eere.energy.gov/consumer/tips/>

Find tips that can make your home more comfortable and easier to cool this summer while saving money.

> **Disaster Preparedness for Seniors by Seniors**

<http://www.redcross.org/services/disaster/beprepared/seniors.html>

Includes information on creating a family disaster plan, establishing a personal support network and what to do in different types of emergencies.

> **Handbook of Texas Online**

<http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/>

This site is a collection of more than 23,000 articles on the history of the state that gives users factual accounts of Texas’ history.

> **Houston TranStar**

<http://www.houstontranstar.org/>  
This site includes real time traffic maps, Galveston ferry wait times, lane closures and traffic cameras from the region.

> **Growing Stronger - Strength Training for Older Adults**

[http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/physical/growing\\_stronger/index.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/physical/growing_stronger/index.htm)  
Learn more about strength-training from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Tufts University.



# FELIX RODRIGUEZ

## AN ARTIST IN OUR MIDST

Decades ago, Felix Rodriguez's sister-in-law wondered if he could make an art project out of toothpicks. That long-ago challenge has evolved into hundreds of amazing artistic creations made out of matchsticks.

"After I made my first bird cage out of toothpicks, I realized I really liked doing it and moved on to matchsticks," said Rodriguez, a regular at Precinct Two's North East Center. "I moved on to designing western towns, some of which I still have. Over the years, I've created hundreds of projects."

Rodriguez's designs have been used by various organizations in fund-raisers and often are thank you gifts to his family, friends and colleagues. Recently, he has been designing churches with a special goal.

"The 20 different churches I've created are non-denominational so everyone will feel included," explained Rodriguez. "I'm hoping to eventually display all the churches together under a banner saying, 'Peace on Earth.'"

His artistic craftsmanship is just one of the ways this active 72-year-old spends his days. He has been an ardent collector of Coca-Cola memorabilia since his days as a supervisor in Coke's fleet division. In addition to his wide assortment of Coca-Cola collectibles, Rodriguez also has amassed more than 4,000 unopened bottles of Coca-Cola!

Over the years, Rodriguez has been active in many service positions with the Cub Scouts, Boy Scouts and the Juvenile Court of Volunteers of Harris County. These days, many seniors have

come to know Rodriguez through his volunteer activities at the North East Center.

"A group of us moved over to the North East Center about three years ago and we really enjoy it," said Rodriguez who serves on the Center's advisory board. "This is our center and we all need to get in, be active and recruit more members so it will be here for our children in the future."

A source of pride for Rodriguez is his family. He and his wife, Ora, have six children, 23 grandchildren, 10 great-grandchildren and another two great-grandchildren on the way.

"I enjoy my life because of Ora and because of God," said Rodriguez. "God has been good to our family as we have been so blessed by His abundance."

# *Enjoy a Precinct Two Park this Summer*

Whether you want to bring your grandchildren to someplace new, meet with friends or take a romantic stroll, you don't need to look any further than Precinct Two's parks.

Currently, there are 39 properties managed by the Precinct Two Parks Department that cover approximately 4,000 acres. Parks in this region have numerous amenities including 14 miles of walking trails, playground equipment, picnic facilities, boat ramps, fishing piers, tennis courts, and baseball and soccer fields.

"Precinct Two is committed to maintaining our park system and adding amenities that interest our families, youth and seniors," explained Gilbert Smith, superintendent of the Precinct Two Parks Department. "For seniors who may be looking for something different to do with their grandchildren, Precinct Two has two skate parks and two waterspray parks that have been developed under Commissioner Garcia's leadership. Or if you want some light exercise while you visit, enjoy a walk on one of our nature or jogging trails."

Residents can learn more about the nature of southeast Texas with a visit to Armand Bayou Nature Center. Precinct Two owns the 2,500 acres of land and has leased it to the Center. Three ecosystems can be experienced at Armand Bayou: grasslands, hardwoods and wetlands. Visitors can venture out onto the boardwalk through the forest and marshes, view the live animal displays and butterfly garden, or visit the 1800s farm site.

Because Precinct Two covers a vast area, the park properties have been broken down into three divisions: East, Central and South.

Maps of the majority of the parks as well as a listing of current amenities can be viewed on Precinct Two's Web site at [http://www.co.harris.tx.us/comm\\_garcia](http://www.co.harris.tx.us/comm_garcia).



## **Parks that residents can visit include:**

### **East:**

- Baytown
- Cedar Bayou
- Cedar Grove
- David Burnet
- Edna Mae Washington
- Highlands
- Highlands Sports Complex
- Riley Chambers
- Stratford

### **Central:**

- Carpenter's Bayou Trail
- Channelview Sports Complex
- Channelwood
- Cloverleaf
- Halls Bayou Jogging Trail
- James Bute
- James Driver
- Jim & JoAnn Fonteno
- Meadowbrook
- Moncrief
- Northshore
- North Shore Rotary Park
- Rio Villa Nature Trail
- River Terrace

### **South:**

- Armand Bayou Nature Center
- Bay Area Hike and Bike Trail
- Bay Area Park
- Clear Lake
- Dads Club Sports Park
- Kipper Mease Sports Complex
- Seabrook Sports Complex
- Sylvan Beach

## Things to Know *continued from the cover*

### Seasonal Dances Set for Summer

In addition to EHCSC regularly-scheduled monthly dances, two Centers will be hosting special fund-raising dances over the next few months.

The East Harris County Activity Center is hosting Inner City's Latin Rhythm Dances this summer on June 28, July 26 and Aug. 30 from 7 p.m. to 10 p.m. Music will be provided by Los Versatiles de Hector Javier. Tickets are \$5 per person and can be purchased at the door. Each dance will be a fund-raiser for the East Harris County Senior Citizens. For more information, call 713-514-0185.

If you enjoy Tejano music and dancing, make plans to dance the night away at the North East Community Center on June 8, Aug. 10 and Oct. 12. Tickets are \$5 apiece and music will be provided by disc jockey Jesse Rojas. For more information, call 281-442-7950.



## *A truly generous spirit in Precinct Two*

### **The Chit-Chat's Featured Employee: Myrian Espitia**



"Having the opportunity to interact with so many people, especially the seniors, is a wonderful part of my job," said Myrian Espitia, acting South Channel senior coordinator. "It's an honor to get to work with the seniors and help them stay active."

Espitia has been a part of the Harris County Precinct Two team for the past seven years. She started off as a receptionist at the East Harris County Activity Center and has been working in her current role for two years.

Espitia focuses on both finding activities and events that Precinct Two seniors will enjoy as well as coordinating programs for the South Channel area including Senior Olympics, Hot Dog Social and monthly movie days. Every day, Espitia is researching recurring and special events, such as Astros game, theater performances and

museum trips, for seniors.

"There are close to 180 groups under the South Channel umbrella and each month, I meet with the groups' trip directors to discuss what I've been able to book so they can take the information back to their group and decide if they'd like to attend," explained Espitia.

All who know Espitia certainly would describe her as both kind and generous. Her giving spirit recently was seen in a brave and truly loving decision to give one of her kidneys to her father. "My Dad had been on dialysis for several months and my brothers and I were tested to see if we were a match," said Espitia. "It turns out that all three of us could have donated but I really felt it should be me."

Espitia's father is doing extraordinarily well since the surgery and after an eight-week recovery, Espitia feels much better and is back

on the job. "I'm really thankful to the Precinct for supporting me during this time and to all the seniors who have been so wonderful," said Espitia. "Everyone has made me feel so good to be back."

Espitia's husband of 20 years and three children also made her recovery period easier. "They not only were very supportive about my decision to give my Dad a kidney but they also just stepped in and took over everything at home while I recovered," said Espitia. "My mother also was such a blessing to me during my recovery."

When she's not planning excursions for seniors or spending time with her family, you find Espitia working out at the gym or running the women's ministry at Adulam Christian Church.

# Have You Re-registered With the 2-1-1 System?

## *Don't Put Off Preparing for Hurricane Season*

Hurricane season is upon Harris County once again. Past experience has taught residents that preparation is an important element in surviving a hurricane, especially when an evacuation is ordered.

In fall 2006, the Texas 2-1-1 Information Referral Service began taking information from seniors and other residents with special needs to develop a list of those who will need assistance in evacuating if an evacuation is ordered.

Residents without any means of transportation or who know they will require special assistance during an evacuation are strongly encouraged to register with the 2-1-1 system as soon as possible. All operators on this system have received extensive training and are ready to register those who will need transportation should a hurricane or other natural disaster mandate an evacuation.

The registry program does not provide the actual transportation in the event of an emergency but forwards the registry list to local emergency management personnel to coordinate the evacuation.

Recently, changes were made to the information being asked for in the registration form. Seniors who already registered need to call 2-1-1 to re-register their listing. The system is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and information can be provided in more than 90 different languages.

### **Creating a Basic Emergency Supply Kit**

Having an emergency supply kit is important for every resident of Harris County. Waiting until the last moment to prepare a supply kit to bring during an evacuation can lead to unnecessary panic.

When it appears that a hurricane is headed toward the Texas Gulf Coast, don't wait until the last minute to ensure that your car has a full tank of gasoline.

### **Items to include in a basic emergency supply kit are:**

- Water: at least one gallon per person per day for a minimum of three days.
- Food: a minimum of three days worth of food per person (non-perishable) – include a can opener for canned meals.
- Radio: battery-operated or hand crank (plus extra batteries if needed)
- Flashlight (and extra batteries)
- Whistle to signal for help
- Personal sanitation supplies
- Local maps
- Cash or travelers checks
- Important documents: keep a water-proof container or watertight, resealable bag in close proximity to the permanent location of your important documents (such as medical and home owners insurance, medical records, bank account information, Social Security card, list of family phone numbers)
- First aid kit: include items such as antihistamines, decongestants, fever reducing agents, anti-diarrhea products, anti-constipation medication, antacids, antiseptic cleaners, and band-aids and antibiotic creams. Make sure to have any prescription medicines you take on a regular basis with you as well as the phone number of your primary care physician.

## **Seniors staying active at the North East Center**

*continued from cover*

In addition to the East Harris County Senior Citizens, several groups, including the Girl Scouts, Harris County Public Health, Aldine Quilters and a weight loss support group, regularly meet at the North East Center. "The face of the North East monthly calendar reflects that we are openly seeking civic association groups and social and service groups in this area to meet at our center," said May.

The North East Center is available for rental for special events for up to 300 people. The Center has many professional kitchen appliances, 60 rectangular 8-foot-long tables, more than 300 chairs and other amenities that make it a perfect spot for special occasions.

If you haven't been by to see the North East Center, stop by any weekday or call 281- 442-7950 for more information.



EHCSC  
13828 Corpus Christi  
Houston, TX 77015

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**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

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

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