

The Senior CHIT★CHAT

FALL 2010



A Publication for Precinct2gether from Commissioner Sylvia R. Garcia

Thousands of U.S. veterans call Harris County home, from those who recently have returned from active service to men and women who served this country decades ago. Harris County Precinct Two's Veterans Services Office focuses on assisting those residents.

In addition to providing very necessary services that help veterans receive their benefits, the Veterans Office, in conjunction with many volunteers, works to create programs to support veterans as they return from active duty and celebrate all they have done for this country. One of the most anticipated such programs every year is the Commissioner Sylvia R. Garcia Precinct2gether Veterans Picnic. Scheduled for Saturday, Oct. 16, at Highlands Park, this family-oriented event brings together veterans, their families and the community to recognize all current and past members of the armed services. While this event honors the sacrifice of all veterans, each year the picnic pays special tribute to a specific war-time group with those who served during the Korean War being recognized in 2010.

"The Veterans Picnic is important because it continues to bring awareness of the needs of our veterans to the community as well as give anyone the chance to come out and thank them for their service," explained Helen Berrott-Tims, General Superintendent of Community Programs and Special Projects for Precinct Two. "It's amazing to watch this picnic

IN THANKS FOR THEIR SERVICE

*Precinct2gether staff,
volunteers partnering for
annual Veterans Picnic*



The 82nd Airborne Color Guard was on hand at the 2009 Veterans Picnic.

come together as so many members of the community volunteer their time and talents to create this event. We have veterans who have been out of the service for many years who work on this picnic to show their support for our current and returning veterans.

"We are so fortunate to have numerous people come forward and show their support," Berrott-Tims continued. "For example, our veterans provide us with all the beverages for the picnic by ask-

ing their family members, friends and neighbors to contribute drinks. Community members have stepped forward to develop a kid zone for all young participants and a car show for all our car enthusiasts. The Precinct Two Color Guard will be on hand as well as representatives from many local service organizations who have committed to supporting the picnic. This Veterans Picnic has grown into such a wonderful event because of all these different groups working together."

New to the picnic this year will be an eight-bay truck from the Houston Food Bank that will be hosting an open food fair. "This is a huge truck and we will be distributing food to any member of the community in need," said Sharon Carter, program social worker for Precinct2gether.

The 2010 Veterans Picnic will include food and drinks, games and door prizes. To financially support or volunteer for the picnic, call 281-862-9531.



Check out what's inside...

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Mark Your Calendar

Following are some events for seniors taking place during September, October and November. 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:

September

Sept. 1-3 First week of bus booking

Sept. 2 Gospel Night, Flukinger

Sept. 3 Grandparents Brunch, North East

Sept. 3 Lunch & A Movie, Bay Area

Sept. 7-10 Second week of bus booking

Sept. 8 Fiestas Patrias, North East

Sept. 10 Black & White Ball, Bay Area

Sept. 14 Gospel Night, San Jacinto

Sept. 15 Grandparents Day Party, Flukinger

Sept. 16 Inner City Network Meeting, Martinez Annex

Sept. 16 Country & Western Event, EHCAC

Sept. 21 Volunteer Banquet, Flukinger

Sept. 21 Gospel Night, Grayson

Sept. 23 Tejano Dance, North East

Sept. 24 Hometown Opry "50s Show," EHCAC

Sept. 27 Lunch & A Movie, EHCAC

October

Oct. 1 Lunch & A Movie, Bay Area

Oct. 4 South Channel Council Meetings, Bay Area & EHCAC

Oct. 4-6 Food Harvest, Grayson

Oct. 5 National Night Out, various centers

Oct. 6 North Channel Network Meeting, Flukinger

Oct. 7 Gospel Night, Flukinger

Oct. 8 Royal Pageant, EHCAC

Oct. 12 Gospel Night, San Jacinto

Oct. 15 Health Expo & Flu Shots, North East

Oct. 15 Lunch & A Movie, EHCAC

Oct. 16 Veterans' Day Picnic, Highlands Park

Oct. 19 Gospel Night, Grayson

Oct. 20 Hobo Stew & Costume Contest Party, Flukinger

Oct. 21 Inner City Network Meeting, Martinez Annex

Oct. 22 Hometown Opry, EHCAC

Oct. 26 Senior Fraud Expo, Pasadena Convention Center*

Oct. 27 Halloween Party, EHCAC

Oct. 28 Line Dancing Competition, Barrett

Oct. 29 Fun Day, Bay Area

Oct. 29 Fall Fest, Walker

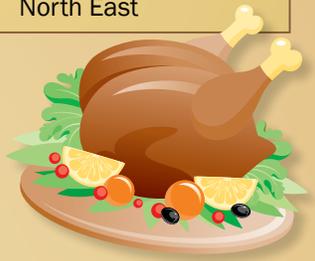
November

Nov. 1 South Channel Council Meetings, Bay Area & EHCAC

Nov. 4 Gospel Night, Flukinger

Nov. 5 Tamalada, North East

Nov. 5 Lunch & A Movie, Bay Area



Last Wednesday: Flukinger, Grayson, North East

Nov. 9 Thanksgiving Lunch, San Jacinto

Nov. 9 Gospel Night, San Jacinto

Nov. 10 Thanksgiving Celebration, Flukinger

Nov. 12 Hometown Opry "Gospel Show," EHCAC

Nov. 16 Gospel Night, Grayson

Nov. 18 Inner City Network Meeting, Martinez Annex

Nov. 19 Thanksgiving Dinner & Party, Walker

Nov. 30 Lunch & A Movie, EHCAC

About the Chit-Chat:

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Monthly Birthday Celebrations	
Second Tuesday: San Jacinto	Last Wednesday: Flukinger, Grayson, North East
Third Thursday: Barrett	
Second Friday: JD Walker	

Community Center Dances: Proceeds benefit Precinct2gether, Inc.	
Second Thursday:	Grayson
Second Tuesday, Nov.:	Bay Area (ballroom dancing)
Third Tuesday, Sept./Oct.:	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)



A Message from Harris County Precinct Two Commissioner

Sylvia R. Garcia

I want to draw your attention to two items in this issue of the Chit-Chat: an insert that will allow you to code your Kroger Plus Card to direct Kroger donations to Precinct2gether and our cover article on our annual Veterans Picnic.

This year's picnic will take place Oct. 16 at Highlands Park. This event to honor our Precinct Two veterans and their families began in 2007. This fourth year promises to be an exciting one as we have been able to increase the size and scope of the picnic.



Each year, the number of veterans who turn to Precinct Two's Veterans Services increases. Fortunately, we also

have had many people come forward who want to work with us to honor these veterans. With the help of these volunteers and donors, this annual tradition will continue for many years to come thus giving us the opportunity to truly thank our veterans for their service.

Precinct2gether depends on volunteers AND donors to keep our programs – including many of your senior programs – going. There are many ways you can volunteer as well as show your support for Precinct2gether. One of the easier ways to support our programming is through the Kroger Neighbor to Neighbor program (the subject of the insert in this issue of the Chit-Chat). Precinct2gether is recognized by Kroger as one of its benefitting non-profit organizations. This means that by simply taking this insert with you to Kroger on your next shopping trip and asking the cashier to swipe the sheet along with your card, you will



Sylvia R. Garcia

be enrolled in this program that will give a percentage of the value of your purchases to Precinct2gether each time you shop. It's that simple.

I encourage Kroger shoppers to take advantage of this program to help us continue bringing services to Precinct Two's seniors, youth and veterans.

Precinct2gether begins commodities distribution program



“This is an extraordinary program and we are very excited to have the opportunity to help even more seniors within our precinct...”

In conjunction with the Houston Food Bank, Precinct2gether has five distribution sites for a new commodities distribution program for seniors. “This is an extraordinary program and we are very excited to have the opportunity to help even more seniors within our precinct,” explained Sharon Carter, program social worker for Precinct2gether. “We want every senior in Precinct Two who needs food to sign up for this monthly distribution program.”

To be eligible for the program, seniors must be 60-years-old or older. Seniors living alone must have a monthly income of \$1,174 or less. Seniors who live in larger households should call and we will check the qualifications.

The first distribution was held at the Grayson Center on July 1 and more than 150 seniors received boxes of food. Since then, distributions have been held at Barrett, Flukinger, North East and Walker Community Centers. More than 600 seniors received commodities from Precinct Two centers during July which was the first month of the program. Seniors who are a part of the homebound meals program also have been included in the distribution program.

For more information on this program, contact your local community center or call Carter or Lisa Hernandez at 713-455-4869.

Things to Know

Senior Fraud Expo set for Oct. 26

Precinct2gether, in conjunction with the AARP, Better Business Bureau Education Foundation, City of Pasadena and Harris County Precinct Two, is sponsoring a Senior Fraud Expo on Tuesday, Oct. 26, from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at the Pasadena Convention Center, 7902 Fairmont Pkwy. The focus of this program is to provide information to attendees so they can better protect themselves from fraud and scams.

The Expo will include speakers from the BBB Education Foundation, U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission, Office of the Attorney General of Texas, U.S. Postal Inspection Service and AARP. There also will be various exhibitors on hand to provide participants with more information. There is no admission fee for this expo.

For additional information on this program, contact the Precinct Two Social Work office at 713-455-4869.



Conference focuses on senior issues

The National Hispanic Council on Aging-Houston Chapter promotes the well being of seniors in Houston and Harris County through education and advocacy.

The Council will be hosting its 17th annual “Bajo El Mismo Techo” Conference on Thursday, Sept. 30, from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Humble Civic Center.

Attendees will have the chance to enjoy a continental breakfast and a catered lunch, listen to speakers who will discuss issues affecting senior adults and visit exhibitors who will feature a variety of health and well being services and products. There is no admission for this program. For more information, call 713-514-0185.

Holiday season kicks off with annual tamalada

Tamales are a staple of many families’ holiday celebrations. On Friday, Nov. 5, the North East Community Center is hosting its fifth tamalada and community members are welcome to take part in this fund-raising program.

“While our tamalada is a fund raiser, it’s also a wonderful time for our community to join together for a wonderful day creating delicious tamales that will be enjoyed by many

families,” said Lisa May, director of the North East Community Center.

Pork tamales will be available for \$7 per dozen and must be pre-ordered. Tamale orders must be placed by Nov. 1 and picked up on Monday, Nov. 8, from 9 a.m. - 4 p.m. For more information on participating in the tamalada or placing an order, call 281-442-7950.



Make it a happy holiday for Precinct2gether nursing home residents

Every holiday season, Precinct2gether’s Nursing Home Program sponsors “Adopt-a-Resident,” a program that focuses on delivering some joy to those living in Precinct Two area nursing homes. “Without our program, some nursing home residents would experience the heartache of being forgotten at Christmas,” explained Freda Morris, director of the Precinct2gether Nursing Home Program.

“Each year, between 350 to 400 nursing home residents are ‘adopted’ as sponsors strive to make each participant’s Christmas wish a reality.”

To participate in the “Adopt-a-Resident” program, call Morris at 281-479-7199 or e-mail Freda.Morris@pct2.hctx.net.



Turning sight into sound

For more than 40 years, Taping for the Blind has worked to enrich the lives of individuals with visual, physical and learning disabilities through its radio reading, custom recording and audio description services. Taping for the Blind works with numerous individuals throughout this region who not only are completely blind but also may have visual disabilities such as cataracts, low vision and macular degeneration; physical disabilities making it impossible to hold a book; and learning disabilities.

To learn more about how Taping for the Blind could help you or a member of your family, call 713-622-2767 or visit www.tapingfortheblind.org.



Precinct2gether participating in Kroger’s Neighbor to Neighbor program

Precinct2gether is participating in the Kroger Neighbor to Neighbor donation program that allows the organization to receive a donation from Kroger based on our participants’ spending at Kroger each time they use their Kroger Plus Shopper Card. Simply bring the letter that is included as an insert in this issue of the Chit-Chat to your local Kroger. The donation that Precinct2gether will be eligible for is based on purchases from now until April 30, 2011.

Staying active with the Wii!

Don't put off your flu shot

Every year in the United States, more than 200,000 people are hospitalized due to seasonal flu-related complications and approximately 36,000 people die from flu-related causes. Complications from seasonal flu can lead to bacterial pneumonia and worsening of chronic medical conditions.

Seniors 65 years old and older are more likely to have complications from the seasonal flu. The best method for not contracting seasonal influenza is the flu shot. Bay Area, East Harris County Activity Center, Flukinger, Grayson and North East Community Centers are scheduling dates to offer seasonal flu shots. Check with these centers to find out more information.



Make plans to enjoy National Night Out

In 1984, National Night Out (NNO) was created to encourage neighborhood camaraderie, promote police-community partnerships and crime prevention. More than 11,000 communities from all 50 states take part in this program.

In Harris County, National Night Out will be celebrated on Oct. 5. The Barrett, East Harris County Activity Center, Flukinger, Grayson, North East, San Jacinto and Walker Community Centers are planning NNO events. The Barrett Center's program will be off-site at the City of Refuge Edu-Care parking lot, 12028 Crosby-Lynchburg Rd. beginning at 6:30 p.m. All other participating Precinct Two Community Centers participating in NNO will host on-site events from 6 p.m. – 8 p.m. Contact your local center for more information.

Years ago, video games were almost exclusively played by children and teens while they were seated in front of a television. With the introduction of the Nintendo Wii, not only have "gamers" been on their feet playing a variety of fitness and sports games but seniors also are enjoying the fun.

According to the Entertainment Software Association, 25 percent of gamers are older than 50. Not only are seniors enjoying the challenge as they play on their own or with their family and friends, but many Wii games require arm and body movements that simulate actions used in playing the actual sport.

Seniors at several of Precinct Two's community centers have joined the Wii movement. "Our seniors take advantage of the Nintendo Wii on an individual basis Monday-Friday and would be playing on Saturday and Sunday if the Center was open," explained Cassandra David, director of the Barrett Community Center. "They are in the process of getting their teams together to have a Wii tournament here at the Center. Their favorite active game that keeps them moving is bowling, which is one of their highlights of the day."

At Bay Area and the East Harris County Activity Center, Wii activities often follow Lunch & A Movie. Pick-up Wii bowling games are a regular occurrence at the Flukinger, Grayson, San Jacinto and Walker Community Centers.





MAKING IT EASIER FOR SENIORS TO STAY ON THE MOVE

The Chit-Chat's featured employee: Velia Tudon

Since 1997, Velia Tudon has been working for Harris County, spending the first two years of this career journey with the Harris County Library System and then joining Harris County Precinct Two in 1999. "For the first several weeks that I worked with Precinct Two, I was a floater," explained Tudon, director of Precinct Two's Voucher Transportation Program. "I then became the assistant coordinator at the East Harris County Activity Center where I worked with the senior program. A year later, I had the opportunity to work at the Bay Area Courthouse Annex where I assisted several liaisons to Commissioner Sylvia R. Garcia in serving the Bay Area community."

While working at the Bay Area Annex, Tudon realized she wanted to return to school to study for an associate's degree in social work. Tudon also has completed a certificate in human services and gerontology from the University of Houston and completed an internship at the Vista Continuing Care Nursing Home in Pasadena.

In 2006, Tudon was selected to assist with Commissioner Garcia's new Voucher Transportation Program. Within just three months of joining this team, Tudon was promoted to

director. "Talk about being at the right place at the right time!" recalled Tudon. "The Voucher Transportation Program offers door-to-door transportation services for low income seniors using several taxi and van services via a partnership with Harris County RIDES."



Working with the Voucher Transportation Program has been an amazing position for Tudon. "This is the most rewarding and blessed job I have ever had," said Tudon. "I love helping people and being able to make a difference in their everyday lives."

Tudon spends her time away from the job enjoying her husband of 29 years, her two daughters and her grandson. "I also like shopping, scrapbooking and traveling," said Tudon. "A few years ago, we decided not to wait until we retire to really start to travel and during the past four years, I've visited Hawaii, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Florida, South Carolina, North Carolina and the Caribbean."

JAKE LOWRANCE: *Enjoying the music of life*



Jake Lowrance has enjoyed music for as long as he can remember, especially playing his bass. A founding member of the Pick 'N Grin Band, Lowrance has been sharing his love of music and his volunteer spirit for the past decade at the San Jacinto Community Center.

"Before we started the Pick 'N Grin Band, several of us would get together and jam in the park behind the Highlands Community Center" recalled Lowrance. "The more time we spent together, the more we enjoyed it. While jamming, we came up with the idea of playing our music at dances, first at the Highlands Center and then at San Jacinto when it opened. The band has been playing for years and seniors really seem to enjoy the dances."

Lowrance is an active member of the San Jacinto Center where he can be seen almost every day. In 2009, he was named Volunteer of the Year at San Jacinto in recognition for his willingness to help out wherever he is needed. Lowrance also is a member of the Highlands High Flyers.

An accomplished woodworker and gardener, Lowrance moved to Texas about 30 years ago from his native Oklahoma. Before retiring, he spent many years with Brown & Root. Lowrance and his wife of 58 years have one daughter, three grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

Have you received a jury summons?

Thomas Jefferson once said, "I consider trial by jury as the only anchor ever yet imagined by man, by which a government can be held to the principles of its constitution." Being called for jury service is something that most U.S. citizens will experience at least once. However, there can be confusion regarding seniors serving on juries.

In regards to Harris County jury service, a person can claim an exemption from jury service if she or he is more than 70 years of age. However, this exemption does not have to be claimed and is the choice of each potential juror. There are several other exemptions that may impact Precinct Two seniors including being the primary caretaker of a person who is an invalid unable to care for himself or herself or having legal custody of a child younger than 15 years of age and the person's service on the jury requires leaving the

child without adequate supervision.

Potential jurors in Harris County are selected at random from the Harris County Voter Registration List and the Texas Department of Public Safety list of drivers or identification card holders living in Harris County. Juries are necessary for both criminal and civil cases (civil does include family cases). Jurors are paid \$6 for the first day of jury service and \$40 for each additional day.

If you receive a jury summons and do plan to claim an exemption, this can be done online by visiting the Harris County District Clerk's office Web site at <https://www.hcdistrictclerk.com/common/juror/Secure/jurorsearch.aspx>. For more information, you also can call 713.755.6392 between 10 a.m. - 5 p.m. Monday-Friday or e-mail jury@hcdistrictclerk.com.

Special note on Harris County



District Clerk's Web site related to jury duty: "Identity thieves have contacted Harris County residents and threatened them for failing to report for jury service. The thieves are seeking confidential information. The local courts and Jury Assembly Room staff will NEVER call you or e-mail you and ask for Social Security numbers, credit card numbers or other sensitive information. Do not give out such information to anyone claiming to be with the judicial system who calls or e-mails you."

USEFUL RESOURCES ON THE WEB

Following are some Web sites that provide information that may be of interest to you:



Federal Trade Commission-Cramming: Mystery Phone Charges

<http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/edu/pubs/consumer/products/pro18.shtm>

Does your phone bill seem too high? There's a chance you've been crammed which is when a company adds a charge to your phone bill for a service you didn't order, agree to or use. Visit this Web site to learn more about how you can avoid this problem or what to do if your phone bill has suspicious charges.

Houston Museum District <http://www.houstonmuseumdistrict.org>

Looking for somewhere interesting to bring out-of-town guests or a new place for you to explore? The Houston Museum District Web site provides information on 18 museums within a 1.5 mile radius of the Mecom Fountain.

Recreation.gov <http://www.recreation.gov>

This Web site is a single point of access to information about Federal recreational activities and reservations. Users can discover which parks, forests, lakes, museums and other recreation sites managed by Federal agencies are located near a particular area or offer a specific recreational activities and use interactive maps to plan trips.

USGenWeb Project <http://usgenweb.org>

The USGenWeb Project is a group of volunteers working together to provide Internet Web sites for genealogical research in every U.S. county and state. The Project is non-commercial and fully committed to free access for everyone.

Healthfinder.gov <http://www.healthfinder.gov>

Visit this Web site to access resources on a wide range of health topics selected from more than 1,600 government and non-profit organizations that provide the most reliable health information on the Internet.



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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** ★

Department of Community Centers & Senior Programming

Precinct2gether Main Office
 281-862-9531

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