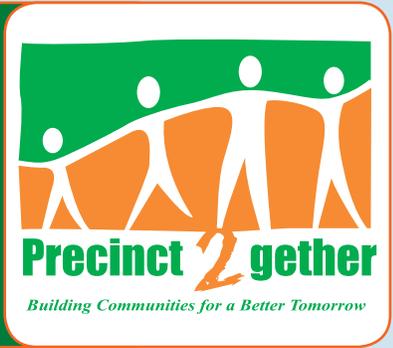


The Senior CHIT★CHAT

Spring 2010



A Publication for Precinct2gether from Commissioner Sylvia R. Garcia



It's time for the U.S. Census

YOUR PARTICIPATION HELPS YOUR COMMUNITY

President George Washington was in office less than 18 months when the first U.S. Census was conducted to meet the requirements in the Constitution that states, "The actual Enumeration shall be made within three years after the first meeting of the Congress of the United States, and within every subsequent term of ten

years..." The first "Census Day" was Aug. 2, 1790, and the results of the Census showed a resident population of 3,929,214.

Twenty-two U.S. Censuses have been conducted in this country's history. The 2000 Census found the U.S. resident population to be 281,421,906 and that number is expected to grow significantly with the 2010 Census that will count everyone residing in all 50 states, Washington, D.C., Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam and Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands.

Why do we have a Census? In short, the Census defines who we are as a nation, affects political representation and directs how billions of dollars in government funding is allocated. Not only is participation in the Census required by law (U.S. Code Title 13, Section 221) but it has a direct impact on the future of Harris County Precinct Two.

What does the Census impact?

There are countless ways the Census impacts our community every day. When the federal government distributes more than \$400 billion to states and communities each year, the spread of these funds is determined, in part, by census data. Census data

determines boundaries for congressional districts and local and state officials. It also is used by communities to determine new housing needs, schools, hospitals and other community facilities.

Some other ways Census data is used includes:

- Attracting new businesses to areas
- Forecasting future transportation needs
- Creating maps to speed emergency services to households in need of assistance
- Planning budgets for government at all levels
- Developing adult education programs
- Researching historical subject areas
- Understanding consumer needs

It's just 10 questions!

The 2010 Census only contains 10 questions and should take just 10 minutes to complete. The Census form package will be delivered between March 15 and March 17, 2010, via the U.S. Postal Service. The head of household should complete the form on behalf of every person living in the residence on April 1, 2010, and should return the Census form in the provided envelope by April 1, which will be "Census Day 2010."

As a reminder, all information you provide to the Census Bureau cannot be shared with anyone including other federal agencies and law enforcement entities.

February is Census Month at Precinct Two community centers. If you have any questions regarding the 2010 Census, Precinct Two staff will be on hand to provide you with information.

"Not only is participation in the Census required by law but it has a direct impact on the future of Harris County Precinct Two."



Check out what's inside...

- **Precinct2gether calendar of events, page 2**
- **Precinct Two's Wildflower Program, page 3**
- **Earth Day turns 40, page 5**
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Mark Your Calendar



Following are some events for seniors taking place during March, April and May. 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:

March

March 1 South Channel Council Meeting, Bay Area and EHCAC

March 1-5 First week of bus booking

March 3 South Channel's A Day of Bingo, EHCAC

March 4 North Channel's Rodeo party, Baytown Community Center*

March 4 Gospel Night, Flukinger

March 4 Town Hall Meeting, North East

March 5 Lunch & A Movie, Bay Area

March 8-12 Second week of bus booking

March 9 Gospel Night, San Jacinto

March 10 Famous Women in Texas History Program, North East

March 12 Nursing Home Olympics, EHCAC

March 16 Gospel Night, Grayson

March 16 Nursing Home Party, Flukinger

March 17 St. Patrick's Day Party, Flukinger

March 18 Inner City Network Meeting, Martinez Annex*

March 23 Cascarones Workshop, Flukinger

March 26 Hometown Opry '50s Show, EHCAC

March 30 Lunch & A Movie, EHCAC

April

April 1 U.S. Census forms should be returned by this date

April 1 Country & Western Dance, North East

April 1 Easter Party, San Jacinto

April 1 Gospel Night, Flukinger

April 5 South Channel Council Meeting, Bay Area and EHCAC

April 6 Inner City's Spring Party, EHCAC

April 7 North Channel Network Meeting, Flukinger

April 8 Town Hall Meeting, San Jacinto

April 9 Birthday Luncheon, Walker

April 9 Nursing Home Olympics, EHCAC

April 9 Lunch & A Movie, Bay Area

April 13 Inner City's Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon, North East

April 13 Gospel Night, San Jacinto

April 15 Inner City Network Meeting, Martinez Annex*

April 17 George Watt Commemorative Chili Cook Off, Flukinger

April 20-22 Inner City Senior Olympics, Various Locations

April 20 Gospel Night, Grayson

April 21 Easter Party, Flukinger

April 21 San Jacinto Day, San Jacinto Monument*

April 22 Worden Tournament for Senior Golfers, River Terrace Golf Course*

April 23 Inner City Senior Olympics & Awards Luncheon, EHCAC

April 24 Festival at the Monument, San Jacinto Monument*

April 29 Lunch & A Movie, EHCAC

April 30 Hometown Opry, EHCAC

May

May 3 South Channel Council Meetings, Bay Area and EHCAC

May 3-6 North Channel Senior Olympics, Various Locations

May 6 Town Hall Meeting, EHCAC

May 7 North Channel Senior Olympics & Awards Ceremony, Grayson

May 7 Lunch & A Movie, Bay Area

May 10-13, South Channel Senior Olympics, EHCAC

May 11 Nursing Home Party, North East

May 11 Gospel Night, San Jacinto

May 11 Mother's Day Luncheon, San Jacinto

May 14, South Channel Senior Olympics & Awards Luncheon, EHCAC

May 18 Gospel Night, Grayson

May 19 Mother's Day Party, Flukinger

May 20 Inner City Network Meeting, Martinez Annex*

May 21 Ladies Tea, EHCAC

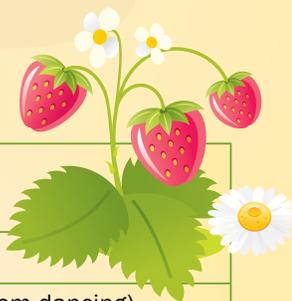
May 24 Inner City Cinco de Mayo Party, EHCAC

May 25 Nursing Home Party, EHCAC

May 27, Mother's & Father's Day Breakfast, Grayson

May 28 Mother's & Father's Day, North East

May 28 Hometown Opry Gospel Show, 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)

About the Chit-Chat:

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A Message from Harris County Precinct Two Commissioner

Sylvia R. Garcia

Can you remember how many times you have filled out a Census form? The first U.S. Census took place in 1790, so I think it's a safe bet none of our Chit-Chat readers can claim to have participated in each and every one.

One thing is a safe bet. The Census form you receive this March is one of the most important forms you will fill out this decade. With all the news stories and ads that are out about the Census, I'm sure you've heard how important it is to get an accurate count.

A fact that many overlook is that the Census is singularly one of the most important aspects of the way our nation works short of our right to vote.

Every dollar we receive in the future from Washington will be based on a foundation of the 2010 Census. The basis on which Texas

government allocates many of its dollars also will be impacted by this census. The way Harris County aligns each of our four precincts and applies for monies from a variety of sources depends on this census. The few minutes you spend answering the Census questions truly will impact your community.

With this issue of the Chit-Chat, you will find a flier on the Census. Please keep it. Put it on your refrigerator or bulletin board as a reminder to take action when you get your Census form in the mail. It also has information on who to call for help should you need some in filling out your form.

I always have been able to count on the Precinct2gether seniors. Let's work together to ensure that EVERYONE is counted in Harris County Precinct Two!



Sylvia R. Garcia

In an effort to beautify the Washburn Tunnel, bluebonnets were planted around it in the 1970s. Sadly, the state flower of Texas didn't grow as hoped.

Fast forward to 1992 when a new effort was undertaken by former Commissioner Jim Fonteno at the encouragement of his wife, JoAnn, to begin a wildflower planting program that not only would be enjoyed by the public but be good for the environment. Jerri Fletcher, superintendent of the Precinct Two landscaping department, initiated this program 18 years ago and continues to oversee it with the full support of Commissioner Garcia.

Areas can be found all over Precinct Two that have been seeded with wildflowers. Seeds are planted every October and November and the areas are not mowed until after the seed pods have turned brown. When mowing is done, it is handled in such a way that the seeds are blown into the wildflower areas instead of away from them. It can take a few years for an area to produce a noticeable crop of wildflowers.

As spring approaches, keep an eye out for the Wildflower Program's hard work in more than 50 areas. Common wildflowers that are planted include Texas Bluebonnets, Texas Paintbrush, Rocket Larkspur, Crimson Clover and Bachelor Buttons.

PRECINCT TWO'S WILDFLOWER PROGRAM

*Beautifies
Region*

Things to Know

Harris County Transit expands service

Residents of Pasadena, Clear Lake, Baytown, La Porte, Seabrook, South Houston, Highlands and Crosby now have access to Harris County Transit, a system that covers more than 60 miles and works to provide residents outside of the Metro service area with transportation alternatives. Kids, seniors and those who are disabled pay only \$.50 each way. More information on this service can be found at www.harriscountytransit.com or by calling 713-578-2216.

Seniors gather to create cascarones

Cascarones (confetti eggs) are a part of celebratory events in Mexico and in many Texas families.

According to legend, having a cascaron broken over your head brings good luck.

On March 23 from 9:30 a.m. – 11 a.m., Easter cascarones will be made at the Flukinger Center. For more information, call 281-457-1810.



A day on the links

The 13th annual Kim Worden Memorial Golf Tournament will take place Thursday, April 22, at the River Terrace Golf Course, 16777 Wallisville Rd., Houston, 77049. Open to players ages 50 and up (no professionals), this two-person team scramble will be flighted by team scores at the end of the event.

The \$50 per person entry fee covers green fees, golf cart, range balls, breakfast, sack lunch and door prizes. For more information or to register, call 281-452-7598.

Have you registered with 2-1-1?

Hurricane Season is rapidly approaching and planning for potential evacuation now is crucial. Make sure you are aware of what evacuation zone you are in and how you will evacuate. If you live in an evacuation zone and know you will not have a way to leave, you need to register with 2-1-1 Texas.

2-1-1 Texas is a free, confidential information and referral program that coordinates evacuation transportation. Phones are answered by certified, multilingual specialists 24 hours a day. Your information only will be shared with your local emergency management office so they can plan for transportation of individuals needing assistance. If you or someone you know will need help being evacuated, call 2-1-1 today. Remember: you must re-register with 2-1-1 every year. For more information on hurricane preparedness, visit www.hcoem.org.

Senior Olympics taking place throughout Precinct Two

Every spring, Precinct2gether seniors can be found in friendly competition in the Senior Olympics. The 2010 dates are as follows:

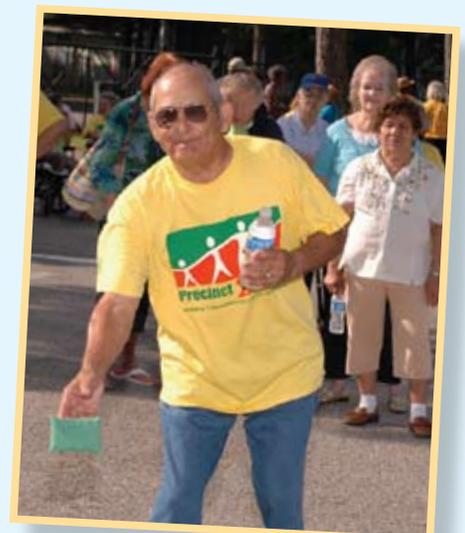
- Nursing Home: March 12 and April 9
- Inner City: April 20-23 with a registration deadline of March 18.
- North Channel: May 3-7 with a registration deadline of April 22.
- South Channel: May 10-14 with a registration deadline of April 30

Commissioner to host town hall meetings

During 2010, Harris County Precinct Two Commissioner Sylvia R. Garcia will continue her biennial tradition of hosting a series of town hall meetings. By holding meetings throughout the Precinct, the topics can be focused on specific regions. "These meetings provide opportunities for residents to ask questions, offer solutions and work with their county government," said Commissioner Garcia. "I welcome the chance to bring decision makers and department heads together with the taxpayer."

Town hall meetings for the remainder of 2010 include:

- March 4: Inner City – East End Town Hall, North East Community Center 10918-1/2 Bentley, Houston, 77093
- April 8: Baytown Area Town Hall, San Jacinto Community Center, 604 Highland Woods Dr., Highlands, 77562
- May 6: Pasadena Area Town Hall, East Harris County Activity Center, 7340 Spencer Highway, Pasadena, 77505
- Sept. 9: North Channel Area Town Hall, Leon Grayson Center – Baldree Building, 13828 Corpus Christi, Houston, 77015





ARE YOU DOING YOUR PART FOR THE ENVIRONMENT?

Earth Day Turns 40

On April 22, 1970, the first Earth Day was celebrated in the United States to inspire awareness of the environment. Forty years later, many know so much more about protecting the environment and that it takes everyone to make a difference.

There are many reasons to commit to recycling, reducing and reusing. For example, according to the University of Colorado at Boulder, Americans throw away enough aluminum to rebuild the entire commercial airline fleet every three months. In a lifetime, the average American will throw away 600 times his adult weight in garbage! Making cans from recycled aluminum saves 95 percent of the energy required to produce cans from non-used material. Recycling a four-foot stack of newspapers saves the equivalent of one 40-foot fir tree.

There are numerous easy ways that you can positively impact the planet by recycling, reducing consumption of natural resources or reusing products in your home. Here are easy ways to get started:

- The average person lets about 90 glasses of water run down the drain every day while brushing his teeth. According to the Eco-Dentistry Association, this ends up being about 27 billion gallons of drinkable water going to waste every year. Stop wasting water by either not turning the tap on at all until you're finished brushing your teeth or simply turn it back off if you prefer to start with a wet toothbrush.
- Don't throw away your coffee grounds as they contain a significant amount of nitrogen that can benefit your garden. The acid content of grounds can help roses, camellias and azaleas which all thrive with a little acidity. Earthworms, which are extremely beneficial for soil, also enjoy a breakfast of coffee grounds.
- Before buying seldom-used items (such as certain power tools or party goods), consider renting or borrowing them.
- The average adult uses about 300 plastic bags every year and these bags only get used for about 12 minutes before they're discarded. While it may be hard to not use any plastic bags, consider leaving the bag behind the next time you're buying only a couple of items or something that is easily held in your hand. Keep a reusable fabric bag in your car that you can use every time you go to the store. When you do use plastic bags, take left-over bags back to grocery stores where they are collected and reused to make plastic lumber.
- Newspapers, magazines and white paper all can be recycled as long as the paper is clean and dry. Plastic wrap, stickers or rubber bands should be removed, but staples and plastic window envelopes are okay. A great thing about recycling is that it lets you put your favorite old containers, bins or baskets to use.
- Recycle worn-out rechargeable batteries like those used in cell phones, computers, or power tools. Go to www.rbcc.org to find a drop-off location in your area.
- Many products are designed to be used more than once, such as cloth napkins, dishcloths, rechargeable batteries, refillable containers, and washable utensils, so consider the reusable possibilities when shopping.



Seniors Benefit From Tai Chi



For centuries, Tai Chi has been practiced in China as a martial art, exercise and a way to improve the flow of internal energy. Tai Chi emphasizes correct form for each movement so it is practiced in both slow and gentle movements which allows people of all ages and fitness levels to participate.

The benefits of this ancient exercise are numerous including reducing anxiety and depression, reducing falls, lowering blood pressure, improving cardiovascular fitness, increasing energy and improving overall feelings of well being. The Oregon Research Institute found that, after six months, Tai Chi participants were twice as likely to have no trouble performing moderate to rigorous activities as nonparticipants and that the quality and length of their sleep had improved.

Precinct2gether seniors at the Bay Area Center have been enjoying the benefits of Tai Chi for the past 10 years. "Tai Chi focuses on the mind and body," said Tasha Gurdatt, assistant director at the Bay Area Center. "Our class is designed to give seniors a great workout that is not strenuous but is relaxing." Tai Chi classes at Bay Area are held on Mondays at 6 p.m. and

Wednesdays at 9 a.m. and all seniors are welcome to attend.

In February, the East Harris County Activity Center (EHCAC) also began holding a Tai Chi class for seniors every Wednesday at 3 p.m. "Seniors are very excited about the Tai Chi class being offered at EHCAC, because of the health benefits it provides," said Myrian Espitia, South Channel senior coordinator. "I invite you to discover the benefits of Tai Chi for yourself."

To learn more about these Tai Chi classes, call the Bay Area Center at 281-326-2955 or EHCAC at 281-479-4232.



Embrick Edwards: Enjoying Every Day at the Barrett Center

"We really enjoy ourselves at our Center as there is a lot of love here," explained Embrick Edwards, one of the most recognizable seniors at the Barrett Community Center. Since he retired in 2000, Edwards not only has become an enthusiastic participant in Precinct2gether but he also is a part-time building monitor at Barrett.

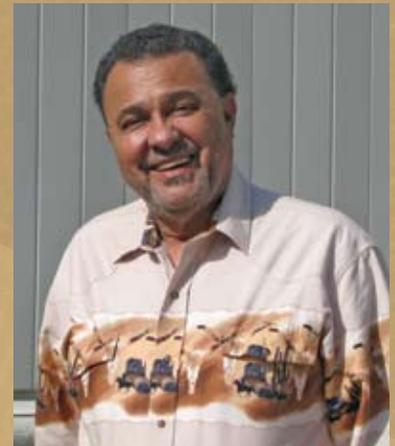
While Edwards really enjoys working with people using the Barrett Center for special events, he is truly passionate about being able to spend time with other seniors through Precinct2gether and he takes advantage of as many programs as he can. During the past few years, Edwards has been involved with the Precinct-2gether Christmas productions with his latest role being that of Scrooge in the 2009 program. "What I like best about being in the Precinct2gether Christmas productions is the chance you get to meet everybody," said Edwards. "People come from all the community centers to be in the show and I've made friends from all over the area."

Edwards also is known for his love of dominoes – "only friendly competitions!" – and dancing. "Our line dancing team won first place in a competition and I was named the best dancer," remembered Edwards with a smile.

A native of Louisiana, Edwards moved to Texas, graduated from Drew High School and spent most of his career working for U.S. Steel and owning a trucking business. He and his wife of 48 years have five children, nine grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

Retirement not only has introduced Edwards to the Barrett Center, but has re-acquainted him with his love of horses. "I rode when I was younger but after I retired, many of my friends had horses and I would ride," said Edwards. "I had the chance to get my own horse and even though my wife was unsure, she wanted me to have fun so I got the horse!"

Edwards encourages all seniors to visit their local Precinct Two Center and see what's going on. "Once people give the centers a chance, they really enjoy themselves as there are so many opportunities to be active," said Edwards.





Thriving as Precinct Two's Deputy Commissioner

The Chit-Chat's featured employee: Roel Garcia

Since the day that Precinct Two Commissioner Sylvia R. Garcia took office on Jan. 1, 2003, Roel Garcia has been at her side in his position as deputy commissioner. His daily routine is never quite the same as he manages the 400 employees working in Precinct Two and works closely with the two assistant deputy commissioners and two general superintendents.

"There are so many elements involved with my job," explained Garcia. "It's very exciting because this is such a diverse precinct. I interact closely with my assistant deputy commissioners and general superintendents to know where we are on projects, budgets, personnel and issues that come up. Every day really is different and exciting."

Garcia received his bachelor's degree in accounting from the University of Houston and his law degree from the University of Houston Law School. Prior to working in Precinct Two, he was the deputy controller for the City of Houston.

One of the areas that Garcia oversees is Precinct2gether. "This is such a fantastic program and it is really highly rated," said Garcia. "We always are looking for ways to make the program even better for everyone who participates in it."

A Houstonian for the past 30 years, Garcia and his wife have one 11-year-old son. "In my free time, I really enjoy golfing, hunting and fishing with my son," said Garcia. "I love being able to enjoy the things I like with him. I'm taking advantage of spending time with him whenever I can!"



Useful Resources on the Web

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

Harris County Public Library

<http://www.hcpl.net>

This site includes lists of events happening at each of the county's 26 libraries. You can access the library catalog, renew books online and read news related to books and the arts.

Foster Grandparents Program-Senior Corps

<http://www.seniorcorps.gov/about/programs/fg.asp>

The Foster Grandparent Program connects volunteers age 55 and over with children and young people with exceptional needs. Volunteers mentor, support and help some of the most vulnerable children in the United States.

Our Earth as Art

<http://earthasart.gsfc.nasa.gov/index.htm>

Earth as Art lets users view our planet through images taken by the Landsat-7 satellite - and most recently, the Terra Satellite's Advanced Spaceborne Thermal Emission and Reflection Radiometer (ASTER).

Consumer Action

<http://www.consumeraction.gov/>

For more than 30 years, the Federal Citizen Information Center (FCIC) has been a trusted one-stop source for information about consumer problems and government services. FCIC distributes and helps produce a variety of government publications, including the Consumer Action Handbook which is an everyday guide to being a smart shopper and can be ordered for free from this Web site.

IRS for Seniors & Retirees

<http://www.irs.gov/individuals/retirees/index.html>

This section of the IRS Web site was developed to help seniors and retirees. Information includes tips how to avoid common pitfalls when preparing tax returns, events in the lives of seniors and retirees that may impact tax responsibilities, tax scams/consumer alerts, publications for older Americans and FAQs for seniors.



Precinct2gether, Inc.
13828 Corpus Christi
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 ★

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

2010



MARCH 2010

Census forms are delivered to households



APRIL 2010

National Census Day—send your completed forms back in the mail. Remember, the law protects the confidentiality of all your information



APRIL — JULY 2010

Census takers visit households that did not return a form by mail



DECEMBER 2010

By law, the Census Bureau delivers population information to the President for apportionment

2011



MARCH 2011

By law, the Census Bureau completes delivery of redistricting data to states



For additional **2010 Census** information, visit

www.precinct2counts.org

or call

the U.S. Census Office at 1-800-923-8282.



Sylvia R. Garcia
Commissioner