

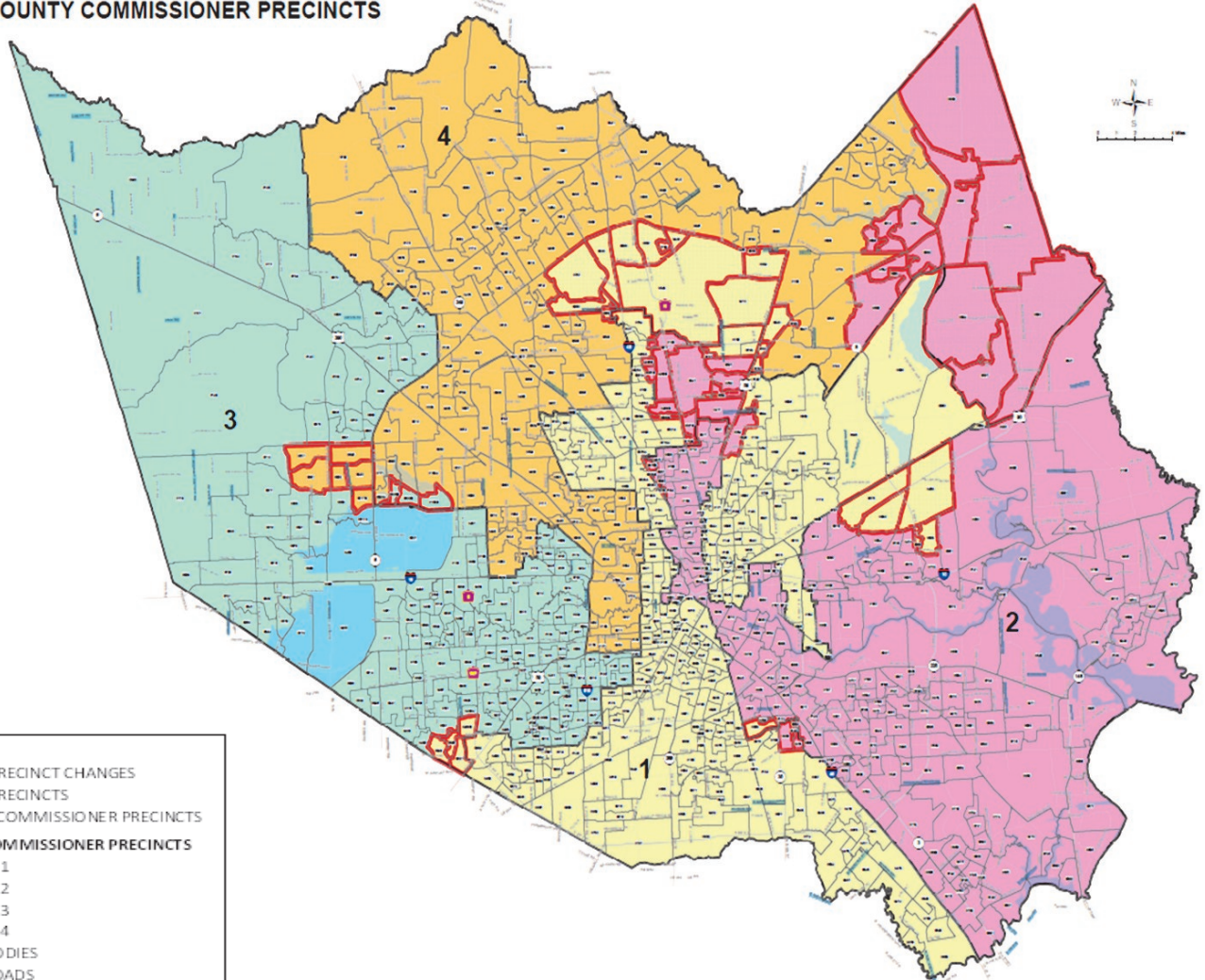


ONE TO ONE

ISSUE NO. 3 • NOVEMBER 2011 • NORTH/SOUTH

A Report to the Residents of Harris County Precinct One ... from Commissioner El Franco Lee

HARRIS COUNTY COMMISSIONER PRECINCTS



Proposed redistricting plan being considered by Justice Department

Precinct One will take on a new look next year – particularly in its boundaries and demographics. This will occur because the decennial census conducted in 2010 requires Commissioners Court to redraw all precinct lines. Boundary lines will recently approved a pro-

change in all four Harris County Commissioners' precincts to conform with the Voting Rights Act, which protects against racial, ethnic and language-minority discrimination. Commissioners Court

posed redistricting plan that must be cleared by the U.S. Justice Department.

Legal considerations for redistricting include Population Equality: "One Person – One Vote." The factors include:

- Local governments are

required to draw districts that are "substantially equal in population."

- Ten Percent Standard: Maximum acceptable deviation in population between the largest and the smallest districts.
- Courts will look at any significant deviation on a

case-by-case basis, evaluating all factors used by the governmental body to draw districts.

- Courts recognize the importance of making districts compact, respecting traditional boundaries, preserving the core of

(Continued on page 5)



Notes from Commissioner El Franco Lee

Comments on past and future activities

Harris County Toll Road Authority Projects

- The Harris County Toll Road Authority soon will begin work to widen the Sam Houston Tollway between Southwest Freeway (U.S. 59) and Texas 288. The 11-mile project in south Harris County calls for increasing the lanes from two to four in each direction. The additional lanes should significantly improve traffic flow and enhance mobility. The plan also includes the installation of a new emergency shoulder, renovations to the main-lane plaza and the reconstruction of toll entrance/exit ramps. Work is scheduled to start in early December and it should be completed in about 20 months.
- Harris County Commissioners Court has authorized the Toll Road Authority to move forward on the 4-mile Hardy Toll Road Downtown Connector project, which will link the Hardy Toll Road to downtown Houston. Now, the toll road's southern terminus is the Loop 610. The connector will make it possible to drive 25 miles from the Harris-Montgomery County line to downtown Houston without encountering a stop light. The plan also calls for the elimination of at-grade railroad crossings at Collingsworth, Quitman and Lorraine. These new facilities will improve mobility in the neighborhood by eliminating lengthy delays caused by trains. This project, which should be completed in about two years, should help alleviate congestion at the Loop 610, Interstate 45 and U.S. 59. The Hardy Toll Road opened in two phases in 1987 and 1988, and provided a third north-south artery for the Houston area.

Harris County Flood Control District Projects

- The U.S Army Corps of Engineers soon will announce the completion of the General Re-evaluation Study for Clear Creek. The Corps plan to host a public hearing in late November or early December to release the long-awaited National Economic Development (NED) Alternative, an initial plan derived from the Corps' comprehensive analysis of engineering, economic and environmental criteria. This plan has the best chance to receive the Corps' approval for funding. The public will be able to review and comment on the plan before it is submitted for approval as the final report. The Corps is the lead agency responsible for conducting the study and construction management. Project sponsors include the Harris County Flood Control District, Galveston County and Brazoria County Drainage District No. 4 – all of which are responsible for land acquisition, bridge modifications and utility relocation. The NED Alternative limits along Clear Creek are from Texas 288 east to Dixie Farm Road. For more information visit: www.clearcreekproject.com.
- The Flood Control District has started channel repairs along Vogel Creek in the Inwood Forest subdivision from Arncliff Drive upstream to West Mount Houston. The repairs include restoring the flow-line of the channel by removing excessive silt mounts, installing new interceptors and repairing erosion along the channel's slopes and bank. Other general channel repairs are also under way along White Oak Bayou from North Durham east to Studewood in the Heights.

USA Swimming honors 2 HCAP founders for diversity

Harris County Aquatics Program (HCAP) head coach Johnnie Means and Commissioner El Franco Lee have been awarded the USA Swimming's Diversity Inclusion Award.

The award is presented to a person or a group who has increased the participation of underrepresented groups in the sport of swimming.

Meeting in Jacksonville

Means and Lee, both HCAP founders, accept-

ed the awards Sept. 16 at the 2011 USA Swimming House of Delegates meeting in Jacksonville, Fla.

HCAP, under the umbrella of the Harris County Street Olympics, was created 20 years ago to teach youth discipline, leadership and teamwork skills through the sport of swimming.

The program offers instructions/lessons for beginning swimmers, swim-stroke development for intermediate swimmers and competi-

tions who join the Mighty Dolphins, HCAP's swimming team that competes year-round.

HCAP supporters

Competitive swimming is offered free at the Harris County Aquatics Center, MacArthur High School and Attucks Middle School.

HCAP partners are Precinct One, Harris County Community Services Department, Houston and Aldine school districts, and the American Red Cross.



Commissioner El Franco Lee, left, and Harris County Aquatics Program head coach Johnnie Means hold USA Swimming's Diversity Inclusion Awards they received Sept. 16 in Jacksonville, Fla.

Mighty Dolphins discover swimming can lead to academic success

Coach Johnnie Means, with a little humor yet a stern demeanor to demonstrate he means business, led 13 teenagers through about 30 minutes of stretching exercises in a weight room.

From there, they went outside that September evening to run laps for 30 minutes in the 90-plus-degree weather and then more strenuous calisthenics. "This is a relative easy day," the coach said.

Later, inside the Harris County Aquatics Center, they swam laps. They swam some more. And much more.

After all, that's what Mighty Dolphins do – swim. This competitive swimming team is part of the free Harris County Aquatics Program.

"It doesn't just teach the kids to be good swimmers," said Means, who coached swimming for about 20 years at Texas Southern University and at a YMCA. "The program is designed to prepare them to be good people so they can have a chance to get scholarships."

In addition to competitive swimming, HCAP offers Learn-to-Swim lessons and swim-stroke development for intermediate swimmers. All of this is accomplished with the help of HCAP partners: Harris County Precinct One, Harris County Community Services Department, Houston and Aldine school districts, and the American Red Cross.



Coach Johnnie Means takes his Mighty Dolphins swimming team through stretching exercises before they hit the Harris County Aquatics Center pool to swim laps.



Dara Anya, left, Oscar Santos and Kaulen Applin work on their kick during a recent practice. The Mighty Dolphins practice six days a week.

The Mighty Dolphins compete year-round. There are teams for ages 10 and under, 11 and 12, 13 and 14, and 15 and older.

Although there's a lot of swimming involved, those who designed HCAP say the program teaches discipline, leadership and teamwork skills.

In the team's 19-year existence, more than 70 participants have received academic or athletic

the team now who are hoping to receive scholarships.

"Right now I'm working on a college essay at school," said Oscar Santos, 17, a senior at Lamar High School. "I'm applying at the University of Texas in Austin, the University of Houston, Baylor (University) and Sam Houston State (University). If I get an opportunity, I'll go for it (swimming on a college team)."

For now, however, Santos and the other swimmers have to adhere to HCAP coaches' strict requirements, which include doing well in school. After practicing three hours a day, six days a week, they have to go home and do homework.

"The bottom line is to get kids who maybe could not afford to be in a competitive program," Means said. "Of course, swimming is very expensive."

Parents like Tonya Conrad, the mother of swimmer Tiffany, are thankful for the free program and what it instills in their children. "I like the program," she said. "She (Tiffany) loves swimming."

Tiffany, 14, a freshman at Channelview High School, has been swimming for about six years.

"All my friends are having fun at home playing," she said. "And I'm over here swimming. My goal is to get to the Olympics."

scholarships at universities nationwide. Means said HCAP swimmers have gone to the U.S. Olympics trials as well as national and state championships.

Now, five former Mighty Dolphins are on swim scholarships and one on an academic scholarship at major universities, including the University of Texas, the University of Utah and the University of Bridgeport.

And there are others on



Seniors and young adults don't miss a beat in water aerobics class

Fresh out of the pool, Serena Starns reflects on her first day in the water aerobics class at the Precinct One Harris County Aquatics Center. She concedes she was 40 pounds heavier and her endurance was low.

"When I first started," she says, "I wasn't able to do half of the stuff he (the instructor) does now. The first 30 seconds, I was out of breath – literally out of breath. I had to sit and rest."

Meet new friends

Eighteen months later, Starns is ecstatic about her new-found stamina – and a slimmer body to match. She and the other students in her class now can go nonstop to the beat of the up-tempo music and the commands of instructor Mike McMahan.

In addition to the exercise, the free classes also provide Starns and her classmates the opportunity to meet new friends. And, most importantly, the water exercises help them feel better health wise.



Mike McMahan, foreground, takes his adult water aerobics class through a 60-minute workout at the Harris County Aquatics Center.

"It's fun to see their health improve," says McMahan, a swim trainer and a Precinct One Community Aide in the adult program that includes water aerobics and Learn-to-Swim. "To them, it's a valuable part of their new lifestyle."

'Whole body workout'

Delores Chandler, who has osteoporosis, says: "I've gotten 100 percent better with aches and pains. It's just a blessing



Serena Starns has lost 40 pounds in the water aerobics class.

just to be here. You really get a whole-body workout."

McMahan, a former high school physical education teacher who taught

swimming, says the one-hour classes meet twice a week for a two-month period. After two months, every participant must re-register for the classes, which have a maximum of 35 students.

The program started about two years ago with one class. Now there are three water aerobics classes and two swimming classes at full capacity. Many are senior citizens with at least one in her 90's. But all adults can

participate.

The water aerobics classes are on Tuesdays and Thursdays. On Mondays and Wednesdays, adult swimming lessons are offered.

Alton Jones, one of the few men who participate, says he started at the urging of his mother, Christine Plummer, who has been involved since the inception.

"I thought it was a good idea," he says of his mother's advice. "Exercise in any form is a good idea. And the water is a lot better on the joints."

Doctor's satisfaction

For Starns, who recently enrolled in another two-month session, her mission isn't complete. She follows McMahan's advice on having a protein shake in the morning, and cutting the fatty foods, Diet Coke and liquor.

"My doctor is very pleased with me," she says. "In another year from now, I'll be down 100 pounds. That's my goal."

Seniors Holiday Celebration slated Nov. 17 for Precinct One senior citizens at Reliant Center

The 19th Annual Seniors Holiday Celebration, hosted by Precinct One Commissioner El Franco Lee, will be held from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Nov. 17 at Reliant Center.

The event is free for senior citizens 55 years and older who live in Precinct One. Organizers are asking that senior citizens bring nonperishable food items

Seniors Holiday Celebration

WHEN: 10 a.m.—1 p.m. Nov. 17
WHERE: Reliant Center
WHO: Precinct One residents 55 years and older

that will be donated to feed those who are less fortunate.

The event offers a holiday meal, dancing and socializing.

It started in 1992 with about 200 seniors who gathered at Tom Bass Park Community Center. In recent years, about 3,000 have attended the Celebration at Reliant Center.

If you plan to attend this year, remember there's a \$10 parking fee for each personal vehicle that enters Reliant Park.

Registration being accepted for creative writing classes

Registration is being accepted for the Inprint Seniors Memoir Workshops at Finnigan and Lincoln parks. Instructors from Inprint, whose mission is to inspire readers and writers, teach the creative writing classes. For registration information, call Finnigan Park at 713-678-7385 and Lincoln Park at 281-445-1617.

Halls Bayou study seeks to relieve flooding and add green space

The Harris County Flood Control District held a public meeting Oct. 25 to provide information about “Halls Ahead,” an accelerated flood damage reduction study within the Halls Bayou watershed.

The meeting’s purpose was to inform the public about the study and solicit feedback. Two other meetings will be held in the next 12 months.

Displays relating to the study will be available at future meetings. Flood Control District representatives and their consultants will provide information and answer questions. No formal, oral presentation is planned, and all information will be provided in English and Spanish.

Halls Ahead is a flood-

damage reduction study within the Halls Bayou watershed that will incorporate community needs and interests.

Officials welcome comments on issues such as:

- What is your experience with flooding in the Halls Bayou watershed?
- What urban enhancements and amenities do you envision within the Halls Bayou watershed?

Halls Bayou, a tributary of Greens Bayou, is in north-central Harris County. Approximately 20 miles in length, Halls Bayou collects stormwater from the Veterans Memorial Drive area flowing east until it joins Greens Bayou at the City of Houston’s Brock Park.

Flooding along Halls

Bayou is a persistent hazard for area residents, businesses and property owners. Flooding has been documented at least 14 times since 1970.

During Tropical Storm Allison in 2001, for example, more than 13,000 homes in the Halls Bayou watershed flooded, and about 1,400 homes were damaged by flooding during Hurricane Ike in 2008.

During a 12-month period that started in August, a team of experts in fluvial geomorphology and in hydrology, urban designers, environmental scientists and civil engineers began creating a flood-damage reduction plan that incorporates sustainable design principles and considers en-



Flood Control District’s public hearings

When: To be announced

What: Halls Bayou flood damage reduction study

Submit feedback: www.hallsahead.org or e-mail hallsahead@hcfcd.org

hancement of the urban and natural environment. tion projects that can be designed and implemented, as funding allows.

While some projects already have been constructed in this watershed, this study will identify additional measures that can be implemented to further reduce flooding risks and damages.

Main objectives are to identify:

- Flood damage reduc-

- Opportunities for urban enhancements and neighborhood-friendly amenities — such as trails, parks and habitat restoration — that may be implemented through partnerships with community, civic or other organizations.

Redistricting: Continued from page 1

prior districts and avoiding contests between incumbents.

Harris County had a 20 percent population growth. But the growth was uneven in the four precincts.

With Harris County’s 2010 population at about 4 million, each precinct must have about 1 million people.

Precincts One and Two were underpopulated. Therefore, for the most part, neighborhoods in Precincts Three and Four had to be shifted to the underpopulated districts. Precinct One and Two did exchange some areas.

Redistricting requirements call the four commissioners’ precincts to be contiguous and reasonably compact. Also, to the extent possible, the precincts

should be based on existing composition of the precincts.

To the extent possible, the redistricting plan should use identifiable geographic boundaries as precinct boundaries, preserve natural historical boundaries, recognize identifiable communities of interest in a single precinct and avoid splitting neighborhoods.

Also, the Voting Rights Act requires the governmental unit to establish that any proposed voting change “does not have the purpose and will not have the effect of denying or abridging the right to vote on account of race or color or membership in a language minority group.”

The Justice Department may refuse to pre-clear a redistricting plan if it would lead to retrogression of minority voters. The de-

Harris County Maintained Parks

Park Name	From Pct	To Pct	Total acres
Bill Crowley	1	2	30
Dow One	1	2	9
Gerber	1	2	1.5
Pep Mueller	1	2	14.6
Gene Green Beltway 8	2	1	230.1
Crosby	4	2	46
Crosby Sports Complex	4	2	13
I.T. May	4	2	69
Kuykendahl Road	4	1	106.6

partment will look at whether the redistricting plan causes minority voting opportunities to diminish from what existed under the immediately preceding plan.

Precinct One will lose Bill Crowley, Dow One, Gerber and Pep Mueller parks. Precinct One will gain Gene Green Beltway 8 and Kuykendahl Road parks.

If the plan submitted by Commissioners Court is approved, it would mean some of the county facilities — such as parks, librar-

Precinct One construction projects

- The construction project on **Hughes Road** from Sageblossom to the Pearland city limits has been completed. The work along the .68-mile portion of Hughes included a four-lane, divided, concrete roadway along with two 119-foot bridges over the Harris County Flood Control District drainage ditch.
- Plans are under way to improve a one-mile stretch of **West Montgomery Road** from Gulf Bank to West Mount Houston Road. The work involves converting the two-lane West Montgomery to a four-lane, divided, concrete roadway with storm sewers.
- Construction of a right-turn lane on **Black Hawk** northbound at Beltway 8 has been completed. Last year, a left-turn lane was installed at that intersection.
- A .45-mile section of **South Gessner** at Beltway 8 has been reconstructed. The four-lane, concrete roadway was reconstructed and a new traffic signal was added. This work was done in conjunction with Fort Bend County and Missouri City, which managed the project.
- Workers have completed the widening of **Stafford/Staffordshire Road** (Riceville School Road) from Beltway 8 to the Fort Bend County line. The work involved widening the two-lane asphalt road to a four-lane, concrete street. The cost of this project is shared by the Texas Department of Transportation and the City of Stafford, which is managing the project.



Workers, above, put the finishing touches on the Hughes Road project from Sageblossom to the Pearland city limits. A crew, right, waters the freshly sodded median east of the two bridges over a Harris County Flood Control District's drainage ditch.

Historic Harris County 1910 Courthouse re-opens for business

The historic Harris County 1910, replacing the previous courthouse that was as it is now officially called, was rededicated at an Aug. 23 ceremony.

The 1910 Courthouse at 301 Fannin now is being occupied by the state's 1st and 14th Courts of Appeals, which are using two historic two-level courtrooms for the first time since 1953. The appeals courts were previously located at South Texas College of Law.

In March 2003, Commissioners Court authorized a master preservation plan that was submitted to the Texas Historical Commission, which would define the condition of the courthouse and propose a scope of work to restore the building's exterior and interior to their 1910 conditions. The commission provided \$5.5 million in grant funds.

Exterior work included restoring the dome, installing wood-frame windows, and reconstructing the monumental staircases to the second floor entrances on Fannin and San Jacinto.

Interior work involved removing the suspended corridor ceilings and restoring the ornamental plaster detailing, installing marble in the corridors and the courtrooms, reopening the double stairways on the upper levels to public view, restoring the two-level courtrooms to the full height, reopening the center rotunda though level 6, and installing a shallow-domed, stained-glass skylight at the top of the open rotunda.



Commissioner El Franco Lee, second from right, joins Stan Graves with the Texas Historical Commission, County Judge Ed Emmett and Commissioner Jack Morman in showing the Harris County 1910 Courthouse rededication plaque.

“This building is one of the last and, what I think, is the best courthouses of that era,” said retired state District Judge Mark Davidson, the rededication ceremony's master of ceremonies.

Street Olympics celebrates 25 years of helping Houston-area youth

Stephanie Gale, Jessica Elkins and Desirae Ramirez, all 16, walked confidently into Fonde Recreation Center to the sound of basketballs bouncing off the hardwood floor as other teams warmed up for the **3-on-3 Basketball Tournament**.

Most of the male and female teams in the two-day tournament – one of three marquee events the Precinct One Harris County Street Olympics hosts in the summer – had four players. There were only three for this team that calls itself the Pals of Pasadena.

“We learned how to be a team, not just one individual,” Ramirez said. “It takes all three of us.”

That – along with great shooting, ball-handlings and rebounding – was enough to win the Girls Division V championship on July 15.

Ramirez’s comments

echo just one of the reasons why Precinct One Harris County Commissioner El Franco Lee created the Street Olympics. It’s not just about athletics. The programs teach youth valuable lessons – such as teamwork – that they can use throughout life.

In celebrating its 25th year, the Street Olympics this summer continued to build upon its mission of implementing programs that provide training, support and resources that lead to healthy and productive lives for Houston-area youth.

The Street Olympics’ summer-only programs center on the **Summer Games**, which include **3-on-3 Basketball**, **Final Event** and **Bright Futures Fair**.

The **Discovery Camp** summer program at Deussen Park helps children learn about nature and the environment.



Stephanie Gale, left, Jessica Elkins and Desirae Ramirez, all 16, are all smiles after winning the 3-on-3 Basketball Tournament’s Girls Division V championship.

Also, there are the Learn-to-Swim sessions and competitive swimming components of the **Harris County Aquatics Program** (HCAP). HCAP hosts **Splashdown** – a friendly competition between Learn-to-Swim participants from eight locations – at the Harris County Aquatics Center.

Street Olympics’ programs, which reach about 10,000 youth and young adults annually, continue

year-round with HCAP competitive swimming; the **Traveling Naturalist Program** that helps children to learn about nature and the environment; and the **Northeast Adolescent Program** – a 20-year partnership with Baylor College of Medicine, Houston and Aldine school districts, and the Harris County Hospital District who team up to offer free clinics for teens and young adults.

In **3-on-3 Basketball** this summer, about 400 boys and girls ages 7 to 17 initially played in the five-week preliminary rounds at countywide neighborhood agencies’ sites. About 280 boys and girls representing 70 teams earned bids to the tournament July 14 and 15.

“I think it’s fun,” Faith Guevara, 11, said. “I think I can be a basketball player so I can become a pro.”

At **Splashdown**, about 150 swimmers competed for ribbons on July 31.

“I learned that winning

isn’t always everything,” said Walter Harrison, 11, a first-year swimmer who trained at HCAP’s Kashmere High School location. “Sometimes it’s just about having fun.”

On Aug. 5, the **Final Event** took place in Reliant Arena. About 2,200 youth competed for gold, silver and bronze medals in 12 traditional “street” sports like foot racing, jacks and Frisbee accuracy.

To qualify for the **Final Event**, about 3,500 athletes competed with their peers at about 40 participating agencies.

Montie Beach Park athlete Rudy Messa, 9, who won third place in hopscotch for his age group, had a greater appreciation for the competition after vying against students from around the Houston area.

“Hopscotch is harder than I thought,” he conceded. “There were more challenging people than the people I competed with (at Montie Beach).”



Lucy Marshall, foreground, and Eric Burton assist participants at the Precinct One Horticulture Department’s booth at Bright Futures Fair, which provides educational, safety and nutritional information. The purpose of this booth was to educate children on gardening. The children were given plants to grow at home.

Harris County Precinct One
 El Franco Lee, Commissioner
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Precinct One Parks' Reservations

All reservations are scheduled on a first-come, first-served basis. Please read the park rules and regulations for reserving pavilions and community buildings prior to making reservations. This information can be found on our website at www.hctx.net/comm_lee/parks.htm.

Refer to the following schedule when making 2012 reservations:

Reservations for the months:	Reservations will be accepted on or after:
Jan. 2012 – March 2012	Monday, Nov. 14, 2011
April 2012 – June 2012	Monday, Jan. 9, 2012
July 2012 – Sept. 2012	Wednesday, March 14, 2012
Oct. 2012 – Dec. 2012	Wednesday, May 9, 2012

Our reservations office is open 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. We can be reached at 713-440-1587.



PARADE OF OLYMPIANS: Pasadena Boys & Girls Club youth carry their banner to help mark the 25th anniversary of the Harris County Street Olympics' Final Event on Aug. 5. **See story on Page 7.**

PRECINCT ONE SITES and PHONE NUMBERS

REGIONAL OFFICES

El Rio Service Center	713.991.6881
Downtown Office	713.755.6111
El Camino Office Annex	713.741.1096
Kashmere Office "Annex 36"	713.675.0004
Leland Office "Annex 31"	713.697.1104
Neartown Office "Annex 1"	713.755.9300
Hardy Service Center	281.820.5151

COMMUNITY CENTERS

Christia Adair Community Center	713.991.6881
Tom Bass Community Center	713-733.3717
Challenger Seven Learning Center	281.332.5157
Deussen Seniors Center	281.454.4108
EFL Community Center	281.464.9708
Finnigan Community Center	713.678.7385
Hardy Seniors Center	281.260.6772
Barbara Jordan Community Center	281.591.6951
Kashmere Office "Annex 36"	713-675.0004
Lincoln Park Community Center	281.445.1617
"Pep Mueller" Community Center	281.591.6951
YET Center @ Finnigan Park	713.676.0519

PROGRAM INFORMATION

Aquatics Program	713.748.7333
Discovery Camp Program	281.332.5157
Northeast Adolescent Program	713.673.1655
Seniors Program	713-733.3717
Street Olympics Summer Games	713.741.0851