



ONE TO ONE

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

Holiday Celebration attracts 2,800 seniors to Reliant Center

Not many songs – if any – kept Brenda Hubbard in her seat at Reliant Center. For about three hours, she stayed in step with the beat while line dancing on the concrete floor.

“I like to get down,” Hubbard said as she rushed to catch a Precinct One bus at the end of the event. “And I had a great time.”

And she wasn’t alone.

Throughout the Seniors’ Holiday Celebration sponsored by Precinct One Commissioner El Franco Lee, the music was playing, the dance floor was crowded and the noise from the incessant chatter and laughter was almost deafening. To top it off, the guests were served a holiday meal that included turkey, dressing and other trimmings.

Organizers said the November event was the biggest in the his-



TO THE LEFT: Line dancing was one of the many highlights at the Seniors’ Holiday Celebration at Reliant Center in November. The 2,800 seniors from Precinct One also ate a holiday meal.

tory of the 17-year-old celebration 2,800.

that started at Tom Bass Park Community Center. It has grown from about 200 seniors to about 300

Margie Piper said she enjoyed meeting different people. “I don’t dance,” she said while seated at her table near the stage, “but I love to watch them.”

She and others agree that the event is a fun outing for people who often don’t do much but sit at home.

Margaret Loggins, who was sitting at the table with Piper, said she’s watched the event grow in numbers during the six years she has participated. “I like the fact that senior citizens are moving around and dancing and doing things rather than just sitting at home,” she said.

In the waning minutes, two-year attendee Wilbert Waddell chatted with people as if he did not want the music to stop.

“I like mingling with the people,” Waddell said. “All of them

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GETTING DOWN: G. Allen Mack, right, sings with Bernadette Mitchell in the musical drama “Rockin’ and Rollin’ Seniors Speak their Minds.”

Drama program provides seniors a voice in society

Sharon Harrison’s emphatic demand for a seniors’ bailout always receives overwhelming approval from her audience. Of course, as the old adage goes, she’s preaching to the choir.

“I’ve been looking at the news and reading the newspapers. All these big corporations want a ‘bailout.’ ... I wish somebody would bail us seniors out,” Harrison says during a monologue that she delivers to a mostly elderly audience.

This takes place in yet another chapter of Precinct One’s Senior Citizens’ Dance and Drama Program under the direction of famed playwright Thomas Meloncon. Harrison and about 29 other seniors – whose ages range from 63 to 84 – are the cast for Meloncon’s

latest musical drama called “Rockin’ and Rollin’ Seniors Speak their Minds.”

That they do when they delve into topics about economics, active lifestyles and the respect they deserve from the younger generation. They use an array of talents that consist of singing, dancing, poetry, dramatic monologues and vignettes.

“They told the truth,” said Edward Davis, a senior citizen who watched the musical drama at Tom Bass Community Center in October. “You are never too old to do what you want to do.”

Meloncon, who has written several plays that have been performed locally and nationally, has composed eight plays for the seniors. He is assisted by dance coordinator

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Notes from Commissioner El Franco Lee

Comments on past and future activities

Happy New Year

Let me take this moment to wish you a productive new year. As you all know, the recession has had a tremendous impact on everybody, including us in county government. We are expecting revenues to be flat again this year. However, I want to assure you that Harris County, in particular Precinct One, will continue to provide quality service to our residents. In Precinct One, we will continue to work hard to give you the services by which you have become accustomed to receiving at our parks, which are ranked among the best in the county. We will make sure that necessary road projects, including maintenance on existing roadways, are completed to improve mobility. Also, flood-related projects will be continued to protect people and property, especially those in flood-prone areas. So, in essence, we are watching the county budget closely, but are doing so with the taxpayer in mind.

Be Counted Again in 2010

As always, I'm constantly urging you to actively participate in the governmental process. On that note, with some recognized challenges, I want to emphasize the importance of filling out and mailing back the census forms. The results of the once-a-decade census will be used to draw congressional districts and to dole out Electoral College votes to the states. Also, Congress uses the figures to distribute more than \$400 billion each year in federal aid to states. The 10-question forms, the shortest in the history of the census, will arrive in the mail March 15-17. Remember, your participation means a lot to the State of Texas and Harris County.

Harris County Toll Road Authority Projects

People who utilize the Hardy Toll Road can look forward to a direct route that connects the toll road at Loop 610 to downtown. The project is being designed to construct a four-mile, four-lane tollway that will take you in and out of downtown.

In another HCTRA project, a preliminary study is under way to build a 26-mile tollway within the Texas 288 right-of-way to connect U.S. 59 and the proposed Grand Parkway. Eleven miles of the project are in Precinct One.

Harris County Flood Control Projects

The Harris County Flood Control District plans to widen and deepen about 3 miles of Hunting Bayou from U.S. 59 to North Wayside. When completed, more than 5,000 homes and businesses in the Kashmere and Liberty Gardens areas can expect a reduced risk of flooding. The project also includes excavating a 75-acre storm-water detention site just north of Homestead. To accommodate the project, about 20 bridges will be modified or replaced.

Also, the Flood Control District has awarded contracts to replace two bridges over Sims Bayou – the Law Park pedestrian bridge near Mykawa Road and Law Park, and the White Heather bridge between West Orem and West Fuqua. The replacements are necessary for the U.S. Army Corps to widen the channel along Sims Bayou from the Houston Ship Channel to Croquet Street. The White Heather bridge replacement project is expected to be completed in 350 days.

Upcoming Precinct One Events

Easter egg hunts

Precinct One will have two Easter egg hunts March 27 for children up to age 12.

The Community Picnic and Easter Egg Hunts will be held at Judson Robinson Sr. Park at 1422 Ledwicke in Pleasantville, and at El Franco Lee Park at 9500 Hall Road.

The event at Judson Robinson Park will be held from 11 a.m. to noon, with the Easter Egg hunt at 11:30 a.m.

EFL Park festivities take place from 1-3 p.m., with the egg hunt starting at 2 p.m.

HazMobile Pick-up

The Harris County HazMobile will be at the Precinct One North Service Center from 9 a.m. to noon June 26 to collect household hazardous waste.

Officials will collect materials from about 125 vehicles on a first-come-first-served basis at 11901 W. Hardy Road in Houston. The items include pesticides and fertilizers; paint-related products; used oil and filters; and batteries. For more information, call 281-560-6200.



LUCKY WINNER: Fernando Garcia, 13, left, his sister, Mary, 7, and mother, Mary, pose with Commissioner El Franco Lee after Fernando won a laptop computer drawing at a back-to-school fair in August. See story **Page 7**.

Precinct 1 programs offer youth learning atmosphere during and after school



NEW FACE: Naturalist Joanna Moody, left, draws a butterfly on Raven Gamble's face during an after-school program at Lincoln Park.

Seven-year-old Raven Gamble undoubtedly had a lot of energy to burn after eight hours of sitting in an Osborne Elementary School class.

But less than an hour after school, Raven didn't move an inch in her chair even though some fellow students were exercising in an organized drill at the Lincoln Park Community Center's after-school program. She sat patiently while Precinct One naturalist Joanna Moody painted a butterfly on her face.

"I like the program," Raven said, showing off her new look that October afternoon. "We play games a lot (inside) and we get to go outside and play a bunch of games."

For the 75 elementary school students who participate in the Precinct One after-school program, having fun is perhaps the first thing on their minds when they arrive at the community center. However, the program isn't all about games.

The Community Center in Acres Homes is one of three Precinct One locations that offer – in conjunction with other partners – educational and recreational activities for students during and after school.

Houston, Aldine and Klein school districts' students receive help with their homework and tutorials at Lincoln Park. They participate in physical activities, watch movies, eat an afternoon meal provided by the Houston Food Bank, work in the computer lab and take monthly field trips. They also do community service work.

Other locations

Precinct One, along with the Boys and Girls Clubs of Greater Houston, operates an after-school program at the NFL Youth Education Town (YET) at Finnigan Park in the Fifth Ward. Also, the Challenger Seven Learning Center in the Clear Lake area provides learning activities for stu-

dents both at the site and at other locations, including schools.

Shawn Rouege, Branch Director for NFL YET Boys and Girls Club at Finnigan Park, said the agency assists about 175 students 7 to 17 years old (18 if they are still in high school).

The five-core program consists of parent and leadership development; education and career development; health and life skills; arts; and sports, fitness and recreation.

Learning about nature

Meanwhile, at the Challenger Seven Learning Center, about 320 students from YET and Lincoln are participating this spring semester in an after-school program called Animals in Motion, which will explore animals' movements. The students will do experiments and see live animals to illustrate the different themes of each class.

Also, the center has an ongoing Traveling Naturalist program that educates more than 10,000 children in Houston, Clear Creek, Aldine, Pasadena, Sheldon, North Forest and Klein school districts.

In addition, the Traveling Naturalist programs are requested by

organizations, after-school centers and charter schools. In the program, a naturalist from the learning center travels to the location and talks to students about animal life.

The learning center hosts student field trips to enrich their knowledge of the environment.

Last semester, Kelso Elementary School fifth-graders who visited the learning center received an up-close lesson about marine life in the wetlands as well as a Traveling Naturalist performance.

"I'm excited because I saw animals," said Samantha Marquez, 11. "And I got to play. And I caught a fish."

Stephen Wilborn, teacher and department chair for Kelso's fifth grade, said the field trip was an excellent learning experience for the students. It also reinforces the teachers' lessons, he said.

"Sometimes kids get to see the concept in the classroom," he said, "but they never get to see the concept played out in the real world. This activity here allows them to connect the two."

The trip was partially funded by a grant from the America's Promise Alliance.



CRUSTACEAN CLASS: Ana Aita-Cherry, a naturalist, left, shows Kelso Elementary students a crawfish during a lesson on marine life in wetlands at Challenger Seven Memorial Park.

Various activities attract seniors to 'family' environment at EFL center

Charlotte Hall and Sherry Tacquard come together usually five days a week as "family" – so to speak – to participate in activities at the El Franco Lee (EFL) Community Center.

They are among the citizens who each day enjoy exercise, field trips and other activities at Harris County Precinct One's newest seniors' center, which opened last March. Oh, and don't forget the camaraderie.

"I can't tell you how happy I am that we got this Community Center," Hall said. "It's a true blessing. The people here really care for you. It's like a family."



Charlotte Hall



Sherry Tacquard

cising, yoga and tai chi. "We come up here to visit with the people."

Between those visits there are a lot of activities to keep physically fit or artistically creative. The activities include aerobics, beading, ballroom dancing, ceramics, crafts, gentle yoga and scrapbooking. There's also a Cardio Room with exercise equipment.

Six senior centers

The EFL Community Center is one of six Precinct One facilities where seniors come for programs. Throughout the year, seniors enjoy activities and social events that include field trips.

At EFL, one activity that's growing in popularity is the ballroom dancing class taught by husband-and-wife team Jerry and Edith Sanford.

Lewis Hendrix, who attends the class every Tuesday, said he became interested in dancing four years ago after watching the movie "Shall We Dance?" At that time, he enrolled in a Fred Astair



TEACHERS' APPROVAL: Lewis Hendrix, right, turns Gloria DePaoli, while teachers Edith, left, and Jerry Sanford offer instructions in the proper dance techniques. The Sanfords teach a ballroom dancing class for seniors each Tuesday at El Franco Lee Community Center.

Keeping busy

On a recent morning, absent of activities at the time, Hall, Tacquard and about four other women sat at a table sipping coffee and talking. About an hour later, an arts and crafts class kicked off.

"I'm here five days a week," said Tacquard, who participates in aerobic walking, treadmill exer-

Dance Studio class, he said, and was later urged to go into competition.

He said he started dancing to relieve stress. But the competition created more stress.

"And that sort of turned me off," he said. "So I went out of competition and into more social dancing. It's a lot more fun."

SENIOR CENTER LOCATIONS

Deussen Park, 12303 Sonnier
El Franco Lee Park, 9500 Hall
Finnigan Park, 4900 Providence
Hardy Senior Center, 11901 W. Hardy Rd.
Lincoln Park, 979 Grenshaw
Tom Bass Park, 15108 Cullen

CELEBRATION: Continued from page 1

are my good friends."

Those who attended also thought about others who are less fortunate. Many seniors brought nonperishable food that later was donated to the Cathedral Health & Outreach Ministries, which feeds the homeless and less fortunate at its downtown facility.

And even though food is a big part of any holiday celebration, it obviously played second fiddle to Hubbard's festivities. While most were eating, she remained on the dance floor.

"I barely ate," she conceded. "I was dancing so hard."



NONSTOP GROOVE: Brenda Hubbard dances at the Seniors' Holiday Celebration.

DRAMA: Continued from page 1

Otha Barnes and music coordinator G. Allen Mack. The plays also are performed for seniors in unincorporated Harris County.

The main focus, he said, is to involve seniors in the performing arts as a vehicle to raise awareness about health, social issues, family and other matters. Performing arts is a way

to get seniors involved physically and mentally, he said.

"One of the comments that we get all the time from other seniors is, 'Are you sure that they are seniors?' They question whether they are teenagers in makeup," he said.

To Audition

Call the Tom Bass Senior Center: 713-733-3717.



BAILOUT PLEA: Sharon Harrison delivers her senior's bailout monologue.

PARK UPDATES

Projects will spruce Precinct One parks For year-round use

Precinct One has a variety of park projects — from removing trees to building a new office — under way or planned in order to improve facilities. Here's what's going on:

Precinct One workers are building a 40-by-35-foot office building in **Randolph Park**.

Workers have started removing the invasive species of trees known as "tallow trees" from **Challenger Seven Memorial Park**. Tallow trees have taken over parkland that once was open prairie with native grasses. They also have invaded the wetlands used by migratory and native birds.

Stocking ponds

The ponds at **Tom Bass Regional I and III, Eisenhower, El Franco Lee and Challenger Seven Memorial** parks are being restocked with big-mouth bass, perch and catfish. Also, Precinct One has entered into an agreement with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's stocking program to annually provide fish that include rainbow trout at **Tom Bass III and Eisenhower**.

Tree Replacement

Precinct One's Horticulture Department is replacing trees lost during Hurricane Ike with young live oak, pine and water oak species. The majority of the tree damage or loss was in the north region parks: **Deussen and Crowley**.

Plans are under way for construction of a 34-space, concrete parking lot in **Dixie Farm Road Park**.

Bids are being accepted to install a fitness court and exer-



Precinct One workers construct an office building at Randolph Park.



Don Sehlke, left, Precinct One's North Regional Parks Manager, and Lee Schneider with Greenfield Sport Parks inspect one of the 18 pieces of exercise equipment installed at Crowley Park. The equipment was bought with a grant from ACHIEVE.



Kamil Smith, foreground, and her father, Ronald, were among the people who participated in the Fish Fest at Challenger Seven Memorial Park.

Park reservations and information

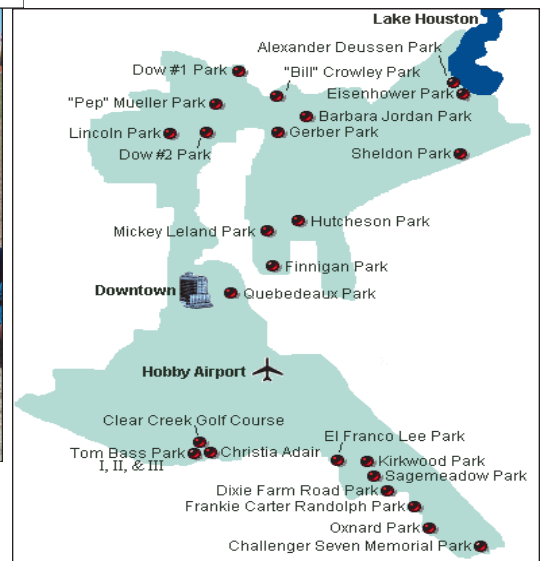
Precinct One accepts reservations for pavilions and community buildings.

For reservations and information about north parks, please call 281-591-6951.

For the south parks, call 713-440-1587. Also, check out the Parks Division online at www.co.harris.tx.us/comm_lee/parks.htm.



Horticulturalists Darryl Cornwell, left, and Marcia Holland inspect trees that were donated by the Harris County Toll Road Authority. The trees will be planted in Precinct One parks.



CONSTRUCTION UPDATES



Precinct One projects in the 2000's: The El Franco Lee Community Center, above, which offers activities for seniors and others in the south-east, opened in 2009. The Mickey Leland Memorial Park, below top left, is a tribute to the late congressman. The boardwalk at Challenger Seven Memorial Park, below bottom left, attracts nature lovers. Below top right, the NFL Youth Education Town at Finnigan Park offers a variety of activities for youth. The Lincoln Community Center, below bottom right, has various activities for youth and seniors at Lincoln Park.



Construction last decade brings Park and road improvements

In the 2000 decade, Precinct One residents benefited from millions of dollars in construction of quality-of-life projects ranging from major roads to new park buildings.

The road and bridge construction has improved mobility by adding new roadways as well as lanes to existing thoroughfares.

The construction and improvements to community centers have enhanced Commissioner El Franco Lee's mission to provide educational, social and recreational activities to all citizens, especially youth and seniors.

The precinct has added green space, and improved picnic and recreational facilities. In addition, more exercise trails have been added.



PRECINCT ONE ROAD PROJECTS	Completed
W. Lake Houston southbound lane from county line south to Beltway 8	2001
Orem Dr, Phase I from Foxton to Martin L. King	2002
Homestead from Green Bayou to E. Mount Houston	2004
Beamer Road northbound from South Canyon to Scarsdale	2004
C. E. King Parkway from U.S. 90 north to Tidwell	2006
Orem Phase II Scarsdale south to Dixie Farm	2006
Scarsdale from Clear Creek to Sageking	2007
Orem Phase III from Kirby to Sims Bayou	2007
Blackhawk from Scarsdale to Dixie Farm	2007
South Belt Fitness Court	2008
Dixie Farm Rd. from Clear Creek to Beamer	2008
El Dorado from Beamer to Blackhawk	2009

PRECINCT ONE PARK PROJECTS	Completed
Mickey Leeland Memorial Park	2000
Lincoln Park Community Center rehabilitated	2004
NFL Youth Education Town facility	2004
Improved Challenger Seven Memorial Park Learning Center with demonstration wetland and boardwalk	2007
Replaced lighting poles and fixtures for ball fields at Dow I and Dow II Parks.	2008
Replaced lighting poles and fixtures for ball fields at Sheldon Park	2008
Replaced four restrooms and 17 pavilions, and added new restroom at Deussen Park	2008
Opened El Franco Lee Park featuring a community center, 300-acre wetland and recreational fields	2009

Parents and students get free supplies at 2 back-to-school fairs

About 154 families who participated in the Precinct One and Julia C. Hester House Holiday Fair received back-to-school supplies, school uniform vouchers and Fiesta gift cards to purchase items for a holiday meal.

The Dec. 12 fair – sponsored by Precinct One, Hester House, America's Promise Alliance and the Houston Independent School District – helped families with children at Atherton Elementary. Also available at the Hester House, where the fair was held, were health screenings.

Holiday cheers

"It brings a lot of cheer and a lot of happiness to those kids who normally probably wouldn't get anything (for Christmas)," said Albert Lemons, the principal at Atherton, which is across the street from the Hester House.

Lemons and Jennifer Holmes, the Hester House executive director, said such programs that pro-

vide food and clothing for the families actually improve student achievement.

Focus on education

"Just knowing they get to go back to school with supplies and new uniforms – and their family had a nice holiday meal – really helps them keep their attention focused on what they really need to focus on: the learning process," said Holmes, whose nonprofit agency provides after-school programs for students.

Thankful Parents

The parents agree.

"It helps a whole lot," Vanessa Nash said. "I really appreciate it. And it helps them with their education."

Raymond Cedillo, who brought Nadia Hernandez, 6, said: "It's a lot of help for everybody. I'm proud of it."



ALL ABOUT LEARNING: Raymond Cedillo, left, and Nadia Hernandez, 6, accept school supplies and information at the Precinct One and Julia C. Hester House Holiday Fair. About 154 families with students at Atherton Elementary received supplies, Fiesta gift cards for turkey dinners and uniform vouchers.



NEW BACKPACKS: Crystal Thomas' three children – Xavier, 5, left, Kevin, 7, and Tyesha, 10 – admire their new backpacks.

Summer event provides backpacks and supplies

Crystal Thomas' three children excitedly gathered around her to get their first look at the new backpacks that draped from their mother's shoulders.

But this typical August ritual didn't take place in the back-to-school shopping crowds in a mall or a department store. The Thomas family, instead, was among the hundreds of parents and children who participated in the Harris County Precinct One Back to School Fair with a Flair at Tom Bass Regional III Park, where parents were given free school supplies and health exams.

"We were stretching pennies trying to see how we were going to afford to get everybody the things they really need – uniforms for everybody," said Thomas, whose children Xavier, Tyesha and Kevin were at her side. "They are really expen-

sive and right now we are in a recession."

The event, held Aug. 12, was sponsored by Precinct One, America's Promise Alliance and the Houston Independent School District. In addition to free backpacks and uniform vouchers, the event also featured free immunizations, health screening as well as free popcorn and snow cones. There were also drawings for a laptop computer, bicycle and other goodies.

Demetra Jones, Precinct One's human resources and risk manager, said more than 1,700 backpacks and a total of \$1,200 in uniform vouchers were given away. Also, 125 families received immunizations.

"Basically they are helping out the parents that need to be helped," Oris Oliver said as his children – Rickey, 3, Joyce, 6, Toni, 8, Francis, 9, and Iris, 11 – ate popcorn and snow cones.

HEAVY TRASH PICKUP

PICK UP	RAIN-OUT	COMMUNITY
March 13	March 20	Heather Glen Civic Club
April 10	April 17	Northline Terrace Civic Club
April 24	May 1	Parkway Community
May 15	May 22	Aldine High Meadows N. Civic
June 5	June 12	N. Houston Heights
July 17	July 24	Airline Improvement District
July 31	Aug. 7	Green Forest Civic Club
Aug. 14	Aug. 21	Colonial Hills Civic Club
Sept. 11	Sept. 18	Parkwood Estates/ Sequoia Estates
Sept. 25	Oct. 2	Castlewood/Fairgreen CIA
Oct. 9	Oct. 16	Sherwood/Benton/ Inwood Place

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

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