



ONE TO ONE

ISSUE NO. 1 • AUGUST 2009 • SOUTH

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

Indoor pool is home field for HCAP's swimming events

Two hundred students made the Harris County Aquatics Center's first summer season a big splash when they dipped into the pool to participate in the Learn-to-Swim program.

And that number was only a drop in the water when you add the hundreds of others who took advantage of similar programs sponsored by the Harris County Aquatics Programs. Precinct One Commissioner El Franco Lee started the program in 1992 to develop leadership and teamwork skills for youths. It's an integral part of the Precinct One summer enrichment program.



Instructor Khefren Savannah, left, shows students a swim stroke.

The HCAP uses facilities in Houston and Aldine school districts, and Lincoln Park to provide structured swimming programs.

This year, however, much of

the excitement was focused on the April opening of the Aquatics Center, a 22,000-square-foot indoor pool facility with eight 25-yard competitive lanes and three

practice/training lanes. The pool is named in honor of "Coach" Johnnie Means, the HCAP director and head coach.

The pool is climate controlled to allow year-round services. The complex is now the official home of the award-winning Mighty Dolphins swim team, which over the years has produced swimmers who have competed in national competition.

"This is the first pool that we have built and that we control," Lee said. "This is the culmination of 17 years of hard work."

Said John Beaudion, the cen-

(Continued on page 3)

Students compete and learn in Summer Street Olympics programs

By ALLISON MARTIN

During the sweltering summer months, parents are facing the challenge of finding enriching activities for their children.

For some residents, the search ended with Harris County Precinct One's Street Olympics. About 5,000 boys and girls – ages 6 to 15 – are participating in Street Olympics. The Summer Games bolted out of the starting blocks June 5 with a torch-lighting ceremony at Mickey Leland Memorial Park and will culminate with the Final Event Aug. 7 at Reliant Center.

There's competition for popular sporting events such as basketball (dribble and free throw), and sprint races. Also, participants can compete in jacks, kickball, hop-

scotch, Frisbee accuracy, softball throw, jump rope and hula hoop.

"I like Street Olympics because I like playing basketball and it teaches us teamwork," said 12-year-old Gerald Thomas, who participates at Finigan Park.

Ongoing preliminaries

Boys and girls are now competing in the preliminary trials at about 90 locations that are operated by 43 participating agencies. The top contestants at the locations are eligible for the Finals.

"The best part each year is the Finals," said Yvette Chargois, who has been the Street Olympics board chairwoman for 22 years. "To see those 3,000 or so kids marching into Reliant, all smiling, is really awesome."



Darryl Brazil, 11, shoots a free throw as Kenon King rebounds.

Also, contestants and spectators will be treated to the Bright Futures Fair, featuring interactive booths with hands-on activities that emphasize health, safety and environmental awareness.

The children will explore nature and wildlife at Discov-

ery Camp, a summer program that takes place at Challenger Seven Memorial Park and at Alexander Deussen Park.

After the summer, the program becomes the Traveling Naturalist, bringing all the fun of Discovery Camp to class-

(Continued on page 3)



Notes from Commissioner El Franco Lee

Comments on past and future activities

Water Safety

The hot summer months are perfect for cooling off at the beach, the lake or a neighborhood pool. But I implore you to practice safety at all times to prevent tragic drownings, 17 of which have occurred so far this year in Harris County. According to the Department of Family and Protective Services, 79 children ages 17 and under have drowned in Texas – most of them occurring at swimming pools at private residences. The state agency says that June, when 30 deaths were recorded, is the worst month for child drownings since the Texas annual count began in 2005. In addition to watching your children closely around water, I also highly recommend that you enroll those who can't swim into a Learn-to-Swim program such as the one at our Harris County Precinct One Aquatics Program. Call the HCAP at 713-748-7333 for more information. Also, the city of Houston, in partnership with the American Red Cross, is providing swimming classes at various area pools. Call 713-526-8300 for details.

Hurricane Preparedness

Speaking of safety, remember that we are in the midst of hurricane season. And, as in most cases, safety starts with preparation. There are a number of resources that provide hurricane preparation lists, including the National Hurricane Center's Web site at www.nhc.noaa.gov. If you plan to ride out a storm, remember to get necessary supplies in advance such as gasoline for your vehicle, food and water, flashlights, batteries and radio. For those who prefer evacuation, please plan your routes and leave early enough to avoid traffic jams.

Toll Road Projects

Traveling along the northeast section of Beltway 8 in Precinct One will get easier in 2011, when additional toll lanes will be added. Construction on the section from U.S. 59 to just south of U.S. 90 – about half of it in Precinct One – will consist of three toll main lanes in each direction between the existing frontage roads with the ability to widen to four lanes when needed. Also, there will be a full-service, main-lane toll plaza between Tidwell and Little York, and 16 ramp plazas throughout the stretch.

In the southwest, another Beltway 8 construction project includes adding two main lanes in each direction within the existing frontage road from U.S. 59 south to Texas 288. Even though the roadway construction will be completed in 2011, the addition of toll equipment will push the completion date to early 2012.

Flood Relief

The Harris Flood Control District has completed the initial excavation of the Homestead Stormwater Detention Basin just north of Loop 610 between Homestead Road and Kirkpatrick. The initial phase, completed on May 5, called for excavating 27 of the 75 acres. The basin is one component of the recommended Hunting Bayou Federal Flood Reduction Project. Although not complete, the basin will provide some flood reduction benefit to residents along Hunting Bayou. My office will continue to work with the Flood Control District during the final design phase to include hike-and-bike trails and other park features.

On June 11, the Flood Control District completed the replacement of the Buffalo Speedway Bridge over Sims Bayou between West Orem and West Fuqua. North- and southbound lanes are now open for public use. The Buffalo Speedway bridge replacement project was number 16 of 21 bridge replacements for the Sims Bayou Federal Flood Reduction Project. I want to extend my sincere thanks to all residents for their patience and understanding during the construction.



The Harris County Hospital District in May opened a health center named in honor of Harris County Precinct One Commissioner El Franco Lee. Officially called the El Franco Lee Health Center, the 66,000-square-foot facility occupies 12 acres at 8901 Boone in southwest Houston. The \$13.9 million center, which started treating patients May 18, has a wide range of health care services, including pharmacy, primary care for adults and children, podiatry and psychiatry. It is in Commissioner Steve Radack's Precinct 3, and the commissioner recommended to the HCHD that the facility be named after Lee.

CHILDREN'S CORNER

Café is an oasis in a food desert

No fancy sign towers above this little-known, Fifth Ward eatery. And no well-dressed hostess escorts you to a table. Instead, the guests walk through the gym at Finnigan Park and enter the café doors near the basketball goal to the left.

Welcome to The Café at Finnigan Park, which organizers refer to as an oasis in the food desert that surrounds this low- to moderate-income community, where restaurants that serve nutritional meals are hard to find. The Café was created by the Harris County Street Olympics and other groups to provide youths and seniors an alternative to the mostly fried-food restaurants.

"So there is no place in this community you can go to have a wholesome, tasty, refreshing meal," David L. Benson, a senior manager for Precinct One Commissioner El Franco Lee, said at the Café's grand opening on June

25. "So what we are trying to be is an oasis in that food desert for our seniors and our young people."

During the weekdays this summer, the Café, with food provided by the Houston Food Bank, will serve 25 to 40 participating students from the Fifth Ward and Kashmere Gardens areas. They will be fed a lunch and snacks, and will take food home for themselves and their families during the week and over the weekends.

In addition, they will be exposed to musical, visual and spoken arts, including karaoke and open-mike sessions.

Change eating habits

At the grand opening, Commissioner Lee told about 50 people that many in the room are susceptible to high cholesterol, high blood pressure and diabetes in part because of eating habits.

"If you would just become



Sean Johnson, 14, foreground, Louis Levine, 15, left, and Devonte Lindsey, 16, dine and watch TV at The Café at Finnigan Park.

inquisitive about those things that are healthy for you and for your babies," he said, "we all will be better and the oasis will grow a lot bigger."

Seniors' serving time

Delores Jackson, who doesn't live in the area but frequently visits Finnigan Park, said it's a fabulous idea to make healthy meals available to senior citizens who often don't eat properly because they are cutting back on spending.

Seniors are served in the morning hours.

During lunch on July 7, the children ate sandwiches and some were glued to a big-screen TV, watching the King of Pop Michael Jackson's memorial.

But Tyvon Morris, 13, didn't get caught up in the emotional viewing. He focused more on his sandwich, orange and trail mix.

"It's good," he said of the program. "I like coming here."

Other partners in the project are the Frees Foundation, the Simmons Foundation, One Voice Texas and the United Way of Greater Houston.

Aquatics Center

(Continued from page 1)

ter's Learn-to-Swim director: "The main goal is to produce competitive swimmers. We'd love for all those little fellows over there to be competitive swimmers one day. But we recognize that you've got to first teach them how to swim before you can teach them the swim strokes."

On a hot June morning, instructors were doing just that.

About 10 students – some wading and others sitting on the side of pool with feet dangling in the water – listened to instructor Khefren Savannah explain how to kick their legs, stroke their arms and hold their heads. Their parents, meanwhile, sat patiently in the bleachers.

Jeannette Bowie, whose 13-



Lauren Bowie, 13, practices her kick at a swimming lesson.

year-old daughter, Lauren, was in the pool, praised the classes and the facility, which she says prevents the children from being in the 90-plus-degree temperature outside.

"Well," she said, "I think it's very beneficial. I think it gives

children an activity to participate in that's rewarding. It builds self-esteem in the children as well as confidence."

Lauren said she plans to pursue competitive swimming. For now, she's concentrating on the basics.

"I like it. I think it's cool and it's going to help me with my techniques," she said.

Aquatics Center officials are concentrating on youths this summer, Beaudion said, but there are plans later this year to add free classes for adult lap swimming, senior citizens' programs and water aerobics.

CONTACT HCAP

By phone: 713-748-7333

Online: hcap.streetolympics.org

Street Olympics

(Continued from page 1)



For more information, visit streetolympics.org or call 713-741-0851.

rooms throughout the county.

Street Olympics was founded as a nonprofit organization in 1987 by Harris County Precinct One Commissioner El Franco Lee.

The program has grown from the Summer Games to include the Harris County Aquatics Program, the Northeast Adolescents Program and Discovery Camp.

"It's all about getting the kids involved in recreational activities and teaching them skills in a fun, safe environment," said Brian Rego, director of the Summer Games.

SENIORS

O'Connor, others stay active in various Precinct One senior programs

Jeremiah O'Connor's roundtrip walk to the Hardy Senior Center covers two miles each of the three days he visits during the week. The real work-out comes from his activities at the center.

The 73-year-old O'Connor, whose slim body is his evidence, spends 20 min-

utes on the treadmill (he calls it the "dreadmill") and another 45 minutes doing aerobics.

"I feel good," he said. "The nice thing about here is that people are friendly. Everybody makes you feel comfortable."

He's among dozens of other seniors who take advantage of

free activities at Hardy and five other Harris County Precinct One programs.

They enjoy health and fitness activities, special events, arts and crafts, and transportation services for day trips. Each center also has a weight room.

Delsie Stoute, senior's program director for Harris County Precinct One Commissioner El Franco Lee, said the centers are the lifeline for the participants.

"It's somewhere they can go to fellowship and see people they've known from school," Stoute said.

At Lincoln Park, for example, Victor Burke worked on a dog he made in a ceramics class while his wife, Margarita, put the finishing touches on a large vase.

Meanwhile, at the Hardy Senior Center, the participants have taken on their own identity as the Peppy (Proud, Elated, Patient, Pleasant, Young-at-Heart) Bunch (Brave, Unselfish, Noble, Considerate, Happy).

"We have fellowship," said Geraldine Hinton Green, the cen-

ter's director. "I teach piano. We have some that come in for exercise and some just to drink coffee."

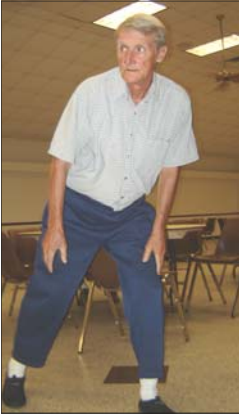
But, Green said, not all are as dedicated participants in the exercise program as O'Connor.

"If we check the rosters, sometimes he's the first one to sign in," she said. "You see him walking down the street and you know it's Jeremiah."

O'Connor, who also works out two days a week at a nearby facility in Precinct Two, said he hasn't always been an avid exerciser – conceding that he couldn't "walk across the room" after he gave up smoking and drinking at age 65.

He said that before he retired as a brick layer, he kept in shape just by doing the job. But after retirement at age 62, he eventually went from 160 pounds to 195. About eight years ago, he underwent a procedure where doctors had to clear an artery leading to his heart, he said.

"That's when I got scared and started exercising," he said.



Jeremiah O'Connor stretches during aerobics.



Victor Burke works on dog in a ceramics class at Lincoln Park.

FIND A CENTER NEAR YOU

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



4th OF JULY CELEBRATION: Harris County Commissioner El Franco Lee, center, reviews the program with one of about 230 senior citizens who attended the Independence Day Celebration on July 1. Seniors at EFL Community Center hosted the program. Participants from five other centers arrived by buses.

Food drive under way to assist homeless and poor families impacted by recession

Harris County Precinct One is conducting a food drive to replenish a nonprofit agency's pantry that has been hard hit by the recession.

People who wish to donate can drop off nonperishable food through Sept. 30 at Tom Bass Community Center at 15108 Cullen and at Hardy Senior Center at 11901 W. Hardy Road. The food will be given to the Cathedral Health & Outreach Ministries (CHOM), which provides social and health services to poor and homeless people.

Tracy Burnett, CHOM's executive director, said the food will

be used at the agency's day shelter called the Beacon.

Burnett said the 2-year-old CHOM had its busiest day ever July 19, when 789 people came through the doors. She said people are in need because they have been laid off from their jobs. Others who live from paycheck to paycheck are seeking food donations so they can save their money to pay rent.

"We have people who are walking through our doors who had never expected to walk through a shelter's doors," Burnett said. "That's why we are getting so busy."

PARK UPDATES

2 dog parks coming to Precinct 1

Two parks – one in the north and one in the south regions – will become dog friendly by the end of the year. Harris County Precinct One officials say dog parks will be constructed in Alexander Deussen and Tom Bass parks.

Both parks will include adjacent areas – separated by a fence – for large and small dogs. The large dog areas will be roughly 5 acres and the small canine areas will be about 1 acre.

“It’s not just a place for dogs to run around,” said Mike Cunningham, the county’s landscape architect. “It’s still a public park for people with dogs. It’s a very laid-back, very comfortable social environment.”

And that applies to dogs as well as their owners.

Each bark park, as they are commonly called, will have doggie bag stations, watering stations for pets and people, clear areas for dogs to run around unleashed, benches and even plastic fire hydrants.

Parking areas also will be constructed at each park.

“Precinct One Parks Department has committed to construct our first dog park facility at Deussen Park,” said Paul Mauricio, general superintendent of parks. “It will be a first for the parks department to construct a leash-free environment for dogs and a social setting for the owners.”

Tom Bass is a 292-acre park at 3452 Fellows in south Houston. Deussen, at 12303 Sonnier in north Houston, is a 309-acre park on Lake Houston.

Other future and completed park improvements include:

Sheldon Park users will be able to take advantage of new office/restroom building, concession space and pavilion.

Adair Park will have a new restroom building that will be constructed near the old one, which has a decaying roof.

A press box, restroom and concession facilities are being designed for **El Franco Lee Park**.

A .61-mile trail has been built through the wooded area in **Dixie Farm Park**. The trail connects to the existing 6-mile South Belt Hike and Bike Trail at the Harris County Flood Control detention basin.

Bark Park Rules



- *Park hours, 7 a.m. to dusk.
- *All dogs must be leashed when entering and leaving parks.
- *All dogs must have current rabies and all other vaccinations as required by the Harris county Public Health Department and should be healthy and free of contagious diseases and parasites.
- *Dogs must wear current license tags in parks.
- *Dog owners/handlers must carry a copy of their dogs' rabies vaccination certificate while in parks.
- *Dogs must be in view of and within voice control of their owners/handlers at all times.
- *Dog owners/handlers must carry a leash with them at all times while in the parks.
- *Dog owners/handlers are responsible for picking up and disposing of all of their dogs' waste.
- *Dogs in "heat" are prohibited.
- *Dogs showing any signs of aggression must be leashed and immediately removed from parks.
- *Dogs under 4 months of age are prohibited.
- *All dogs must be under the control of an adult and there is a limit of two dogs per adult at any time.
- *No food or drinks for dogs or humans allowed in the parks.
- *No bicycles, skateboards, rollerblades or any motorized vehicles.

Leadership Experience and Employment



Michael Emmers of Lamar University works in Precinct One.

This summer, 139 college and recently graduated high school students are participating in the Precinct One Leadership Experience Employment Program. Forty-five are working in Precinct One, 82 in other county departments and 12 in the private sector. Thanks to both public and private employers for participating and for giving these worthy students an opportunity in a professional environment.

Among the participating employers are: Constable Precinct One, County Auditor, County Attorney, County Clerk, County Library, District Clerk, Domestic Relations, Flood Control District, Pretrial Services, Architecture and Engineering, Facilities and Property Management, Right-of-Way, Homeland Security and Emergency Management, Tax Assessor-Collector, Management Services, Medical Examiner's Office, Mental Health Mental Retardation Authority, Protective Services for Children and Adults, Sheriff's Office, Hospital District, Port of Houston, Reliant Park and Allied Waste.

CONSTRUCTION UPDATES



Workers prepare to pour concrete on El Dorado Boulevard to improve traffic flow in the heavily congested Clear Lake area.

Road projects keep traffic flowing

South Region

The ongoing construction on **El Dorado Boulevard** from Beamer to Blackhawk involves a four-lane, divided road with storm sewer and traffic signal upgrades. The 2.5-mile stretch is expected to be completed in December.

Beamer Road from Dixie Farm Road to West Bay Area Boulevard will be improved to a four-lane, divided roadway. The project also includes traffic signal upgrades, and storm sewer and drainage improvements.

Cullen from Alameda-Genoa to Beltway 8 will be upgraded to a four-lane, divided roadway. The other construction on Cullen between Beltway 8 and Clear Creek

is being done by the Texas Department of Transportation.

North Region

The two-lane **Aldine Mail Route** from Airline to Aldine will be improved to a four-lane, divided road. The project also includes traffic signal upgrades. Construction along the 2.5-mile stretch is expected to start next summer.

Construction of a four-lane, divided roadway on **Imperial Valley** from Rankin to Harvest is expected to start in the first quarter of 2010.

Plans are under way to upgrade the two-lane **Ella Boulevard** from Little York to West Gulf Bank to a four-lane roadway with storm sewers.

HEAVY TRASH PICKUP

Aug. 8/Aug. 15: Aldine High Meadows South
Aug. 22/Aug. 29: Magnolia/Aldine Forest
Sept. 12/Sept. 19: Kenwood/Northington
Sept. 26/Oct. 3: Sherwood Place
Oct. 10/Oct. 17: Airline I.D. Sections 1 & 2



Grants fund water and sewer services for 2 Precinct One communities in Aldine area

Water and sewer systems are being constructed for two Precinct One subdivisions in the Aldine area.

In the North Houston Heights subdivision, a \$6 million system is expected to be completed in August. The 127 developed lots, including 103 homes, now use private water wells and septic tanks – many of which are old and failing.

In the Inwood Place subdivision, construction of a \$1.2 million water system to service more than 200 customers is

expected to be completed in March. After completion, the system will be transferred to the city of Houston, which will maintain it.

A \$1.4 million sewer system for Inwood Place is scheduled for construction next year.

In both neighborhoods, the work, supported by the East Aldine Management District, was made possible by federal grants administered by the Harris County Community Services Department.



DRAINAGE IMPROVEMENT: Randy Wright, left, and Kevin Demerson, help to install one of the culverts underneath a commercial driveway on Fellows Road in the south region. The project was completed in June. Below, a crew in the north region loads old culverts on a truck in preparation to replace them in different locations in the Castlewood subdivision. That project is expected to be completed in August.



PICTURES FROM THE PRECINCT



TO THE RIM: Kyla Braggs, 8, drives at the Street Olympics 3-on-3 Basketball tournament at Fonde Recreation Center July 9-10.



GOT NEXT?: Jackie Fillmore III, 10, serves to Mya Vaughns, 10, while other children at Lincoln Park wait their turn on the table.

CROSS-OVER: Commissioner El Franco Lee shows children dribbling techniques at the Street Olympics Summer Games' kickoff at Mickey Leland Memorial Park on June 5.



Furry Friend: Naturalist Joanna Moody allows an opossum to crawl on her shoulder at the Challenger Seven Learning Center, which does environmental programs for schools and youth organizations.



MUSICAL RECRUITMENTS: Musician Kenne Smith, left, encourages children at The Café at Finnigan Park to participate in a musical program that he provides for youths at the park.



STARS AND STRIPES: Ora Carter, right, Lincoln Park's seniors' program coordinator, serves a cupcake to Glaydean Hunter, center, at EFL Community Center, host of a Fourth of July party for seniors.

PRECINCT ONE SITES and PHONE NUMBERS

REGIONAL OFFICES

Central Service Center Office	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
North Service Center Office	281.820.5151

COMMUNITY CENTERS

Christia Adair Community Center	713.738.8484
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

Harris County Precinct One
El Franco Lee, Commissioner
1001 Preston Ave., Ste. 950
Houston, TX 77002
www.co.harris.tx.us/comm_lee

PRSRT STD
U.S. Postage
PAID
Houston, Texas
Permit No. 813

Harris County Precinct One
Commissioner El Franco Lee,
HISD & America's Promise Alliance
Hosts

**"Back To School Fair
With A Flair"**

Wednesday, August 12th, 2009
9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
Tom Bass III Community Bldg.
15108 Cullen Blvd., Houston, TX 77047

FREE
Immunizations, Health Screenings, Backpacks,
School Supplies, Uniforms, Entertainment & More!

BACK TO SCHOOL

AMERICA'S PROMISE ALLIANCE

For additional information, please call 713-991-6881

