

# Fort Bend Herald

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ROSENBERG-RICHMOND, TEXAS \$1.25 RACK/32¢ DELIVERED

## BOYS SOCCER



Foster hosts annual summer camp; see Sports

# Report: 94% of county's elderly population partially vaccinated against COVID-19

BY CHAD WASHINGTON  
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Almost every Fort Bend County resident that is 65 years or older has at least one shot of the COVID-19 vaccine, according to state officials.

As of Thursday, just under 94% of county residents in that age group has at least one shot, with 83.4% of that population fully vaccinated, according to the Texas Department of State Health Services.

That makes Fort Bend one of the top metropolitan counties in the state in getting the vaccine to older residents. Harris County only has 70% of its 65-

plus residents fully vaccinated, while Galveston County has 75.7% of its elderly population fully vaccinated. Nearby Wharton County only has 65.5% of its 65-plus population fully vaccinated.

Fort Bend also continues to have high numbers of its 12-years-and-up population getting the shot. Over 54.7% of those residents are fully vaccinated, while just over two-thirds have at least one shot.

Dr. Jacquelyn Minter, the health director for Fort Bend County, said at Tuesday's commissioners' court meeting that the vaccines are helping the number of new cases drop in the county. Minter said that new COVID-19 cases

in the county are now averaging 42 per day, which is down about 22 from one month ago. She also said that new cases are appearing in the 10-to-22-year-old range, which has gone up 22% from the previous month.

There were 13 new deaths reported last week, which moves the COVID-19 death toll in Fort Bend County to 651.

The county also reported 90 new cases on Wednesday and 119 new recoveries, moving the total number of COVID cases in the county to 59,000 and just over 58,000 total recoveries.

Minter also mentioned new areas that she wants to target to get the vaccine. In these targeted areas, some resi-

dents want the vaccine but cannot get to a pharmacy or vaccination site for some reason. Kendallton, Orchard and the northeast end of Rosenberg are areas Minter called "extremely vulnerable."

"We have increased by these targeted efforts about 57% (since last week), and that's by us continuing to go out and get 20, 30, 40 or 60 (people) when we go out," Minter said.

"Any places or pockets that we are missing (for giving out the vaccine), let us know," County Judge KP George said to the public.

"Seventy percent (of the county vaccinated) is our goal, and we definitely will get there."

## Good Afternoon

### Police officer benefit

A benefit barbecue for Needville police officer Mikki Miller is scheduled for Sunday, June 6, between 10:30 a.m. and 1 p.m. at the Knights of Columbus Hall in Needville. Plates will include barbecue brisket, sausage, buttered potatoes, pinot beans, dessert and tea. Tickets are \$12 per plate. Please call Cindy Valchar at 713-591-3551 for more information. There will also be a basket raffle, silent auction and live auction. Proceeds will go to Mikki and Suzanne to help with medical expenses.

### Queens contest

The Fort Bend County Fair is now accepting entries for contestants for the Fair Queen Scholarship Contest. The number of contestants is limited to the first 20 entries, and the registration deadline is June 14. A mandatory orientation meeting will be held on Sunday, July 11, 2021, at 2:30 pm at the Fairgrounds in Building B. The 2021 Fort Bend County Fair Queen will be crowned on Friday, Sept. 24. For more information, visit fortbendcountyfair.com or call the Fair Office at 281-342-6171.

### Czech Heritage Society

The Czech Heritage Society of Fort Bend County will hold a membership meeting at 10 a.m. Saturday, June 12, at the Gus George Law Enforcement Academy at 1521 Eugene Heimann, Richmond. Winners of the high school scholarships and their families will be the speakers. Social distancing will be observed and no potluck lunch. Please wear a mask.

### Comedy show fundraiser

The Rotary Club of Richmond will host a fun evening of comedy and barbecue from 6:30-9 p.m. Saturday, June 5, at the Swinging Door barbecue restaurant, 3818 FM 359 in Richmond. Admission to the comedy show is \$80. Everyone is invited. Space is limited so reserve seats online at RotaryRichmond.org. All proceeds support the Rotary Club of Richmond's efforts to better the community through service projects and student scholarships.

## Fort Bend Journal

### Makes you think

If the No. 2 pencil is the most popular, why isn't it No. 1?

— SRW

## Around the Bend

Mandi and Chris Bronsell and family finding a snake in their home...

District Court Judge Christian Becerra and wife Lucy celebrating their anniversary with a trip to Cancun...

Don Munsch at Cowboys Stadium in Arlington watching niece Emily graduate...

County Court At Law Judge Juli Mathew celebrating the last day of school before summer break with her daughter, who is advancing to first grade! Tommy Kuykendall getting up at 5:45 a.m. to head to the gym...

## Obituaries

Rev. Robert Lee Banks, Jr., 71  
Ludvik Edward Okruhlik, Jr., 79  
Olivia D. Torres, 86  
Vallie Mattie Christ Urbanek, 91

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## Today's Scripture

We wait in hope for the Lord; he is our help and our shield.

Psalms 33:20

# Recognition long overdue

## The late Willie Thomas Sr. of Booth has finally been inducted into the Bullriders Hall of Fame

BY SCOTT REESE WILLEY  
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Decades after his last rodeo and months after he was laid to rest, Willie Thomas Sr. of Booth has finally been inducted into the Bullriding Hall of Fame.

"The recognition was long overdue," said niece Debra Greenwood-Sharp. "And it's a crying shame he wasn't here to be inducted in person. He waited so long — so long — for the honor."

The induction event took place at the legendary Cowtown Coliseum in the historic Fort Worth Stockyards on May 15.

Thomas' extended family and friends — numbering about 50 — showed up at the recognition ceremony.

"It was a beautiful ceremony," Greenwood-Sharp recalled.

"We were grateful he finally received the recognition he was due and we were grateful to be there to witness it."

### 'The Jackie Robinson of Rodeo'

Thomas, who died in 2020 at the age of 90, didn't live to see the fruits of his lifelong battle against racism in the professional rodeo circuit recognized.

But he knew the day would come, his family said.

And he lived to see other Blacks, many of whom he mentored, succeed in professional rodeo, they said.

Harold Cash, a protégé of Thomas, said his mentor helped pave the way for Black bullriders such as Myrtis Dightman and former world champion Charles Sampson, both of whom were inducted into the Bullriders Hall of Fame before Thomas.

"Willie probably should have been first," Cash figures.

"(But) he came along at a time when it wasn't time for Black cowboys. We have Black cowboys today who are world champions, but if it hadn't been for people like him back in the day who stayed out there and took the abuse, there may not be Black rodeo champions."

Back during segregation, he said, Black cowboys would have to ride 15 or 20 seconds — rather than the typical eight seconds — and sometimes still not get a score.

"And if truth be told, Willie Thomas should have been a world champion a long time ago. I heard this from white cowboys who told me 40 years later that just because Willie Thomas was a Black man, he didn't win," Cash said.

"He's an amazing guy who just stayed out there competing and making things better for the other Black cowboys. He was the Jackie Robinson of Rodeo."

### Decades of abuse

Thomas was born on Jan. 30, 1930 on George Ranch, where his dad worked as a cook for the ranch hands and cowboys and which

at one time was a plantation with slaves.

He first started riding bulls at the age of 8 when he would simply leap off a hay wagon onto the backs of Brahmas, son Berkley said.

At the age of five, Thomas had an accident at the George Ranch that left him with a prosthetic eye; he has also broken his leg nine times and been told twice he would never walk again.

Despite these setbacks, Thomas persevered and pursued his dream to become one of the best bullriders in the history of the sport.

SEE THOMAS, PAGE 10A



Willie Thomas's rodeo career began in 1952 in San Antonio. He retired from bullriding in 1969. Last month, he was inducted into the Bullriders Hall of Fame in Fort Worth. This photograph hangs in the Black Cowboy Museum in Rosenberg.

# Some Rosenberg residents to get property tax relief

BY AVERIL GLEASON  
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It's still too early to decide whether or not Rosenberg residents will see a tax cut in the next fiscal year.

But one thing is for certain — some citizens will get some relief through new tax exemptions.

At the Rosenberg City Council meeting Tuesday, council members voted to hike tax exemptions on the homesteads of disabled homeowners.

Currently, the city offers a 10% homestead value exemption or \$5,000, whichever is greater, according to city staff.

The consensus of council was to increase the residential homestead exemption to 15% of the appraised value or a minimum of \$5,000.

The current exemption for the disabled homeowner is \$60,000.

Council agreed to increase the disabled

exemption to \$75,000.

According to Assistant City Manager Joyce Vasut, the impact on property tax revenues total \$174,000 as follows:

- Residential homestead exemptions — \$165,000; and
- Disabled persons exemption — \$9,000

Council member Isaac Davila made a motion to increase the tax exemptions.

The motion was seconded by council member Alicia Casias.

The next council meeting will be held at 6:30 p.m. on June 15 at City Hall, located at 2110 Fourth St.

Citizens wishing to speak to the council must sign up before the meeting begins.

Citizens will be allowed to attend council meetings, but must first be screened for symptoms associated with COVID-19, including a temperature check; and are encouraged to wear a protective mask while in Rosenberg City Hall.

### City of Rosenberg water disinfectant switch set for June 8

The city of Rosenberg public water system will temporarily convert the disinfectant used in the distribution system from chloramine to free chlorine June 8-June 21. During this period, residents may experience taste and odor changes associated with this type of temporary disinfectant conversion.

## Drive-thru church benefit is Sunday

A drive-thru chicken barbecue fundraiser will be held on Sunday, June 13, at St. Paul Lutheran Church, 1208 Fifth St., Rosenberg. Tickets are \$10 for a whole chicken with a side of barbecue sauce. Meals will be available beginning at 11 a.m. Drive through the church parking lot to pick up.

### Hermann Sons Life to meet

Members of the Rosenberg-Richmond Lodge 85 Hermann Sons Life will meet Monday, June 14 at 7 p.m. at the Rosenberg Civic Center. Chicken fried chicken and chicken fried steak will be served. Dessert will be provided. Call 281-344-8055.



HERALD PHOTO BY SCOTT REESE WILLEY

## Remembering the D-Day invasion

Rosenberg resident Bob Fagan places his hand over his heart during the playing of Taps at Monday's solemn Memorial Day ceremony. Fagan is one of the few surviving WWII veterans in our area and also one of the few D-Day veterans nationwide still living. Fagan, now 98, was a 19-year-old Army private on June 6, 1944 when he and the rest of his company of combat engineers landed on Utah beach on the coast of Normandy to begin the Allied invasion of Europe. Sunday marks the 77th anniversary of D-Day, often referred to as "The Longest Day." See editorial, Page 4A.

