



# ONE TO ONE

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

## Precinct One hosts Harris County Job Fair at Finnigan Park

A day after losing his job, Robert J. Vila donned a dark-colored suit in search of new employment – a journey he calls a full-time job without pay. One of his early stops was the Harris County Job Fair hosted by Precinct One.

“It’s really convenient,” Vila said of the fair at Finnigan Park, where representatives from 28 Harris County departments set up booths.

“I have plenty of experience in different departments like administration, collections and customer service. I can use my



Precinct One employees, right, Calvin Williams, Joel Johnson, Deotis Gay and Don Sehlke talk to men who attended the Harris County Job Fair. Other Harris County departments along with the City of Houston and the Houston Independent School District were present.

expertise for any department in Harris County.”

Vila was among about 500 people who attended the job fair April 18 in the Finnigan Park Community Center and the adjacent NFL Youth Education Town gym. The City of Houston and the Houston Independent School District also had representatives from their respective information technology departments.

Joyce Cambric, the county’s deputy director of Human Resources within the Human Re-

*(Continued on page 5)*

## Former pro basketball players conduct clinics during NBA All-Star Weekend

Jordanee Wilson, a Wheatley High School junior basketball player, has spent many hours learning from coaches during practice sessions and at games.

With all due respect to her coaches, Wilson, 17, said she recently received invaluable tips from some people who really know the game – former professional basketball players. She was among the lucky 200 youth who attended the Legends of Basketball All-Star “Kids Get Fit” Community Basketball Clinic conducted by retired professional basketball players.

“I mean,” she said, “I see how they succeeded, so I know it’s going to work coming from them.”

The National Basketball Retired Players



Former Houston Rocket Rodney McCray gives instructions to Meashell Crosby, left, Bria Pearson, Eryka Sidney, Ariel Taylor and Jordanee Wilson at the Legends of Basketball clinic.

*(Continued on page 2)*



## Precinct One

# Commissioner El Franco Lee

### Comments on current and future activities

#### CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Since its inception in 2009, the Harris County Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (CJCC), supported by the work of the Office of Criminal Justice Coordination (OCJC), has saved taxpayers millions of dollars and has produced positive results in the criminal justice system.

The CJCC, which consists of eleven elected county officials, has improved criminal justice processes in ways that promote efficiency, public safety and fiscal responsibility.

As CJCC chairman, I have had the privilege of working with dedicated CJCC members and OCJC officials who all want to improve the criminal justice system and save money.

One of the most significant savings has resulted from a 21% reduction in Harris County's jail population since 2009, according to the most recent jail population report.

The estimated jail bed detention cost per inmate ranges from \$45 a day for general population with no health issues to \$305 a day for mental health housing.

As a direct result of CJCC and member-led initiatives, the following major milestones associated with jail population reduction have been met:

- Average daily jail population reduced from 11,295 per day in August 2009 to 8,895 per day in April.
- Population reduced from 16% over jail design capacity to 9% below design capacity.

Elimination of out-of-county contract jail beds that cost taxpayers nearly \$18.2 million annually.

Jail population, however, is not the only focus of the CJCC and OCJC. CJCC workgroups — comprised of CJCC members or their representatives, and community stakeholders — continually explore avenues to improve the criminal justice process.

Initiatives that stop the revolving door of nonviolent offenders, especially those who struggle with mental illness, substance abuse and homelessness, have emerged as the CJCC's priorities.

Another notable accomplishment has been the creation of the Harris County Public Defender's Office. In 2009,

Commissioners Court first approved a concept for a Public Defender's Office and referred the matter to the CJCC.

Thereafter, the Council created a Public Defender Workgroup, which subsequently drafted an implementation plan and a grant application to the Texas Commission on Indigent Defense. In 2010, with the help of a four-year, \$14.3 million grant, the Commissioners Court established the Public Defender's Office and a Public Defender Board, and hired a chief public defender, Alex Bunin.

The office began receiving indigent defense cases in January 2011. It consists of an appellate division and three trial divisions: misdemeanor mental health, felony and juvenile.

## Basketball legends' goal is to get children 'off the couch'

(Continued from page 1)

Association (NBRPA) Houston chapter sponsored the clinic at Wheatley and Finnigan Park on Feb. 16 during the NBA All-Star Weekend. The retired players held sessions on how to dribble, shoot, play defense, box out and post up, among other skills.

"They showed us more fundamental stuff," Wilson said. "You can win games with smart passing, and not trying to be

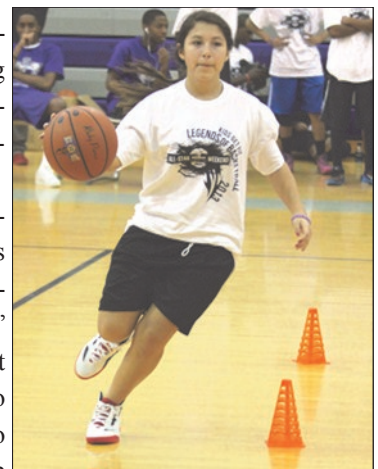
fancy."

The clinic was held in two gyms at Wheatley and one at the NFL Youth Education Town at Finnigan Park, which is across the street from Wheatley. A similar clinic was conducted Feb. 15 at Yates High School, where about 400 students from various Houston Independent School District campuses participated.

At the Feb. 16 event, former Houston Rockets players Caldwell Jones, Rodney McCray

and Moses Malone were in attendance. Also participating were Kevin Loder, Ollie Taylor, Steve Jones and Brian Taylor, among others.

"Right now we are volunteering our time for the kids because we always had someone in our lives coming up," Steve Jones said. "Kids don't get out anymore. So we want to make our presence known to give them inspiration to keep being physical — get off the couch."



Jade Martinez, 14, a Huffman Middle School student, practices dribbling.



## Earth Day activities at Deussen teach youth about nature

In honor of Earth Day, 108 students recently gathered at sections of Deussen Park that Precinct One officials transformed into outdoor classrooms to teach the youth about the environment.

"I learned that alligators have 80 teeth," said Mayte Mendoza, a 7-year-old first-grader at Fallbrook College Preparatory Academy. "Trees have blood (sap) like us and they breathe."

With the theme "Discovering Nature's Treasures," Earth Day provided Mayte and the other students with a variety of activities that

included identifying the unique characteristics of trees, dipping into the wetland to see water species, learning animal sounds and exploring for creatures on and underneath the dirt.

Also, there were exhibitor booths, including the Eddie V. Gray Wetland Nature Center and the Texas Parks & Wildlife J.D. Murphree Wildlife Management Area Alligator Program.

For the students – whose ages range from 5 to 8 – their memorable moment was holding and touching alligators displayed by exhibitors.

To help educate the youth, Precinct One used

about a dozen students from two of its service learning high schools – Jones and Washington.

The event, sponsored by Precinct One and America's Promise Alliance, was also an educational experience for the high school students, who were prepped for their presentations by Precinct One staff.

"It was actually really fun," said Jones High senior Kianna Phillips, 18, who along with other students did the presentations on trees. "They (younger children) all had different personalities. I actually did learn a lot about trees."



Fallbrook College Preparatory Academy students take an upper view of a pine tree to get an Earth Day lesson on the characteristics of trees.

## Youth go Easter egg hunting at Robinson and EFL parks



The Easter basket winners at El Franco Lee Park are Myranda Kelley, 6, second from left, Jay Isacc, 1, and Yamile Vargas, 9. Standing with them are Constable Christopher Diaz, left, Justice of Peace Jo Ann Delgado and Commissioner El Franco Lee.



At Robinson Park, Easter basket winners are Keon Sharp, 6, Jacob Pena, 4, and Marvin Fortson, 9. Joining them are Commissioner El Franco Lee, left, Constable Christopher Diaz and Justice of the Peace Jo Ann Delgado.

Taishona Engrum, 9, had plans for the candy-filled, plastic eggs she collected at the annual Easter Egg Hunt in the

Pleasantville community.

"I'm sharing with some of my cousins," Taishona said at Judson Robinson Sr. Park.

"And if I have anymore, I'm going to give some to my Dad, to my Mom and my sister."

To collect her bounty, she

had the fun-filled challenge of scurrying through a grassy field to find the treats at the March 23 event sponsored by Harris County Commissioner El Franco Lee, Justice of the Peace Jo Ann Delgado and Constable Christopher Diaz.

A similar Easter Egg Hunt was held later that day in the El Franco Lee (EFL) Park.

At both events, attendees were treated to free snow cones, hotdogs and beverages.

Three lucky hunters at each site who found golden eggs were given Easter baskets stuffed with goodies.

## April in Paris becomes an elegant affair under the big tent



Cuc Doan, left, Hau Doan, Thanh Nguyen, Huong "Rose" Ngo, Jose Gonzalez and Bong Nguyen were among the Precinct One senior citizens who enjoyed the April in Paris Spring Tea on April 24.

The white with gold trim- ming tea cup and saucer instantly won Adlean Furch's heart the moment she spotted it while shopping online for a memento to mark her 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary.

"I was just surfing," she recalled, "and I said let me look

and see if they have some cute April 24 at the Kashmere Annex 36. So much so that the judges awarded it first place in the tea cup contest.

The second-place winner was Anopawuia Spinks and Furch's sister-in-law Dorothy Furch won third place. Each year, Precinct One hosts the

event to give seniors a taste of Paris that includes tea, lunch and entertainment. It's usually held outside at Mickey Leland Memorial Park. The threat of inclement weather caused organizers to move next door underneath a tent set up in the Kashmere parking lot.

The women dressed in colorful spring outfits topped with stylish hats.

"It was an absolutely beautiful event," said Shirley Stransky, who decorated her white and pink hat with two artificial red roses.

Of course, there also was a contest for the best hats. Earline Davis Green's hat took first-place; Henrietta Cage garnered second; and Marsha Williams won third.

"Actually, it's one of my church hats," Green said. "Oh, I have about 70 hats."

## Valentine's, Black History and Lunar New Year celebrated at EFL

Red was the popular color on Valentine's Day at the El Franco Lee Community Center. However, the Feast of St. Valentine wasn't the only celebration.

The diverse senior citizens' community in the South Belt area also recognized the Lunar New Year and Black History Month, which is celebrated in February. At the community center entrance, there were three tables – one recognizing Black History, another paying tribute to Valentine's and one honoring the New Year.

"That makes me feel real good," said Johnnie B. Mayes, who along with his wife, Sylvia, have been participating in various programs at the center for about three years. "We have a multicultural mix-

ture and we all get along well."

Huong "Rose" Ngo said the community center combined the Chinese and Vietnamese New Year traditions. "The cultures are a little bit different," Ngo said. "We took something from the Chinese and something from the Vietnamese."

Sandwiched in between those cultures was the heartfelt celebration of Valentine's Day. That included some chocolate covered strawberries, chocolate candy and cupcakes.

Let's not forget another fun activity that occurs frequently at the Community Center — line dancing.



Lora Dementl enjoys the Valentine's treats at the El Franco Lee Community Center.

"We enjoy line dancing," said Marie Asscherick. "You don't have to be a line dancer. We just come together."



## Two HCAP Mighty Dolphins compete in Junior Nationals swim meet

Two Harris County Aquatics Program (HCAP) swimmers recently competed in the National Club Swimming Association Junior Nationals meet in Orlando.

Safa Anya, 15, and Kaulen Applin, 18, both members of HCAP's Mighty Dolphins team, swam in numerous races at the meet held March 12-16.

"It's great," said Applin, a senior at MacArthur High School. "Not a lot of kids get the opportunity."

This is the second year that Applin and Anya have qualified for the Junior Nationals. The NCSA is a private, non-profit organization for professionally coached swimming clubs and professional club swimming coaches.

"Both of those guys have come a long way," said Johnnie Means, the HCAP director and head coach of the Mighty Dolphins. "I'm really pleased with their progress."



**Safa Anya, 15, left, and Kaulen Applin, 18, recently competed in the National Club Swimming Association Junior Nationals meet in Orlando, where both swam in several races.**

Anya, a Lamar High School sophomore who has been in the HCAP since the third grade, competed in the 50-yard, 100-yard and 200-yard breast stroke; and the 50 and 100 butterfly.

Means said Anya is one of the nation's top breast stroke competitors.

"Safa is young and he has unlimited abilities. He is well advanced for his age group,"

Means said.

Applin, who has been in the HCAP for 12 years, competed in the 50 and 100 freestyle; 50, 100 and 200 butterfly; and the 100 breast stroke.

"Kaulen now is preparing to go to college," Means said, "and hopefully he will get a scholarship. Several schools are interested."

Both swimmers said they plan to pursue swimming in

college. Also, both are aspiring Olympiads.

"That's the goal," Anya said of his Olympic dreams. "I learned in this program that you never give up on your goals."

HCAP, under the umbrella of the Harris County Street Olympics, offers the competitive swimming program free to youth. HCAP also has free Learn-to-Swim lessons and swim-stroke development for intermediate swimmers.

Zachery Brown, a HCAP coach and former Mighty Dolphin who traveled to Orlando with Anya and Applin, said he was able to provide coaching tips because he has competed in the meet.

"It's the same pool," said Brown, who ranked No. 5 in 50 freestyle in 2004. "It's nice to tell them what to look out for, what to do and what not to do. To see them succeed is always awesome."

## Job fair lures about 500 people seeking employment

(Continued from page 1)

sources & Risk Management Department, said there were 125 positions available that included "everything from dog catcher to medical doctor and everything in between."

She said that later this year job fairs will be held in the other three county commissioners' precincts.

Rosalynn Bouldin, who was laid off last year, said the job fair was a convenient way to

see what's available in each department. Bouldin, who has an undergraduate degree in criminal justice and a Master's in counseling, said she's "looking for a job with benefits," and would prefer to work in the probation department.

For Vila, there were no solid leads at the time.

"I have to go online and fill out applications," he said. "I'm going to put my luck on that to see if I can find a job. . . ."



**Robert J. Vila, right, visits the Harris County Public Health & Environmental Services' table at the Job Fair, which attracted about 500 people.**

## CONSTRUCTION UPDATES

### PARKS



Casey Scribner, project manager for Trees for Houston, demonstrates to Houston Texans employees how to plant a tree at Finnigan Park. The Texans donated 20 American elm trees, which were planted April 23 by the NFL team's employees.

#### Light poles being installed at EFL Park soccer fields

##### El Franco Lee Park

Precinct One construction department is installing 12 light poles at three soccer fields at El Franco Lee Park. Four poles are being erected at each field – two of them regulation size and the other a practice field. The work is expected to be completed by the end of June.

##### Sanitary lift stations

Workers have completed improvements to sanitary sewer lift stations at Randolph, Tom Bass I and Tom Bass III parks. The work, finished in May, involved two lift stations at Randolph, three at Tom Bass I and one at Tom Bass III.

### ROADS



Motorists enjoy the convenience of the recently completed construction project on Scott Street between Almeda Genoa and Orem. The roadway provides better access to the Harris Health System's Martin Luther King Jr. Health Center north of Almeda Genoa.

#### Portion of Scott Street repairs completed

##### Scott Street

The recent completion of the Scott Street construction between Almeda Genoa and Orem includes an .8-mile project that has four lanes with storm sewers. A similar project is under way on Scott between Beltway 8 and Almeda Genoa. It's expected to be completed in September.

##### T.C. Jester

The final design to improve a 1.25-mile segment of T.C. Jester Boulevard between Spears and F.M. 1960 has started. After the design is done, construction will follow to expand T.C. Jester to a four-lane, concrete roadway with a traffic signal.

## New Forensic Genetics Laboratory opens in Texas Medical Center

The Harris County Institute of Forensic Sciences earlier this year opened its Forensic Genetics Laboratory, where scientists analyze evidence to provide unbiased and reliable results to the justice system and to the Harris County Medical Examiner's Office.

The laboratory is responsible for testing biological fluids – including blood, semen, saliva and tissues – to obtain DNA profiles that may link evidence found at crime scenes to individuals.

"This state-of-the-art laboratory stands as a testament to the high value Harris County places on independent science

and sound scientific evidence in the pursuit of criminal justice," said Dr. Luis A. Sanchez, Executive Director and Chief Medical Examiner.

The 15,000-square-foot lab in the Texas Medical Center's John P. McGovern Building provides analysis and training in the fields of:

- Forensic Serology.
- Nuclear DNA testing, including Touch DNA analysis.
- Y-Chromosome STR testing.
- Molecular genetics testing in cases of sudden death.
- Animal DNA testing
- Post-doctoral Forensic Genetics training.



Scientists analyze evidence in the Harris County Institute of Forensic Sciences' Forensic Genetics Laboratory that recently opened.



## Summer Games provides youth competition and chance to venture out

Sports competition – kick ball, jacks and running – definitely is an incentive to get children excited about the Harris County Street Olympics Summer Games. For participating agencies officials, there's another key element that's equally important.

"The social aspect of the event is something that they look forward to more so than the actual sporting events," said Tyler Jackson of Haverstock Hills Apartments, which has a summer program that allows children to participate in the Street Olympics. "It's something where they get out and meet other youth around the city from different neighborhoods."

Jackson was referring to the Street Olympics Final Event at Reliant Arena, where hundreds of athletes from the Houston area gather each summer for an Olympic-style competition in traditional street games such as hopscotch, Hula Hoop, jump



The Splashdown, a part of the Summer Games, allows young swimmers to utilize their new lifesaving skills in a friendly competition.

rope and softball throw.

Harris County Commissioner El Franco Lee created the Street Olympics in 1986 to implement programs that provide training, support and resources that lead to healthy, productive lives for Houston-area youth.

The Summer Games now involves thousands of children competing at participating agencies, including Haverstock, Houston Parks and Recreation Department community centers, churches, Boys & Girls Clubs' sites, YMCAs and other summer youth pro-

grams.

At a luncheon held April 11 to inform participating agencies about the programs, Lee said the agencies are essential to the Street Olympics continued success.

Clifton Clark, Houston's parks department division manager, said his agency has 35 facilities where some 2,000 youth participate in the Summer Games. About 1,000 youth go to the Final Event.

"It's an additional opportunity for them," Clark said. "I like to definitely look at it as

something for them to get out of the community centers."

In addition to the Summer Games, Street Olympics has programs that operate year-round. It reaches about 10,000 youth and young adults annually. The four core components are:

The **Summer Games** that include **3-on-3 Basketball**, **Final Event** and **Bright Futures Fair**.

The **Discovery Camp/Traveling Naturalist Program** offers children a fun and exciting way to learn about nature and the environment.

The **Harris County Aquatics Program** offers Learn-to-Swim sessions and competitive swimming.

The **Northeast Adolescent Program** – a partnership with Baylor College of Medicine, Houston and Aldine school districts, and the Harris Health System – offers free clinics for teens and young adults to address infant mortality, teenage pregnancy and other health and social issues.

## Lincoln Park youth programs offer educational and athletic services

Jazmyn Jones, 9, is a speedster who loves the sport of running. Most of her practice takes place at the After School Enrichment Program at Lincoln Park Community Center.

"It feels good ... because we get to practice stuff," she said. "And I like running."

At the program's awards ceremony on May 8, Jazmyn received the Flo Jo (deceased track star Florence Griffith Joyner) Award.

The after-school program from 3-6 p.m., now in its eighth year, has 45 stu-

dents who come to the Community Center operated by Precinct One and City of Houston staff. The children, ages 6 through 13, participate in recreation, sports, Learn-to-Swim and homework assistance, among other activities.

The site also has a Summer Enrichment Program.

"The program is a blessing, especially the after-school part," said Jazmyn's mother, Elizabeth Nichols. "The summer program allowed my children to go to different activities that I'm not able to afford."



Kedrick Kelley, left, with the Lincoln Park staff, presents awards to Jalil Muhammad, Montrae Williams and Jazmyn Jones during the After School Enrichment Program Youth Awards Banquet on May 8.

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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 [hcp1.net/ParkReservations](http://hcp1.net/ParkReservations).

Refer to the following schedule when making 2013 reservations:

Reservations for the months:	Reservations will be accepted on or after:
Jan. 2013 – March 2013	Monday, Nov. 12, 2012
April 2013 – June 2013	Monday, Jan. 14, 2013
July 2013 – Sept. 2013	Monday, March 11, 2013
Oct. 2013 – Dec. 2013	Monday, May 13, 2013

For southside reservations, call **713-440-1587**. To reserve Deussen Park and Jordan Community Center, call **281-591-6951**.

#### 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
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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