

# DATELINE

The University of Houston-Downtown

Volume 68  
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April 28, 2022

Editorial

## The Dateline applauds UHD President Loren Blanchard's inaugural year

BY JORDYNN GODFREY

April marks one year since President Loren Blanchard joined as UHD's President. Working under the pandemic pressure, Blanchard helped UHD reach impressive achievements.

After learning from the campus community, he located four points of excellence to lead the institution forward.

BLANCHARD continued on pg. 5

## Student leads collaborative Earth Day event

BY SHAHERYAR KHAN

UHD student Chris Kemp led a collaborative Earth Day celebration in the Sciences and Technology Building to teach UHD and community members about sustainability.

Diverse organizations and faculty from UHD and across the city showed their support by donating their time to the event.

"My time working as a student intern in the CUAS has made me hyper conscious of how important the framework of sus-

tainability is; as well as how deeply intertwined sustainability and philosophy (my major) are," Kemp said. "I wanted to present the concept of sustainability to UHD, and the community we serve, by making it accessible and in a cheerful environment."

Kemp acknowledged the CUAS, Arts and Communications Department, and the College of Humanities and Social Sciences as "key players" in sponsoring the event. "Activism in general

can oftentimes be draining because of the stakes that activists are aware of," Kemp said. "It was important to me that we provide tools for positive action beyond Earth Day in an upbeat environment."

The organizations present at the event were the Animal Rescue Club, Garden and Compost Club, Bike Club, Active Minds, Student Supply Chain Management, and the Food Market.

EARTH continued on pg. 5 page 2



UHD student Chris Kemp leads student and local organizations and community members to collaborate for the Earth Day event in the Sciences and Technology Building on April 21 and 22. Credits: Edward Saenz



Houston-based artist Anat Ronen painted a mural in Finnegan Park in Houston, Texas of newly-appointed Supreme Court Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson. Credit: Shaheryar Khan.

## Senate confirms 1st Black female judge

BY SERGIO PRESA JR.

The U.S. Senate confirmed U.S. Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson, the first Black female, to the Supreme Court on April 7.

The vote for Jackson's confirmation made it through the Senate in

a 53-47 bipartisan vote.

She will be the first Black woman to serve on the high court. Every Democratic Senator voted to confirm Jackson and Republican Senators Susan Collins, Lisa Murkowski, and Mitt Romney voted with Democrats in confirm-

ing her. Jackson is replacing Justice Stephen Breyer who is retiring.

Jackson's confirmation has been closely watched, especially by Americans who believe the Supreme Court needs to be more diverse. UHD student Diana Ambrosio said

her confirmation is groundbreaking and that Jackson is "more than qualified for that position."

"It is only logical for more than just white men to represent the people of the United States," Ambrosio said.

JUDGE continued on page 6

## Food market launches new website for daily updates

BY ANITA GOOLCHARAN

UHD's free food market launched its new website to update on hours of operation, inventory, volunteer opportunities, and a sign-in option for easy checkout.

FOOD MARKET continued on page 2



L-R: Dariana Renta, Emily Garcia, Daniel Hernandez, Jewel Servin, David Mesa Ventura pose in front of the Food Market in room S-292. Credit: Anita Goolcharan



Steve-o Review

Credit: J.J.

8



Pokemon cards craze

Credit: G.O.

12



Dateline composts

11

### INSIDE THIS EDITION

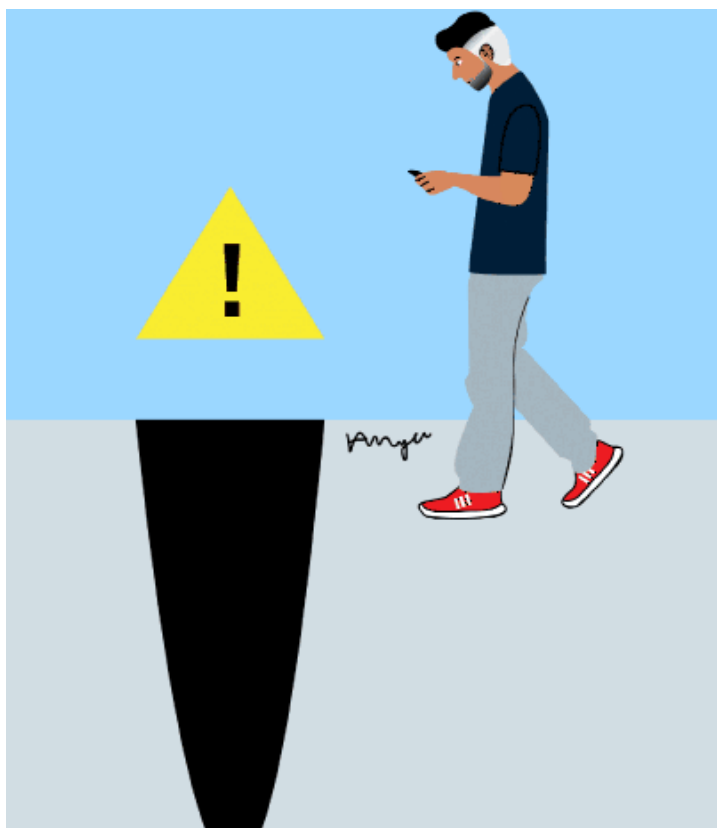
- Gator Life.....2
- News.....6
- Arts & Entertainment.....8
- Opinions.....11
- Sports & Gaming.....12



FIND US ONLINE!



Credit: Amy Nguyen



## Psychology Club reflects on social media dilemmas

BY AMY NGUYEN

The Psychology Club hosted a discussion series about seeking meaning and sanity in the “black mirror world” on April 13 in room A-431 and on Zoom.

Several film clips were shown, along with a discussion on digital depression, how platforms contribute to polarization and holding Big Tech accountable.

“I struggled with media obsession and time management and want to help others overcome them for a healthy mindset,” said English Professor Paul Fortunato.

Fortunato gave a mini lesson while short film clips from the Netflix film “Social Dilemma” played.

Students discussed how to resolve “ongoing negative effects caused by social media use” in small groups. Excessive phone usage can negatively affect lifestyles by leading to procrastination on assignments and tasks and causing depression from negative beliefs about oneself and the influence of others.

However, Fortunato also pointed out that corporations blasting catered advertisements and content from algorithms on the internet, especially social media, seem unavoidable even when users are away from their phones.

Instead, he suggested looking out for one another and encouraging mindfulness.

During the discussion, several students suggested that young children should not have a phone until they are 16 years old. They also said that parents should enforce a reduced or restricted time limit and encourage hobbies that interact with nature instead of smartphones.

“We get bad to get good and have to accept how to interact in different ways,” said UHD student Shawn Awagu.

FOREST is an app designed to reduce time spent on apps by setting a time limit on chosen applications, and when one goes over the limited time, a tree dies when the rule has broken. This is a negative reinforcement not to destroy one’s tree or productivity.

“This is something I don’t want to be a part of anymore,” said former Google design ethicist and Center of Humane Technology co-founder Tristan Harris in an interview.

This summer, there will be an event using additional clips from “The Social Network,” focusing more on negative impacts on mental health and strategies to strengthen your mental health on June 16 from 4 p.m. to 5:15 p.m.

## FOOD MARKET

Continued from page 1

“It’s easier to sign in, especially if you’re waiting in like a really big line,” Emily Garcia, a food market employee stated. “It also helps you see what’s new in the shipment, and what time were estimated to open during shipment days.”

When asked how the website will improve the efficiency of the food market, Daniel Hernandez, a food market employee stated that the website will update on hours of operation during shipment days.

“Often times people will ask when we open, our shipping days are Tuesdays and Thursdays, and on those days it’s hard to tell when we open because it takes a while to organize everything... sometimes we don’t open at all, but we can notify of that on the website.”

The registration process is simple. Scan the QR code and fill out the short form.



Credit: Giselle Oviedo

Once you have completed the form, take note of the FFC ID number you received. After these steps have been completed, you can stop by the market.

The food market partners with the Houston Food Bank to ensure the pantry is stocked and informs students of the inventory. The food market also offers reusable bags, paper bags, or boxes and carts to wheel groceries to your car.

Volunteers are also greatly appreciated as the food pantry is currently understaffed. Volunteer tasks would include shredding cardboard, unloading, stocking, cleaning duties, and general tasks. The food market is located on the second floor of the One Main Building in room S292.

## FOOD PANTRY



Credit: Anita Goolcharan



Nicole Franklin Jones, director of outreach of Aid to Victims of Domestic Abuse, presents in room N-420 on April 13. Credit: Anita Goolcharan

BY ANITA GOOLCHARAN

UHD welcomed Nicole Franklin-Jones, the director of outreach of Aid to Victims of Domestic Abuse, on April 13 to explain and detail issues that pertain to domestic violence.

“There is never a situation that provides just cause for anyone to be victimized,” Franklin-Jones said. “No matter if you dated two or three people or if you wore a certain outfit.”

April is observed as sexual assault awareness

## Humanitarian presents facts on domestic abuse

month and UHD is hosting a series of seminars to promote education and inform the campus community on the issues of sexual assault.

ADVA’s mission is to end family violence by advocating for the safety of victims. They also aim to promote accountability for abusers.

Domestic violence is considered a public health crisis. In Texas, domestic-violence related homicides have increased by 23% during the pandemic.

An intimate partner most commonly abuses women between 18 to 24, but anyone can fall victim to such crimes. Intimate partner violence accounts for 15% of all violent crime where 19% of the violent crimes often involve a deadly weapon.

Franklin-Jones credited social media as a powerful tool for increasing awareness of domestic violence. She also stated that social media can be a double-edged sword

since it is both a blessing and a curse.

In the wake of social media, stalking has become increasingly prevalent as a tool for domestic abuse. Nearly 60% of women and 44% of men reported being stalked by a current or former intimate partner.

She advocates recognizing, responding, and referring as the three main ways to help someone in an abusive relationship.

Recognizing by listening empathetically and asking about physical or emotional abuse can help someone take steps to seek help.

Responding involves accepting and validating their claims. Another important portion of responding is documenting these claims.

Referring someone to law enforcement if necessary is the decisive step. Another way to refer is to call resources such as ADVA for help at 713-244-9911.



# Museum director explains how to include 'muted' voices of history

BY JORDYNN GODFREY

UHD welcomed interim director of the Cooper-Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum Ruki Neuhold-Ravikumar as she presented a historical account of the voices who have been erased from the conversation in fields such as art, architecture, innovation, and fashion.

Likening their erasure to the all-too-common phrase added to our Zoom vocabulary during the COVID-19 pandemic, "You are on mute," Neuhold-Ravikumar discussed how history tends to leave out, or "mute," voices and important stories to further the desired narrative.

Ravikumar's presentation, "You are on mute — Who did we leave out of the conversations and how do we include them now?" took place over Zoom. Assistant Professor of Graphic Design Natacha Poggio moderated the event.

As Acting Director of the Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum in New York City, Ravikumar describes herself as a designer and educator who loves stories.

The main channel through which people tell stories today is social media channels. However, Ravikumar noted that what people present as stories today are not true, stating that there is a "crack" in the narrative.

"If that's the case, then what has us so convinced that the history that we're reading doesn't contain gaps and embellishments as well?" Ravikumar asked.

The most notable example Ravikumar provided was of the untold history of the famous Indian monument, the Dome of the Taj Mahal (commonly referred to as the "Onion Dome" due to its bell shape). Although it is an architectural feat, the design history of the monument is rather "gruesome," according to Ravikumar.

Several thousands of craftsmen of the monument were maimed so that they could never build a replica again. According to Ravikumar, this set back art, design, and architecture for decades.

"Think about that," Ravikumar said. "If you learned that and you could re-write the history of that building today, what would it stand for?"

This was just one of several examples of how history is often embellished or completely left out, telling a different story. Ravikumar went on to list women and people of color who made strides in art, design, science, etc., who were never acknowledged in history.

Ravikumar mentioned that one of the things she loves about museums is how they demonstrate how capable human beings are of immense change. She

emphasized the importance of change, and making space for change, by explaining how a hummingbird's nest is "built for change."

Indeed, that was the greatest takeaway from Ravikumar's presentation. The most impressive factor in design, art, policy, and architecture is whether the project is built for change. Ravikumar stated that Museums today are more interactive, engaging with the community as much as they display the past.

"Museums help facilitate a conversation about the future with objects from the past," Ravikumar said. "People fear change, but when you walk through a place like the Smithsonian and you see how much we have changed, then you have a sense of optimism."

Museums often democratize and de-colonize history by pushing for more inclusivity in what stories are told to present a complete version of history. Ravikumar encouraged attendees to take control of their own stories and be their archivists to increase the number of unique voices throughout history.

To learn more about history's "muted" voices, Ravikumar recommended listening to podcasts such as "Sidedoor: A Podcast from the Smithsonian."

## THE DATELINE

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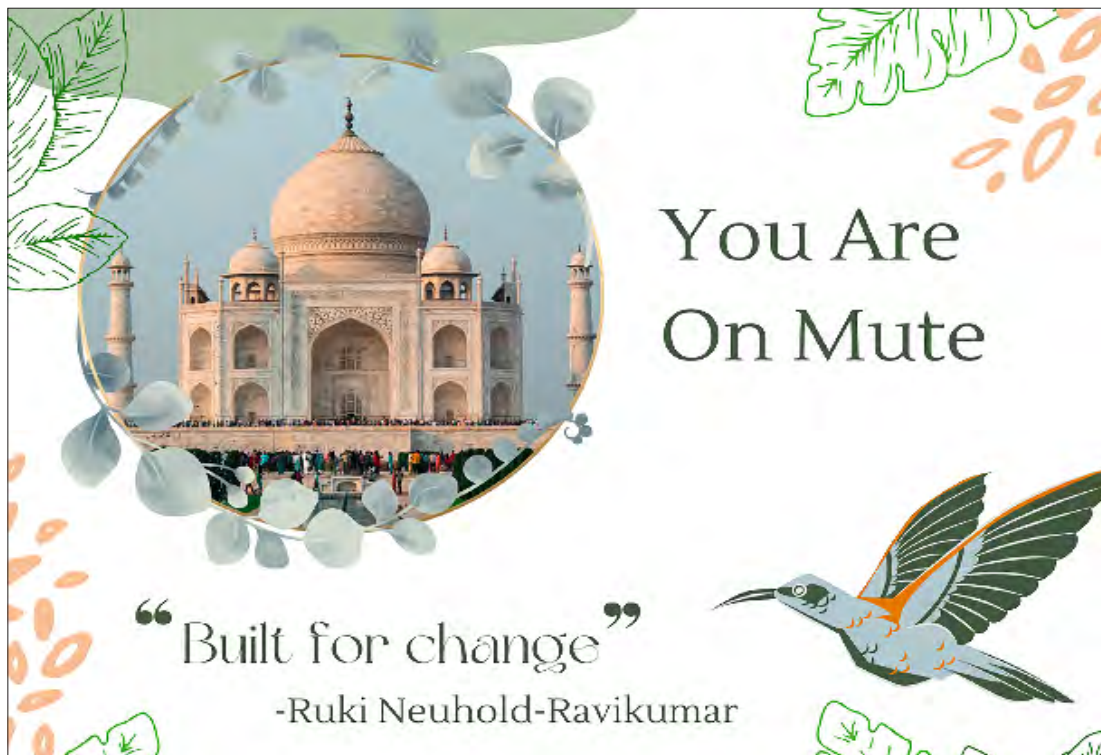
Credit: Giselle Oviedo

The Dateline is the official student newspaper of the University of Houston-Downtown. Since its first issue in 1982, The Dateline is proud to be "Student Run since Volume One." We strive to meet the needs of a growing university as well as the growing metropolitan city that surrounds us.

### Submission Policy

The Dateline staff consists of students from UHD who complete all tasks required to produce the newspaper, which serves all UHD campuses. The opinions and commentaries expressed within reflect the views of the contributing writers. No opinions expressed in The Dateline reflect the viewpoints of UHD, its administration, or students.

The Dateline reserves the right to edit or modify submissions for the sake of clarity, content, grammar, or space limitations. All submissions become property of The Dateline and may not be returned. All paid writers must be currently enrolled students at UHD. All paid writers must also complete vendor registration with the University of Houston System prior to contributing. Press releases, story ideas, news tips and suggestions are always welcomed. We encourage all students to contribute.



Credit: Jordynn Godfrey

    
@the\_dateline



## Wrongfully convicted woman shares story at UHD advocacy campaign

BY TAYLAR STOWERS

The UHD chapter of Deeds Not Words hosted a weeklong advocacy campaign about wrongful arrest and convictions of minority citizens. The campaign focused on the statistics of minorities being arrested, prosecuted, and convicted at a higher rate than their other race companions.

The chapter interviewed Director of Outreach Anna Vasquez from The Innocence Project of Texas organization. The Innocence Project of Texas was founded in 2006 as a nonprofit organization to provide free investigative and legal services to indigent Texas citizens who were convicted of crimes they did not commit. This advocacy organization functions with paid staff, law school students, volunteers, and pro-bono attorneys. Vasquez was recently exonerated for a crime she did not commit.

Vasquez is known as one of “The San Antonio Four;” four women who were wrongfully convicted of a sexual assault crime and sentenced to prison. In March 1995, Vasquez along Elizabeth Ra-

mirez, Kristie Mayhugh, and Cassandra Rivera were indicted on charges of sexually molesting Ramirez’s 7-year-old and 9-year-old nieces in San Antonio, Texas.

All four women cooperated with authorities and vehemently denied they molested the girls. Elizabeth Ramirez was sentenced to 37 years in prison, and the other women were sentenced to 15 years in prison. Vasquez explained during the interview that it took her several years to find an attorney that would take a second look at her case.

Finally a biologist from the Yukon contacted her believing they were innocent, and then contacted the National Center for Reason and Justice. After re-examining the case, and re-interviewing the second child who was supposedly molested, they were convinced of the women’s innocence, and contacted the Innocence Project of Texas. During the interview, Vasquez explained all the struggles she had in prison, as well as the struggles of getting her conviction overturned.

“Even after being fully exonerated, it wasn’t until

I attended a high school to speak to children, and they ran my name, that I knew my record still hadn’t been expunged,” Anna stated. “Then I had to fight again just to get my record expunged.”

Finally on Nov. 23, 2016, the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals granted the writs and vacated the convictions of the four women, ruling in favor of them on their actual innocence claim and the faulty science claim.

Vasquez explained how important the work that the Innocence Project of Texas does; she also stated that wrongful convictions happen more often than one might know as they receive over 1,000 letters a month requesting assistance.

“This happens more than anyone knows,” Vasquez added. “If you don’t have an organization like the Innocence Project helping you, it will be even harder to get exonerated.”

Vasquez and the San Antonio four have a documentary detailing their experience called “Southwest of Salem: The Story Of The San Antonio Four” for those who are interested in learning more.

## O’Kane Theatre presents ‘The Royale’ sports story

BY ANITA GOOLCHARAN

The O’Kane Theatre hosted their final spring production, “The Royale” by Marco Ramirez. The play was directed by Tim Klein, associate professor of drama, and Luke Fedell, lecturer of theatre and acting.

The play was loosely based on the true events of the life of native Texan Jack Johnson. Johnson was nicknamed the “Galveston Giant,” as he became the first African American world heavyweight boxing champion. He held the title from 1908 to 1915, during the height of the Jim Crow era.

“This production invites us to experience the history of African American athletes,” Fedell told UHD News. “These great heroes who were able to break

through the constant barriers that were placed in front of them.”

The five-member cast included Shon Brown as Jay, an ambitious, charismatic boxer that takes Fish (Mawuena Agbenohevi), under his wing as a sparring partner to prepare for the fight of his career.

They were accompanied by characters Wynton (Emmanuel Ojode), and Max (Jordan A. Martinez).

Just before the first match of the play, the audience met Nina (Avianca Palmer), Wynton’s estranged sister, that reminds him of the consequences he can face going up against Bixby, a white, retired heavyweight champion.

Sepp Lemberger, a first-time attendee of the O’Kane Theatre, expressed



Homage lockers located outside of the O’Kane Theatre showcase Black-athletes. Credit: Anita Goolcharan

his impression and gratitude for the production.

“Every time I’m at a play and experiencing ...active human emotions.. I can’t help but just say ‘thank you’ and feel closer to everyone here,” Lemberger said. “The greatest thing about live theater... is a collective experience that develops empathy and brings us all closer together as human beings, but in this case as Gators.”

**GIFT VID FOR GRADS!**

**STEP 1**  
Visit [uhd.edu/give](http://uhd.edu/give) or text 71777

**STEP 2**  
Complete the Brick Order Form to donate to UHD

**STEP 3**  
Include your main e-mail, student ID number, and name of your college in the “Additional information” box on the second page of the form

**STEP 4**  
Receive your commencement video clip within five weeks

Credit: Amy Nguyen

## UHD invites graduating students to make a gift, donors to receive a commencement video

BY AMY NGUYEN

The UHD Advancement & University Relations announced a donation opportunity for students graduating in May.

Students who make a gift of \$20.22 to UHD in honor of their graduation year will receive a video clip of their walk across the commencement ceremony stage.

While Advancement & University Relations have held the graduation donation for seven years, it was on hold during the pandemic. After returning to in-person commencement in fall 2021, students donated over \$1,500 to various funds throughout the university, especially to the UHD Alumni Association Endowed Scholarship.

“It’s good to see alumni come back to campus,” Manager of Annual Giving Sandra Jacobson said. “Scholarships affected my ability to graduate and would like to see them grow.”

If the combined total gifts of spring ‘22 graduates are \$1,500 or more, they will be honored with a brick in the Alumni Plaza (Girard Street near the Jesse H. Jones Student Life Center). It would take 75 students to partici-



Brick at UHD Plaza recognizes fall 2021 graduates for their monetary gifts. Credit: Amy Nguyen

pate out of 1,500 upcoming May graduates.

Last year’s donation was backed by 74 students with \$9,000 raised towards scholarships, and more donations would help support our community, university, and their resumes.

While all graduating students donating to the fundraiser can direct their gifts to UHD, most gifts go towards the UHD Alumni Association Endowed Scholarship. This gesture supports scholarships for family members of Gator Grads after gifts created by the organization from over 230 alumni and friends.

By graduating, each student opens scholarship opportunities for their own family and helps provide more funding for awarded scholarships.

Gifts are welcome up until Commencement Day on May 15.



# EARTH

continued from page 1

Along with these groups, there was a pop-up library where students were greeted with a specially curated list of books that were related to Earth Day.

These organizations advocated for sustainable initiatives and helped encourage an overall healthier lifestyle for students to adopt.

For example, the Garden and Compost Gators members Diana Ambrosio, Indira Zaldivar, and Nichole Dukett tabled to invite Gators to grow food crops at the two gardens on campus. They also showed off student-led compost projects on campus.

The Dateline's Assistant Editor Edward Saenz learned a lot from the booths at the event.

"Prior to the event I assumed sustainability was limited to gardening," Saenz said. "The students at the Active Minds booth showed me how being physically and mentally healthy play a big part in wanting to protect the earth, and I learned what companies and projects like METRO and Houston Parks Board are doing to help the earth. I also learned that Metro will be free over the summer."

Day one of the event consisted of a panel led by faculty staff and industry professionals who are experts in sustainability. The panelists included CUAS Director Lisa Morano, Social Impact Design Professor Natacha Poggio, Business Law Assistant Professor Dietrich Von Biedenfeld, compost expert Luis Chamorro, and a METRO representative.

Alongside the main Earth Day event,

the eSports Center ran a Super Smash Bros. Ultimate tournament. The event took place over two days, with the second day taking place in the Science and Technology Building's Fondren Commons room. The event was won by Chidozie Oguejiofor. For his victory, he received a new Smash Bros. Controller and a Nintendo gift

card. Stephen Landry placed second and won a gaming headset and Nintendo gift card.

The first Earth Day was held in 1970 and is now a global phenomenon coordinated by over a billion people across 193 countries, according to EarthDay.org.

The official theme for this year's Earth Day was "Invest in Our Planet."



From left: Stephen Landry, Chris Kemp and Chidozie Oguejiofor win E-sports. Credit: Edward Saenz



From left: Indira Zaldivar and Nichole Dukett demonstrate their composting projects on campus. Credit: Edward Saenz



Credit: Edward Saenz



From left: Professors Natacha Poggio, Dietrich Von Biedenfeld, Lisa Morano, and compost expert Luis Chamorro and a METRO representative. Credit: Edward Saenz

## PRESIDENT LOREN BLANCHARD'S INAUGURAL YEAR

- ★ Enhanced virtual learning, executed a safe return to campus
- ★ Launched the President's Lecture Series: Inclusive Excellence, The Way Forward
- ★ Granted a \$850,000 grant for the Department of Urban Education in the College of Public Service
- ★ Recognized as one of the Top 50 Black Professionals and Entrepreneurs of Texas
- ★ Selected as the 2022-2023 Chair of the Houston Guided Pathway to Success program

Congratulations, President Blanchard on a successful inaugural year!

Credit: Jordynn Godfrey

# BLANCHARD

Continued from page 1

Strengthening justice, enhancing student success and equity, supporting our institutional excellence, growing as an anchor institution have been the directions of his compass.

The most immediate

challenge that Blanchard faced was providing an excellent educational experience while maintaining a safe campus environment during the pandemic.

Before students returned to in-person classes, Blanchard and his team implement-

ed best practices to support virtual learning. Once the return to campus was set in motion, touchless door entries were installed, free hand sanitizers and masks were provided, and the Curative testing kiosk was opened next to the Student Life Center.

Additionally, local and national leaders were welcomed to UHD to keep the campus community updated on COVID-19 developments. Blanchard also launched the President's Lecture Series: Inclusive Excellence, The Way Forward which welcomed guest lecturers and panel speakers every month to address justice, equity, and inclusion issues. These free events were available in person and virtually.

The speakers were experts in their fields

with valuable strategies to curate an inclusive, equitable campus.

Under Blanchard's leadership, the Houston Endowment granted the Department of Urban Education in the College of Public Service an \$850,000 grant. This grant aimed to increase a diverse K-12 teaching workforce in the greater Houston region.

Serving as an ambassador of UHD in higher education conferences and speaking panels, Blanchard was recognized as one of Texas's Top 50 Black Professionals and Entrepreneurs.

Notably, he was selected as the 2022-2023 Chair of the Houston Guided Pathway to Success program, working on efforts that promote student success.

Blanchard has worked endlessly to

show that UHD is an outstanding, diverse, and inclusive institution that empowers its students to achieve success. He has proved that his top priority is to support students and curate a safe, inclusive,

quality university, and will work to continue these efforts into the future.

Congratulations, President Blanchard, on a successful inaugural year.



University President Loren Blanchard speaks at his first state of the university address. Credit: Shaheryar Khan.



# Harris County Public Health offers 2nd COVID booster shot

BY SERGIO PRESA JR

Harris County Public Health began administering second COVID-19 booster doses on March 29.

The second booster shots come after the FDA authorized a second booster of either the Pfizer or Moderna COVID-19 vaccines for certain immunosuppressed individuals and older people.

“We have more testing and treatment ...than ever, but the vaccines are our strongest defense,” Harris County Judge Lina Hidalgo said.

She also shared the news that ICUs in hospitals and general populations for COVID-19 patients are at their lowest since May 2020.

Hidalgo mentioned that while the hospitalizations are down, in the past cases have dropped and plateaued before they begin to rise again.

“We are watching western Europe, we are watching Asia; they are seeing those case increases, some of these countries are seeing issues in their hospitals.

What remains to be seen here in Harris

County is, if and when we see the next wave, have enough people been vaccinated?”

She also mentioned that even if you contract the virus, being fully vaccinated makes you less likely to be severely ill or hospitalized. COVID-19 vaccine doses are free, and HCPH takes people by both appointments and walk-ins.

When asked about his opinion on the vaccine boosters, Eddie Saenz said that he would happily get another if needed.

“It’s a great idea, Saenz said. “As I am over 60 years old with some existing medical conditions it’s important to do everything I can to minimize the impact of COVID-19 if I get it.”



Credit: Edward Saenz

Credit: Sergio Presa Jr

## JUDGE

continued from page 1

“Seeing her work her way through a system that was created by men for men is amazing and only encourages me to work my way to help better the system,” Diana Ambrosio, Dateline’s Business Manager, said about Jackson’s confirmation

Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner was invited by the White House to attend Jackson’s commemoration ceremony also had some words to say.

“I can’t tell you how proud I am. I mean she endured a very tough confirmation,” Turner said.

“Her presence will signal to a lot of boys and girls that the opportunity is there, and this Supreme Court will look a bit more like America.”

The mayor also believes having Jackson on the Court will better represent America.

Sen. Mitt Romney



From left: The Dateline’s staff Indira Zaldivar, Amy Nguyen and Diana Ambrosio admire the mural in Finnegan Park in Houston, Texas commissioned by Harris County Precinct 1 Commissioner Rodney Ellis. Credit: Shaheryar Khan.

stated that while he may not agree with all the decisions Jackson will make on the court, she is a “well-qualified jurist and a person of honor.”

Other Republicans did not share Romney’s view, as Sens. Lindsey Graham, Josh Hawley, and Ted Cruz questioned whether Jackson had let convicted child pornographers with sentences that were too light and grilled her

with questions about those rulings.

“It was disappointing and frustrating to see elementary level questions asked to her by conservative senators throughout her confirmation hearings,” a UHD freshman studying law, history, and culture Heather Hong said.

Judge Jackson will join liberal justices Sonia Sotomayor and Elena Kagan.

# Texas judge dismisses murder charge against woman in abortion case

BY SERGIO PRESA JR

A Texas judge dismissed a murder charge filed against a woman involved in a self-induced abortion case.

The local district attorney Gocha Allen Ramirez filed a motion to dismiss the charge. The judge’s ruling came after the motion was filed.

Lizelle Herrera was arrested by the Starr County Sheriff’s Office. Herrera’s role in the alleged crime was unclear.

The sheriff’s office did not say whether she was charged with having a self-induced abortion or whether she helped someone else get an abortion. The sheriff’s office in a press release said that Herrera was charged after she “intentionally and knowingly causing the

death of an individual by a self-induced abortion.”

Ramirez said that the sheriff’s office “did their duty” by investigating the incident.

“Although with this dismissal Ms. Herrera will not face prosecution for this incident, it is clear to me that the events leading up to this indictment have taken a toll on Ms. Herrera and her family,” Ramirez said.

According to Ramirez, based on Texas law and the facts presented in the case, the matter is not a criminal one.

After her arrest, Herrera was held in the Starr County Jail in Rio Grande City. A group of activists demonstrated outside the jail on Saturday. Her bond was \$500,000 bail. She was

later released after posting bond and obtaining legal counsel Saturday evening.

Domingo Garcia, the national president of the League of United Latin American Citizens said that Herrera’s case highlights the role that class plays regarding abortion restrictions in Texas.

“Texas law exempts from murder charges, termination of a fetus by the pregnant woman herself,” Garcia wrote in a LULAC news release.

“However, this public shaming and criminal persecution of a Latina under the guise of the law, highlights the very desperate situation some women are facing in Texas if they cannot access legal abortion services because they are unable to afford the travel costs.”



# Federal judge overturns travel mask mandate, local community expresses thoughts on wearing masks

BY SERGIO PRESA JR

A Florida federal judge on Monday struck down the Biden Administration's mask mandate for air travel and public transportation.

Judge Kathryn Kimball Mizelle's ruling vacated the mandate, saying it was unlawful because the CDC exceeded its statutory authority and because the mandate's implementation violated administrative law.

The mandate was set to expire May 3 to give the CDC more time to study the BA.2 omicron variant after being extended on April 18. A Biden administration official said the ruling was under review

but "in the meantime, today's court decision means CDC's public transportation masking order is not in effect at this time." The TSA stopped enforcing the rule after it was voided. The CDC still recommends that people wear masks on public transportation, including airplanes.

Press secretary Jen Psaki called the ruling "disappointing" and the Justice Department will make any decisions on a legal response.

After the mandate was voided, major U.S. airlines, Delta, United, and Southwest lifted their mask requirements. Amtrak and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Author-



Credit: Amy Nguyen  
ity rescinded their mask mandates as well. NJ Transit, which services New Jersey, initially kept their mandate in place, but later ended it.

Mixed opinions on the voided mandate were expressed. Republican Sen. Chuck Grassley tweeted that the ruling showed the importance of his work on Trump judicial nominations, saying his

work was "so important to protect liberty and restraining government overreach." Democratic Sen. Ed Markey tweeted that a "Trump-appointed judge is obstructing our pandemic response and putting the most vulnerable at risk." Politicians were not the only ones with comments on the ruling. "It's about time and way overdue for these

mask mandates to be struck down, the first COVID-19 shot has been available with FDA approval for almost eight months," said UHD student Victoria Moteaga. "Someone truly worried about the virus should be vaccinated by now and that prolonging the mask mandate is redundant and a burden for people trying to move on with their lives."

On the contrary, UHD criminal justice Professor Karina Rodriguez reminds that the pandemic has "not completely" left. that it is "it is important to remain vigilant as the pandemic has not completely left us."

"It is important to

remain vigilant," she said. "It is important to use our best judgement when it comes to wearing a mask."

An Instagram poll asking users how they felt also revealed how other UHD community members are feeling about the mandate ending.

"We should finish the year with masks," user @uhdbikeclub said.

Another user, Mario Torres said that the decision was "bound to happen sooner rather than later, but it was too soon."

The Dateline's poll revealed that 74% of voters disagreed with the judge's decisions and 26% agreed.

# The Infinite gives visitors peek into life in space

BY EDWARD SAENZ

For the last three months, Houstonians have had the privilege to do what few get to do, tour the International Space Station.

The Infinite is the brainchild of Felix & Paul Studios and PHI Studio. The project is

one part of the Emmy Award-winning series Space Exploration: The ISS Experience, the largest film production ever done in space. The project was done in collaboration with TIME Studios, the Canadian Space Agency, the ISS U.S. National Lab and NASA.

The experience lasts just over an hour and allows visitors to use a VR headset and "physically" walk through a 1:1 scale model of the space station, where they will learn about life in space thanks to footage and astronaut interviews shot while on the space station.

The experience took place in a warehouse located at Silver Street Studios near east downtown and ran until April 17.

It was divided into seven "zones." In zone one, guests listen to the audio of NASA astronaut Anne McClain recounting her experiences moments before lift off. In zone two, guests are set up with their VR headsets before being ushered into zone three, The Infinite Experience.

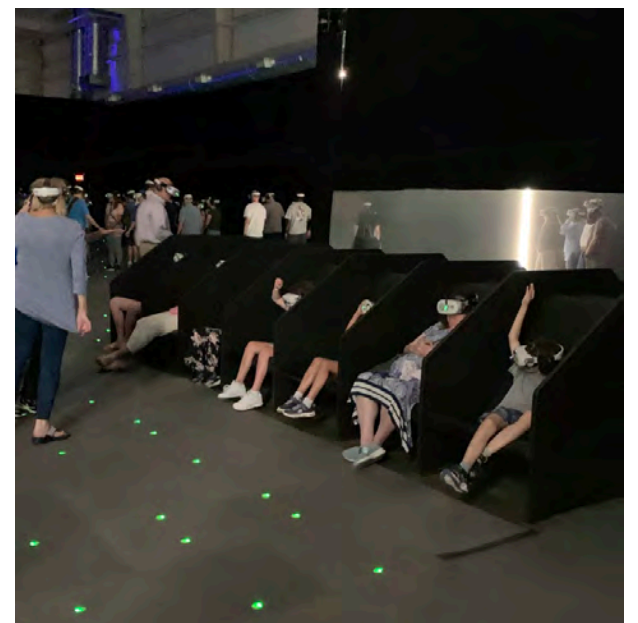
In zone three guests carefully walked through a virtual recreation of the space station. While walking through, guests could

tap glowing orbs that floated near them and would be taken into three-dimensional videos in which astronauts would share their experiences aboard the space stations.

"We sent 3D 360-degree cameras that were built for that specific purpose of filming inside the space station and what that does is it captures reality at 360-degree in 3D," said Felix Lajeunesse, co-founder and creative director of Felix & Paul Studios.

"So you have a sense of presence. You have a sense when you watch a scene that you are there. The whole thing is about presence and it's about full immersion."

In zone four guests watched a spacewalk in real time. Once the headsets came off, the experience was not over. Guests were ushered into zones five, six, and seven, where



Guests sit down in custom seats to view a space walk. Credit: Edward Saenz

mirrors and specially designed rooms gave guests the experience of what space looks like and what a space shuttle take off looks and sounds like.

"The response to THE INFINITE from the Houston community has been overwhelming. For astronauts, this is an opportunity to virtually go back to the Space Station they lived on.

For the general audience, it is an opportunity to travel to space, emotionally connect with the astronauts, and gaze down upon the Earth," said Stéphane Rituit, CO-CEO of Infinity Experiences Inc.

The Infinite experience held its last Houston showing on April 17 and will start up again in Seattle, Washington in late May.



Guests get fitted with VR Headsets before touring the ISS. Credit: Edward Saenz



# Obama portraits come to Houston, Gators visit for free

BY ANITA GOOLCHARAN

The Obama portraits have arrived at the Museum of Fine Arts-Houston and will be on display until May 30.

Tickets to the Obama Portraits tour are included with general admission. UHD Students can attend the event for free with a student ID.

The portraits were first unveiled in the Smithsonian's National Portrait Gallery in February 2018. The official portrait of President Barack Obama was painted by Kehinde Wiley and First Lady Michelle Obama's official portrait was painted by Amy Sherald.

The process of the portraits was quite extensive and took over two years to curate.

The National Portrait Gallery recommended 15 artists to the White House which the Obamas then selected artists to interview.

Mrs. Obama selected Sherald and President Obama selected Wiley, but their decisions remained secret until late 2017 when the news was brought to light, sparking anticipation and numerous responses from the public.

The National Portrait Gallery has commissioned the painting of each outgoing president since 1994. Wiley and Sherald made history as the first Black portraitists for the National Portrait Gallery.

The portraits are also important in that they break from the outdated tradition of formal portraits.

Both Wiley and Sherald are committed to reframing Black figures in portraiture and their works have sparked conversations concerning inclusivity and representation in American art.

Inspired by the 18th and 19th century European style paintings of

aristocratic and historic individuals, Wiley has constructed the presidential portrait to reflect these themes.

He also created a Federal-Revival style in his work as he paints president Obama leaning forward in a chair, symbolic of democracy, while highlighting his casual appearance without a tie, reminiscent of his portrayal as a man of the people.

The background of the portrait serves just as much meaning to the portrait as the subject. Wiley incorporated flowers into the background that stand out from the leaves.

The African blue lilies represent, the Kenyan heritage of the president. The white jasmine, the official flower of Hawaii, is reminiscent of the childhood and birthplace of Obama.

The last flower depicted, the chrysanthemum, the official

flower of Chicago, pays homage to the start of the president's career as a community organizer and a senator for Illinois from 2005 to 2008.

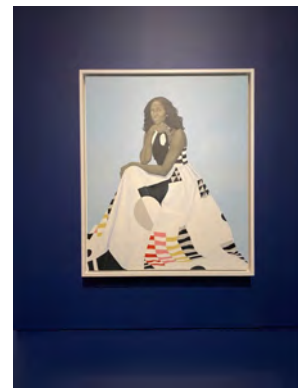
Sherald's portrait of Mrs. Obama is influenced from Sherald's appreciation of historical black and white photography.

Her use of grayscale also draws inspiration from W.E.B. Du Bois' compilation of Black Americans from the 1900 Paris Exposition.

The use of grayscale represents the intentional erasure of Black subjects in portraiture. The style was the subject of criticism when the portrait was first revealed.

"Anything that comes along with something that's very public is going to bring along some criticism," Sherald expressed at a community club house.

"I thought I was ready for it, but after 48 hours... I was like, 'People are crazy.'"



The Michelle Obama portrait. Painted by Amy Sherald. Credit: Anita Goolcharan



The Barack Obama portrait. Painted by Kehinde Wiley. Credit: Anita Goolcharan

Sherald explains that her work has a visual effect that "does not carry on Instagram" as she talked about a common experience among viewers.

"A lot of people were like, 'I didn't like it and then went to go see it.' And they wrote me back to say, 'it made me cry,'" Sherald told the attendees of the community center.

The First Lady is depicted as relatable and confident in her portrait. Her expression contrasts President Obama, pic-

tured with a contemplative expression whereas he has an openness in his facial expression.

The dress the First Lady wore for the portrait was designed by Michelle Smith. It is known as the Milly Gown. It draws inspiration from quilts of Gee's Bend, Alabama.

The patterns in the gown carry a personal meaning as the quilting community consists of descendants of enslaved Africans that have carried on the tradition of quilting for generations.

# Steve-O stirs gasps, laughs from Houston Improv audience

BY JAMES JUREWICZ

"He passed out? Just sit him back in his chair. He will be all right. This happens more than you think," said Steve-O after an audience member passed out during his comedy show, "The Bucket List."

Steve-O visited the Houston Improv on

March 29 for his tour "The Bucket List," an X-rated, adults-only multimedia standup comedy show. Steve-O is one of the "Jackass" television and movie stars, he started stand-up comedy in 2010.

In "The Bucket List" Steve-O performs stand-up comedy, setting up clips of dangerous or disgusting yet

hilarious stunts which are then screened for the audience.

Fans were greeted with the pleasing sight of the Steve-O tour bus in the parking lot. Coincidentally, a "Jackass Forever" movie poster hung nearby on a cinema neighboring the Improv.

The venue was packed, a pre-show

video was projected on a large screen for the waiting fans featuring bits from Steve-O DVDs and some newer clips from YouTube. Paul Briske, Steve-O's producer, and editor opened the show with a small set of stand-up comedy.

Fellow Jackass cast member Preston Lacy went onstage next, performing a solid ten-minute set. The crowd was delighted by the surprise appearance, exploding in cheers and applause. Lacy was previously a truck driver out of college and is now serving as the Steve-O tour bus driver.

Steve-O has experienced recent popularity with the most recent film "Jackass Forever" (2022). The show was sold out and every seat was occupied in the

Houston Improv.

"The definition of Macho is a guy who jogs home from his own vasectomy," said Steve-O, a joke he heard at age 12.

This prompted one of his most extreme bits called "The Vasectomy Olympics."

Steve-O screened the highlights of his vasectomy for the audience and of the painful activities that followed directly after the surgery like bareback horse riding and posing as a piñata for rowdy children.

"The Vasectomy Olympics" was the catalyst for the fainting audience member, a young man near the front of the stage.

Steve-O also videotaped his never-ending quest for cauliflower ear. Famous UFC

fighters Rhonda Rousey and Chuck Liddell took turns pounding Steve-O's right ear.

"That is crazy! This is crazy! There's no way!" said surrounding audience members as everyone laughed heartily.

The audience also witnessed a world record on film. In one of the viler clips, Steve-O fills a baby pool with aged, discolored urine from multiple donors, proceeding to hold his breath for over a minute in the thick, amber-colored soup.

Anyone with the chance to see "The Bucket List" should go. The show is hilarious, depraved, and unforgettable.

Steve-O has tour dates across America through May. It was truly unbelievable.



Steve-O's tour bus, outside Houston Improv. Credit: James Jurewicz



# Buffalo Bayou displays night of artistic light projections

BY TAYLAR STOWERS

The Buffalo Bayou and Aurora picture show presented an evening of free video art that stretched along three-fourths of a mile of the Buffalo Bayou East trails on April 2.

Houston artists Julia Barbosa Landois, Marcelese Cooper, and the Input/Output company featured their work entitled “Night Light,” complemented with music, vendors, and local food trucks.

Keven Balderas, an attendee and local resident, shared his

thoughts on the event.

“Night Light was about making Houstonians interact with the Buffalo Bayou in a way that is different, creative and fun, through the use of artistic video projections,” Balderas said.

“You were forced to interact with your surroundings through the art, and it was in a kind of easy, no-pressure setting because there was music and drinks, and people brought their dogs.”

He was impressed with how the event brought local vendors, local art and the com-

munity together.

As an aspiring photographer, the artwork presented an opportunity for him to practice taking shots of video projections on a large and open scale, with a lot of people and movement.

“The projection on the silos would let you interact with the lights through these sensors,” Balderas said. “The projection on the stairs was more reflective and philosophical.”

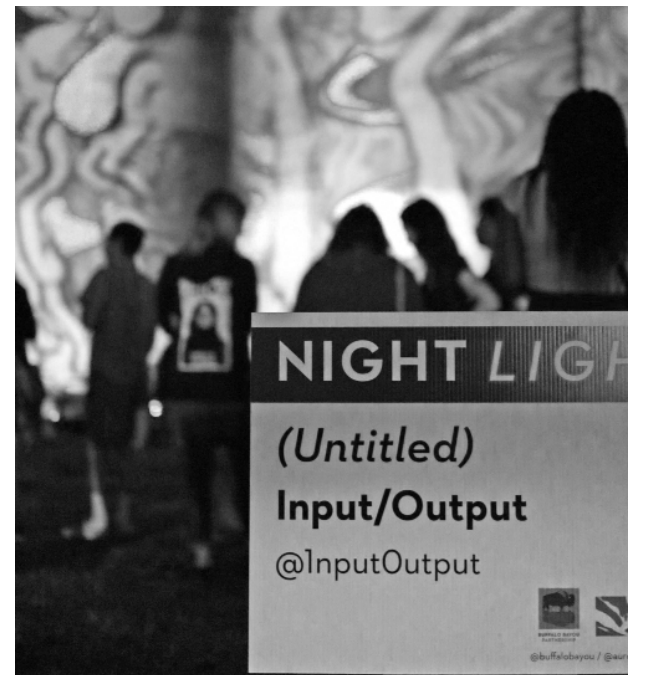
A general recommendation by Balderas for attending events downtown is to be

mindful about dark areas and plan for limited parking.

For example, while the event flyer provided parking directions, Balderas said the darkness made it hard for him to walk to the art exhibition.

Overall, Balderas praised the event for bringing the community together, and for catering to fans of art and photography.

“If you think of ‘fun’ as looking at life with joy and curiosity, then it was definitely fun.”



Close up shot of the Input/Output art at Buffalo Bayou. Courtesy: Keven Balderas

## Movie Review

### ‘Sonic the Hedgehog 2’ is example of sequel done right

BY JAMES JUREWICZ

“Sonic the Hedgehog 2” is a 2022 video game adaptation based on the Sonic game series.

Colleen O’Shaughnessey, Idris Elba, and Ben Schwartz are the voices of the interdimensional aliens, Tails, Knuckles, and the titular Sonic.

Sonic (Ben Schwartz) spends his time moonlighting as a local superhero, he is now living with Tom (James Marsden) and Maddie (Tika Sumpter) from the first film. Dr. Robotnik (Jim Carrey) returns from his exile on a mushroom planet to continue his hunt for Sonic.

Two new characters are introduced in the sequel, Tails (Colleen O’Shaughnessey), a two-tailed yellow fox, and the red-furred Knuckles (Idris Elba) who is the last of the echidna warriors.

Knuckles possesses super strength and large spiked hands. Tails was

bullied on his planet for his spinning extra tail, allowing him to fly like a helicopter.

“The great thing is, I can lose playing Sonic, but I win because I am Robotnik,” Carrey told IGN.

Carrey’s celebrated return to the villainous yet zany Dr. Robotnik does not disappoint. Robotnik is a return to Carrey of the ‘90s. When he is having fun, so is the audience.

Rothwell also returns as the angry sister-in-law Rachel, who hates Tom and is terrified of Sonic. Her humorous performance is another highlight of the film.

“It was alright, it wasn’t as good as the first one, it was too cringy” an audience member, possibly in his late teens, said while exiting the theater

There was a completely different reaction from a young child a few seats over.

“Oh my God!” he

screamed as he jumped and applauded wildly, an emphatic reaction to the film’s closing action.

The audience reaction was mixed, and this film may appeal to a younger demographic.

It is unfortunate that Marsden and Sonic do not spend much time together onscreen compared to the first film. It was their unlikely friendship that contributed to much of the film’s fun.

In the sequel, Marsden’s character poses as more of a father figure than a friend. Sonic has an imposed curfew and Tom is quick to lecture him. Understandably, Sonic shares most of his time on-screen with his new buddy Tails.

The Sonic Games easily adapt as movie material. “Sonic 2” is an example of a sequel made right. Higher stakes, new characters, and the return of Jim Carrey all add to the film’s enjoyable quality.

## Movie Review

### ‘Ambulance’ boasts Michael Bay’s signature techniques

BY JAMES JUREWICZ

“Ambulance” is a 2022 action remake directed by Michael Bay.

The film was originally a Danish film by screenwriter Laurits Munch-Petersen.

Two brothers and their team of criminals are forced to take an ambulance as their getaway vehicle after committing a \$32 million bank heist.

Injured police officer Zach (Jackson White) and EMT Cam Thompson (Eiza Gonzales) aboard offer the outlaws protection from pursuing police.

The criminals lead authorities on a bloody and violent chase in Los Angeles with Cam tasked with keeping Zach alive during the chaos.

“Ambulance” has the DNA of a Michael Bay film though it does not feel like one. The quick and choppy cuts, the hand-held

close ups, and intricate plot with many moving pieces and zesty characters are all Bay’s signature techniques. However, this film contrasts with the rest by focusing more on the characters rather than the plentifully violent action.

Jake Gyllenhaal delivers a heated performance as Danny Sharp, portraying the film’s villain fantastically. His antagonists are always entertaining and interesting characters.

Yahya Abdul-Manen plays military veteran Will Sharp, who is only involved in the heist to afford life-saving experimental surgery for his wife Amy (Moses Ingram). Will is a good man at heart, he only gets involved because of his adopted brother Danny.

Gruesome special effects portray realistic wounds. A graphic, lifesaving surgery becomes difficult at speeds over 50 miles

per hour.

The suspense and action are enjoyable and get better as the film progresses.

A major highlight of the film is the unexpected nature of the action and plot. Bay avoided a formulaic approach, and the results are fantastic.

This film contains a noticeable abundance of close ups. Close-ups are inevitable in a film with an ambulance as the setting; the small set and cast make it apparent this was shot during the pandemic.

Bay’s films can be entertaining or not good, there is not much middle ground for a director like him. This film is one of his best yet, and it is the small scale that heavily contributes.

“Ambulance” is now playing in cinemas and is worth watching. Yes, although this is a Michael Bay film, the ambulance does not transform.



## 'Turn out lights' event at Discovery Green recognizes nighttime migratory birds

BY NOHELY MARTINEZ

Discovery Green celebrated Green Mountain Energy Earth Day in co-partnership with Citizens Environmental Coalition on April 10. Their mission was to spread awareness about bird migration and diversification.

"Birds are important to the environment; they eat insects, and they help reduce waste," The Dateline's Amy Nguyen said she learned from the event. Birds begin to migrate north around this time of year. Between April 22 and May 12, bird migration reaches an all-time high.

During this period, there is an exponential increase in bird collisions, a phenomenon caused by bright city lights.

On their website, Discovery Green encourages people to turn off "non-essential lights" from 11p.m.-6a.m. during the spring migration period.

"As an added bonus, turning off non-essential lights also saves energy and money for cities, local businesses, and homeowners," the entity states.



A bird handler shows off eagle at Discovery Green's earth day. Credit: Amy Nguyen

Aside from priceless information, the Houston Aztec Dance/Calmecac Indigenous Arts Organization also performed an Aztec dance. There were also short presentations by environmental leaders, ABC birds, music, and a live bird demonstration to entice the public.

Under the direction of UHD Professor Natacha Poggio, UHD students showcased their research of the

coexistence between humans and birds.

The research included a variety of birds of all shapes and sizes.

For 14 years, Green Mountain Energy has been Discovery Green's official green energy provider reducing its carbon footprint with 100% renewable energy.

It was an event with a big green thumb.

## Clear Lake community hosts easter egg hunt, craft show

BY JAMES JUREWICZ

The Clear Lake Community Center Association recently held their annual Easter Egg Hunt and Spring Craft Show.

The egg hunt was held every 15 minutes in an enclosed grassy area behind one of the rooms at the recreation center.

There were over 3,100 eggs prepared and discovered, with some of the eggs containing tickets for prizes and gift baskets.

"It was a great turnout, so many families came out for the egg hunt" said Robyn Evens, the Recreation Program Coordinator for the CLCCA.

There was so much activity at CLCCA, two Easter Bunnies available for photos. A large sign reading "Happy Easter" was surrounded by multi-colored pastel eggs, partially obscured by the green grass. The welcoming atmosphere at the CLCCA gym entrance included colorful inflatable circus games, and a petting zoo.

Barlows, an upscale barbecue restaurant, provided food for attendees. The gym held the pleasant

aroma of barbecue and popcorn, attracting the attention of the hungry guests.

The CLCCA staff were courteous and helpful, available to assist approximately 400 visitors. Inside the gym, 15 companies set up vendor booths, selling assorted items and dispensing complimentary items.

The Mathnasium booth advertised tutoring for the STAR Test and a crimson A+ mascot greeted guests and posed for pictures. Pops Pecans was selling and offering free samples of delicious, candied nuts.

The most creative company name was The Mad Batter a small batch bakery selling sweets. The Houston Police Department Community Affairs also had a booth for community outreach.

The Jims Jungle Petting Zoo held an eclectic menagerie. A pony and a herd of goats intermingled with exotic creatures, like a brindle black and white mini cow and a cuddly looking wallaby. A tortoise casually beaked at the lawn nearby.

A four-car train circled the festivities, allowing the visitors a

differing perspective of the event. The train had one of the longest lines of any attraction.

"We had 60 volunteers from the surrounding high schools including Clear View, Clear Horizons, and Clear Lake" said Robyn Evens.

The CLCCA has been serving the community of Clear Lake for over six decades. The gym, fitness room and indoor pool are open all week year round, and the outdoor pool season is from Memorial Day weekend to Labor Day Weekend.

Volleyball, basketball, swimming lessons, karate, and aqua aerobics are some of the programs offered at CLCCA. There is also space for private events, with five distinct room rental choices for parties, including the gym.

The CLCCA has multiple events planned for Summer 2022. The annual Memorial Day Opening Day Bash Pool Party, summer camp, and numerous sports programs.

Memberships are available and visitors are also welcome at the CLCCA Recreation Center.



Credit: Nohely Martinez



Mathnasium employees table to play math games with kids at the Clear Lake Community Easter event. Credit: James Jurewicz



# Composting worms make The Dateline office fun and sustainable

BY INDIRA ZALDIVAR

Over 100 little red wigglers displayed the wonders of composting in a small 8-quart plastic tote during the two-day Earth Day event in the Sciences and Technology Building.

These red wigglers were not brought temporarily to show Gators how indoor composting happens; they live on campus. I brought them in a small bin into The Dateline office in October 2021, and they have lived here since.

They work around the clock to transform the organic waste of the newspaper staff into a nutrient-rich solid additive which plant enthusiasts commonly refer to as “black gold.”

The red wigglers have inspired The Dateline staff, such as News Section Editor Amy Nguyen, to learn more about composting.

“The worms have shown me how incredible they can be for help-



The Dateline Editor Indira Zaldivar shows off her worms. Credit: Edward Saenz

ing the environment,” Nguyen said.

The hardworking newspaper team constantly fuels on coffee and consequently so do the red wigglers. Coffee grounds, as well as any post-consumer waste such as fruit and veggie scraps, extra newspaper, toilet paper rolls, etc., are fed to our worms.

The Dateline’s Assistant Editor Edward

Saenz said feeding the worms makes him feel good as he’s helping the environment.

“I’ve enjoyed learning about the worms, how they work and what they can and can’t eat,” Saenz said, “as well as being able to share that knowledge with other people in and out of the office.”

The Dateline’s indoor compost bin diverts our organic waste away from landfills, which are the third largest source of methane emissions in the United States, according to the Environmental Protection Agency.

Methane is 25 times more efficient than carbon dioxide at trapping heat in the atmosphere, thus, a powerful greenhouse gas contributing to climate change.



Amy Nguyen (left) and Indira Zaldivar (right) feed the worms paper. Credit: Ryan Price

“Composting indoors makes me feel mindful of what I’m putting into the environment,” Nguyen added.

Contrary to popular belief, indoor composting is not dirty. A well-maintained indoor worm bin does not stink up the office nor attract unwanted organisms.

Conversely, undiverted trash ends up in landfills which are 100% toxic-level dirty. For example, landfills host a feast for disease-spreading pests. They pollute the soil; water table, and air in our environment.

Composting is an environment-friendly activity that makes use of two categories of waste labeled as greens and browns. Greens are rich in nitrogen (fruit

and veggie scraps, peels, spent coffee and tea grounds, etc.). Browns are carbon-rich waste (cardboard toilet paper rolls, coffee filters, newspaper, and yard waste).

“I used to throw everything in the trash without hesitation,” Saenz added. “Now I find myself thinking about everything I eat, and if it’s safe to throw away, toss into the yard, or give to the worms.”

While composting has been a therapeutic activity that I started at home with my family during the COVID-19 lockdown, I was afraid my office mates would reject the worm bin.

Fortunately, the worm bin in the office has facilitated a discussion and demonstration

of how sustainable efforts are a win-win for people and the environment.

For example, The Dateline’s writer Anita Goolcharan said the worm bin in the office has served as an educational tool that has facilitated composting.

“I am always learning about the worms and what composting can do,” Goolcharan said.

“Because the compost bin is accessible to me, it makes it so easy for me to compost my leftovers from lunch. Even though it’s such a small step, it helps me feel good about doing something for our planet!”

The planet needs composting as it is one way to counteract climate change by reducing municipal waste and harmful gases.

The EPA says composting also reduces the need for chemical fertilizers, multiplies beneficial bacteria and fungi which break down organic matter, enriches soil to help retain moisture, and suppresses plant diseases and pests.

Seeing The Dateline team dispose of organic waste into the worm bin and care for the earth together is a big green plus to the many rewarding experiences that the busy and talented news staff has gifted me with.



Credit: Amy Nguyen

# University of Houston Cougars emerge as city powerhouse

BY YOLAND MATHIS

Fellow Houstonians have a promising team to root for while the two major sports franchises head towards a rebuild. The Houston Cougar’s men’s basketball team is emerging as a powerhouse.

With the Houston Rockets not being relevant since the depar-

ture of superstar James Harden, and the Houston Texans finally moving on from superstar quarterback Deshaun Watson, the spotlight is on the Cougars of the University of Houston.

Over the past four seasons, the Cougars have achieved an impressive win/loss of 112-22. They have won the American Confer-

ence three out of the last four seasons and made the NCAA tournament all four seasons. The most impressive being last year’s final 4 appearance, the equivalent to making it the super bowl or NBA finals.

Former Houston Rockets Assistant and (2021-22) American Conference Coach of the year Kelvin Samp-

son has done an outstanding job with the Cougars since his arrival in 2014. These last four years have been spectacular, not only for the Cougars, but for Houston aswell. Sports Illustrated has already ranked the cougars the No. 3 team in the nation heading into next season. One Cougar fan seems to think the

Cougars are emerging as a powerhouse.

“I have always been a fan,” Matthew Roland, a business student at the University of Houston, said. “My dad is an alumnus, so he used to always take me to the games. He had the opportunity to watch Hakeem Olajuwon and other Houston greats play.”

That same excitement Matthew’s father had back then is the same that I as well as others in the city are feeling right now.

This University of Houston’s basketball team is on to something very special. With coach Sampson leading them, I do not see them slowing down anytime soon.



# Scalpers threaten fairness of Pokémon card collecting

BY TAYLOR ENOCHS

As the demand for Pokémon cards continues to increase, retail shelves fluctuate in supply.

The Pokémon Company is an iconic brand; with a popular card game, a world-renowned show, and new video games emerging every year, the franchise spans across generations.

“Coming back out of COVID-19, the main thing that changed was Pokémon,” said Steve Lancevich, co-owner of Champion Card Collector in New York City.

“Pokémon went from something that was on the back burner and a little quieter, to something that people could not get enough of.”

Pokémon recently celebrated 25 years, bringing back new and old players to the gaming field. While there are competitive auctions through eBay to find

vintage sets, new sets can be hard to find as well. Most common retailers struggle to keep cards on the shelf and most local businesses have to upcharge their supply to slow down the demand.

Scalpers are to blame for the low supply. They buy entire stocks of inventory before the retail market can, and try to resell it to make a profit. However, scalpers take things to such an extreme that it almost deters the normal market from buying at all.

With many older cards being worth millions, many feel incentivized to get their hands on cards by any means necessary.

Because of the scalpers, many major retailers such as Target and Walmart are having to place a hold on selling trading cards in 2022 due to safety concerns for their employees. Recently, a Californian man stole

\$2000 worth of rare cards from a local card shop. This is only one of three recent robberies involving Pokémon cards.

“The most infuriating thing about scalpers is that they attack nostalgia because they know that it is the easiest way to drain the money pocket of a collector trying to hold that little piece of happiness they get for every new addition to their collection,” said UHD student and card collector Chandler Grivetti.

However, there are things for Pokémon card fans to look forward to.

“We are aware that some fans are experiencing difficulties purchasing certain Pokémon Trading Card Game products due to a very high demand and global shipping constraints impacting availability,” The Pokémon Company said in a statement on their website.



Credit: Giselle Oviedo

“For new Pokémon TCG expansions launching in the future, we are maximizing production to increase product availability upon release, and we will continue to reprint the products to replenish stock at retailers as soon as possible.”

Players can already begin to see some roll-out from Pokémon in local card shops.

Strikezone, for example, a trading card shop on the southeast side of Houston, has started lowering prices for their Pokémon inventory due to over-

stocking. Trainer boxes that were originally \$60-\$90 are now being seen as low as \$35-\$65.

Pokémon’s new production increase brings hope for avid collectors of all ages who enjoy seeing their collections grow.

## UHD Thursday Nights Concerts at Discovery Green

- **April 28: AJ McQueen with opening act American Psychos (Hip Hop)**
- **May 5: Cinco de Mayo Night featuring Las Fenix with opening act Morena Roas (Norteño and Cumbia/rap)**
- **May 12: Girl Ultra with opening act Tee Vee (Latin alternative)**
- **May 19: Paul Wall featuring Doc Loc and the Swangers with DJ Mav (Rap, Hip Hop)**

Credit: Edward Saenz

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Credit: Edward Saenz