

# UPDATE



BUILDING FOR OUR FUTURE

R. Jack Cagle, Harris County Commissioner



## Constituent Needs

KEEPING ROADWAYS SAFE, TRAFFIC MOVING

**H**arris County is one of the fastest-growing counties in the U.S. With a population of 4.6 million people, it remains the nation's third-largest county, with a gain of more than 56,000 new residents in 2016.

Precinct 4 alone boasts nearly 1.4 million residents. With such substantial growth—particularly in unincorporated areas of Harris County—anticipating and relieving road and bridge issues are paramount. Precinct 4 currently maintains almost 2,600 miles of roadways

and manages \$385 million in capital improvement projects (CIP).

With a limited budget, Commissioner R. Jack Cagle explains that when considering a potential roadway project, Precinct 4 identifies whether the issue is one of safety, mobility, or aesthetics. “Minor cracking in the road may look ugly, but it won’t be at the top of our list. Our highest priorities are to keep our roadways safe and traffic moving,” he says.

When it comes to potholes, Precinct 4 commits to addressing issues quickly. “A pothole is what a constituent says a pothole is. The sooner we get it filled, the

better.” Commissioner Cagle appreciates that the City of Houston now adopts the precinct’s approach. “All of the candidates in this last election, including Mayor Sylvester Turner, said they would adopt county practices in their protocol. That’s testament to the fine work Precinct 4 road crews accomplish day in and day out.”

### Maximizing Resources

To make the most of its limited budget, Precinct 4 leverages partnerships with utility districts, the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), Harris County Toll Road Authority

*See Constituent Needs, page 7*



## A WORD FROM

## Commissioner R. Jack Cagle

**A**s one of four county commissioners serving Harris County residents, I know unfunded mandates always impact budgets. In addition to parks, roadways, and other quality of life issues, Harris County provides a host of services to residents living in the nation's third-largest county. Public servants, safety professionals, and law enforcement work hard to keep our citizens safe. The Harris County Health System, one of the largest county healthcare systems in the country, provides care for approximately 2 million residents each year. To properly staff and maintain these critical county services to mandated levels puts tremendous pressure on our county budget.

I believe conservative financial stewardship is critical to accomplish our goals in Precinct 4. When it comes to roadway projects, I often say we have a dime's worth of budget and \$10 worth of projects. Yet, even with limited funds, we accomplish more capital improvement projects than ever before. Precinct 4 leverages partnerships with utility districts, cities, and state organizations. We work closely with residents to understand their needs and provide enhancements through collaboration with community groups. I am extremely proud of how Pamela Rocchi and her staff in the Capital Improvement Projects Division manage multimillion-dollar projects that address the fundamental need to keep people safe and moving on our roadways.



When it comes to creating new green space and adding amenities to our existing parks, I take the same approach, maximizing

county dollars through innovative partnerships. Mercer Botanic Gardens is an important resource in plant conservation and preservation that recently added 50,000 plant specimens to its existing herbarium through a long-term loan from the Spring Branch Science Center. This added amenity enhances Mercer's own herbarium, which plays a significant role in scientific research.

I always look for willing partners who share my belief that parks are like the front yard to your home: the nicer we keep our yards, the nicer our homes appear. Precinct 4 boasts more than 30 parks and preserves, totaling around 3,800 acres of green space. Our "front yard" speaks to the quality of life found in Precinct 4, and much of our green space offers an increasingly important place for water to go when our creeks rise. It's why Precinct 4 remains one of the most desirable areas to live in Harris County.

It is a pleasure and an honor to serve as your commissioner, and I hope to meet you at a park or community event soon.

*Commissioner R. Jack Cagle*

## Sign Up Online!

*Update* newsletter is a publication of Harris County Precinct 4, available to residents free of charge. To receive our monthly e-newsletter, *Commissioner's E-Corner*, visit us online at [www.hcp4.net](http://www.hcp4.net). **Signing up is easy and takes just minutes.** We can also be reached at 281-893-3726, or send your name, address, and email address to the Precinct 4 Communications Department at 1731 Hugh Road, Houston, Texas 77067.



**Editors:** Mark Seegers and Kaci Woodrome, Precinct 4

**Writing and Design:** Susan Diemont-Conwell, Torma Communications



**Precinct 4's Senior Adult Program offers at least 12 trips from 10 different locations every week.**

[www.hcp4.net/sapevents](http://www.hcp4.net/sapevents)  
281-893-3726

## ON THE BACK COVER:

The photo of a tree stump covered with lichens along a Jones Park trail earned **Grand Prize** in the 2017 Jesse H. Jones Park & Nature Center photo contest. **Congratulations, Marisa Fedee!**



Printed on recycled paper

## What's Inside

3

Precinct 4 Saves Historic Tree

Pioneer Day

4

Mercer Expands Herbarium

Mercer Creates Learning Opportunities

5

Jones Park Adds New Butterfly Habitat

6

Fruit, Nut Trees Planted on Greenway

'Smart' Playground

7

Managing Roadway Improvements

8

Tribute Honors Veterans

SAP Calendar

9

Parks, Community Centers Calendar of Events

# Kissing Tree Park

## PRECINCT 4 SAVES HISTORIC TREE

**B**ack in the late 1800s and early 1900s, couples would “spark” (hug and kiss) under the old oak tree on the corner of T.C. Jester and Louetta. The “kissing tree” became a central landmark on the farm of Prussian immigrant Hermann Strack, one of the first settlers in the Klein area.

When Circle K purchased the last of the Strack farm property several years ago, the convenience store planned to uproot the 150-year-old tree to make room for the store’s driveway entrance. A grassroots community effort brought the issue to the attention of Commissioner R. Jack Cagle, who not only prevented the tree’s destruction, but also purchased the surrounding four acres to create Kissing Tree Park.

### Grassroots Effort

When local resident and retired teacher Mary Beth Kreml found out about Circle K’s plans, she first contacted an arborist. “I wanted to make sure the tree was healthy and worth saving.”

“From its earliest days, this tree was likely a landmark for Native Americans and our earliest Europeans. This tree is a part of our history,” says Klein ISD Historian Steve Baird. Kreml contacted the *Houston Chronicle* and began posting about the imperiled tree on Facebook.

A persuasive letter-writing assignment at Klein Oak High School helped put additional pressure on the convenience store chain. “This was a golden opportunity to take something that is



Photo by Crystal Simmons

**The tree at the corner of Louetta and T.C. Jester likely started growing around the time of the Civil War.**

academically sound that can be applied directly to the community,” says teacher Sian Gibson. More than 150 students wrote letters, sent photographs, and created persuasive videos, which were sent to Circle K’s southwest regional offices and to those involved in the sale of the property.

### Finding Another Way

Sympathetic to residents’ concerns, Commissioner Cagle worked to create a solution. Precinct 4 surveyors and engineers evaluated the location of the driveway entrance and determined that a move in the cut-through on T.C. Jester

would allow Circle K to relocate its driveway entrance, preventing the tree’s destruction. Precinct 4 and the Texas Department of Transportation widened the center median, and Circle K narrowed the width of the store’s driveway from 40 to 30 feet.

Precinct 4 arranged for an arborist to evaluate the tree’s root system to determine its health and committed to maintaining the tree going forward, purchasing the four-acre property surrounding Circle K and creating Kissing Tree Park. Two existing buildings onsite provide needed office space for Precinct 4’s Parks and IT staff.

“When the issue came to Commissioner Cagle’s attention, he was extremely responsive,” Kreml says. “We are so grateful that he not only found a way to save the tree, but created Kissing Tree Park in the process. Commissioner is such an advocate for green space in Precinct 4. He really went above and beyond in preserving and protecting this beautiful landmark and important piece of our history.”

More information

[www.hcp4.net/parks](http://www.hcp4.net/parks)



### PIONEER DAY

Learn what life was like for early Texas settlers at Jesse H. Jones Park & Nature Center during Pioneer Day. The free event, held **Saturday, November 11 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.**, features living history demonstrations of blacksmithing, cooking, and woodworking, as well as folk music and hayrides!



# Innovative Partnerships

## MERCER EXPANDS HERBARIUM, ENABLES SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

Since opening its doors in 2014, the Mercer Botanical Center has served as an important resource in plant conservation, preservation, and research.

Its MERCA herbarium—a collection of preserved plant specimens—aids botanists, students, and citizen scientists in documenting plant populations and assisting in scientific studies.

Now Mercer has added to its collection of 5,000 preserved plant specimens.

In partnership with Spring Branch Independent School District (SBISD), Mercer now hosts the Spring Branch Science Center's (SBSC) herbarium. The collection of 50,000 pressed, dried, and mounted plants and plant parts is a long-term loan from SBSC and includes flora from the Houston metro area and East Texas.

Plant specimens from herbariums like MERCA and SBSC provide sources of DNA for use in studying taxonomy and the relationship of plants. "Herbaria provide specimens for research and for training botanic garden volunteers and staff. They serve as reference centers for naturalists, students, plant societies, and garden clubs interested in learning about local flora and plants," says Anita Tiller,

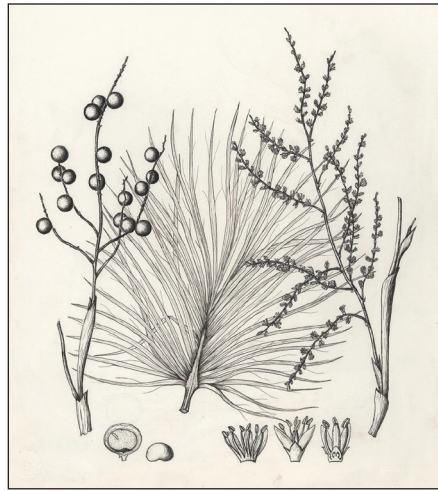


Illustration by artist Carol Tate

**The Sabal palmetto, a Texas Gulf Coast native.**

botanist and conservation manager at Mercer.

In addition to the SBSC herbarium, Mercer received SBISD's botanical reference library and specimen illustration collection. According to Tiller, a botanical library is necessary to support the work conducted at an herbarium. "Mercer depends on teams of highly skilled volunteers, students, and interns to maintain the botanical reference library, input specimen data into the herbarium's database, mount specimens to archival

papers, prepare and attach labels to specimens, file and inventory specimens, and repair damaged specimens," she notes.

Mercer's MERCA herbarium and Spring Branch's SBSC herbarium are both listed in the global directory of herbaria, which connects plant researchers from around the world. Darrin Duling, director at Mercer, says that herbaria, which document rare plant populations, are critical in the conservation of threatened and endangered plant species. "Loss of habitat, introduction of foreign species, and over-collection are putting many of our native plants in danger of extinction," he says. Out of 20,000 native plant species in the U.S., 200 species have become extinct and over 766 plant species are federally listed as endangered or threatened.

"Loss of native plant species weakens the natural ecosystem, reduces the beauty and diversity around us, and depletes an irreplaceable gene pool that may hold the cures for diseases," Duling explains. "The MERCA and SBSC herbaria at Mercer Botanical Center will help in our efforts to study and conserve these and other species."

More info

[www.hcp4.net/mercer](http://www.hcp4.net/mercer)

## MERCER CREATES LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

The Mercer Botanical Center not only hosts well-known botanists and researchers, but also provides research opportunities for local college students.

Many of the botany projects are a partnership with the Lone Star College (LSC)—Kingwood Honors Biology program. Student researcher Lauren Crain spearheaded a study on the propagation of the aquatic milkweed (*Asclepias perennis*) as part of her honors project. Aquatic milkweed, a critical food source of the imperiled monarch butterfly, grows naturally at Mercer and along the Cypress and Spring Creek greenways. "The project at Mercer provided me with a multi-faceted learning opportunity, working in the

field and performing data entry," she says. Crain not only presented at the Great Plains Honors Council Conference, but also earned an acceptance into the Honors College at the University of Houston.

University of Texas student Edwin Umanzor worked on a project that investigated the germination of the Neches River rose-mallow (*Hibiscus dasycalyx*), a rare Texas native that Mercer maintains for the Center for Plant Conservation's National Collection of Endangered Plants. Umanzor's research at Mercer helped qualify him for a Jack Kent Cooke Foundation Scholarship, a prestigious award funding the completion of his bachelor's degree at the University of Texas at Austin.

Other student projects include:

- » A study on the use of little blue stem grass (*Schizachyrium scoparium*) to replace and restore the grassy prairie areas invaded by Bahia grass (*Paspalum notatum*) at the Precinct 4 Prairie Dawn Preserve (student volunteer, Reina Amaya)
- » Documentation of the SBSC herbarium collection, funded through a grant from Volunteer Houston's Shell Nonprofit Internship Program (student intern, Sarah Lozano)

"Projects through the Mercer Botanical Center give students important hands-on experience while contributing to our botanical research," says Darrin Duling, director at Mercer Botanic Gardens.



# Saving Pollinators

## JONES PARK EXPANDS BUTTERFLY HABITAT

Christina McKinney's story starts with Freckles and Elsa, two monarch butterflies found in her local elementary school garden. McKinney spotted the eggs on a milkweed plant. She took those eggs home as a summer project for her three young children, and several weeks later, the family released Freckles and Elsa in that same garden. "My daughter actually sang 'Let It Go' as she released Elsa," McKinney muses.

A year later, McKinney has raised and released almost 300 monarch butterflies—more than half released at Jesse H. Jones Park & Nature Center. The park is an ideal home for monarchs, with an abundance of plants needed for all four stages in a monarch butterfly's life (egg, caterpillar, pupa, and adult butterfly). "Jones Park not only has a pollinator garden near the Nature Center, but we are planting additional milkweed and native wildflowers and grasses in different areas of the park," says Matt Abernathy, horticulture coordinator at Jones Park. When complete, Jones Park will have approximately five acres of pollinator habitat—more than enough to feed the monarch butterflies McKinney raises at home!

### Plight of the Monarch

When McKinney came across those very first eggs, she took to the internet to find out everything she could about the monarch butterfly. What she found alarmed her. "Monarch butterflies are dwindling at a catastrophic rate," she says. Over the last few decades, the population has declined by 80 percent, according to the Center for Biological Diversity.

Such a decline not only makes extinction a probable outcome in the next few decades, but the decline in pollinators threatens the world's food supply. "Pollinators are essential for the production of fruits and vegetables," Abernathy says. According to the Pollinator Partnership, pollinators are responsible for one out of every three bites of food. Pollinators, like bees, butterflies,

moths, flies, and hummingbirds, enable plant fertilization by unwittingly carrying pollen from the male part of a flower (anther) to the female part of the flower (stigma). Once fertilized, the plant grows fruit (and seeds) from the pollinated flower. Dwindling habitat, increased pesticide use, and changing climate conditions are key culprits in the monarch butterfly's decline. In the wild, the butterfly's survival rate is a dismal one to five percent. McKinney learned that by raising monarchs indoors, she can increase the survival rate to 85 percent.

### Providing a Food Source

Today, in her front garden, McKinney has 60 milkweed plants, critical for feeding monarch caterpillars and for egg laying. "I came home one day and found that a female monarch laid 200 eggs on one plant. This monarch found our plants. I was so amazed that I cried."

McKinney removes the whole leaf with the laid eggs and brings them inside. "I keep the eggs damp in a shoebox. After three to five days, the caterpillars begin to emerge." She transfers the small hatchlings to plastic containers and once larger, transitions them to a mesh enclosure. "They feed until they're ready to enter the pupal stage, where they crawl up to the top of the mesh and form a chrysalis." At any one time, McKinney has 50 caterpillars and 50 chrysalises. Once the butterflies emerge, she releases them as quickly as three to four hours. "I try not to keep the emerged butterflies longer than a day. They have lots of work to do in their four to six weeks on this Earth."

"Monarch butterflies migrate to their wintering locations in Mexico. Then it takes roughly four generations of monarchs to complete the migration back to the northern reaches of their range in



Photo by Christina McKinney

the eastern United States," Abernathy says. "How each subsequent generation knows the migration pattern is a great mystery!"

Thanks to a grant from Monarch Watch, Jones Park received 250 native green milkweed seedlings, as well as another 50 aquatic milkweed plants as a result of a partnership between NRG and the National Resource Conservation Service. "These two species of milkweed are the two most common in the area," Abernathy says. "As native plants, they are adapted to our climate and don't need additional water or soil treatments often required by non-native plants."

In a partnership with local scouting groups, the park is installing a pollinator trail, adding additional pollinator plants, and constructing a butterfly enclosure for raising butterflies and moths for release into the park. "Over the next year, Jones Park will continue to expand and enhance our pollinator habitat and offer programs on creating your own pollinator-friendly garden," he says.

For her part, McKinney will continue raising and releasing monarchs. "I always stop what I'm doing to watch a butterfly emerge. It is always a miracle to me," she says. She encourages others to get involved. "You don't have to raise butterflies in your home. Instead, reduce the use of pesticides, which kills pollinators, and choose to plant pollinator-friendly plants like milkweed. Small changes can make a tremendous difference."

More info

[www.hcp4.net/jones](http://www.hcp4.net/jones)



# Fruit, Nut Trees Planted

**A**walk along the Spring Creek Greenway will soon offer more than captivating views of water and wildlife. In as little as a year, visitors can get a true taste of the thriving ecosystem. From pecans to plums, select trees along the greenway will soon bear fruit and nuts for area residents.

“Commissioner Cagle envisioned residents walking along the Spring Creek Greenway and stopping to enjoy fruit and nuts directly from the trees,” says Laura Carlton, arborist at Mercer Botanic Gardens. From December through February, Precinct 4 staff and more than 150 volunteers planted 185 trees along the greenway. While most of the fruit and nut trees will bear fruit in five to 10 years, the Mexican plum may produce fruit even earlier. “The Mexican plum is ripening now, so it’s even possible we’ll see fruit this year,” Carlton notes.

Arborists from Mercer and Jesse H. Jones Park & Nature Center carefully selected the trees for planting. “We chose trees native to Texas,” Carlton says. “Natives traditionally require less maintenance. They are better adapted to the soil, and they don’t need as much water as ornamental, non-native plants.”

Staff and volunteers planted pecan,



Photo by Crystal Simmons

walnut, Mexican plum, persimmon, and pawpaw trees. In addition to serving as a valuable natural food source for local wildlife, the fruit trees have the added benefit of producing flowering, fragrant blooms that attract pollinators. “Most residents don’t have the chance to enjoy fruit and nuts directly from the tree,” says Commissioner Cagle. “These trees will help strengthen the ecosystem along the Spring Creek Greenway and provide food for visitors and wildlife alike.”

More info

[www.hcp4.net/parks/SCGW](http://www.hcp4.net/parks/SCGW)

## Trails As Parks Event Snapshot



**Archery.** Learn the basics of archery. Ages 7+.



- Carter Park.

*Tuesdays, Sept. 5, Oct. 3, Nov. 7, and March 6, 6 p.m.*

- Spring Creek Park. *Tuesdays, Sept. 19, Oct. 17, Nov. 14, March 20, 6 p.m.*

**Stargazing.** *Tuesdays, Dec. 5, Jan. 9, and Feb. 6, 6 p.m.* Learn about planets and stars. Bring a telescope or binoculars. Pundt Park.

**After-School Fishing.**

- Kickerillo-Mischer Preserve.

*Tuesdays, Sept. 12 and March 27, 6-8 p.m.*

- Pundt Park. *Tue., Oct. 10, 6-8 p.m.*

- Burroughs Park. *Tue., Oct. 24, 6-8 p.m.*

**Pontoon Boat Tours.** *Saturdays, Sept. 30, 9 a.m., 11 a.m., 1 p.m., and 3 p.m.* Ages 12+. Jones Park.

**Canoeing.** *Saturdays.* Ages 16+.

- Mercer to Jones (canoe clean-up). *Sept. 9, 9 a.m.-2 p.m.*

- Kickerillo-Mischer Preserve - Marshall Lake (canoe and fish). *Sept. 23, Oct. 14, Nov. 4, Dec. 9, Jan. 13, Feb. 3, and March 17, 9 a.m.-2 p.m.*

- Collins Park to T.C Jester Bridge. *Oct. 7, 8 a.m.-2 p.m.*

- Carter Park to Jones Park. *Jan. 6, 9 a.m.-1 p.m.*

- Mercer to Jones. *Sat., Feb. 24, 8 a.m.-1 p.m.*

**Dip Netting Workshop.** *Sat., Oct. 21, 9 a.m.-noon.* Pundt Park.

**Creepy Critters and Evening Walk.** *Sat., Oct. 28, 6 p.m.* Spring Creek Park.

**Pontoon Boat Bird Trips.**

*Saturdays, Nov. 18 and March 24, 8 a.m. and 1 p.m.* Ages 12+. Jones Park.

Reservations

[www.hcp4.net/tap](http://www.hcp4.net/tap)

More info

[www.hcp4.net/burroughs](http://www.hcp4.net/burroughs)

# Promoting Active Play

**W**hen it comes to children’s use of electronic devices, many parents feel the pressure to limit screen time. But now it’s possible for kids to be screen-savvy and active. A new playground at Burroughs Park uses smart technology to promote dynamic play through a suite of mobile games—accessible on iPhone and android smart devices—that connects with playground equipment. After downloading the free Biba software app and selecting one of 10 games, parents swipe a QR scanner to begin. With guidance from the game, children perform a series of physical

tasks—climbing, sliding, and/or swinging. Once a child completes a physical challenge, the parent, who acts as referee, swipes a QR scanner to unlock the next step of the game. “In Dino Dig, children pretend to be an archeologist. They scale a certain climber or go down a particular slide before they can dust off the bones in the game,” says Jeff Bratton, senior project design manager with May Recreation Equipment and Design, which installed the Biba system at Burroughs Park. “The technology not only encourages active play, but is designed to get kids playing longer, harder, and much more often.”



# Managing Roadway Improvements

PAMELA ROCCHI REFLECTS ON 25 YEARS OF SERVICE

**P**amela Rocchi reflects on the sheer volume of road and bridge projects accomplished throughout her 25 years of service in Precinct 4's Capital Improvement Projects (CIP) Division. "Between 1992 and 2016, Precinct 4 implemented 435 capital improvement projects with a construction value of more than \$838 million." Those projects include extending or widening existing major thoroughfares, new roads and bridges, traffic signals, and intersection and drainage improvements.

Rocchi began her tenure as an administrative assistant. Not long after, she rose to technical assistant and began serving as division director in 2000. She credits changes in technology for CIP's ability to more quickly address community needs and collaboration between various jurisdictions to accomplish more with less.



Photo by Crystal Simmons

**Pamela Rocchi and her staff manage capital improvement projects for Precinct 4.**

"When I started working for the Capital Improvement Projects Division, it could take up to nine months to respond to a constituent's letter of concern." Today,

staff members hop on Google Earth to identify the area of concern and send off a memo to the engineering department that same day. The warrant study now takes an average of three months. "Because of advances in technology, we've streamlined our processes," Rocchi says. "In the 1990s, a roadway widening or extension could take between four and seven years to accomplish. Today, that same project takes as little as 36 months."

Technology changes also impact road enhancements. "Today, we have the ability to synchronize traffic systems along an entire corridor to better manage the flow of traffic. These systems are more sophisticated than ever before."

Rocchi feels a great deal of satisfaction in the projects accomplished by the CIP Division. "We actively work to improve the quality of life for Precinct 4 residents. It's very gratifying work," she says.

*Cont'd. from Constituent Needs, cover page*

(HCTRA), the City of Houston, and homeowners association groups. "Capital improvement projects focus on upgrading or extending major thoroughfares to address transportation needs," explains Pamela Rocchi, CIP director. Collaborative efforts with area partners allow Precinct 4 to share funding and maximize outcomes. "Thanks to these innovative partnerships, we accomplish a greater volume of capital improvement projects than ever before."

Rocchi cites current TxDOT and HCTRA partnership projects, including three new segments to State Highway 99, improvements to U.S. 290, and the addition of three toll lanes in each direction to State Highway 249. Construction of the Kuykendahl Road bridge over Spring Creek is a joint participation project between the Woodlands Road Utility District No. 1, Montgomery County Precinct 3, and Precinct 4. "The bridge addresses mobility needs and benefits all parties," she says. District No. 1 funded the design of the

bridge, while precincts 3 and 4 share the cost of construction.

## Anticipating Future Needs

When Precinct 4 renovates or expands a roadway, it often partners with communities to add special enhancements. "Precinct 4 actively looks for opportunities where a community can upgrade services. For example, the county funds traffic signals suspended by a span wire system. A local neighborhood may partner with Precinct 4 to upgrade that cable to a mast arm, which is more aesthetically pleasing," Rocchi explains. Although a homeowners association may not be ready to landscape and maintain the greenery in a new median, neighborhoods often opt to fund the cost and installation of irrigation pipes during construction or expansion of a roadway.

Furthermore, if a community would like a sidewalk and funds the cost of the concrete, Precinct 4 will design and install the sidewalk during a road construction project. "Some neighborhoods even pay

for drainage piping that is larger than spec in anticipation of future growth," she adds.

The CIP Division works hard to anticipate future roadway needs, attending meetings at local chambers of commerce, as well as transportation-related meetings across Precinct 4. "Our goal is to understand what our region is trying to accomplish and stay on top of mobility needs," Rocchi says.

"Mobility issues are quality of life issues," Commissioner Cagle says. "The people who work to maintain and construct new roads and bridges are conscientious public servants. When they say they have Precinct 4 pride, it means they take pride in serving each and every one of our constituents. I'm very proud of what these employees accomplish to ease traffic congestion, keep pace with continued growth, and make sure our roadways stay in tip-top shape."

More info

[www.hcp4.net/community/roadsbridges](http://www.hcp4.net/community/roadsbridges)



# Honoring Our Veterans

## PRECINCT 4 HOSTS DINNER, CONCERT

Commissioner R. Jack Cagle invites veterans to Precinct 4's fourth annual Tribute to Veterans on **Wednesday, November 8 at 6 p.m.** at Humble Civic Center.

"Having the opportunity to recognize the great men and women who served our country is an honor that resonates to my core," he says.

Commissioner Cagle explains that he grew up with stories of service and sacrifice. "When we honor our veterans, we honor my grandfather and my ancestors going back hundreds of years. It's very much a part of who I am and why public service is so important to me now." He notes that his family on his mother's side served in every American conflict since arriving to this country in the 1650s. While Commissioner Cagle registered for the draft, he missed Vietnam by two years.

"Harris County is home to more than 180,000 veterans. As we go about day to day, we can forget the sacrifices these brave men and women made for our country. This event is just a small way we recognize the contributions they make in and out of uniform," he says.

The Veteran's dinner and patriotic concert features the Singing Cadets from Texas A&M University. Founded in 1893, the premier men's chorus is now in its

*"Harris County is home to more than 180,000 veterans. This event is just a small way we recognize the contributions they make in and out of uniform."*

114th touring season.

Following an address by Commissioner Cagle, participants will feast on a catered turkey dinner with all the trimmings and a dessert of apple pie.

The free event, which is hosted by Precinct 4's Senior Adult Program and Fun4Seniors, is open to veterans and their spouses. Reservations are required, and transportation is available from 10 locations across Precinct 4.

Reservations and  
bus information

[www.hcp4.net/sap/  
events](http://www.hcp4.net/sap/events)



## SENIOR ADULT PROGRAM CALENDAR

### LUNCHEONS

*(includes lunch and entertainment)*

**Champion Forest Baptist Church Jersey Village. Tuesdays, 11:30 a.m.\***

- Oct. 10. Jazzy Jack O' Lantern: \$12
- Dec. 5. All Wrapped Up: \$10
- Feb. 13. Love You to Pieces: \$10

**Copperfield Church. Fridays, 11:30 a.m.\***

- Oct. 20. Pumpkin Spice and Everything Nice: \$10
- Dec. 8. "Can"-dy Cane: \$10
- Feb. 16. Chinese New Year: \$10

**Cypress Creek Christian Community Center. Fridays, 11:30 a.m.\***

- Sept. 1. We're "Leaf"-ing Summer Behind: \$10
- Dec. 1. I Can "Bearly" Wait for Christmas: \$10
- March 9. "Seas" the Day: \$12

**Lone Star – University Park (EMI building). Fridays, 11:30 a.m.\***

- Nov. 10. "Tree"-Mendously Thankful: \$10
- Feb. 2. All You Need Is Love: \$10

**St. Stephen's United Methodist Church. Mondays and Fridays, 11:30 a.m.\***

- Sept. 18. A "Hoot" of a Good Time: \$12
- Nov. 3. A Gobbilin' Good Time: \$10
- Jan. 22. "Snow" Happy to See You: \$10
- March 19. "Sea" What We Caught: \$12

**Bridge Tournaments. Wed., Sept. 13, 9:30 a.m.** Recreational bridge players register in teams (\$24/team). Humble Civic Center.\*

**Howling Good Time Concert and Dance. Wed., Oct. 18, noon-3 p.m.** Features the River Road Boys. Suggested donation: \$7. Humble Civic Center.

**Destinations Galore Travel Show. Tue., Jan. 30, 9:30 a.m.** Humble Civic Center.

\*Reservations required; call 281-893-3726.

# Calendar of Events



## Jesse H. Jones Park & Nature Center



### SEPTEMBER

**Scavenger Hunt.** *Sat., Sept. 2, 10 a.m.* Ages 5-15. Reservations begin Wed., Aug. 23.\*

**Volunteer Meet 'n Greet.** *Sat., Sept. 9, 9-11 a.m.* Learn about the rewards of volunteering. Ages 16+.

**Second Saturday Settlers: Powder and Steel.** *Sat., Sept. 9, 1-3 p.m.* Learn about early Texas militia life.

**Tree T's.** *Sat., Sept. 16, 10 a.m.* Bring a white t-shirt and make an autumn shirt. Reservations begin Wed., Sept. 6.\*



**Hunter Ed Certification.** *Tue. and Wed., Sept. 19 and 20, 5:30-8:30 p.m.* Material's fee: \$15. Ages 9+. Register online at [tpwd.elementlms.com/course/hunter-education-classroom-course-296](http://tpwd.elementlms.com/course/hunter-education-classroom-course-296).\*

**Brownie Hiker.** *Sat., Sept. 23, 9 a.m.-noon.* Brownies earn their Hiker badge. Reservations begin Wed., Sept. 13.\*

**TPWD Junior Angler Workshop.** *Sat., Sept. 30, 9 a.m.-2 p.m.* Bring bait and tackle and learn the basics of fishing. Ages 8+. Reservations begin Wed., Sept. 20.\*

### OCTOBER

**Pontoon Boat Tours.** *Sat., Oct. 7. Tours throughout the day.* Ages 8+. Reservations begin Wed., Sept. 27.\*

**Twilight Walk.** *Sat., Oct. 7, 7 p.m.* Bring a flashlight and wear closed-toe walking shoes. Ages 10+. Reservations begin Wed., Sept. 27.\*

**Embroidery.** *Sat., Oct. 14, 10 a.m.* Bring an embroidery hoop and learn 18th- and 19th-century techniques. Ages 8+. Reservations begin Oct. 4.\*

**Second Saturday Settlers: Clay Works.** *Sat., Oct. 14, 1-3 p.m.* Watch a clay-firing demonstration.

**Stargazing.** *Sat., Oct. 14, 7:30 p.m.* Bring a telescope or binoculars. Reservations begin Wed., Oct. 4.\*

**Bird Friendly.** *Sat., Oct. 21, 10 a.m.* Learn about the bird-friendly communities program. Ages 12+.

**Tricks and Treats Among the Trees.** *Sat., Oct. 28, 3:30-7 p.m.* Come in costume and enjoy a nature trail, games, and hayrides.

### NOVEMBER

**Tree Planting Party.** *Sat. and Sun., Nov. 4 and 5, 9 a.m.-noon.* Bring tools and help reforest the park. Ages 8+. Make reservations by Fri., Oct. 27.\*

**Pioneer Day.** *Sat., Nov. 11, 10 a.m.-4 p.m.* See page 3.

**Canoe Spring Creek.** *Sat., Nov. 18, 9 a.m. (longer trip) or Sun., Nov. 19, 2 p.m. (shorter trip).* Ages 16+. Reservations begin Wed., Nov. 8.\*

**Plant Texas Natives!** *Sat., Nov. 18, 10 a.m.* Learn about the benefits of natives. Wear closed-toe shoes. Reservations begin Wed., Nov. 8.\*

### DECEMBER

**An Old-Fashioned Christmas.** *Sat., Dec. 2, 4-7 p.m.*

Experience 19th-century holiday customs. Reservations begin Wed., Nov. 15 (Harris County residents); Mon., Nov. 20 (non-Harris County residents).\*

**Second Saturday Settlers: Homestead Holiday.** *Sat., Dec. 9, 1-3 p.m.* Enjoy homemade cookies and wassail.

**Critter's Christmas.** *Sat., Dec. 16, 10 a.m.* Make decorative, edible treats for wildlife.

### JANUARY

**Winter Bird Count.** *Sat., Jan. 6, 7:45 a.m.* Take part in this informal count of Jones Park's wintering and resident birds. Birders ages 12+.

**Volunteer Meet 'n Greet.** *Sat., Jan. 13, 9-11 a.m.* Discover the rewards of volunteering. Ages 16+.

**Second Saturday Settlers: Flint to Fire.** *Sat., Jan. 13, 1-3 p.m.* Learn how to build a campfire with flint and steel.

**Pioneer Campfire.** *Sat., Jan. 13, 5:30 p.m.* Storyteller Jean Donatto shares *This Train is Bound for Story!* Reservations begin Wed., Jan. 3.\*



**Arbor Day Celebration.** *Sat. and Sun., Jan. 20 and 21, 10 a.m.-4 p.m.* Take home a free sapling and learn about tree planting and care. Saturday activities include a Forester Talk at 10 a.m. and Winter Tree Hike at 2 p.m.

**Animal Tracks and Signs.** *Sat., Jan. 27, 10 a.m.*

### UPCOMING

**Project Wild Workshop.** *Sat., Feb. 3, 9 a.m.-3 p.m.* TEEAC & SBEC accredited. Formal and non-formal educators welcome. Materials fee: \$30. Register by Mon., Jan. 15 at [tpwd.texas.gov/calendar/project-wild-growing-up-wild-workshops](http://tpwd.texas.gov/calendar/project-wild-growing-up-wild-workshops).\*

**Homestead Heritage Day.** *Sat., Feb. 10, 10 a.m.-4 p.m.* Discover 19th-century Texas settler life.

**Fishing 101.** *Sat., Feb. 17, 9 a.m.-2 p.m.* Bring bait and tackle and learn the basics of fishing. Reservations begin Wed., Feb. 7.\*

See Calendar, page 10

\* Reservations required.  
Please call 281-446-8588.

All ages unless  
otherwise noted.



Continued from Calendar, page 9

**Winter Woods Orienteering.** *Sat., Feb. 24, 10 a.m.* Bring a compass and learn to follow an off-trail course. Ages 10+. Reservations begin Wed., Feb. 14.\*

**NatureFest.** *Sat., March 3, 9 a.m.-3:30 p.m.* Free event includes pontoon boat tours, guided walks, live animals, a catch-and-release fish tank, and presentations.

#### ONGOING

**Nature Photo Contest.** Take part in the annual photo contest. Visit [www.hcp4.net/Community/Parks/Jones/Contest](http://www.hcp4.net/Community/Parks/Jones/Contest).

**First Saturday Birding.** *Saturdays, Sept. 2, Oct. 7, Nov. 4, Dec. 2, Jan. 6, Feb. 3, and April 7, 7:45 a.m.* Ages 10+.

**Invasives Beware.** *Sundays, Sept. 3, Oct. 1, Nov. 5, Jan. 7, Feb. 4, March 4, and April 1, 9-11 a.m.* Help remove invasive plants. Ages 16+ or accompanied by adult.

**Tadpoles Club.** *Wednesdays, Sept. 6, 13, 20, and 27; Nov. 1, 8, 15, and 29; Jan. 10, 17, 24, and 31; and March 7, 21, and 28; 10:30 a.m. or 1 p.m.* Children learn about nature. Ages 3 and 4 only. Parent must accompany child. No younger or older siblings. Reservations for respective months begin Wed., Aug. 2, Oct. 4, Dec. 6, and Feb. 7.\*

**Second Sunday Pickers.** *Sundays, Sept. 10, Oct. 8, Nov. 12, Dec. 10, Jan. 14, Feb. 11, March 11, and April 8, 2-4 p.m.* Enjoy the music or bring an instrument and join in the fun.

**Jesse Jones Park Volunteers.** *Mondays, Sept. 25, Oct. 30, Nov. 27, Dec. 11 (annual Christmas party), Jan. 29, Feb. 26, March 26, and April 30, 7 p.m.* Ages 16+ or accompanied by an adult.

**First Friday Friends.** *Fridays, Oct. 6, Nov. 3, Feb. 2, March 2, and April 6, 1 p.m.* Ages 55+.

**Thai Chi.** *Wednesdays, 9 a.m.* Enjoy a one-hour beginner class.

## Mercer Botanic Gardens



#### SEPTEMBER

**Lunch Bunch: Your Garden and Climate Change.** *Wed., Sept. 13, noon-2 p.m.* Discover how climate change affects your garden.\*

**Summer Garden Club: Basket Weaving.** *Sat., Sept. 16.* Weave a basket by hand using natural materials.\*

**Forensic Science Workshop.** *Wed., Sept. 20, 9-11 a.m.* Explore the world of forensic science. Ages 14 and up.\*

#### OCTOBER

**Lunch Bunch: Planting for Pollinators.** *Wed., Oct. 4, noon-2 p.m.* Learn how to create a backyard haven for pollinators.\*

**Native Plant Workshop and Sale.** *Sat., Oct. 7, 8:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. (workshop); 10:30 a.m.-4 p.m. (sale); 8:30-10:30 a.m. (special shopping hours).* Discover the benefits of natives.\*



**10th Annual Garden Party.** *Sat., Oct. 14, 5-10 p.m.*

**Mercer's Enchanted Garden Adventure.** *Sat., Oct. 21, 9 a.m.-noon.* Wear a fairy costume, travel winding paths, spy garden fairies, and create a garden with natural materials. Ages 12 and under.\*

**Wine and Roses in the Garden.** *Sat., Oct. 28.*

#### NOVEMBER

**Lunch Bunch: Putting Wetlands to Work in Your Hometown.** *Wed., Nov. 8, noon-2 p.m.* Discover the benefits of wetland plants.\*

**Teddy Bear Picnic.** *Sat., Nov. 11.*

#### DECEMBER

**Nature Explore Educator Workshop: Moving to Learn.** *Sat., Dec. 9, 9 a.m.-noon.* Learn techniques for helping kids develop motor control, gain knowledge, and discover an outlet for emotional expression. Register at [natureexplore.org/workshops/educator-workshops](http://natureexplore.org/workshops/educator-workshops).\*

**Nature Explore Educator Workshop: Heart-Centered Teaching.** *Sat., Dec. 9, 1-4 p.m.* Discover tools for a more joyful approach to teaching. Register at [natureexplore.org/workshops/educator-workshops](http://natureexplore.org/workshops/educator-workshops).\*

**Lunch Bunch: Think Outside the Box.** *Wed., Dec. 13, noon-2 p.m.* Lee Murdock-Rowell, owner of Exotics, Plants and Treasures, teaches a beginners class on succulent art.\*

#### JANUARY

**Texas Gulf Coast Gardener.** *Mondays, Jan. 22-March 5, 9 a.m.-3 p.m.* Learn how to create a perfect garden oasis at home.\*

**Lunch Bunch: Spring Preparation for Houston Trees.** *Wed., Jan. 10, noon-2 p.m.* Learn what to do now to prepare trees for spring.\*

#### UPCOMING

**Landscape Conference.** *Fri., Feb. 9.*

**Lunch Bunch: For the Love of Orchids.** *Wed., Feb. 14, noon-2 p.m.* Learn how to successfully grow and care for orchids.\*

**March Mart Volunteer Training.** *Wed., March 7, 3-4 p.m. and Sat., March 10, 9:30-10:30 a.m.* New and experienced volunteers learn about March Mart.\*

**March Mart.** *Fri., March 16, 10 a.m.-4 p.m. and Sat., March 17, 8 a.m.-4 p.m.* Special shopping hours Friday, March 16, 8-10 a.m. (TMS members).

See Calendar, page 11

\* Reservations required.  
Please call 713-274-4160.

All ages unless  
otherwise noted.

Continued from Calendar, page 10

**Lunch Bunch: Texas Snakes.** *Wed., March 21, noon-2 p.m.* Learn about snake identification and safety with Clinton Pustejovsky of Texas Snakes & More.

#### ONGOING

**Gardening.** *Tuesdays, 9 a.m.-noon.* Seek out what's blooming and learn about plant grooming, pruning, and weeding in the Perennial and Conservation gardens. Wear closed-toe shoes, gloves, and hat, and bring sunscreen and water.

**Gardening.** *Thursdays, 9 a.m.-noon.* Take part in plant grooming, pruning, weeding, and mulching in the Prehistoric and Shade gardens. Wear closed-toe shoes, gloves, and hat, and bring sunscreen and water.

**Friend-Raising and Fund-Raising Volunteer Groups.** *Days and times vary.* Help plan special events for Mercer.

**Story Time in the Gardens.** *Third Monday of the month, 10:30-11:30 a.m.* Mercer volunteers share their favorite nature books with children and parents.



**Stroller Strolls.** *First Thursday of the month, 9-10 a.m.* Get active in a family-friendly outdoor setting.

**Cypress Creek Daylily Society.** *Sundays, Sept. 24, Oct. 22, and Dec. 3, 2-4 p.m.* Learn about gardening with daylilies.

## Community Centers



BIG STONE LODGE AT  
DENNIS JOHNSTON PARK

\*For more information or to sign up, call 281-350-1029.

**AARP Smart Driver Course.** *Wednesdays, Sept. 13 and Feb. 28, noon-5 p.m.* Fee: \$15 (AARP members); \$20 (non-members).\*

**Luncheons.** *Fridays, 11:30 a.m.* Includes lunch and entertainment.\*

- Sept. 15 Forget the Siesta; Let's Fiesta! (tickets: \$8; purchase by Sept. 13)
- Oct. 20 Oktoberfest (tickets: \$8; purchase by Oct. 18)
- Nov. 17 Thanksgiving Blessings (tickets: \$9; purchase by Nov. 15)
- Dec. 15 Mistletoe Magic (tickets: \$8; purchase by Dec. 13)
- Jan. 19 A Groovy Kind of Luncheon (tickets: \$8; purchase by Jan. 17)
- Feb. 16 How Sweet It Is (tickets: \$8; purchase by Feb. 14)
- March 7 We're Antsy for a Picnic (tickets: \$7; purchase by March 5)
- March 16 Catch the Wave (tickets: \$12; purchase by March 14)

**3rd Annual Arts and Crafts Exhibit.** *Fri., Sept. 29, 2 p.m.*

**Free! Popcorn and a Movie.** *Thursdays, 1 p.m.*

- Oct. 5 Rooster Cogburn
- Jan. 5 The Swiss Conspiracy

**Cowboy Campfire Breakfast.** *Fri., Oct. 6, 9 a.m.* Suggested donation: \$6; purchase tickets by Wed., Oct. 4.\*

**Pontoon Boat Rides.** *Fridays, Oct. 27 and Nov. 10, 10 a.m.*

**Bridge Tournaments.** *Fridays, Nov. 3 and Feb. 2, 9:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m.* Recreational bridge players register in teams (\$24/team).\*

**Christmas in the Pines Open House.** *Fri., Dec. 1, 2 p.m.*

**Stuffed Stocking Exchange.** *Tue., Dec. 12, noon.*

**AARP Tax Aide.** *Fri., March 2, 9 a.m.*

MANGUM-HOWELL CENTER  
AT DOSS PARK

\*For more information or to sign up, call 281-591-7830.

**Luncheons.** *Tuesdays, noon.* Includes lunch and entertainment.\*

- Sept. 12 Back to School (suggested donation: \$8; purchase by Sept. 8)
- Oct. 10 Burgers & Bingo (suggested donation: \$8; purchase by Oct. 6)
- Nov. 14 Bushel of Blessings (suggested donation: \$8; purchase by Nov. 10)
- Dec. 12 Twelve Days of Christmas (suggested donation: \$8; purchase by Dec. 8)
- Jan. 19 Celebrate Lunar New Year! (suggested donation: \$8; purchase by Jan. 5)
- Feb. 13 Black History Awareness (suggested donation: \$5; bring a covered dish)
- March 13 Burgers & Bingo (suggested donation: \$8; purchase by March 9)

**Free! Movie & Popcorn.** *Fridays, 1 p.m.* Includes popcorn, drink, and treat.

- Sept. 15 Singing in the Rain
- Oct. 13 The Ghost and Mrs. Muir
- Nov. 10 To Catch a Thief
- Dec. 15 Elf
- Jan. 12 Hidden Figures
- Feb. 9 The Karate Kid

**Bridge Tournament.** *Thursdays, Oct. 5 and Feb. 1, 10 a.m.* Recreational bridge players register in teams (\$24/team).\*

**Santa's Workshop.** *Fridays, Dec. 1 and 8, 5:30-8:30 p.m. and Saturday, Dec. 2, 2-5 p.m.* Enjoy this free event of crafts, games, and a hayride. Bring a camera for a photo with Santa.

**AARP Tax-Aide.** *Tuesdays and Wednesdays, Feb. 6-April 11 (except Wed., March 21). Tuesdays: 10 a.m.-4 p.m.; Wednesdays: noon-4 p.m.* AARP Tax-Aide volunteers provide free income tax assistance for low- and middle-income taxpayers. Visit [www.aarp.org/money/taxes/aarp\\_taxaide](http://www.aarp.org/money/taxes/aarp_taxaide).

**Bunny Hop "Eggs"travaganza.** *Wed., March 21, 10 a.m.-noon.* Suggested donation: \$2. Bring a camera.\*



**Harris County Precinct 4**  
R. Jack Cagle, Commissioner  
1731 Hugh Road  
Houston, Texas 77067

PRESORTED STANDARD  
U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
N. HOUSTON TX  
PERMIT NO 257



## What's Inside

---

**3** Precinct 4 Saves  
Historic Tree

---

**5** Jones Park Expands  
Butterfly Habitat

---

**8** Tribute Honors  
Veterans

---

# UPDATE

