

S A W W U CITY

Volume 10 • Number 4
Fall 2005

Quarterly newsletter published for city of Houston employees

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How do you spell relief? H-O-U-S-T-O-N

City employees answer the call for help when disaster strikes their neighbors



Left: Health and Human Services nurse Edna Ratler provides immunization to an infant evacuee. HDHHS provided 7,264 immunizations to the evacuees. **Middle:** Mary Hammond, Library, baby sits a sleeping toddler while the child's mother uses a computer in the impromptu library to search for lost family. **Right:** Minerva Alba, Human Resources, answers phones at the mental health client set up at the GRB. More than 18,300 volunteers kept the shelter operating day and night.

By Dave Schafer

Valerie Stewart and her three children left New Orleans in her rundown 1989 Lincoln Towncar just before Hurricane Katrina slammed ashore. They were looking for shelter and knew Houston was offering it.

Unsure of where that shelter was, they drove slowly through the downtown streets.

An off-duty police officer pulled Stewart

over and offered help. She bought gas for Stewart's car, food for the family and diapers for the youngest child.

Then she took the family to the George R. Brown Convention Center, where Stewart and her family stayed for nearly two weeks.

Stewart said she'll never forget the officer, whose name is Angel.

"She was my angel," Stewart said.

Stewart's not the only one to find an angel in

Houston. When the hurricane struck the Gulf Coast, Houstonians came to the aid of their neighbors in need. City departments and workers, on the clock and off, led the effort.

"It's been hard," Stewart said. "I've lost everything, and that's frustrating. But the city of Houston has been wonderful. Other than not having a home, I've got no complaint."

See **RELIEF** on page 2.

Public exposure

Houston men take a stand against family violence

By Dave Schafer

Charlotte was no older than 7, with big, innocent eyes. Police Chief Harold Hurtt met her when he was a young officer walking the beat in Phoenix, Ariz., and the two quickly took to each other.

During one of his shifts, Charlotte begged him to take her home with him. He reminded her that she had a home of her own and a family that loved her. They'd miss you if you went home with me, he told her.

When he reported to work two days later, Hurtt was told the little girl had been killed during a family dispute. Her father had shot at her mother and missed, hitting Charlotte in the head instead.

"Those are the things you remember," Hurtt said. "Those are the things that we in law enforcement continue to work to change."

Now, Hurtt and other city leaders want Houstonians to know that those abuses will not be tolerated by society or swept under families' living room rugs.

On June 15, HPD and the Houston Area Women's Center kicked off Houston Men

Against Family Violence, a one-year initiative to bring family violence out into the open and show it's not just a woman's problem.

"This is everybody's responsibility," Hurtt said.

The multi-faceted program is Hurtt's brainchild, started with the blessing and support of Mayor Bill White and many other community leaders such as Harris County Judge Robert Eckels, District Attorney Chuck Rosenthal and Councilman Adrian Garcia. These men and others are adopting the program and taking it out into the community.

Black eyes, blue tears

"Abusers are losers," goes the Houston Men Against Family Violence motto.

"We want to let people know that if you abuse another person, you stand to lose quite a bit," said Assistant Chief Vicki King, who's overseeing the program. "You can lose respect, your liberty, your money. Most importantly, you could lose your family."

King said police departments are set up to

See **VIOLENCE** on page 6.

Love ya BLUE — City maintains superior drinking water rating



Michael Bush's simple solution, which will save the city more than \$85,000 a year, won a top

By John Perry

Think clear, sparkling water is safe to drink?

Microscopic bacteria, disease-causing microorganisms and invisible chemicals can contaminate the clearest water.

Think taste tells?

"You can't taste cholera," said Danelle Belhateche, Public Works & Engineering senior assistant director.

See **WATER** on page 7.

Katrina response earns recognition



Mayor Bill White

Kaye Marvinns Photography

On the clock and off, employees stepped up in time of need

When more than 150,000 evacuees from that state needed help, Houstonians opened their arms, their homes, and their hearts. They donated time and money to help those who had lost everything. Race, class, income levels, nothing mattered but that these people needed help.

Our region rose to the challenge of building a temporary city within a city to help folks get back on their feet. Many city employees worked heroically as part of these unprecedented efforts to provide food, clothing, medical care, hygiene, security, and housing for these new residents. Virtual hospitals were created at the Astrodome and the George R. Brown Convention Center within 24 hours. Less than four weeks after the hurricane crashed

into the Gulf Coast, we were able to find accommodations for the 27,100 evacuees who sought shelter in Reliant City and the GRB.

The performance of city employees has been unbelievable, and the competence and dedication of the city workforce has been noticed by all Houstonians engaged in the relief effort, along with thousands of public officials, volunteers and media from outside our region.

Just as importantly, those city workers who didn't have direct, assigned responsibilities for Katrina relief stepped up their efforts to cover for those called away. We did not allow our compassion to compromise the quality of services to Houston residents.

We accomplished these things by empowering people to make decisions and cutting through red tape to get things done. Let's bring this attitude to every single thing we do every day so our citizens will respect us for being the most efficient, responsive local government in the United States. Let's use the incredible volunteer energy of Houstonians to accomplish even more every day without displacing the critical role of full-time public employees.

I want to personally express to all city employees how proud I am to be on your team, which has received international recognition for compassionate, prompt, and effective response to Katrina. It is my privilege to work with each of you.

Thank you.

Houston was lucky that Hurricane Rita turned away from a direct hit on our city. The residents of Louisiana weren't so fortunate when Hurricane Katrina came calling.

RELIEF

continued from page 1.

No single story can convey what happened in Houston in the weeks after Hurricane Katrina and its flood of evacuees. But below is a sampling of stories that show how the city and its employees reacted.



Shirley Caldwell, Parks & Recreation, Kathy Barton, HDHHS, and Donna Hill-Wiley, Planning & Development, work GRB's Joint Information Center. Public Information Officers from all departments staffed the center, which functioned as the base for media who wanted to interview evacuees or city officials or who wanted to tour the GRB.

at several service centers and depositories, and garbage truck drivers picked up set-aside curbside donations while they ran their neighborhood routes.

Using their automated bottling facility, water production employees in Public Works and Engineering produced 16-oz and 5-gallon bottles of treated Lake Houston water for the Red Cross and evacuees housed in Houston.

The Houston Public Library issued three-month Power Cards to evacuees and offered free use of computers. In cooperation with Xerox Global Services, the library provided free copies and printouts of Federal Emergency Management Agency applications and other information for Katrina evacuees.

A shelter from the storm

In all, officials estimate 245,000 evacuees relocated at

least temporarily to Texas. Harris County opened the Reliant Astrodome, Reliant Center and Reliant Arena. When those filled, the city housed the overflow.

On Sept. 2, White opened the GRB for evacuees. Previously, the city was supporting Harris County and other sheltering agencies.

"We want to use our resources in any way we can to help our neighbors through one of the greatest natural disasters in our nation's history," White said.

Housing and Community Development employees, with Wal-Mart and Sam's Club, raised \$5,000 to purchase materials for the GRB. Employees moved about 3,000 air mattresses, cots, and sleeping bags into the center.

Within 12 hours, Convention and Entertainment Facilities staff had the GRB ready for up to 2,500 guests.

That night, the first 200 evacuees arrived. They continued coming over the next several days.

Dorothy Papallion, a senior accounting clerk in Finance and Accounting, worked Sept. 3 helping evacuees get settled in their new temporary home.

"I knew they needed a lot of help," said Papallion, one of 18,300 volunteers, according to CEF, who kept the GRB going day and night. Hundreds of city employ-

ees volunteered at the GRB and Reliant City. "Watching the coverage on TV made me sad, so I wanted to help."

The George R. Brown Hotel

By Sept. 4, 2,800 evacuees were sheltered in the GRB and 24,300 in Reliant City.

Soon, the convention center became more than just a place to sleep at night.

C&EF staff scheduled entertainment and religious services, arranged hourly searches for loved ones, made hourly public announcements in English and Spanish, and built 80 shower stalls.

Services available at the GRB included Red Cross, FEMA, food stamp and school registrations, a full-service ambulatory medical facility, informational programs, housing, post office, and banking services.

Other areas were designed to take the edge off stress, such as a gym for teens and older youths and a play area for pre-teens.

HPL set up an impromptu library complete with 28 computers, books donated from the community and publishers, crafts and toys for children, and board games like Skip Bo and Candyland.

Tech Corps, a nonprofit organization that provides computers and training to schools and organizations in low-income areas, set up 30 computers in the computer resource room. There, evacuees could register for FEMA, view aerial photos of their devastated New Orleans neighborhood, look for lost friends and relatives or set up a SimHouston account to check e-mail and save files.

Health help

Human Resources Employee Assistance Program, along with Fire Department psychologist Steve Pierrel, psychiatrists from UT, providers from MHMRA and volunteers, provided mental health services and emotional support to the people housed in the GRB.

Mental health wasn't the only medical concern. With so many people living in so close an area, the possibility of a disease outbreak was real. So epidemiologists from the Health and Human Services Department watched for illnesses.

Tubes of sanitizers were readily available throughout the GRB and posted signs prompted residents to wash their hands.

HDHHS connected with the Louisiana Immunization Registry, which allowed nurses to give proper, non-repetitive immunizations to those 17 and younger in the GRB and Red Cross shelters.

"We were able to save dozens, dozens of thousands of dollars because of that,"

Unlovely Rita

On Sept. 21, Mayor Bill White's office moved from Hurricane Katrina response to Hurricane Rita preparation. White and Harris County Judge Robert Eckels called for a mandatory evacuation of residents in storm-surge areas and recommended evacuation of residents in other flood-prone regions. Essential city staff were activated.

The hurricane turned away from the city, but it's landing on the Texas/Louisiana border left many Houston-area residents without power for hours to weeks.

The near miss provided a dry run of the city's hurricane response plan. The Emergency Operations Center was activated just days after it shut down following the Katrina relief efforts. The EOC is a central point to monitor and manage the action for city departments and other government agencies.

Evacuation routes were established, and shelters were opened, including hub shelters in schools and gymnasiums along I-45 in case residents couldn't get out of the city in time.

All this while the city continued to provide essential services to residents.

Some important lessons were learned. White, Eckels and Gov. Rick Perry have formed a task force that will recommend ways to improve transportation and logistics for large evacuations, such as the evacuation of an estimated 3 million Texans from the Gulf Coast area before Hurricane Rita.

"Governor Perry, Judge Eckels and I are quite concerned that both state planning and implementation of a plan needs to improve for reducing traffic congestion and refueling in the case for a large-scale evacuation of the Houston Metropolitan Area," White said.

said Porfirio Villarreal, public information officer.

Like so many other departments, HDHHS' impact wasn't limited to the GRB. Nurses went to Red Cross shelters to conduct medical assessments. Health centers gave prenatal care to evacuees and tetanus shots to people exposed to contaminated floodwaters. The Women, Infants and Children program provided

See RELIEF on page 6.

On the campaign trail with Julie Keeton

On the busiest day of her year, CMC coordinator lays the groundwork for a successful drive

By Dave Schafer

The problems start early. At 8:50 a.m., the speaker scheduled to go onstage in 10 minutes is nowhere to be seen.

Yet, Julie Keeton, the citywide Combined Municipal Campaign coordinator, doesn't panic. She has a high-energy co-worker prepared in case something like this happened.

It's the second day of training for CMC department coordinators. In the downstairs auditorium at 611 Walker, 175 department coordinators are learning how to run their campaigns. Soon, 150 nonprofit vendors will fill the street-level lobby upstairs for the agency fair.

The missing speaker is just one of the many challenges that crop up. But Keeton has been working toward this day for eight months. She's ready.



Julie Keeton talks to a representative from Habitat for Humanity, one of the new CMC agencies

Behind the scenes

The CMC, the city's employee charity giving drive, started in 1991. In 1995, Human Resources Director Lonnie Vara became head of the campaign, which he assigned to the communications division. Last year, employees contributed about \$647,000 to 13 federations and more than 600 agencies.

Keeton took over the CMC in December, coming here from Child Advocates.

"I liked the idea of the CMC and helping others," she says. "The stability, something I might not have with a nonprofit agency, is nice, too."

Keeton's been in the auditorium since 6:30 a.m. setting up tables, hanging up signs and double checking the table chart for the agency fair. Coordinator training begins at 9 a.m., and coordinators began arriving before 8:30 for breakfast, chatting and sifting through the gift bag they pick up when they sign in.

From the stage, Keeton tells the coordinators how to fill in the Scantrons, the card employees use to document their donations. She talks about the coordinators' responsibilities and tries to anticipate questions before they're asked. She inspires them to take the campaign back to their offices.

Keeton admits the subject matter can be dry. She slips in a joke here and there and elicits chuckles from the crowd.

"If that helps them to remember what's being said because it's fun, that's what we're here for," she says.

At the fair

The fundraising campaign is August through October, but Keeton keeps busy all year planning other CMC events like the 1 Percent Recognition Reception and the silent auction, organizing next year's campaign, and finishing paperwork from the just-completed one.

Besides her CMC responsibilities, Keeton also helps plan Public Service Recognition Week, is in charge of the Mayor's Service Awards, and manages other HR assignments.

This morning, Keeton leaves coordinator training at 9:30 because she wants to greet the agency representatives arriving in the lobby upstairs.

Training continues without her. Trained volunteers teach the coordinators how to encourage donations and how to put the fun in fundraising.

She organizes the events and gets them in motion, Keeton says. Then, they tend to go of their own momentum.

Clad in blue jeans and a light denim button-up shirt over a green and white CMC T-shirt, Keeton greets the agency representatives with one-armed hugs and a quick smile. She asks for the spiel from those agencies she's unfamiliar with.

The representatives are happy to meet this woman they've been phoning and e-mailing for months. The representative from The Technology Opportunity Institute shakes Keeton's hand so vigor-



Agency representatives, CMC coordinators, a curious city employee - they all get a Keeton smile. Even when they bring her questions and complaints.

ously, Keeton's arm shakes like a piece of wood in a windstorm.

Last year, Keeton was an agency rep at the fair. Now, she brings the agencies' viewpoint to the fair and tries to fix some of the issues she saw last year.

For instance, she changed the agency drop-off routine, making it easier on the agencies and harder on her and the other city volunteers. Many agency reps express their gratitude for the change.

When the reps aren't thanking her, they are approaching Keeton with questions and problems. She sidles next to them and puts her hand on the back of their arms in reassurance. She rubs her chin with her hand as she thinks out the solution.

Keeton deals with most of the problems personally, offering advice, moving tables and taping up new, decorative signs to replace the bland ones attached to a third of the tables. She constantly runs downstairs to check on the training or drop something off.

The fair will end at 1 p.m. It's been a successful day, Keeton says.

Nonprofit agencies have been able to reach out to hundreds of potential contributors, and 175 coordinators have been trained to make it easier for city employees to contribute to their favorite cause.

At 12:30 p.m., Keeton's leaning against a wall.

"My big feet need a rest," she says. But the rest is brief. Agencies are starting to leave, and she needs to say goodbye.

Helicopter pilot is HPD's eyes in the sky

Rick Justice fights crime from the air and does some other stuff to make the subhead longer

By John Perry

The helicopter engine failed mid-flight. Except for the warning buzzer, the cabin was suddenly and alarmingly quiet.

In 20 seconds, on-duty Houston police pilot Rick Justice with his flight-observation officer would crash into concrete rushing upward at 1,400 feet per minute.

Justice had one chance to avoid catastrophe. And it would have to be timed to perfection.

At 600 feet, he performed the maneuver known as autorotation: an aerodynamic condition where the overhead rotor spins without engine power.

Justice pushed the nose down, increasing airspeed and forcing the main rotor to spin as the concrete kept coming.

At 40 feet, he dragged the nose up and "flared" the chopper. The spinning main

blade briefly provided enough lift to reduce the dangerous rate of descent.

Quick reactions, HPD flight training and a thorough understanding of aerodynamics made it possible to land safely.

"Any time you have engine failure, you have a very short window of opportunity to do exactly the right thing," Justice said.

Sky-view law enforcement

Officer Justice is a 25-year veteran of the HPD helicopter patrol division. With 8,000 hours of flying time, he is the unit's most experienced pilot.

"Rick's the backbone of the division," said commanding officer Lt. John King.

For Justice, the day starts at 8 a.m. with a preflight check outside the hangar doors of the unit's Hobby Airport headquarters.

"Every successful mission starts on the ground," Justice said. "The maintenance

crew gives our craft a thorough going-over, checking equipment and refueling. Then I do my own. And I'm proud to say we have a great safety record.

"Someone once described a helicopter as 'thousands of moving parts all trying to get away from one another,'" Justice said. "And every one has to be maintained."

Starting in 1970 with three helicopters, the division now maintains eight,

flying two-hour shifts, 22 hours a day. Of nearly 5,000 classified HPD officers, only 29 are helicopter pilots.

To qualify for pilot training, each applicant must be an HPD officer in good standing. There is a two-year waiting list. If accepted, they fly as observers for at least two years before training in a 10-month program at Hobby.

By 8:45 a.m., Justice gets the weather forecast: clear skies into mid-afternoon.

At 9 a.m., he tucks his 9 mm Smith & Wesson into his shoulder holster and climbs into the left pilot-in-command seat of the McDonnell Douglas 500. Officer Larry Savat, his partner for the last 12 years, takes the flight observer's position on the right.

The 420-horsepower engine starts, rotating the 27-foot main blade and lightly bouncing the craft without leaving the tarmac. Both officers use earplugs under their headphones. Because of noise, they must communicate via headset microphones.

Cleared for takeoff, the copter rises vertically. For the next two hours they patrol the skies over Houston and parts of Harris County.

Justice checks instrument panel indicators and watches surrounding airspace, ever vigilant for other aircraft. He monitors a police ground-to-air radio frequency while constantly altering attitude to maximize visibility for Savat, who spends a good deal of time watching for conflicting traffic-flow situations below.

Suspect on the ground

A dispatcher directs them to a bank robbery at a Washington Mutual on South Post Oak Boulevard. They race to the crime



Clear for takeoff. Pilot Rick Justice checks instruments before starting a two-hour patrol.

scene at 100 miles per hour.

"The MD-500 has a top speed of 140," Justice said. "Very useful when you have the potential of covering 700 square miles of real estate."

The helicopter swoops low over the area but the suspect escaped on foot.

Justice said suspects have surrendered at the sight of the helicopter. Some of his more gratifying moments were safely finding lost children.

Later, they coordinate with ground officers to locate a stolen vehicle hidden in thick brush by a remote Buffalo Bayou bend.

By 11 a.m., they have burned 44 gallons of fuel. Time to return to Hobby, make reports and check equipment before their next patrol at 1 p.m.

During a quick lunch, Justice, 51, father of four, reflects on his career.

"It's a wonderful life. When I wake up each morning, I look forward to getting to work. Not many people can say that."



Helicopter's eye view of City Hall during a routine security reconnaissance.

What's goin' on

Convention & Entertainment Facilities

Employees honored as team players are: **Anita Robles** and **Anna Hawley**, George R. Brown Convention Center; **Veronica Hernandez**, **Jones Hall**; **Alberto Garcia**, theater district parks; **Linda Hunter**, human resources; and **Yvonne Williams**, accounting ... GRBCC staffers **Anita Mendiet**, 35 years, and **Skip Kivel**, 16 years retired ... New employees include **Ted Bowen** and **Manny Obmaces** ...

Farewell to **Daniel Nguyen** ... **Brinda Norwood** is the department's CMC coordinator, replacing **Larry Larson**, who did the job for 11 years ... **Twining** and **Virginia Oxford** successfully completed certification at the Public Assembly Facility Management School.

— *Pete Radowick*



Laine Twining, booking supervisor for theater district facilities, was named CEF employee of the year.

Police

In little more than 90 days, the newly created Houston Police Foundation raised more than \$1 million to benefit projects that promote public safety. Donations received through the foundation support special programs, officer safety, training equipment and new technology. Under the direction of **Don A. Sanders**, the foundation is comprised of influential business and community leaders ... On July 27, Chief **Harold L. Hurtt** met with citizens to discuss the progress made by HPD on the most pressing crime and traffic issues identified during the 2004 crime summit ... Hurtt and members of his staff conducted an opening ceremony July 11 to welcome 70 men and women into cadet class #185 at the L. D. Morrison Houston Police Academy. On July 29, Hurtt pinned police badges on 63 graduating cadets at a commencement ceremony for cadet class #184. **Adrian Garcia** was keynote speaker. The graduating cadets have undergone 26 weeks of intensive training to become Houston police officers ... Hurtt participated in the 22nd annual National Night Out Aug. 2. Along with several HPD officers, Hurtt visited communities to meet citizens and show HPD's support. To view photos of the event, visit <http://www.houstonpolice.org> ... Officers with the public affairs division helped build a new life for one senior citizen Aug. 13. **Lizzie Piper**, 86, is a longtime resident and HPD supporter. Piper's husband died a year ago, her only daughter died five years ago, and she has no immediate family in the Houston area. Officers who routinely check on her learned she was despondent to the point of losing her will to live. They and several remodeling experts gave Piper's home an extreme makeover. "Our goal is to make her environment a better and happier place to live, and we will lift her spirits," Officer **Warren Jones** said ... On Aug. 29, HPD and the Cy-Fair Chamber of Commerce kicked off the DWI Hero Campaign to reduce fatal accidents along two stretches of road: from FM 1960 West between State Highway 249 and Interstate 45, and SH 249 between Beltway 8 and I-45 in Northwest Houston/Harris County. Fifteen percent of all Harris County fatalities that are a result of drunk-driving accidents have occurred on those 14 miles of roadway. The Cy-Fair Houston Chamber of Commerce, Houston Northwest Chamber of Commerce, 1960 Area Community Alliance and the Willowbrook Area Super Neighborhood are creating educational campaigns to decrease drunk-driving accidents in the area. In addition, TxDOT has constructed warning signs at either end of the corridors to raise awareness of the issue. The Hero Campaign, one of the many joint projects, will encourage the use of designated drivers and work for tougher drunk-driving laws. More details be found at <http://www.herocampaign.org/> and www.herocampaign.org. — *Alvin Wright*

Building Services

Employees recognized for their years of service at the annual employee awards ceremony and luncheon were: **Emmitt Henry**, 40 years; **Nathan Large**, 30 years; **Florence Foster**, **Roberto Rocha**, **Mary Taylor-Ross**, 25 years; **Linda Gunn**, **John Kelly**, **Robert Merryman**, **Lawney Morales**, **Richard Young**, 20 years; **Robert Eadie**, **Stephanie Emmers**, **Russell Galbreath**, **Joe Garcia**, **Arquemedes Joya**, **Percy Singleton**, 15 years; **Sandra Alexander**, **Ghassan**

Asmar, **Robert Berry**, **Richard Bittman**, **Edward Boulter**, **Deborah Cole**, **David Cox**, **Wladyslaw Cupial**, **Calvin Curtis**, **Rodolfo Giron**, **Philip Golembiewski**, **Lisa Hicks**, **Pamela Ingersoll**, **Lugene Jackson**, **David Killebrew**, **Shalia Mason**, **Alex Mena**, **Frank Phan**, **Carter Roper**, **Baldomera Tovar**, **Michael Williams**, 10 years; **Vicente Barrera**, **Wayukula George**, **Javier Medina**, **Marion Moore**, **Julianna Olorundu**, **Regina Patrick**, **Chrystal Rodriguez**, **Georgina Rodriguez**, **Ali Samani**, **LaVonne Schoeneberg**, **Verdi Smith**, **Gilberto Soliz**, **Gil Villanueva**, **Russell Whatley**, **Ruthie Williams**, 5 years. The

department also recognized 47 employees for perfect attendance ... Effective July 1, BSD consolidated the facilities management divisions of the Health and Library departments, transferring a total of 56 employees into BSD ... Congratulations to **Jane Cheeks**, **Leroy Fenske**, **Clarence "Buddy" Hall**, **Wendy Teas Heger**, **Paul Marro**, **Vladimir Naranjo**, **Jacquelyn L. Nisby**, and **Reynaldo Vargas**, recipients of the first Director's Choice Award. Director **Issa Z. Dadoush** created the award to recognize employees for exemplary work and commitment to customer service ... **LaTricia Lester**, payroll supervisor in the PWE's public utilities division, commended **Marshall Abrin** for going above and beyond the call of duty to assist another city employee with her disabled vehicle. — *Jacquelyn L. Nisby*

Human Resources

At the June 24 HR service awards luncheon, **Robin Heatherly** and **Karen Perkins** received customer service awards while **Roland Bienvenu**, **Monet Muse**, **Helen Murphy** and **Itanya Guliex** won team spirit awards ... On Aug. 19 in Wortham Center's Green Room, the communications division hosted the Mayor's Executive Luncheon kicking off this year's Combined Municipal Campaign. Former Channel 2 reporter **Cynthia Hunt** emceed ... **Roland Bienvenu** chaired the Gulf Coast Regional Blood Center blood drive at 611 Walker ... Congratulations to **Itanya Guliex**, promoted to administrative assistant in temporary services, and welcome to **Mirian E. Rocha**, who took her place as an account clerk ... Thanks to HR employees who volunteered in the Katrina hurricane relief effort: **Minerva Alba**, **Candy Aldridge**, **Roland Bienvenu**, **Ruth Carroll**, **Lucilla Chen**, **Rose Corder**, **Leslie Denton-Roach**, **Elizabeth Ford**, **Robin Heatherly**, **Anika Isaac**, **Valerie Jackson**, **Deborah Joseph**, **Julie Keeton**, **Donna Mitchell**, **Barbara Roy-Ruan**, **Connie Silerio**, **Yvonne Stafford**, **Gerri Walker** and **Mosis Willet** ... Good luck to **Ulysses Fogg**, who transferred to the enterprise resource project team ... Welcome **Mark Kasten**, **Maribel Gomez**, **Natasha Silmon**, **Paul Garcia** and **Mary Rangel** ... Farewell and good luck to **Beatrice Galisch**, who worked in the department for seven weeks over the summer while visiting from Stuttgart, Germany. Galisch is studying public administration at the University of Applied Science and wanted to experience government in the southern United States. She will graduate September 2006. — *John Perry*



Intern **Beatrice Galisch** spent the summer learning about human resources.

Aviation

More than 900 Hurricane Rita evacuees were flown from George Bush Intercontinental Airport to shelters in Lubbock and El Paso in the two days before the storm brushed past Houston in the early morning hours Sept. 24 ... At Ellington Field, the U.S. Air Force's 147th Fighter Wing set up a temporary hospital near its on-site clinic to relieve the overcrowding in hospitals in and around Houston. Hospitals in a nine-county area around Houston had already taken in scores of patients displaced by hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Only about 20 beds were vacant among all the hospitals when the new influx of patients began ... On Thursday prior to the storm, both Bush Intercontinental and William P. Hobby airport terminals were packed with travelers who decided to fly at the last minute. Many did not have a ticket. Due to effective communication through the media, passengers heeded the warning not to come to either airport, and the crowds began diminishing by mid afternoon. By noon Friday, the last flights departed about 12 hours before Rita came, and no stragglers were left in the terminal ... No major airport in the U.S. has on-time arrivals and departures that match Bush Intercontinental. The latest on-time performance report released in August by the U.S. Department of Transportation surveyed of the nation's 33 largest airports for on-time arrivals and departures for one year ending June 2005. Bush ranked first in all rating categories. Compared to the year before, the 2004-05 performance improved by 15 percent. — *Roger Smith*

Parks & Recreation

The Southwestern Bell Corp. Foundation, the philanthropic arm of SBC Communications Inc., awarded a \$320,000 grant to build the Acres Homes Baseball Complex in West Little York Park. Since 2001, SBC has donated \$430,000. Plans for park improvements include two lighted and fenced little league baseball fields with bleachers and dugouts, one lighted and fenced NCAA baseball field, a picnic pavilion, a multi-purpose trail throughout the park with connections to the neighborhood, a toddler playground with swings and spring riders, a boardwalk, an outdoor classroom, picnic tables and benches, and an information kiosk. The park is scheduled to be completed in the summer of 2006 ... The department recently celebrated the reopening of eight parks and community centers: **Alief**, a 37-acre community park; **Swiney**, a two-and-a-half-acre neighborhood park; **Windsor Village**, a nine-acre community park; **Beverly Hills**, a 21-acre community park; **Burnett-Bayland**, a 32-acre community park; **Settegast**, a four-acre community park; **Shady Lane**, a 12-acre community park; and **Almeda**, a one-acre neighborhood park. Improvements included new jogging trails and walkways, landscaping, drinking fountains, playgrounds, picnic tables, multiuse pavilions, renovated restrooms and meeting and activity rooms ... The welcome mat was put out for birds, butterflies and other wildlife during the first phase of a three-part education and demonstration program called the Gragg Park Naturalization Project. Gragg Park is the headquarters for the Parks and Recreation Department. The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and the National Wildlife Federation certified the Gragg Park courtyard as an official Texas Wildscape Garden and an official wildlife habitat. Phase two of the naturalization project will focus on the five esplanades that surround the park complex. These five esplanades will serve as landscaping demonstration areas and will be used to encourage citizens to take part in the city's Adopt-An-Esplanade program. Phase three of the project will add landscape enhancements ... **Eastwood**, **Watonga**, **Linkwood** and **Clinton** parks have joined **Kingwood Park** in providing designed space for skate boarders, in-line skaters and traditional roller skaters. These new skate parks have concrete curbs, grind boxes, grind rails, concrete benches, curved benches, mini ramps, and pyramids. Skate parks are open from 6 p.m. to 11 p.m. Participants are encouraged to wear helmets and safety gear ... The department received two federal pass-through grants - \$238,897 from the governor's criminal justice division for the Mayor's After-School Achievement Program, and \$30,000 from Texas Forest Service for GIS support of the tree-inventory project. — *Estella Espinosa*

on in the city?

Planning

Robert Litke retired in August after 10 years as director 14 years with the department.

Marlene L. Gafrick, deputy director, is the new director ... To permanently protect historic structures, the department created a "protected landmark" status.

While the historic preservation ordinance allowed the designation of historic landmarks, it did not protect them

from demolition or substantial change. To be eligible for protected landmark status, the property must meet at least three criteria named in the historic preservation ordinance; been constructed before 1905; be listed individually or as a contributing structure in a historic district listed in the National Register of Historic Places; or be recognized by the state as a Recorded State Historical Landmark. The city designated the first eight protected landmarks: Julia Ideson Library, 500 McKinney; Arthur B. Cohn House, 700 Avenida de las Americas; Houston Fire Station No. 7, 2403 Milam; Kellum-Noble House, 212 Dallas; Houston City Hall and Hermann Square, 901 Bagby; Gregory School, 1300 Victor Street; Houston Public Library - Heights Branch, 1302 Heights Boulevard; Houston Heights City Hall and Fire Station No. 14, 107 W. 12th Street ... Happy anniversary to **Johnny Raia**, who has worked for the city for 50 years. - *Suzu Hartgrove*



Marlene Gafrick, a 25-year department veteran, was appointed as P&D Director.

HEC

David Cutler took over as director. Cutler retired from HPD after 24 years, most recently as assistant chief of information services command. - *Joe Laud*

Fire

On July 12 at Station 18, the department presented 13-year-old Corey Gaspero with a certificate of appreciation for saving the life of his soon-to-be stepfather, Lee Bolton, after Bolton dropped a large knife into his leg. Gaspero remained claim, calling 911 and holding the knife in place until paramedics arrived. According to Bolton, hospital doctors were amazed by Gaspero's actions and said if the knife had moved he might have died. The teen's actions were especially heart-warming, Bolton said, because the next day was Father's Day ... On Aug. 29, EMS held a reunion at Fire Station 60 with the friends, family and firefighters who rescued a 2-year-old boy. The boy nearly drowned in a pool during a birthday party. His mother and bystanders preformed CPR and called 911. HFD crews from stations 60, 68 and 73 arrived and continued CPR and advance life support on the child. He was transported to a local hospital and has made a full recovery ... HFD deployed 13 members to assist with rescue operations in Louisiana. Eight are with Texas Task Force 1 USAR, and five are with Texas Task Force 1 Swift Water Rescue. They helped rescue several thousand citizens. Both teams returned to College Station Sept. 7 ... More than 100 members were recognized during the HFD annual Medal Day Ceremony Oct. 7 for their dedication, valor and service with the fire department and for the citizens of Houston. - *Alicia Whitehead*

Library

Rhea Brown Lawson is the new director. Lawson served as deputy director of the Detroit Public Library since 2003 and as chief of the Central Library in Brooklyn, N.Y., from 1999-2003. She's the sixth director in the library's 101 years. - *Dave Schafer*



Rhea Brown Lawson is the new Library department director.

Controller's Office

Debt manager **Sue Bailey** recovered \$3.8 million for the city. About a year ago, Bailey noticed the money sitting in an escrow account set up by one of the Kingwood-area municipal utility districts prior to annexation in 1996. The money had become city property after annexation but had either been forgotten or overlooked. After talking with state agencies, bankers and public works personnel, Bailey talked the state into releasing the funds to the city. This is the second time Bailey has made this type of discovery. In FY 04, she recovered about \$1 million dollars languishing in a forgotten escrow account. - *Janice Evans*

Housing & Community Development

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity congratulated HCDD staff for an excellent job addressing the key components in the city's 2005 Analysis of Impediments. The AI provided an insightful overview of the status of housing in Houston ... The community outreach division launched a newsletter Housing Community Today, which will highlight department work and keep stakeholders abreast of the latest trends in the industry. The newsletter can be downloaded at www.houstonhousing.org ... The 2005 consolidated plan, produced with residents, community leaders, representatives from nonprofit and for-profit agencies, as well as other city departments, describes how \$65 million in federal funds will be spent to assist low- and moderate-income Houstonians. The plan highlights existing needs, presents a five-year strategy and promotes improvement projects for the current fiscal year. HUD released the funds in August. For more information, call (713) 868-8441, or download the plan from www.houstonhousing.org ... Judge **Ruben Guerrero**, director of the community outreach division, and his staff served as panelists during the South Park/Sunnyside Super Neighborhood town hall meeting on reverse mortgage and predatory lending. More than 150 residents packed the Sunnyside Multi-service Center. Several other local government agencies, bankers, realtors, mortgage companies, nonprofit agencies, and civic clubs also participated ... Guerrero and staff also participated in Estrenando Casa's Executive Business Forum hosted at the Intercontinental Hotel. Several local, state and national organizations, bankers and realtors served as panelists and addressed the influential role of Hispanic consumers ... Acres Homes Community Development Corp. hosted its eighth annual Volunteers Award Luncheon at the Greater Zion Missionary Baptist Church. HCDD served as a partner with special recognition given to the planning and process division ... HCDD participated in Congressman Gene Green's federal grants workshop on grants and how to start and finance a small business ... HCDD and the Mancuso, Flores, Pleasantville and Scenic Wood library branches hosted reopening celebrations. The branches received funding through the Community Development Block Grant. - *Lester Whiteing, Jr.*



Ramiro Diaz, Elizabeth Esquivel, Christopher Trevino, and Vincent Mack, left to right, assist youngsters participating in National Night Out.

Mayor's Office

Welcome interns **Joseph Romano** and **Margaret Vallejo** ... **Terrence Fontaine** worked side-by-side with State Rep. Rick Noriega as site manager for the Hurricane Katrina Shelter at the GRBCC ... The Mayor's Office salutes the many city employees who worked heroically to provide food, clothing and other assistance to Katrina victims. Your dedication and service is greatly appreciated. And remember the Houston Katrina/Rita Fund for any future donations at www.hkrf.org - *Debra Veal*

Obituaries

William K. Hall, a recruiter in the Aviation's human resources section, died Aug. 16. Hall joined HAS in June 2004 and contributed to the launch of the NeoGov applicant tracking system. Funeral services were Aug. 20 at Rising Star Baptist Church in Oakdale, La. Many of Hall's fellow employees honored his memory during a memorial service Aug. 19 at the HAS Administration Building. He is survived by his parents, Ethel White of San Antonio and Romeo Hargrove III of Ville Platte, La; three sisters; one brother; and a large extended family.



Public Works

On Aug. 2, 2005, four utility customer service employees participated in Neighborhood Night Out at Dezavala Park on the east side of town. The employees staffed a display, answered water and sewer questions, and distributed pamphlets, brochures and other material to educate residents about their water bill and water usage, including suggestions on ways to check for hard-to-find water leaks. - *Gary Norman*

Health & Human Services

Health inspection reports for Houston food establishments, ranging from swanky restaurants, nursing homes and grocery stores to mom-and-pop mobile food units and school cafeterias, are now online at www.houstonhealth.org. The reports will tell consumers the sanitary conditions of a food establishment during the most recent visit by a health inspector. Consumers can search food establishments by name, category and zip code. The inspectors conduct unannounced visits at least once a year to each of the approximately 12,000 food establishments in Houston. They perform additional inspections based on public health risks posed by the establishment's past compliance history ... The Children's Environmental Health Program will receive a \$3 million grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to renovate about 250 homes that contain lead paint and house a lead-poisoned youth. Bond funds from the city's Department of Housing and Community Development will augment the grant, bringing the total project value to \$4.3 million. The program has renovated 1,138 Houston homes since 1996. Elevated blood lead levels in children can result in learning disabilities, behavior problems, mental retardation, speech and language handicaps and brain damage. Seizures, coma and death are possible at extremely high blood lead levels. - *Porfirio Villarreal*

Legal

Congratulations to **Rey Hernandez**, winner of the August Eagle Award for going the extra mile in his job. The August Eagle Award was dedicated to the men and women serving in the armed forces, and the \$435 raised will be used to buy them calling cards ... Celebrating milestones are **Annette Lake**, 25 years; **Douglas Herrera**, **Lillie Knight**, 20 years; **Adana Elliott**, 15 years; **Maria Hogan**, **Mary Sharp**, 10 years; **Laura Gill**, **Robert Allen**, **Harelda Brown**, **Susana Sosa**, 5 years ... Welcome new employees **Paulette Wolfson**, **Nirja Aiyer**, **Cynthia Rodriguez**, **Elida Gonzales**, **Sharon Rummels**, and **Sokkhorn Tan**. - *Vachel Henry*

Employees get a kick out of indoor soccer

Emergency teams are ready to spring into action in case disaster strikes

By Dave Schafer

While many other workers hit the bar for happy hour, Will Chavez and a dozen other city employees spend a happy hour playing indoor soccer.



Photo by Dave Schafer

Will Chavez, player-coach for the City Slickers, tries to steal the ball from two Exxon Mobile players. About a dozen city employees play for the City Slickers each week.

Chavez, of the Information Technology Department, is player-coach of the City Slickers, a team of city employees who play in a Friday night indoor soccer league at Kicks Indoor Soccer on Shepherd.

"I love this," Chavez said between gulps of air. Sweat stood out on his face from running around the field, which is less than one-third the size of a normal soccer field and made of synthetic fiber, rubber pellets and sand. Each half of play is 25 minutes, and walls keep the ball in bounds.

Because the field is smaller with less out-of-bounds areas, the action is faster and more intense than during outdoor soccer.

Chavez has played soccer nearly all 33 years of his life. He began playing indoors to beat the Houston heat.

After playing in another Kicks league, Chavez started a team of city employees.

About 12 members of the team from City Council, IT, Planning and Development, Building Services and 311 show up for each game.

Robert Bundick, IT, joined the team because his son, Nosakhere, likes playing soccer. Bundick said he thought this would be a good way to encourage his son's interest and spend some fun time with the boy. It's also keeping the ex-Marine in shape.

Bundick, 41, is the oldest member of the team. Nosakhere, 13, is the youngest.

Hector Rodriguez, P&D, said he hadn't played the game since college physical education classes in the early 1990s.

"I love the sport, I just have never had the opportunity to play it before," he said.

Bundick, Rodriguez and many other City Slickers never played soccer beyond the requirements of school. Chavez said the novices are improving, but the team's inexperience shows in its record: two wins against 6 losses and a tie against teams from other companies and schools, such

as Exxon Mobile Corp., Rice University, and St. Thomas.

Hurricane Katrina can be partially blamed for that. Many team members are assisting hurricane evacuees, so Chavez had to find other employees to fill out the team.

For instance, he met Rodriguez in an elevator before the ninth game.

"You look like a soccer player," Chavez said. Rodriguez wasn't, but he took Chavez up on his offer to join the team.

It's not about winning, the players said. The league has a steep entry price, \$925 per team for a 10-week season, and the champion gets just a small trophy and a T-shirt.

"The point is to get in shape," said Chavez, who has lost 16 pounds since he started league play in February. "It's a lot of fun, and without realizing it, they're having a great workout."

It's also about friendly competition, team-building skills and camaraderie.

Kicks has leagues all year around, so this happy hour will continue, Chavez said. After all, it's a healthy way to burn off a week's worth of stress.

VIOLENCE

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react to family violence. This initiative is proactive.

"If you're going to be effective dealing with family violence, you have to prevent it from ever happening, and that's our focus," she said.

The program is funded by the Houston Police Foundation, which donated \$15,000, and by Rosenthal's office, which has donated \$5,000 and pledged to match the police foundation.

Over the next year, King and HPD will build a network of resources and support so another organization can take up the baton.

"Our hope is, where we started small with just a few stakeholders, that this will grow to a national campaign and resonate with the entire country rather than just our community," King said.

The \$20,000 King has received for the program has been stretched to provide public service announcements, four bill-

boards located throughout the city and book covers for elementary, middle and high school children.

King has also applied for a Department of Justice grant of more than \$1 million. "If we can do everything we've done with just \$20,000, imagine what we could do if we really had some money," she said. "We could blanket this city."

Betterman

In 2004, more than 31,000 cases of family violence were reported to HPD. Thirty-four of those cases ended in deaths, including 10 children.

It was those statistics, a tour of the Houston Area Women's Shelter, and experiences from his years on the beat that prompted Hurtt to approach White about the program.

HPD is working with the media to publicize the program and the problem of domestic abuse.

"The most important thing to ending the cycle of violence is to break the silence," said Kelly Boros, education services co-

ordinator for the Houston Area Women's Center. "Get the word out that this isn't acceptable and let victims know that this isn't their fault and that there are services available."

In July alone, HAWC's hotline received 15 calls from people who referred to Houston Men Against Family Violence.

One man said a public service announcement inspired him to volunteer with HAWC. Another said he'd seen a PSA in which he'd recognized himself, and he wanted to know how he could get some counseling.

"Those are two calls that are less common for us," Boros said. "I think this is a very unique campaign, and I applaud Chief Hurtt for taking such a strong stand and for realizing that this is something that needs to be put out there and talked about."

Never again

The initiative also aims to provide young males with role models who speak out against domestic violence.

"We want to educate our young people that it's not the right thing to do," Hurtt said.

Although the press materials feature prominent Houstonians, this program is about all types of men, from the bartender to the accountant to the mayor, King said.

Hurtt wants to provide a counter image to the media and entertainment industries, which so often glorify the denigration of women and children. He wants to show

Components of Houston Men Against Family Violence

- HPD officers are working extra hours rounding up suspects wanted for family abuse.
- Working with HISD to find ways to get the district more engaged in the program.
- Hurtt hopes HPD will host two or three "chat and chews" in communities where higher numbers of domestic-violence calls originate. These fairs would include barbeque, ice cream, balloons, information booths and officers discussing family violence.
- Working with media outlets to get the word out of the program and the problem of domestic abuse.
- Public service announcements.
- Book covers for school students.
- Four billboards throughout the city.
- Providing youths with positive male role models.



One of four billboard images HPD put up to make the community more conscious of the problem of domestic abuse.

RELIEF

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vouchers for nutritious foods to those who received WIC services in their hometowns.

There's no place like home

Even as the rush to provide shelter was ongoing, officials were looking at the next stage for evacuees: permanent or semipermanent housing.

With help from the city's Housing department, the Mayor's Office of Neighborhoods and Housing scoured the city for evacuee housing. According to Deputy Chief of Staff John Walsh, the office had moved 3,178 households into private housing by the first of October. He expected to have another 12,717 units ready by the end of the month.

Getting into private housing is important for the family, Walsh said. Family life will be fractured as long as they remain in public shelters.

The Building Services Department, which provided janitorial services and electricians to GRB and built showers at Reliant Arena, also got furniture for the newly housed evacuees and conducted home inspections to ensure the apartments were habitable.

"The department's objective with Katrina was to get families out of shelters and into dignified housing where they can rebuild their lives and regain their independence," Director Issa Dadoush said.

Working for a living

HR's temporary services division hired dozens of evacuees to put together fur-

niture and move beds and food into the new residences.

Gallery Furniture donated the furniture, and the Houston Food Bank provided the food that was stocked in the cupboards and refrigerators.

Evacuee Luis Guzman was a taxi driver before the hurricane drove him from New Orleans. Wanting to keep busy and make money, Guzman joined the work crews.

"If we have money, we'll be all right, we can rebuild," he said. "I'm happy to work at least three weeks. It means I can survive."

But temporary work wasn't the only kind evacuees were being offered. WorkSource, which matches potential employees with companies looking for workers, spent two weeks at the GRB. According to Pauline Gallien, onsite manager,

WorkSource, which is funded by the Texas Workforce Commission and federal grants, saw about 1,900 evacuees in the first week.

Hundreds of them received jobs, Gallien said.

Before the GRB closed as a shelter Sept. 21, it had been home to more than 5,000. Other shelters remain open, and the evacuees' struggles continue. So does the helping hand extended by the city of Houston.

To respond to evacuees' needs and begin transitioning people out of the shelters, Mayor Bill White and Harris County Judge Robert Eckels set up the Houston Katrina/Rita Fund, an IRC 501(c)(3) charitable organization modeled after the 9/11 Fund. For more information, visit <http://www.hkrf.org/>.

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ERP project update

We interrupt our regularly scheduled column, Street Scenes, for an update on the new enterprise resource planning system implementation project, now known as HoustonOne. The ERP system is used to run city business and manage employees' information. The new project name focuses on the one city, one system, one team concept. For a more detailed description of the ERP, see the summer 2005 City Savvy.

About 200 city leaders and employees gathered at the George R. Brown Aug. 18 for the HoustonOne kickoff. Mayor Bill White, Chief Administrative Officer Anthony Hall and Controller Annise Parker shared their visions for the future and discussed how the new ERP will make Houston government more efficient.

Moving right along

Thirty-eight full-time team members from 12 city departments are staffing the project with support from 17 SAP Inc. consultants. During the last week in July, the team learned how the new system would be designed, developed, tested and integrated into departments.

The team is designing the new ERP processes for finance, payroll, human resources and materials management. They and department representatives who work in those fields attend weekly workshops at the HoustonOne headquarters on the 16th floor, 611 Walker. Before creating the blueprint design, they are learning about business requirements, how information flows through a process from start to finish, and who is involved.

During review sessions, department heads are advised of key decisions. They will decide if the design will meet their department's needs.

An analysis of training needs will also be completed this year. In spring 2006, finance and purchasing employees will be trained.

Grave undertaking: efforts to preserve earliest black cemetery

By John Perry

Near a bend in White Oak Bayou where Spanish moss hangs from huge oak trees, there's a section of the past where granite angels and lions stand proud but broken. Weighted with time, headstones tilt sideways, inscribed names are effaced by years of wind, rain and neglect. A tranquil place, but haunted by relentless overgrowth and ever-encroaching erosion.

Margott Williams' great-great grandfather, a freed slave, is buried there with her great-grandmother, grandfather and two uncles. They share ground with other freed slaves and some of Houston's earliest black residents.

Located in the First and Sixth wards northwest of downtown, Olivewood Cemetery is a six-acre resting place without ownership but with plenty of history.

The cemetery is the earliest known graveyard for blacks in Houston, said Thomas McWhorter, historic neighborhoods director for the Greater Houston Preservation Alliance.

"It's like an open history book with pages written on stone and marble," he said. "It yields valuable historical and cultural information about the area's inhabitants when no written records can be found."

County records list Olivewood as abandoned, McWhorter said. "Without ownership by a church or the county, a cemetery isn't cared for. It can get overgrown and forgotten."

"Olivewood is an irreplaceable historic jewel that deserves preservation."

Williams, 43, thinks so, too. In 2003, the Midtown resident founded the Dece-

dents of Olivewood to take guardianship of the cemetery, to provide care and protect its historical significance.

The Decedents of Olivewood is a nonprofit organization, which enables Williams to raise nontaxable revenue to further preservation efforts.

Williams leads 15 to 20 volunteers cleaning debris and attacking neglect with rakes, hoes, hedging shears and weed-killing strategies.

"We want to put up a good fence and hire a groundskeeper," she said.

"I'm hoping one day it will be a tranquility park where people can come to enjoy the peace and quiet and remember the history."

Her group is also trying to restore the grave markers and locate unmarked graves. One of the more intriguing epitaphs reads, "Murdered Dec. 12, 1889."

McWhorter said continuous overgrowth, erosion and course changes in White Oak Bayou have made it difficult to determine some gravesites.

"These people didn't have vaults," said McWhorter, a trained archeologist. "If they had coffins at all, they were wooden and long-since decayed."

Over the years, there have been numerous reports of mysterious after-dark sightings and strange movements within the graveyard.

Louis Aulbach, a Finance and Administration division manager, heard those stories while working on his soon-to-be-completed book, *Buffalo Bayou: An Echo of Houston's Wilderness Beginnings*.

"But I remain skeptical," he said. "It seems people think a cemetery should



Photo by John Perry

A 1913 angel still stands in Olivewood Cemetery as October's dusk creeps under huge oaks.

be haunted, so they make it so. But if they want to scare themselves silly with stories, it's up to them."

Cathi Bunn, a paranormal investigator, began exploring Olivewood in 1999. One moonlit midnight, Bunn said she videotaped the ghost of Mary White, buried 1888, hovering above her headstone.

Intrigued by the anecdotes, Williams stayed late Halloween night, 2004.

"Only haunting I saw were from two big field mice," she said.

Haunted or not, Aulbach said the important thing is for people to know about Olivewood and its significance.

"It's such a great piece of Houston's history that was almost lost," he said.

WATER

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"Fresh-tasting water has caused population-decimating outbreaks of cholera, dysentery and typhoid throughout the world."

But not in Houston.

"Our drinking water is among the safest in the world," said Jeff Taylor, PW&E deputy director. "We have no recorded cases of water-borne illnesses in Houston."

Houston's drinking water consistently exceeds the Texas Commission on En-

vironmental Quality and Environmental Protection Agency requirements and is rated a "superior public water system."

Drinking water so good, PW&E decided to ...

Bottle it

For about 10 years, the department bottled water from one of its deep-drilled wells safe from surface contamination. Public Works labeled the five-gallon containers Houston Artesian Well Water.

"We began bottling as an easy, economical means to provide clean, safe drinking water to city facilities without (suitable) drinking water," said Belhateche, leader of the water production branch. The locations varied at different times, which included 611 Walker and several police and fire stations.

On Aug. 1, PW&E began bottling treated surface water from the Northeast Water Purification Plant. It's labeled Houston BLUE.

"We moved to the modern bottling plant and can now provide water in small, personal containers as well as the large ones," Belhateche said.

Under the Houston BLUE label, 1,000 16-oz and 200 five-gallon bottles are delivered weekly to 10 city work sites.

"Because of more stringent regulations, our treated surface water is actually superior to artesian well water," Belhateche said.

She said it wasn't unusual for municipalities to bottle and distribute their water. "It's a trend now. Cities like to show how regulations and controls produce wonderful drinking water."

Five consecutive years of regulatory compliance without violations, high water-quality standards and pipeline

cleanliness won the state's superior rating for a municipal water system.

"Providing clean, safe drinking water to a population as large as ours is a big challenge," said Taylor, whose public utilities division is responsible for the public water supply. "On a hot summer day, we'll pump 500 million gallons."

The key is a system of modern water treatment plants filtering out pollutants, Taylor said.

Go with the flow

Houston's drinking water flows from the San Jacinto River into Lake Houston, the nine-mile, man-made reservoir that is the city's primary water supply. The water, treated at the northeast treatment facility, is disinfected with chlorine. Some consumers detect a distinct taste.

"That's not necessarily bad," Belhateche said. "Chlorine is the taste of safe water."

From the treatment plant, the water is supplied to consumers through seven major re-pumping stations.

"We maintain a pressure of at least 55 pounds per square-inch in our lines," Belhateche said. "It makes for a good shower."

And good health.

"By producing drinking water free of water-borne illnesses, we've saved more lives than all the physicians in the U.S. during a calendar year," Belhateche said.

The population of Harris County could double by the year 2050.

"There may be a commercial market for our bottled water," Taylor said. "But whatever the needs may be, I'm positive we can maintain our high standards well into the future."

Beckhead

by Paul Beckman



Bravo to September award winners

Congratulations to **Scott Mellott**, Fire, **Clarence Mitchell**, Aviation, and **Katherine Swilley**, Police, who were named Bravo Award winners for excellent work and contributions to the community. Mayor Bill White and Councilwoman Ada Edwards recognized them Sept. 13 with a mayor's certificate. For more information, visit www.houstontx.gov.



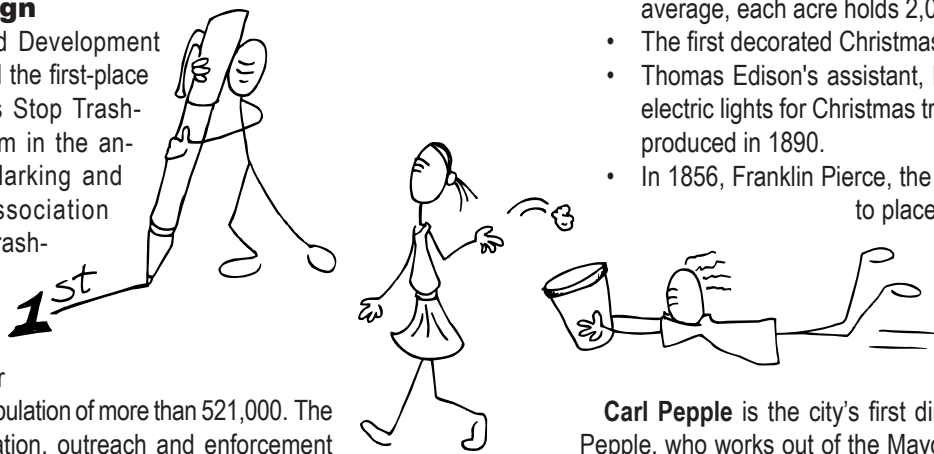
September 2005 Bravo winners were Clarence Mitchell, Scott Mellott and Katherine Swilley.

Winning point of view

The George R. Brown Convention Center's magazine supplement, "Houston Downtown: A New Point of View," won first place in the Special Publications category in the Texas Association of Municipal Information Officers annual awards. **Anna Hawley** and **Pete Radowick** worked with Judson Design to create the supplement, which was inserted into Convene magazine in 2004 and was later reprinted twice by special request.

Savvy campaign

The Planning and Development Department received the first-place Savvy Award for its Stop Trashing Houston program in the annual City-County Marketing and Communication Association competition. Stop Trashing Houston won for Marketing Plans and Tools - Community Issue category for jurisdictions with a population of more than 521,000. The program uses education, outreach and enforcement to reduce illegal placement of heavy trash and illegal dumping. Besides P&D, the Solid Waste Management, Houston Police and Municipal Courts departments are also involved in the program. Judges said, "Great use of community partners and grant funding to address an issue that plagues most metropolitan areas. Houston used a simple message; and the engaging Trash Talkers are helping clean-up the city." For more information, visit www.StopTrashingHouston.org.



The Pulitzers are next

The Human Resources communications division cleaned up in two publication competitions. In Publication Management magazine's national Magnum Opus contest, the division won a gold award for best regular feature for Day on the Job stories, written by **John Perry** and **Dave Schafer**; a silver award for best feature article for "G is for gotcha, a city detective story," written by Schafer and published in the fall 2004 City Savvy; and a bronze award for best interview or profile for "Mayor's first 100 days," written by **Maria Irshad** and published in the spring 2004 City Savvy.

The city also won Magnum Opus honorable mentions for best overall editorial content for the City Savvy, written by Perry and Schafer; best feature article for "Taming the diabetes dragon," written by Perry and published in the fall 2004 issue of Benefits Pulse; and best overall design for the City Savvy, designed by **Leslie Denton-Roach**.

In the Apex Awards from the Writing That Works newsletter, the division won four Awards of Excellence. Schafer won in the Web & Intranet Site Content & Writing category for the online newsletter Extra Milers, and Denton-Roach won for the 2005 Open Enrollment Guide in the Employee, Benefits & Membership Communication category. Also, Benefits Pulse won in the Newsletter Writing category, and the City Savvy won in the Magapapers & Newspapers-Printed category. Reporters for both newsletters are Schafer and Perry, and the editor was **Cyndy Sax**.

Design has a lot of heart

The American Society of Landscape Architects awarded a general design of excellence to Hermann Park's Heart of the Park project. The Heart of the Park, a \$10 million project to restore 18.5 acres from the Sam Houston Monument Circle to McGovern Lake, is the first phase of a master renovation plan initiated by Hermann Park Conservancy and the Parks and Recreation Department.

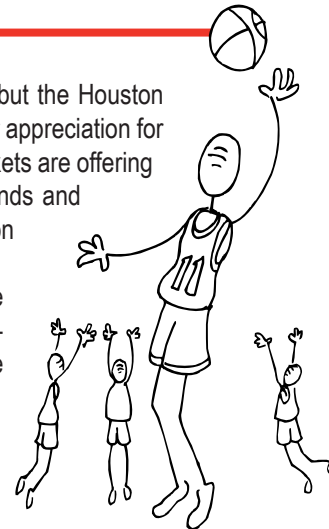
Texas' top cop

The National Association of Police Organizations selected HPD Officer **Muzaffar Siddiqi** for its prestigious 2005 Top Cops Honorable Mention Award representing the state of Texas. Since NAPO launched the program in 1994, the Top Cops Awards have annually paid tribute to hundreds of outstanding law enforcement officers across the country for actions above and beyond the call of duty. The 12th Annual Top Cops Awards ceremony was Oct. 1 at the Lincoln Theatre in Washington D.C.

Dribbling appreciation

Public Service Recognition Week is in May, but the Houston Rockets believe it's never too early to show their appreciation for public servants. So, on Friday, Nov. 18, the Rockets are offering discounted tickets for city employees, their friends and their family to the game vs. the world champion Detroit Pistons.

The Rockets are also offering discounts to five other city of Houston game nights. Visit houston-humanresources.org and click on PSRW for more information.



Oh Christmas tree, oh Christmas tree

Mayor Bill White will light the city's official Christmas tree Dec. 1. During this annual ceremony, the skyline comes alive with music, lights and fireworks from 5:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. For more information, go to www.houstonsepevents.org or call (713) 437-6893.

In honor of that event, we present some Christmas tree facts, courtesy University of Illinois Extension:

- Each year, 34 million to 65 million Christmas trees are produced. Christmas trees take an average of seven to 10 years to mature.
- More than 1 million acres of land are planted in Christmas trees. On average, each acre holds 2,000 trees.
- The first decorated Christmas was in Riga, Latvia, in 1510.
- Thomas Edison's assistant, Edward Johnson, first had the idea of electric lights for Christmas trees in 1882. The lights were first mass-produced in 1890.
- In 1856, Franklin Pierce, the 14th president, was the first president to place a Christmas tree in the White House. Teddy Roosevelt, the 26th president, banned the White House Christmas tree for environmental reasons.

Environmental activist

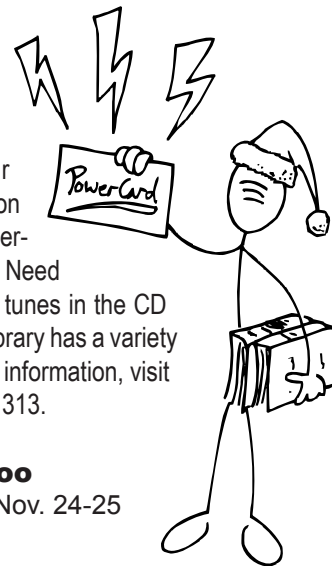
Carl Pepple is the city's first director of environmental programming. Pepple, who works out of the Mayor's Office, is charged with overseeing recycling and air and water quality.

Are you ready for some football?

Adult flag football team registration will be Dec. 12, 2005, - Jan. 4, 2006, at 2999 S. Wayside, 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m., Monday - Friday, in the Parks and Recreation adult sports office. The five-week doubleheader season begins Jan. 10 at Memorial Park. Team fee required. For information, call (713) 845-1190.

You can't hide in the library from your in-laws, but...

Bring your Power Card and visit any Houston public library for help with your holiday plans. You will find a large selection of the best recipes, plus decorating and entertainment books with ideas for your holidays. Need party music? Pick up your favorite holiday tunes in the CD section. How about a holiday movie? The library has a variety of movies in DVD or VHS format. For more information, visit www.houstonlibrary.org, or call (832) 393-1313.



Because we have families, too

HPL will be closed for Thanksgiving Nov. 24-25 and for Christmas Dec. 23-26.

One for the record books

Relive great moments! Name drop those famous relatives you've been trying to sneak into a conversation! Make us jealous of your special talents or short commute to work! Get into the record books!

Well, at least get into the City of Houston Employee Un-Guinness Book of Records.

In the next issue of City Savvy, the Book of Records will honor employees who take the cake in a number of odd categories. There's nothing official about this - it's just a tongue-in-cheek way for us to share our uniqueness and get to know our co-workers. It's also a chance for you to interact with the quarterly newsletter you love to read.

Visit www.houstontx.gov/hr/savvypages/fall05/fall05_unguinness.htm or contact **Dave Schafer**, (713) 837-9386 for contest categories. If you qualify, please send your name, department, daytime phone number and other pertinent information, such as a picture of your pet or an explanation of why you collect TV Guides from every third week in 1967, to dave.schafer@cityofhouston.net. Or send the information through interdepartment or interoffice mail to Dave Schafer, Human Resources, 611 Walker, 4th floor.

Entries are due Dec. 5. Have fun!