Greater

BAYTOWN

February 2021

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This health care issue of Greater Baytown is packed full of helpful information on COVID-19.

With the many challenges we are facing, read Alan Dale's story on Waterford's senior living solutions (page 4).

Michael Pineda writes about a Baytonian making the right call to give up a career in theater to instead help New Mexico patients deal with the pandemic (page 6).

Matt Hollis updates on a Texas study revealing that dentists anticipate a wave of post-pandemic dental problems (page 8).

Some restaurants are utilizing UV light to fight the virus. Read Mark Fleming's article on how McDonald's is on the challenge (page 10).

Local Cardiologist Shezhad Sami M.D., FACC, FSCAI helped lead fellow physicians and his staff at the forefront of the pandemic.

Read how Dr. Sami did it at Houston Cardiovascular Institute (page 12).

Rod Evans writes a touching story on Nurse Jessica Sutterfield, who happened to recognize a Houston Methodist Baytown Hospital patient as someone she worked for years ago, who inspired her to follow a health care career. Read more (page 22).

There is so much more included in the pages of this issue. We hope you enjoy and thank you for reading Greater Baytown.
In a year that has been challenging for the senior living industry and respective communities, it has still found a way to overcome COVID-19 as best as possible.

One of those networks that seem to be thriving is located in Houston, and according to A Place for Mom, the largest senior living referral service in North America, the Houston area is doing just fine.

In its recently revealed list of winners for the SeniorAdvisor.com Best of 2021 that celebrates the more than 20 senior living providers in and around Houston recognized for providing outstanding care last year, the city of Baytown was represented in equal measure.

One of them, the Waterford at Baytown, 901 West Baker Road, and a part of Capital Senior Living, has done quite the job making sure to keep residents in good spirits despite being on lockdown for most of the past year.

The Waterford at Baytown, an independent living, assisted living and memory care community, has come up with plenty of pandemic activities and hopefully with 75 percent of its residents and 48 percent of staff getting the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine, increased health assurances can only help.

On the lighter side of things, the community has been providing residents plenty of things to do including, hosting a special Veterans Day celebration for those who were
Waterford residents proudly show off their COVID-19 vaccination documents.

U.S. Navy Veteran Edwin Thompson

and fellow residents playing Skip-bo.

The Waterford at Baytown took small groups of residents to the Baker Road Baptist Church Pumpkin Patch. These pumpkins came all the way from New Mexico for residents and all of Baytown to enjoy.

“We even had some residents chauffeured in our van and even more drive themselves to visit our neighbor,” Rosko said.

But in reality, it’s not as much about the activities, but more so the care in which the Waterford at Baytown goes about in ensuring the residents are feeling truly at home.

Caregiver Jessica Roberts, who is contracted through the VA, has worked with Edwin Thompson, 93, for six months at the Waterford at Baytown and is impressed with how the facility runs.

“I go with him to the activities here and the calendar is packed,” Roberts said. “They can do as little or as much as they want. They encourage people to go to the dining room and fellowship and eat together, but a lot of them just want to stay in their rooms.”

Roberts said that exercise is also provided for the residents and a small movie theater is on the premises where they can also indulge in some popcorn while watching a flick.

“I would rate this as high as every place I’ve ever seen and I have been doing this for five years,” Roberts said. “I’ve seen the very worst of places and this is by far the best. They put the residents first. Everyone is usually generally happy, and I’ve only seen a couple complain and those are the ones you usually can’t make happy.”

Thompson, a member of the Navy as an Engine Man Chief Petty Officer and Master Diver, was on the crew that recovered the H-bomb in the Mediterranean in 1966.

Thompson for one is very happy as he likes to play the games and especially cards when people get together to socialize.

“It’s kind of like living in a glorified hotel,” Thompson, who has lived there three years, said. “I am happy here; I am staying here.

Roberts says that the workers at the facility are doing the job for the right reasons and are so focused on taking care of the residents and doing the job right.

Sheradan Sunday, activity director for the Waterford at Baytown, said it’s about the connection the workers establish with the residents.

She has worked there for five years.

“For myself, and I feel like all the employees, I feel we truly do care,” she said. “We work in their homes and are an extended part of their families. When they are down or happy, we get down and happy like any blood family. We may not be blood family, but it feels like family. We spend more time with them than our own.

“All the people that work at the Waterford, we do get paid and it’s a job, but it doesn’t feel like a job. We are there to help people and take care of them and make them happy.”
Years can be spent looking for a calling but for Adam Crosby, his calling found him at an early age.

Crosby, the department director of dermatology for the University of New Mexico Hospital, recalled a fishing trip when he was 14. He recalled being with his brother and father near the Houston Raceway Park. The road has recently been paved and a motorcycle flew by, the rider wearing shorts and flip flops on a rainy day and wrecking nearby. The man was taken by flight to Houston but did not survive the accident.

“No one knew how to help him,” Crosby said. “I felt helpless and knew I wanted to do something in the future with medicine.”

Years later, New Mexico residents would benefit from that decision.

Crosby, a Baytown Lee graduate, helped spearhead the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, with the establishment of the state’s only 24/7 testing site. It was a long-winding road that brought about a number of experiences that allowed Crosby to step forward when he was needed most.

While attending Baytown Lee, Crosby was
a member of the school’s nursing program but also had a love of theater. He attended Lee College for one year and was set to attend KD Studio in Dallas before shifting gears and moving to New Mexico. He worked a number of jobs making ends meet. He was a police office, EM tech and worked security. The work in law enforcement fit naturally with his medical aspirations.

“There is something about helping people that stood out,” he said. “Law enforcement was something that I enjoyed here.”

He also fell back on his experience as a CNA, working in two nursing homes which he had also done at Allenbrook Nursing Home in Baytown while in high school. He attended school working his way into phlebotomy and eventually becoming a charge nurse in the emergency room. With avenues for advancement limited, he moved to dermatology.

“I started off on the low end as a tech,” he said. “I would do clerk work. Now I run my own department. My progression has been pretty amazing.”

It all came together once the COVID-19 pandemic struck. Crosby was asked to take over the COVID-19 Respiratory Care Center where as many as 300 to 400 people a day were tested.

“We realized we could not keep up and developed a department for the asymptomatic. We didn’t want people comingling,” he said.

In addition to leading the care center and running his department, Crosby served on two committees helping develop best practices and procedures as the hospitals and others across the nation adjusted on the fly as best they could. He worked with IT on billing to develop the paperwork.

“I didn’t have a day off for 38 days straight,” he said. “I worked 14 to 16 hours a day. We have Tigertext which is a secured way of sending information and I had to keep it on during the evening. I ended up taking volunteers to help in the respiratory center. People were inexperienced and I had to make sure they were trained up.

“Sometimes at 3 and 4 a.m. I would get a Tigertext.”

Crosby returned to his department but saw the impact of the second wave, something the hospital was much more prepared for. Crosby has seen his efforts emulated in other departments and the state is among the best in the nation in vaccinations.

“Our vaccine clinic has moved to The Pit (basketball gym) and people go to the soccer field to get screened,” Crosby said. “All the systems and processes put us in good position to deal with the second wave and I am very proud we took the steps we did. The numbers have been higher, and it is truly amazing we have been able to handle it and keep it together.”

While it has been some time since Crosby lived in Baytown, he still has family in the city and comes back to visit.

“Everything is growing up so much there,” he said.

“There is always something new popping up. It isn’t the small town it used to be.”
By Matt Hollis

Being afraid of going to the dentist has long plagued many patients, but in 2020 COVID-19 added a new fear to their concerns.

About 70% of Texans have delayed routine checkups due to COVID-19 fears, according to research by NextSmileDental.com. The website provides resources on dentures and surveyed 4,500 patients.

The American Dental Association said on March 16, 2020, it recommends elective dental practices be postponed until April, with only emergency services available. That same month, Texas Gov. Greg Abbott also ordered the dentist's office to be closed. Many dental patients had no choice but to wait it out unless there was a serious emergency. Dental conditions such as periodontal disease and erosion have been shown to correlate to anxiety, depression, and loneliness, so say dental experts Zachary Brian and Jane A. Weintraub in an article posted on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website.

Some local dentist offices have taken precautions against anyone contracting COVID-19 to ensure the safety of their patients.

Mary Mata, general manager Mont Belvieu Shine Dental, said her offices are prepared to keep their patients safe from catching COVID or any other type of disease.

“We wear masks, shields, gowns, goggles, gloves, hand sanitizer, and wash our hands diligently,” Mata said. “We take temperatures and have a questionnaire where we ask all patients if they travel, have flu-like symptoms, or have any fevers.”

Kim Crowson, RDH, one of Shine Dental's dental hygienists, said taking care of patients' dental needs is a top priority. Practicing proper sterilization and using personal protective equipment is also a way of meeting that goal. “As a dental hygienist, you are taught from Day 1 to treat every patient as if they had a communicable disease,” Crowson said. “So, COVID or no COVID, you treat everyone the same. We were doing this before COVID, and we are doing the same thing now. COVID has added some things, like never taking off your masks,
but we still offer the same level of service.”

Dr. Thomas Freidt, another Mont Belvieu dentist, said patients should not avoid going to the dentist out of fear of catching COVID-19.

“Because of the precautions we are required and choosing to take, it is certainly safe to have dental procedures done, especially those in need of emergency care. Routine care is being done safely as well,” Freidt said.

Freidt agreed that in his line of business, since they were already conducting most of the precautions anyway, there was not a huge adjustment when COVID-19 came along.

“The difference between dentistry and most other businesses is that we’ve always had to do this,” Freidt said. “It is not like it is anything new for us. The light on it is a little different right now. We’ve always had to take precautions and always had to.”

Crowson and Mata said they had not seen a severe drop-off in patients as the NextSmileDental.com survey indicated.

“We did experience (a patient drop off) whenever the offices first opened back up,” Crowson said. “But it is going well now. I have not run into anyone that has any fear.”

Mata reiterated the importance of not skipping out on dental care, even routine checkups, due to COVID-19.

“Don’t be afraid to let us take care of your needs and concerns before they get any worse,” Mata said.

Mata said regardless of age, everyone should seek dental care.

“We treat everyone the same, whether you are six months old or 86, we will give you the same sterilization, same PPE, have everything safe for everyone,” she said. “It is not based on age or medical condition. Everyone here is treated the same. And receives the highest level of care.”

Both Crowson and Mata said the employees feel safe coming to work.

“Not a single staff member afraid of coming to work since they see all of the precautions we take in protecting ourselves and the patients,” Mata said. “The biggest adjustment we’ve had to make is wearing a mask all day.”

Crowson said people are educated enough about COVID-19 that they come to the office already used to social distancing, PPE, and other coronavirus-related modifications.

“People are aware,” she said. “They will not come if they are sick.”

Kathryn O’Brien, NextSmileDental.com editor, encouraged folks to head to the dentist and not let COVID-19 keep them away.

“With social distancing still a big part of our lives right now, prioritizing our exposure to public spaces is still a consideration for many of us,” O’Brien said. “However, if you are experiencing debilitating discomfort or inability to function as a result of tooth or mouth pain, it is a good idea to contact your local dentist in order to find out what treatment options are available during this time. Many practices have strict COVID measures in place and may be able to assist if you are comfortable and willing. As much as it is important to stay in, it is crucial not to ignore signs your body is giving you if it is in pain – this includes your dental health.”
McDONALD’S USES UV LIGHTS TO FIGHT VIRUS

By Mark Fleming

Face masks and handwashing have been the most common weapons for combatting the coronavirus, but technology is part of the arsenal as well. Some local McDonald’s locations have turned to UV light for part of the solution.

Matthew Kades, who owns eight McDonald’s locations, including six in Baytown and Mont Belvieu, said that he and two other owner-operators began, shortly after the start of the pandemic, looking for ways they could improve safety.

“We were talking about what could we do to plus-up what we were doing in the restaurants here in McDonald’s beside the cleaning, the masks, the temperature checks, the sanitizer everywhere,” he said.

“What else could we do to make the customers feel good about coming to a McDonald’s as well as the crew in the back—even more important we want them to feel good coming to work.”

Through a mutual friend, they got in touch with UVAngel, a Michigan company that manufactures disinfecting equipment that uses ultraviolet light to kill pathogens on surfaces and in the air.

UVAngel Vice President of Product Paul Byrne said, “The team worked with the owner-operators specifically and looked at laying these units out—we have an air treatment and surface treatment.”

The filters in air handling systems and many freestanding air cleaning systems work by trapping particles, but UV systems use a different approach that complements filtration.

“We are not trying to worry about air quality from a particulate perspective—we’re worried about the stuff that makes you sick,” he said.

“Those pathogens are so much smaller that they can often go through most filters, so really what you’re talking about is not capturing those pathogens; you’re trying to eliminate them, and that’s why we use UV light to do so,” Byrne said.

Kades said he first considered putting the units in the McDonalds at Garth and Baker. Since it is across the street from the hospital, it has many customers who are health care workers likely to be especially aware of infection risks.
Ultimately he installed the units in that location and three others: Garth at Decker in Baytown, Briarwood in Mont Belvieu and 310 N. Alexander in Baytown. The North Alexander location was the easiest, as it was still under construction. The locations required 13-16 air treatment units depending on building size and configuration. UVAngel also installed surface treatment units on some high-touch areas like point of sale terminals and the “bump bars” in food handling areas that staff use to indicate order status. Those are equipped with motion sensors to turn off when the equipment is being used but to treat it with UV light when it is idle. The air treatment units run 24 hours a day, Byrne said. The equipment was installed in November and December.
Cardiologist Shezhad Sami M.D., FACC, FSCAI, was one of the forerunners in treating patients in the global coronavirus pandemic. He considers himself a foot soldier. As an entrepreneur, he had to meet challenges head on and early on. We talked recently with Dr. Sami and his staff. They looked back on the past year and all that has happened.

“When COVID started in the U.S. mainland, right around December and January we had heard about the pandemic, but it was mostly in China. Then it went to Singapore and the south Asian countries way before it traveled to Europe,” said Dr. Sami.

“At that time, it was just basically the freight train that was coming. Our medical school usually does training when we have any communicable disease that is respiratory and infectious. We gown up. We have N95s (masks) and we have negative pressure rooms,” Dr. Sami explained.

“I remember when we were in medical school, there was hepatitis C and HIV. For 15-20 years, we did not have treatment for hepatitis C. Now we have drugs that are nearly a 100% cure. We figured out how it is communicated. Everyone got educated. The rule back then was treat every body fluid as if it is infected. Then you don’t need to worry about who has it and who does not,” said Dr. Sami.

Behaviors changed.

“Collective wisdom always wins,” said Dr. Sami, “regardless of the behaviors or thought processes of a group. Collective wisdom does not come by innate nature. Human beings always keep correcting the direction of their ship.

“When this happened in February and March 2020, the sky was falling. COVID-19 was an unknown factor. We had no idea what the long-term factors were. The doomsday scenario was coming true and we did not have enough resources.”

Uncertainty and a feeling of no control can create helplessness. “When one feels helpless, everything seems worse,” said Dr. Sami. “You keep your guard up. This creates a lot of chatter and noise. Sometimes the chatter and noise can make everything so deafening, you cannot sift through real data. In the middle of chaos, people tend to not apply standards they once did,” said Dr. Sami.

“Leading medical education and research journals (the trendsetters) started publishing studies, which lacked the proper vetting, and which never would have been published had there not been a pandemic. In the helplessness of the chaos, they added to the chaos.”

The shut down

“We already knew what was happening ‘across the pond’ and it added to our anxiety of our system, and to our feelings of helplessness. We thought there was nothing we could do to stop this. The first thing decided was to shut down everything. The term ‘essential worker’ was not yet coined. The chaos brought a personal choice, a professional choice and an altruistic choice.

“Public health officials were trying to come up with guidelines. I quickly realized there was not going to be a public answer right away, so I reached out to collaborate with my peers. In North America, we do things a little differently than they are done in Europe or in developing countries, and rightfully so, because we have different resources and we have (we believe) better standards.

“Every one of my employees has a family. They have aspirations and fears. Every time they came to work, there was a definitive fear.” Dr. Sami could see their fears and quickly addressed them.

“Dr. Sami sat down with us and reassured all of us from the
beginning from his medical perspective. This helped us a lot,” said Office Manager Audrey Butler.

“We were met with some very challenging issues regarding COVID and how to take care of our patients when obstacles came up in the way. Working with our team we were able to insure our patients’ safety and carry on taking care of them,” said Lewis (Chip) Debarge RN, MSN, FNP-C.

Dr. Sami went online and researched. “There were hospitals with a different level of support and resources they were able to employ,” Dr. Sami continued. “As an independent private practice, I had to be a little more creative. Most private practices in other countries are in a building with others.” Houston Cardiovascular Institute is a stand-alone business.

“Overseas medical practices were lining up patients in common areas of big buildings they occupied and treated patients with plenty of social distancing. I came up with the plan to have my patients come in to sign in and then go wait in their car. Three months later, this became the standard.

“We also had issues about elderly people coming in. Sometimes it is not feasible for them to sit in the car, especially in the middle of summer. I kept a few chairs in the lobby, physically marking them with tape for six feet distance between. All the things you see now in the stores labeling six feet apart were not there in March and April. The visual cues are important for people to recognize.

“At that time, we did not even know what kind of gown was appropriate. I spent thousands of dollars on acquiring hand sanitizer. One of our biggest expenses last year was hand sanitizer.

"My ability to take care of my patients is going to be directly affected by the limit of PPE." closing patient room doors now. “I believe we were the first practice in Baytown to adopt televisits.”

“We are a community of physicians in Baytown. Baytown is very unique that we have Houston Methodist Baytown Hospital, which works very closely with private doctors. We have a very good, strong relationship with the administration. Houston Methodist Baytown Hospital was phenomenal. The CEO, David Bernard, and his team are true leaders. They led from the front. They make sure the needs of the community are kept at the forefront. I saw changes they hospital made to keep patients safe while they cared for the sickest in the community.

“Methodist Hospital was probably one of the first in the community to restrict access, no matter if you are a patient, employee or doctor. They are hard working, motivated and committed. It is the people that make or break the system. This hospital right from the CEO to the janitor, they have a very strong commitment to serve the community. Everything you see being done is with the clear intent to serve the community. They are able to streamline and make changes in an instant. They are leaders in providing care for the community.

“More than half of the local private practice physicians closed their offices temporarily.”

Learning together

“I made a ‘Whats App’ group to communicate with other physicians. I wanted everyone to be on the same page and I started documenting everything. We shared information on what was helping and what was not. The flow of information was like lightning. We were able to figure out things together that we would not have figured out individually for a long time. We had the same problems. We had the same patient populations. We had the same issues. The technology was evolving, but on the patients’ end it was difficult.

“When things are new, people are resistant to change. There was worry that the elderly would not handle technology well. But, they did. We just had to be persistent in helping them. Their behaviors changed.

“I am an acute observer of human behavior. That is how I am able to help people get better. I look for clues.

A sense of duty

Dr. Shezhad Sami and his wife, Dr. Myrwat Sami, went on the radio on the largest Asian FM channel, 106.1 HUM FM, to do a two-hour show on Saturdays 10 a.m. to noon for a few months, serving the Pakistani, Indian community.

“We called all over the U.S. We had doctors, bankers, economic advisors and other professionals as guests on the show to advise people. When you have a socioeconomic challenged community hit by the pandemic, they are hit the hardest. Most of them are day-laborers. When their wages are gone, they are done. I had emails come from all over the world. The radio show was online. We had calls from Malaysia, Pakistan and Dubai,” said Dr. Sami.

“We were learning and trying to share in real time. We told them to go to the doctor when necessary, to ask for televisits and to keep their children learning. We had pediatricians on the show to talk about the resiliency of children through remote learning. It was not easy, but we felt a sense of duty,” said Dr. Sami.

The furloughs

All of a sudden, patient volume went down when the furloughs began. I had to make a decision for my staff of ten. Every day I would speak with them. All I knew was that everyone was hurting and somehow we would come out of this. Many other practices had cut staff or cut hours.

We had a meeting and on a Friday and everyone was expecting to have their hours cut. I met with each staff member and discovered everyone had a family member that had been affected by furloughs. I decided at that moment that I would take my own money out savings to keep my employees at 40 hours. Then I gave them a COVID bonus. I knew that if I was going to take care of my patients, my family and my employees, this was what I needed to do. I am very proud of my staff. Now, we are in a better position to fight this virus. We don’t know everything about everything. We do know we can take care of our patients, with proper safety precautions. We can help patients in a much more effective manner.

“The virus is a reality of our lives. It is not going anywhere.

“With the vaccine, there is hope.”
Children still have a voice, even if it isn’t always theirs.

Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) of Liberty and Chambers counties has been hard at work for years now and especially during the COVID-19 pandemic that has not only made their jobs even more challenging, but in turn, got its creative wheels turning.

Recently, Karen Foyil—CASA’s collaborative family engagement coordinator and advocate coordinator—met with the Rotary Club of Baytown to speak of the organization’s recent activities and in turn, received a $2,000 check for their time and effort to help local families.

“This allows us to continue the fight for the best interests and safety of children.” CASA is a court-appointed special advocate to represent the best interests of a child to be a voice for them in court.

“We are involved in advocating in the best interests of their education, their medical and making sure their placement is safe and healthy,” Foyil said. “Regardless of what the child may want to go home to a dangerous situation, we have to advocate for what’s best for the child and what’s best for them in the court system.”

Foyil said that CASA is serving 116 children with 80 active cases.

“We all know that abuse and neglect has been ongoing and isn’t always being reported,” Foyil said. “We are here to assist CPS and the caseload that they have. We are literally another set of eyes and ears on the kids and can be more actively involved with that child to know the ins and outs and what’s going on.

“Our reports go to the child’s attorney, CPS and the judge so we can come together as a team to advocate for this child. CASA comes in as more of a one-on-one with the child where CPS workers have caseloads. We have caseloads, but we have volunteers that are more one-on-one with the child.”

The current COVID-19 pandemic has made the job more challenging as domestic abuse cases have risen while people are forced to be stuck in their homes together.

“Our intake on children this last quarter has risen 400 percent,” Foyil said. “The children are working virtually so we have less eyes on the children where schools are usually reporting in that aspect. That’s a concern. The pandemic has caused additional stress at homes and employment issues and obviously the operations of...
school have been interrupted so, that’s a major need.

“Through this pandemic without the extra sets of eyes and ears through the pandemic, they are isolated. They got back to schools and we had a big influx of cases. More people are about to speak up when they start to see things. Through this pandemic we see what happens when society goes into isolation and the welfare of the children can be at risk.”

Foyil said during the pandemic there have been times they could not visit a home and had to try to stay in contact with children through phone calls, texts and virtual conversations because they couldn’t go into the home and have a truly one-on-one to address concerns.

CASA’s mission is to speak up for and find permanent homes for foster children in crisis in the hopes of every abused or neglected child is given the opportunity to thrive in a safe and loving home.

In order to do this, representatives review documents and records, interview the children, family members and professionals in their lives to see how to proceed.

CASA also provides written reports at court hearing and advocate for the child’s best interests and provide testimony where needed.

In many instances, they also act as a child’s educator on what the court proceedings mean and to understand how they will work.

CASA can also recommend services to ensure the children and their families are receiving appropriate service and advocate for those services.

They will also monitor case plans and court orders while keeping the court informed on any developments with agencies and family members.

Programs address the needs of at-risk teens, trauma, faith-based partnerships and building relationships to create “a village of support around the child and family.”

One such program is “Fostering Futures” which is designed to target the needs of teens in Child Protective Service care and to prepare them for transitioning into adult living. CASA aims to instill life skills, health and safety, college preparation and benefits through FAFSA and scholarships, workforce preparation, local resource packets for homeless teens and family connections.

There is also the “Trauma Care” program that addresses trauma in children by assisting them with tools to self-soothe and calm behaviors and offers informative resources to placements to assist in the care and behavior of the child.

“In the past we haven’t had as many special programs and we are also working to engage more with families in the best interest of the children,” Foyil said.

To become a CASA volunteer one can fill out an application at casalctx.org/volunteer/become-advocate/.

Additionally, be prepared to have three personal references, to interview with a CASA staff member, complete 15 hours of virtual training, 15 hours of online reading homework, three hours of courtroom observation and complete final paperwork and interview.
We’re here to serve you

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We’re here to support our community

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As the nation attempts to emerge from beneath the weight of the COVID-19 pandemic to what is considered normal, there has been a focus placed on athletics. From junior school to the professional level, teams have balanced competing with keeping the coronavirus at arm’s length, sometimes unsuccessfully. The effort starts on the front line with training staffs often taking the lead in ensuring protocol and safety measures are met if not exceeded. Despite all precautions, it is still not enough but the hard work continues from the professionals to their student trainers.

"Every day is a new day," Sterling assistant athletic trainer Trenda Rodgers said. "It is changing every day, just like our schedule. One week we may have something scheduled every night and the next day it changes.” The changes in both weekly scheduling and overall changes in the athletic calendar brought about by a delayed start and COVID-19 safety practices have taken an adjustment. Spring is typically the busiest time of year in high school athletics due to the number of sports taking place at one time. This year, the football and volleyball seasons butted into the basketball season ensuring athletic support staffs to hit the ground running.

“It is the worst year ever in my career,” Lee assistant athletic director Leticia LeGrair said. “It is changing every day, just like our schedule. One week we may have something scheduled every night and the next day it changes.” The changes in both weekly scheduling and overall changes in the athletic calendar brought about by a delayed start and COVID-19 safety practices have taken an adjustment. Spring is typically the busiest time of year in high school athletics due to the number of sports taking place at one time. This year, the football and volleyball seasons butted into the basketball season ensuring athletic support staffs to hit the ground running.

“If it is the worst year ever in my career,” Lee assistant athletic director Leticia LeGrair said. “The new protocols are not that bad. I’m kind of a germophobe anyway.”

One of the changes that has taken place is in water distribution. LeGrair said it is not as relaxed with one person assigned to handling the water.

“There is also extra cleaning with items like the water hose after every practice,” she said.

Rodgers said cleanliness is a big focus. Personally, she has noticed she washes hands more often than she did previously. Masks are worn throughout the day although it can create issues in a teaching environment.

“The mask bothers me the most because it makes it more difficult to communicate,” she said. Student trainers are tasked with a number of activities. Athletes at Lee have grown to expect their temperature will be taken before they reach the locker room. Rodgers said just one person typically handles water jugs and the student trainers simply squirt water in the athlete’s mouths rather than hand them over. Those bottles are cleaned all the time.

Sterling student trainer K'Lynn Bennett said maintaining a safe atmosphere is a team effort.

“We are all pretty safe,” she said. “The players have their mouths covered with masks and we are not close to them.” When there is an injury, physical contact falls on the Rodgers and head trainer Karen Barger. With baseball, softball and the other spring sports swinging into high gear, a lot of hard work remains with more demands, particularly with tournaments. “November was bad, it felt like the spring when you had a February rush,” LeGrair said. “This year, the teams will stay at one campus during the baseball and softball tournaments rather than travel to different sites so more teams have been added.”
By Michael Pineda

The Lions Club is well regarded for its charitable pursuits. Fact is, while it is well regarded, it could also be underestimated for its reach both in the community and on a nation and world-wide scale.

“I feel like people don’t realize the service projects the Lion Clubs really supports,” Lions Club President Beth Thompson said. “Just collecting the glasses is big nationwide.”

In Conroe there is a Lions Club Glasses Bank where they refurbish the glasses. That is one of the first things we are known for.

The fight for vision takes place in a variety of ways from raising funds to fight blindness to repurposing used eyeglasses. The club has a number of locations, including The Baytown Sun, where old sunglasses can be dropped off and repurposed to someone who has a financial need. The club became involved in vision in 1925. It was in that year Helen Keller addressed the Lions Clubs International Convention in Cedar Point Ohio, challenging the Lions to become “knights of the blind.” Since that day, Lions have worked tirelessly in the field of vision, aiding those who are blind or visually impaired.

continued next page
In 1990, another major program was initiated, Launching SightFirst. Through the support of Lions Clubs International Foundation, Lions have restored sight and prevented blindness on a global scale with the SightFirst program. Since 1990, Lions have raised over $351 million for the initiative that targets the major causes of blindness.

Another step forward in 2018 when the Lions united to support the global causes of vision, poor, hunger, the environment, childhood cancer and diabetes.

Last June, the Lions Club reported it had exceeded a goal set five years previously of helping 200,000 people from around the world. The Lions have served 275,000.

- Its efforts within the span of a year included:
  - Diabetes screenings for more than 13.3 million people
  - Collecting food and distributing meals to more than 14.7 million people.
  - Planted trees to benefit more than 5.7 million.
  - Supported the treatment for river blindness to help more than 8.5 million people.
  - Offered vision screenings to more than 5.7 million people.
  - Advocated for more than 2.2 million people touched by pediatric cancer.
  - Created educational opportunities for more than 2.9 million people.

The Baytown Lions Club provides scholarships to local graduates. It raises funding through several activities including a gumbo cook-off and placing flags at cemeteries for holidays such as Memorial Day, Veterans Day and the upcoming President’s Day.

“We also give to the Goodfellows,” Thompson said. “In total, we offer donations to about seven groups in the community. We also support kids to the Lions Camp every year. There are two or three kids that receive full scholarships. Some camps are for diabetes, some are for the physically disabled. There are camps for a number of kids. “One day we would like to do vision prescreenings in the grade schools. With COVID, we do not know when we will be able to do that.”
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When you see something at an independent store that costs a little more, try to remember that most major online retailers don’t buy ads in the local football program. Big box stores won’t donate prizes to your silent auction and don’t have kids playing little league in your community.

Small business owners DO and they offer better customer service because they do it face to face.

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Small business owners DO and they offer better customer service because they do it face to face.
Reunion Feature - Rod Evans

By Rod Evans

Houston Methodist Baytown Hospital nurse Jessica Sutterfield, a nurse manager on the hospital’s 3 West unit, noticed a unique nickname written on the whiteboard in the room of a patient admitted for surgery while making her daily rounds—a name that took her back to her days as a student at Dayton High School.

“It wasn’t until I read the preferred name on his whiteboard that I realized I knew the patient,” Sutterfield said. “I said to him, ‘you’re not going to believe this, but we know each other.’”

The patient, Mont Belvieu resident Dennis Leonard, goes by the nickname “Jabo,” a name Sutterfield instantly recognized as the name of the boss of the Mont Belvieu Subway sandwich shop she worked at during high school. They had not seen each other since Sutterfield left the job 20 years ago to attend college.

“She recognized the name on the whiteboard and figured out it was me,” Leonard, 67, said. “I didn’t recognize her with her mask on.”

Leonard was admitted to Houston Methodist Baytown in December for abdominal surgery under the care of Houston Methodist Baytown Hospital surgeon Dr. Boutros Kahla. He recalls Jessica as being a conscientious, dedicated employee who was elevated to shift leader just a few weeks after starting the job at age 17. In fact, her work ethic led to an event that would change Jessica’s life.

“She was a super employee; a go-getter as a high school kid. As a night shift leader, she left the store in perfect condition with the money and inventory always accounted for. She was a smart, reliable, driven kid and we were so impressed that we awarded her a scholarship through Dayton High School,” Leonard recalls.

Sutterfield said the $500 scholarship helped to propel her toward a career in nursing.

“Needless to say,” Sutterfield said, “to an 18-year old girl who was paying for school herself, it was a big deal!”

Sutterfield used the money to help her earn a Bachelor of Science degree in nursing at Stephen F. Austin University in Nacogdoches. She would go on to earn a Master of Science in Nursing and Master of Business Administration.

“I was not surprised when I found her not only working as a nurse, but as a manager and that she is successful in her pursuit of nursing,” Leonard said. “It was evident she had the qualities of commitment and reliability and teamwork even as young kid.”

Leonard, now retired following a career as a business owner, including running several Subway shops in the Mont Belvieu area and a 23-year career as a teacher and coach in the Barbers Hill Independent School District, says Jessica, Dr. Kahla and the nurses helped him through a difficult situation.

“The nurses were angels who gave me great care for the nine days I was there. I appreciated how helpful they were while I dealt with pretty severe pain,” Leonard said. “Dr. Kahla was very attentive. I saw him two or three times a day. He’s a great surgeon, and I was very pleased with how everything went.”

A Baytown native who still resides in Mont Belvieu with wife, Annette, Leonard said he was impressed with how the hospital’s nurses and staff constantly took precautions to keep his room clean and protect him during the COVID-19 pandemic.

For Sutterfield, reconnecting with Leonard gave her the opportunity to say thanks for supporting a young girl dreaming of becoming a nurse.

“I thanked him while he was here for the scholarship, but what my first real job taught me isn’t taught in school and I appreciate all he did for me,” Sutterfield said.

A HAPPY REUNION

By Rod Evans

By Rod Evans

Greater Baytown - February 2021
Early registration is now open for the statewide competition designed to encourage Texans to challenge themselves to live healthier and to foster friendly competition among communities.

This year has been one of the most challenging years in recent history. It has tested us individually, as a community, as a state, and as a country. As we prepare to enter 2021, it’s time to show our courage, strength, resiliency, and determination, and invest in our physical health, nutrition, and emotional well-being, which is more important today than ever before.

The It’s Time Texas Community Challenge, hosted by statewide nonprofit It’s Time Texas, is working to make healthier lifestyles accessible to all Texans. The annual statewide healthy competition runs Jan. 4 - Feb. 28, 2021, and encourages communities throughout Texas to come together for an eight-week healthy competition to build and transform health. Participants track healthy activities like eating healthy foods and physical activity to earn points for their communities and weekly chances to win prizes. Registration is now open for 2021 It’s Time Texas Community Challenge in both English and Spanish at www.ittcommunitychallenge.com.

Joining the It’s Time Texas Community Challenge is free and open to everyone. Individuals, families, mayors, schools, and school districts, employers, and businesses can earn points on behalf of their communities for making healthy choices, like taking the stairs instead of the elevator or participating in a virtual workout, drinking water, or taking a socially-distanced walk outside.

New in 2021, It’s Time Texas Community Challenge participants can track their progress in real-time in the new Community Challenge App, which will be available for both iPhone and Android in December. The only way to log points is through the free, bilingual mobile app. Follow the competition @itstimetx #CommunityChallenge.

The 2020 Community Challenge saw 33,194 participants rack up a total of 49,369,550 points for their communities, and has inspired more than 1,288,075 minutes of physical activity throughout Texas. Following the 2020 challenge, 95% of participants felt confident they would continue progress toward their health goal to be more active.

The 2020 winning communities included San Antonio, McAllen, Harlingen, Los Fresnos, and Smithville. They will look to retain their community bragging rights heading into the 2021 challenge.

It’s Time Texas is proud to partner with H-E-B and Texas State SNAP-Ed Program to bring the Community Challenge to Texas communities.

About It’s Time Texas:
It’s Time Texas is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit empowering Texans to lead healthier lives and build healthier communities. Every day, we work alongside Texans committed to improving health within their homes, schools, workplaces, and communities. Our goal is a Texas where everyone – no matter where they live, their age, race, or income – has the resources, support, and opportunities to prioritize health and live their best life. Through programs and partnerships built to advance health on multiple fronts, we are shifting behaviors, practices, and policies to make health core to what it means to be a Texan. For more information, visit https://itstimetexas.org/.
On January 23, 2021, Chambers County Public Health facilitated the administration of 340 doses of the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine after their designation as a COVID-19 vaccine hub by the Texas Department of State Health Services.

This was the first major distribution of COVID-19 vaccine to the Phase 1B population in Chambers County, and was only the first in a series of vaccination sites. Facilitated by Chambers County Public Health, this event was a collaborative effort between multiple agencies including Chambers County, the City of Mont Belvieu and Winnie-Stowell EMS.

“We have been working to thoroughly vaccinate Phase 1A populations in Chambers County up until this point,” said Chambers County Health Services Director Mary Beth Bess. “With this event, we took a huge step toward expanding vaccination efforts to Phase 1B.”

People want the vaccine, and they’re willing to travel to get it.

“We were receiving about 100 phone calls per day from people all over the world,” said Samantha Humphrey, Chambers County Public Information Officer. “We even had someone call from Mexico City, Mexico.”

Because the vaccines were provided by the federal government via the state as part of the CCPH’s designation as a vaccine hub, anyone was eligible to preregister and attend this vaccination event.

“The event was a huge success and I’m proud of what our team was able to accomplish,” said Chambers County Judge Jimmy Sylvia.
2020 was a difficult year for most Americans, but especially for the elderly. Not only are they most at risk for the coronavirus, they’ve also been deprived of their usual social interactions with family and friends which has been especially hard on their mental health.

With 2021 officially here and the future looking brighter as COVID-19 vaccines become available, it’s critical for seniors to maintain their physical and mental health. Dr. Brienne Loy, a Houston primary care physician and Regional Medical Director of Partners in Primary Care, is available with suggestions that can help older adults achieve better health. Below please find some of Dr. Loy’s simple tips that seniors can easily implement into their daily routines.

**Get Your COVID-19 Vaccine.** Protecting yourself from COVID-19 is extremely important, which is why seniors should prioritize getting their vaccine once it becomes available to them, as well as continuing to practice social distancing and wearing masks. These practices will ensure your own safety and those around you.

**Stay Connected.** Find ways to remain in contact with family and friends to reduce feelings of isolation and loneliness. Connecting on a regular basis, whether virtually or in-person at a safe 6-foot distance with masks, can be an incredible mood booster and will decrease feelings of loneliness.

**Communicate with your PCP.** Stay connected with your primary care physician to address current health conditions in addition to assisting with unmet social or functional needs.

**Work Your Mind.** Brain health is just as important as physical health. By challenging your mind daily, you can not only reduce cognitive decline, but also boost your mood. Try a crossword puzzle, paint, read a book or try something you have never done before.

**Maintain Good Nutritional Habits.** By eating healthy you will feel your best and avoid health issues. Focus on consuming fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains, and protein, and always consult your doctor to figure out the best diet for you.

**Get Moving.** Exercise has so many benefits, including disease prevention, improved mental health and improved cognitive function, among others. Go out for a walk or a jog, ride a bike or take advantage of online exercise classes at home.
WE GOT THE BEAT

WORKOUT WARRIORS MIX MUSIC, COLORS AND EXERCISE FOR A FUN EVENING

By Kim Keefer

The music was loud and the colors were bright as the Baytown Parks and Recreation Department hosted a Pound Lights Out Rock Out with approximately 40 attendees, wearing neon attire showing up ready for a workout.

The event is normally held twice a year, but due to COVID-19 had been put on hold.

Pound is the world's first cardio jam session inspired by the infectious, energizing and sweat dripping fun using drumsticks. BCC's instructor, Momo Foster, has been teaching the workout since 2015.

“The pound workout is the art of using drumsticks or rip sticks combined with simple moves creating a full body workout,” Foster said. “At least 15,000 drum strikes and 600 squats are incorporated during the 45-60 minute class.”

Pound workout classes are free throughout the year, at 6:30 p.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays at Town Square on Texas Avenue and geared for participants of any age. For more information, please contact Shontele Williams at (281) 420-6598 or email shontele.williams@baytown.org.

Instructor and creator of “The Pound Lights Out workout”, Momo Foster, is all smiles during the event held at The Community Center in Baytown.

Instructor and creator of “The Pound Lights Out workout”, Momo Foster, is all smiles during the event held at The Community Center in Baytown.

Instructor Katie Freeman listens as participants sing along while working out during the Pound Lights Out event held at The Baytown Community Center.

Instructor Jeaniahd Elder demonstrates how rip sticks and a few moves can create a healthy way to burn calories.
Participants enjoy pounding it out during the Lights Out event held at Baytown Community Center.

Instructors and junior participants strike a pose before the Pound Lights Out event held at Baytown Community Center.

Bottom row, left to right, Marinela Taylor, Bauer Foster, Candy Zavala. Top row, left to right, Jeanicia Elder, Katie Freeman, Momo Foster, Sabrina Schwenke.

Shontele Williams, left, and Holly Pinkston check in participants before the Pound Lights Out event held at Baytown Community Center.
BLACK HISTORY MONTH CELEBRATED

By Carol Skewes

Lee College Regent Gina Guillory created an initiative to honor Black-owned-businesses in the greater Baytown area starting in February, “Black History Month,” and continuing throughout the year. The first celebration was held at Creeks Kitchen, owned by Delaine and husband, Izora Creeks and Rosilanda and husband, Reggie Creeks, and located at 4915 East Freeway in Baytown. The Creeks pride themselves in making people happy with their food.

They recently extended their hours to be open from 11 a.m.-8 p.m. Monday through Friday and Sundays. They are closed Saturdays.

The family-owned business puts a lot of TLC into every dish they make, and they get many repeat customers who have favorite dishes such as oxtails or smothered pork chops. You can find them on facebook @CreeksKitchen.

The next Black-owned-business event was held Feb. 19 at Artistic Procreations, 123 W. DeFee, owned by Delencia West.

Future events include The Law Office of LaKesha D. Holmes, PLLC, 400 W. Texas Avenue, Suite 101 from 6-7 p.m. Feb. 23;

Blue Ribbon Pharmacy, 3517 N. Main Suite 1 (Food Town Shopping Center), owned by Jada Gilbert, to be held in March;

Sonya Carr Portrait Creations / The Enchanted Ballroom, 2232 N. Alexander Drive, owned by Sonya Carr, to be held in April;

Terry Rivon Realty Associates, 605 Massey Tompkins Road, Suite A, owned by Terry Rivon, to be held in May; and

Big Time Fireworks / Shaved Ice, 4326 FM1942, owned by DeAundre Wooley, to be held June 25; specific times to be announced closer to the events.

Guests gathered to celebrate Creeks Kitchen fabulous food during Black History Month. Creeks Kitchen is located at 4915 East Freeway in Baytown.

From left, Delaine Creeks, Lee College Regent Gina Guillory and Rosilanda Creeks

Pictured are Theresa Powell, Elizabeth Donato and Brianna Gaytan
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BETTER HEALTH AND A BETTER LIFE
Students and staff at Stuart Career Tech High School are pleased to receive a donation of PPE from Worley to help them with safety protocols. Pictured are (from left) Kyle Roche, Eric Perez, Jillian Rogers, Terry Swindoll, Miguel Ramirez, Greg Guzman (Worley), Francis Hernandez (Worley) and Cap Roder, principal.

Cap Roder (right), principal of Stuart Career Tech High School, looks at the PPE presented to SCTHS by Greg Guzman and Francis Hernandez from Worley with student Miguel Ramirez.

Photos by Brittney Culpepper
Focused Care at Baytown offers antibody infusion treatment to help mitigate serious symptoms of COVID-19

Focused Care at Baytown, a long term care community specializing in COVID-19 patients, is offering an antibody infusion treatment to residents who are positive for the virus, early in symptom stage and interested in benefitting from the medication allowed by the Food and Drug Administration through an Emergency Use Authorization.

“Focused Care is heartened to offer this medication to our COVID positive residents that is designed to ameliorate harsh symptoms of the virus that can wreak havoc on the immune systems of seniors who can be disproportionately impacted,” said Mark McKenzie, founder and CEO of Focused Post Acute Care Partners which has 31 long term care communities located mostly in east and west Texas. “This innovative therapy, along with testing and vaccines, is an effective part of the arsenal combatting the pandemic and can reduce hospitalizations and emergency room visits.”

The IV infusion is a monoclonal antibody treatment developed by Eli Lilly called Bamlanivimab. Antibodies are proteins that our bodies make to fight viruses, such as the virus that causes COVID-19. Monoclonal antibodies (as opposed to those naturally produced when our bodies come in contact with a virus) are made in a laboratory and act similarly to natural antibodies to limit the amount of virus in our body.

The infusion therapy is for people who have tested positive for COVID-19 and have mild to moderate symptoms seven to 10 days into infection. The one-time infusion is approximately an hour in length followed by an hour of patient monitoring.

Both Focused Care pharmacy partners Pharmerica and Pharmscript are supplying the treatment to the long term care community. Focused Care at Baytown clinicians are providing the treatment and monitoring post infusion patients. Focused Care at Baytown is a COVID-19 only building and therefore the first Focused Care community to offer the treatment to COVID-19 positive residents who meet the criteria.

“The science community and frankly, all of us, have continued to learn more about this virus and how to manage it as we make our way into the second year of the pandemic,” said McKenzie. “With all the concerns about testing access, new variants and vaccine supply, is it encouraging to have effective therapies that can reduce the severity of illness caused by the virus, alleviate the stress of hospital capacity and most importantly, save lives.”

Greater Baytown - February 2021
The rural health organization located in Chambers County has announced its recommitment to providing exceptional health care services under new CEO, William Kiefer. The organization which includes a critical access hospital and wellness center in Anahuac two federally qualified health centers (one in Anahuac, and the other in Mont Belvieu), continues to grow and adapt to ever-changing healthcare models, area growth, and needs of those it serves.

William Kiefer, chief executive and chief nursing officer of the system, joined Chambers Health in late November. He has been working to learn about the staff, operations, patients, communities and key partners in the region. His vision includes developing staff to improve operations, clinical outcomes and the communities’ perceptions Chambers Health.

“We attract and serve populations from Chambers County, but we’ve also noted that patients are coming from as far away as Beaumont, Houston, and Galveston to receive medical services,” said Kiefer.

A few of the changes happening within the organization include new technology to improve internal processes, partnerships with medical leaders in the community, increased collaboration with the Chambers County Public Health Department and other partners for COVID vaccine administration, clinical leadership appointments to focus on patient quality and safety, and governing board and staff training.

One of the major changes not mentioned above is the return of local providers to care for emergency department and inpatients at Bayside Community Hospital. Historically, Chambers Health’s medical providers cared for patients who presented to the emergency department at Bayside Community Hospital. Most recently, due to the challenges with COVID and other instances, the hospital contracted the service to external groups. This change back to local providers will ensure that there is the highest level of care for patients at each of our clinics and in the hospital as well. “Our community members will see their local providers again in the hospital as well as at our clinics.”

Chambers Health has been your community-based health care organization offering primary care through a variety of essential health and wellness services since 1950. Feel free to browse www.chambershealth.org, or call 409-267-3143.
Chambers Health announces that Bayside Community Hospital’s Emergency Department will be staffed by local medical providers and is pursuing trauma designation through the Texas Department of State Health Services.

Certified Physician Assistant Gary Cook will take lead with Bayside Community Hospital’s Emergency Department and Trauma Designation Program. Cook has over 30 years of healthcare experience ranging from office, clinic-based, emergency room, hospitalist, migrant care, pre-hospital and hospital care.

Cook is certified by the National Commission of Certification for Physician Assistants and has extensive experience in emergency medicine and critical care. Cook graduated from Wichita State University with a Bachelor of Science degree in the Physician Assistant Program. He served in the US Navy, completing Hospital Corpsman Training, Orderly Training, and holds a degree in Film and TV Production from Montana State University.

“I wanted to become a physician assistant after serving four years in the US Navy as a Hospital Corpsman. My training and passion is in rural health care. I have always enjoyed working in the emergency room and have just gravitated toward that kind of work,” Cook said.

Cook prides himself in having practiced emergency medicine across the country, having served as a locums tenens emergency department medical provider. He enjoys working in rural communities and is constantly motivated by learning and adapting new medical technologies into his work. Cook’s other interests include outdoor activities and volunteering in various community organizations where there is an interest in health and wellness.

Emergency room physician assistants provide emergency care for patients in various settings including emergency departments and critical care units, urgent care and fast track settings, in addition to pre-hospital situations and observation units. Physician assistants practice medicine under the supervision of licensed physician and collaborate with other health professionals to coordinate care.
Barbers Hill ISD was awarded the new Holly Jackson Outstanding Achievement Award at the West Chambers County Chamber of Commerce Awards Luncheon Jan. 19 at Eagle Pointe.

H-E-B’s Penny Durant (center) is pictured with Chamber Chair Scott Swigert and Chamber President Macie Schubert.

Business of the Year is Patients ER for its constant care for the community during the pandemic. Pictured from left are Chamber Chair Scott Swigert, Director of Nursing Elbert de la Cruz, Clinical Coordinator Ashley Dugat, Whitley Dorsett, Ashley Shibley, Owner Jeanne Shipp and Chamber President Macie Schubert.
Small Business of the Year is Floyd’s Seafood. Pictured from left are Chamber Chair Scott Swigert, Chamber President Macie Schubert, Owner Ramon Martinez, Event Coordinator Lupe Martinez, General Manager Victoria Hendrix and Operations Manager Eddie Molina.

WCCCC Ambassador of the Year is Pattye Webb of Bates Collision. From left Scott Swigert, Macie Schubert, Patty Webb and Rhonda Barker.

Chambers County Judge Blake Sylvia told the story of how he and community members created #lovethteneighborchamberscounty to help feed those in need during the pandemic.

He credits H-E-B’s Penny Durant for going above and beyond the call of duty for the program which provided $20 gift cards to residents. Judge Sylvia is pictured with Chamber Chair Scott Swigert (left) and Chamber President Macie Schubert (right).
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