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Welcome to the health care issue of Greater Baytown. We have so much good information inside for you.

Our cover feature story starts on page 6 with Baytonian Kyra Williams. She has become a social media star by sharing her weight loss journey with others. Her story is inspiring.

Volunteer fire fighters in Chambers County are receiving EMT training from Lee College. Read about it on page 22.

Alan Dale writes about Darrel Hadnot Jr’s kidney transplant journey, starting on page 12.

Houston Methodist Baytown Hospital held a groundbreaking for their new patient tower recently. It is scheduled to open in 2023. Read more, page 18.

Dr. Laura Choi and Dr. Kendell Sowards give details on weight loss surgery, see page 9. Walk-ins are now welcome for COVID vaccinations at Houston Methodist.

Read about knee health tips from Dr. Michael Hopson on page 20.

David Berkowitz brings us The Baytown Project again “shining a light on everyday people” with three great stories starting on page 26.

Kelsey-Seaybold Clinic’s Angela Guerra, M.D.’s healthy tips are sprinkled throughout the magazine.

Family First ER just held their ribbon cutting. Read about them on page 11.

We hope you enjoy all the photos at the back of the book.

Stay well and thank you for reading.

On the cover
On a mission to lose weight after endoscopic sleeve gastroplasty (ESG), Baytown resident Kyra Williams is a success story whose achievements reach far beyond the scale. Kyra has become an inspiration for others as she chronicles her weight loss journey online using Instagram and YouTube.

Photos by J. Varner Media.

The Baytown Sun

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Memorial Hermann Life Flight is proud to partner with Liberty County Sheriff’s Office to reduce the time for life-saving care to arrive for the citizens of our county. Life Flight staff installed a direct ring-down phone at Liberty County Sheriff’s Office to provide dispatchers direct access by simply lifting to the phone handset with no dialing needed, and our 911 Dispatchers are automatically connected to Memorial Hermann Life Flight. This not only reduces the time for an aircraft to be launched but allows for other telecom communications to be available as needed since the Liberty County Sheriff’s Office 911 Dispatchers will no longer tie up one of our normal incoming/outgoing phone lines to call for Life Flight. Liberty County Sheriff’s Office is the second 911 communications center to receive this sort of communications between a 911 Communications center and Life Flight directly.
WHAT’S THE REAL HEARTBREAKER?
CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASE

It may not come as a surprise that a leading cause of death among adults in the United States is cardiovascular disease. What may be surprising, however, is that women are twice as likely as men to die from a heart attack after being hospitalized.

Studies show that when questioned about cardiovascular disease, female respondents did not correctly identify the warning signs of a heart attack. Symptoms preceding a heart attack can last from a few days to a few weeks. Even more concerning is that many women don’t experience the same warning signs as men; heart attack symptoms in women are often more subtle and may attributed to less life-threatening conditions. This is distressing because early-recognition may save lives and heart muscle functionality.

• Warning signs of a heart attack for women may include:
  • Chest pain
  • Shortness of breath
  • Sudden, unexplained fatigue
  • Generalized discomfort in the arms, back, neck, jaw, or upper stomach
  • Nausea
  • Lightheadedness
  • Cold sweats

A study published by the American College of Cardiology found “Women suffering a heart attack wait much longer than men to call emergency medical services … putting them at greater risk for adverse outcomes.” It is important to be an advocate for your health and act when abnormal symptoms start to occur.

A silver lining is that some risk factors associated with heart disease are preventable, such as avoiding tobacco use, committing to physical activity, maintaining a healthy weight, managing stress, limiting alcohol consumption and eating a nutritious, healthy diet.

Other risk factors may be better managed by having recommended health screenings that include checking blood pressure, cholesterol, and glucose levels. Meeting with your physician for routine tests and exams is a significant step to help avoid life-threatening and preventable diseases like heart disease.
BAYTOWN RESIDENT BECOMES RISING INSTAGRAM STAR
CHRONICLES JOURNEY TO 100 POUNDS LIGHTER

By Moira Dutton

On a mission to lose weight after endoscopic sleeve gastroplasty, Baytown resident Kyra Williams is a success story whose achievements reach far beyond the scale. Kyra has become an inspiration for others as she chronicles her weight loss journey online using Instagram and YouTube.

**Kyra Gains Online Popularity for Sharing Her ESG Story**

Aptly named the “Fierce ESG Diva,” Kyra openly shares with her growing community of social media followers advice, updates, challenges, victories and honest truths about weight loss after her recent ESG procedure. A wife, mother of two, and English instructor at Lee College, Kyra also finds purpose in her online presence, where she offers personal details that she herself was once looking for as she investigated alternative weight loss options.

“When I first started researching ESG, all I could find were doctors explaining ESG. I couldn't find anyone online like me who was talking firsthand about their experience, which is what I really wanted to hear during my research,” Kyra explained. “That inspired me to create my own social media presence and it just kept growing. I receive messages from followers all the time telling me that I have inspired them. Now, I have a whole community of friends with the same goal. We talk online, plan workouts together, and it inspires me to be accountable for staying on track.”

For Kyra, the process has been smooth so far, but her hard work and determination to achieve results have played an integral role in her success. Seven months after her August 2020 ESG, Kyra has already lost about 76 pounds, down from 269 to 193.8 – a major accomplishment, especially considering her years-long battle with weight.

**Early Years Spent Struggling with Weight**

Originally from Little Rock, Arkansas, Kyra was an active child and preteen. Dance, cheerleading, student council and band filled her time and kept her busy. She vaguely recalls being on the chubbier side starting in late elementary school.

“Around my third-grade year, my parents started gently coaching me on my diet choices,” Kyra reflected. “Then in fourth or fifth grade, I participated in a program where kids would exercise in the cafeteria after school a few times per week. Looking back, I was probably chosen because of my weight.”

When Kyra was in the 11th grade, she and her family moved to Texas, a move that was not easy for a teenager. Feeling down about the transition, Kyra quit most of her extracurricular activities and settled into a more sedentary lifestyle after they moved. The first time she tried to diet was that same year, hoping to fit into a dress for her school’s homecoming dance.

“It didn’t work because I was so inactive,” said Kyra. “After that, I went to college and gained about 50 pounds. I was never fixated on the...
scale, but at age 19, I weighed myself for the first time and realized I had reached 243 pounds.”

From there and throughout her adult life, Kyra tried numerous fad diets and workouts, even special fitness programs and women’s gyms, but nothing ever worked. She would lose a few pounds and then gain them right back, unable to keep up with a strict, regimented lifestyle. Before getting married in 2008, Kyra lost about 40 pounds, but it was a loss she was unable to maintain. Shortly thereafter, she gave birth to her son and her daughter 14 months apart, and the weight gain associated with pregnancy seemed impossible to reverse, even with more dieting and exercise.

**Kyra Commits to Transforming her Life**

It was near that time that Kyra decided to look into the idea of weight loss procedures, but she knew she wasn’t interested in surgery. Sadly, Kyra had lost one of her best friends due to complications from bariatric surgery before the age of 30, so she was adamantly opposed to anything that required cutting or rearranging her intestines.

With this discerning approach, Kyra spent almost seven years researching different options that she believed might work for her individual challenges. “It’s not that I ate horribly, I would just eat too much, and I felt like I was always hungry—so the idea of limiting my stomach capacity was very appealing,” explained Kyra.

Then, one night in April 2020, the stars aligned when Kyra’s research led her to stumble across some videos and interviews about ESG, as well as a video of Dr. Christopher McGowan, founder of True You Weight Loss and world-renowned gastroenterologist, actually performing an ESG procedure live while simultaneously answering questions. After watching the video three times, Kyra had a feeling that ESG was the right choice for her.

“Things happened pretty quickly from there,” remembered Kyra. “I told my husband about it, had my consultation with Dr. McGowan in June, and was walking in for my procedure on August 19, 2020—four days before my birthday, so it was a big birthday present to myself.”

**Life After ESG & an Exciting Future Ahead**

After her procedure, Kyra didn’t experience any of the side effects she is frequently asked about—no heartburn, nausea, vomiting or food intolerances. Regarding her weight loss after ESG, Kyra says her positive attitude, dedication, and her commitment to following all of the rules and recommendations given by her doctor, have played a key role in her success.

“I made up my mind that this was going to work for me, and I was going to do everything possible to get the results I wanted,” explained Kyra. “I knew this procedure wouldn’t stop my hunger, but I needed it to help stop my overeating.” Kyra explained that while many of her fellow ESG friends mourn the loss of food, she doesn’t feel that way. “I never saw ESG as the end of food for me—it’s just the end of overeating. I can still eat what I want, but I have to exercise and limit my portions. When I eat too much now, I get feel a tightness in my stomach that serves as a helpful reminder not to go back to my old habits.”

Admitting that regular exercise has been her biggest challenge, Kyra still motivates herself to work out almost every day. Her chosen activities include step aerobics as well as walking and running on her treadmill and lifting weights. Additionally, she is eagerly awaiting the
arrival of her new Peloton bike, a special gift to herself for the anticipated achievement of losing 100 pounds.

Because of her life-changing weight loss, Kyra is excited for the future. She is fitting into clothes that were once way too small, and she looks forward to a celebratory shopping trip that she’ll take when she hits her 100-pound milestone. Also on her list of things to accomplish is to participate in the Disney World Princess Race dressed as Princess Tiana.

Kyra continues to notice changes in the way she feels. “I didn’t realize how bad I felt until I started to feel better,” said Kyra. “My energy levels are way up, and I have much more stamina than I did before. I can actually walk for long distances now and keep up with my kids.”

Kyra strives to be a positive role model for her family. Through her efforts to adopt a healthier lifestyle, she has incorporated healthier habits into their lives as well, teaching them about better food choices and serving size.

She’s also reaching people around the country and world through her online platform, and plans to continue sharing her story to help inspire others.

“My hope is that in the future, when someone researches weight loss procedures and wants to see and hear firsthand from real patients, they’ll find their way to me and I can help them,” Kyra concluded.
THINK BEFORE YOU SNACK:
WAYS TO CURB SNACKING

By Angela Guerra, M.D., Family Medicine, Kelsey-Seybold Clinic – Baytown

People are spending more time at home these days, which means the pantry and refrigerator are within reach and accessible at nearly all times. Follow these simple tips to help curb your urge to sneak a snack.

Eat a Good Breakfast
Eating a healthy breakfast will help start your day off right by helping to kick-start your metabolism. A nutritious breakfast will likely incentivize you to eat healthier throughout your day and help keep you from unnecessary snacking.

Drink Plenty of Water
Water is the only drink your body really needs to survive, and drinking plenty throughout the day may help keep a healthy diet on track, burn calories, keep you more alert, and even give you a more glowing complexion—all this, and help keep you from snacking. Try drinking at least 64 ounces throughout the day. At first, it may seem difficult to drink that much, but after a while, your body will crave it.

Plan Out Healthy Lunch Options
Goals are difficult to achieve without a plan, and if your goal is to reduce unhealthy snacking, then planning healthy meals and snacks may help you get there. Try lunches and snacks that pack a vegetable and protein punch. Grilled chicken salad with a vinaigrette dressing, herbed cheese and tomato salads, tuna wraps with low-fat mayonnaise, and lean meats are all great lunch ideas.

Do you eat healthy dinners? If so, make extra and use the leftovers in smaller portions for lunches. Still feel hungry after eating lunch—or craving a salty or sweet snack? Take a break and walk around the block or do something unrelated to the task at hand—resetting your mind may help alleviate that craving. If it doesn’t, choose raw veggies and hummus, healthy nuts like almonds, walnuts, pecans, or fruits as healthy options. Lean meats and nuts contain lots of protein, which helps your body function properly.

This week, take a little extra time to plan your meals, to think about incorporating those healthy snacks and to be intentional with water intake. You may be surprised by how daytime snacking will drop!
The recent winter storm may have abruptly disrupted routines, but not even that can stop the trees from pollinating in the spring. Along the Gulf Coast, March brings with it an excitement for blue skies, pleasant temperatures, and the enjoyment of the great outdoors. But for those who suffer from allergies, even the most beautiful spring day is diminished by what may seem like an endless allergy season in the Greater Houston area.

Here are five ways to make seasonal allergies less taxing on individual sufferers.

**Track pollen reports**
Keeping an eye on pollen levels is one of the keys to preparing for seasonal allergies. Many local television stations offer pollen reports as part of their weather segments. Alternatively, those seeking pollen counts may track them on smartphone weather apps or online weather sites. The City of Houston posts excellent daily pollen counts on their website. Understanding the risk for exposure to allergens on any given day may help sufferers plan for outdoor activities.

**Spring cleaning**
Removing dust and pollen that has made its way into the house helps reduce exposure to allergens in the home. Dusting fan blades, windows and light fixtures, sweeping out the garage and maintaining a clean household helps reduce the triggers that cause allergy symptoms. Cleaning out the garbage disposal, as well as other wet areas such as the shower, bathtub, or sinks, may help reduce exposure to mold spores. Changing indoor air filters may also help reduce the allergens in the air. If you suffer from allergies, consider wearing a mask—and maybe even protective eye wear if the task is particularly dusty—when undertaking these cleaning projects.

**Prepare for the day ahead**
Allergens are sneaky and may hitch a ride home on hair, especially if the hair has been treated with styling products such as hairspray. For allergy sufferers who typically wear contact lenses, wearing eyeglasses instead on high-pollen-count days may help reduce the amount of pollen irritating the eyes.

**Hygiene habits**
If an allergy sufferer spends time outside on a high-pollen-count day, showering quickly after returning home may help reduce exposure and prevent pollen stuck to clothes, shoes, and hair from transferring to furniture and home textiles like carpets and bed sheets.

**See a physician**
Allergies in the Greater Houston area are particularly difficult because allergy season never really ends. Schedule an appointment before the season is in full swing to work with a doctor in developing a treatment plan.
Located in newly developed 9-acre plaza off Garth Road at 5410 East Fwy in Baytown, Family First ER: Baytown Emergency Room offers 24/7 emergency care with board-certified physicians, highly-skilled staff, superior accommodations and the latest medical technologies.

Unlike urgent care centers or other freestanding emergency rooms, Family First ER ensures patients are seen by board-certified healthcare providers promptly, within minutes of their arrival. With eight emergency treatment rooms, two exam rooms and a waiting room and reception area designed for the utmost welcoming environment and luxurious hospitality, Family First ER aims to deliver top-notch care with little-to-no wait times in a modern facility.

“Our goal is to transform the high-stress setting of an emergency room into a reassuring one. We want our patients and their families to get the quality care, attention and answers they need, fast, in a comforting environment with the capable hands of experienced medical professionals they can trust and talk to,” said Dr. Keegan Massey, medical director.

He continued, “We look forward to delivering the same level of emergency care we would want for ourselves and our own families to the residents of Baytown.”

The 9,000-square-foot facility is a diagnostic powerhouse equipped with top-tier on-site lab testing capabilities and imaging equipment (CT, Ultrasound and X-ray). The new ER also accepts all commercial insurances and offers same-day rapid COVID-19 testing and treatment, as well as adult and pediatric care.
By Alan Dale

Being young wasn’t the easiest thing for Baytown’s Darrel Hadnot Jr.
Yet, that didn’t stop him from being a man his is today regardless of if his kidneys wanted to cooperate or not.
Since he was in early 20s, Hadnot, 32, has battled his own body as his kidneys went bad and to this day he has no real answers why.
So he went about getting a transplant in 2013 and that in turn didn’t work to his benefit and he ultimately was back on dialysis after two previous years of watching both his kidneys shrink away into uselessness.
Then he discovered at-home dialysis.
Through his care team at Fresenius Kidney Care, Hadnot was able to give himself the treatments at home and that provided him the flexibility to begin working toward launching his own catering business and began work with the Texas Department of Criminal Justice as a prison sergeant.
Now after waiting six years for a new kidney, he is ready to begin the newest and best chapter in his life.
“I can’t complain, I am doing really good,” Hadnot said. “I got my kidney transplant, doing good at work, getting my catering business off the ground.
“Life is good.”
Hadnot received his newest kidney from a young man who had died in a car accident and gave a chance for another to keep on living.
But it wasn’t always easy as Hadnot’s original two kidneys stopped working. He ultimately got his first kidney transplant from a cousin, Jamon Murray, but that didn’t take.
“There were quite a few lows, especially for a young kid and that’s hard,” Hadnot said. “Starting off at college, you want to party and do what your friends are doing, and you can’t. You have to grow up quickly.”
Hadnot started culinary school after coming out of Sour Lake and not long after, he noticed things weren’t working right.
“They think it might have been an infection, but they didn’t know what caused it,” he said. “They didn’t do a biopsy on my kidneys because they had become way too small, and it was an at-risk surgery—they are still in my body now.
“I was at work and I could feel my throat closing up and had trouble swallowing. I didn’t think anything of it. I was just going about my business and I was on my way home and I was passing out driving, I pulled over, called my brother and he came and got me and took me to the hospital in Baytown.”
After tests were run, Hadnot found out the hard cold truth.
“The doctor came back in the room, closed the curtain and said, ‘Your kidneys are failing,’” Hadnot said. “He said they would try to jump start them like a car and put me on dialysis for three days straight. It didn’t work.”
After the third day, the doctors talked to Hadnot about dialysis
and transplants.

Svonda Jackson, Hadnot’s home dialysis nurse through Fresenius Baytown North Dialysis, got the first-hand look at the battle her patient fought.

She has known Hadnot since 2011 when he first was diagnosed with the failing kidneys and got on dialysis.

“When he came back for the second time for dialysis, that’s when we discussed with him the at-home dialysis so he could be a little bit more independent,” Jackson said. “He could work his schedule around what he wanted to do. He came in and trained for 25 days and we showed him the mechanics of it and how to stick himself (with the needle) and he did it four times a week. He basically did what a dialysis patient would do at the clinic—he stuck himself, drew his own blood, managed his own labs and then he would come in and see us. We would then tell him what to do on how to manage all that.”

The home machine is a little smaller than the one that he would work with at a clinic, so Hadnot may have had to use it a little more, but it wouldn’t wear on him, according to Jackson.

Jackson noted with pride how Hadnot “never stopped working,” and was working the two jobs and going to the gym to lose weight.

“His drive and his perseverance are as bright as I’ve seen with any patient,” Jackson said. “He had moments where he didn’t understand why this was happening to him because he was so young when this started happening to him. When you are 23, you are supposed to be living your life. Then he would think about it and realized just because you are doing dialysis, it’s not the end of your life.

“You can do the things you do; you just have to take care of yourself during the process. It’s a bridge to when you get your kidney and then you live the life that you can.”

Jackson admitted it would be tough for anyone to have to go back to dialysis.

“That was a little harder to wrap his mind around,” Jackson said. “He never gave up and he worked hard for what he got and where he’s at.

“His body is reacting well to the kidney now. It’s been great for him his second time around.”

Hadnot’s first kidney transplant only worked for a year and it was ultimately removed after a few years as the pain from it was too much.

“At that point, we didn’t have a choice but to pull it out,” Hadnot said. He then lived six years without a functioning kidney. “It wasn’t easy, man, because you get that one taste of freedom. 

“I had to grow up and mature fast or I wasn’t going to make it.”

Hadnot weighed 360 pounds and was told if he didn’t lose weight while on dialysis, he would not live past 25.

So he promptly lost 100-plus pounds after being told he couldn’t get a new kidney because he was “too big.”

“He said that I was young, but I wouldn’t get one in the shape that I was,” Hadnot said. “I did what I had to do to get it and when I got it, it only lasted a year.

“I did everything I was supposed to, and it just didn’t work. I was crushed.”

With the help of Jackson and his grandmother, Victoria, Hadnot, put his head down and got back to work after taking the at-home dialysis.

That included going to school for criminal justice and began working at the prison, ultimately being promoted to sergeant.

“I give 100% every day,” Hadnot said. “The way, I look at it, someone always has it worse than you. That gets me through my days.

“Giving up is never an option.”

Now on the verge of opening Victoria’s Kitchen—named after his grandmother who told him if he wanted to “stay on the ground, that’s your choice,” and fired him up to persevere—in May, Hadnot is ready to continue his newest chapter: His best one yet.

He hopes to be able to serve various foods out of his own kitchen in Baytown until he can advance it to its own building. He will serve takeout orders of various foods and also serve meals for people who are taking dialysis and battling kidney issues like he does to this day.

“I think I could do good in Baytown and I am looking for spots to rent so I can get my restaurant started,” Hadnot said, noting Victoria’s Kitchen in Baytown can be found on Facebook. “I want them to be able to eat good without all the phosphorous and potassium. I created some recipes with no salt or phosphorous that taste amazing and I want it there for them.

“If anyone has any questions, I will help them. A lot of dialysis patients I talk to don’t know what to eat and are scared to eat. I was like that too at first.”

All is good for Hadnot when he might not have lived to see these days.

“I am trying to stay fit, stay on top of medications and I talk to my coordinators and doctors every week,” Hadnot said. “The communication between us is great and I think that’s what is going to make this work.”
THANK YOU
BARBERS HILL ISD NURSES

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We’re here to support our community
Following several months of site preparation, Houston Methodist Baytown Hospital held a groundbreaking ceremony on Friday, March 26 for its new five-story patient tower.

The groundbreaking ceremony was attended by hospital board of trustees members, community leaders and hospital leadership. The facility is scheduled to open in spring 2023 and will expand the hospital by 75 beds, including medical/surgical, intensive care unit (ICU) and women’s services beds.

“This new, state-of-the-art facility will further expand Houston Methodist Baytown Hospital’s ability to serve our community and meet the growing demands of Baytown, east Harris, Liberty and Chambers counties,” said CEO David Bernard. “Houston Methodist Baytown has served our community since 1948 and we are excited to enhance our services and open our new facility on our 75th anniversary.”

Along with the additional bed capacity, the facility will include a new pharmacy, kitchen and dialysis unit, as well as other needed infrastructure. The building’s projected 2023 completion date coincides with the 75th anniversary of the April 29, 1948 founding of Houston Methodist Baytown Hospital.

“For over seven decades now, the residents of our community have trusted the excellent doctors and nurses of Houston Methodist Baytown Hospital,” said Gilbert Santana, Houston Methodist Baytown Hospital board chairman.

“This new patient tower continues the hospital’s commitment to providing the finest medical care and services.”

The new tower is part of a $250 million facilities master plan begun in 2017 that includes the new and expanded emergency department, outpatient center, Houston Methodist Cancer Center at Baytown facility, new parking garage, central utility plant and numerous infrastructure enhancements.

“Houston Methodist Baytown always grows with the needs of our community, and these new facilities allow us to expand our services and continue providing unparalleled safety, quality, service and innovation to our community,” Bernard said. “The additional beds and cutting-edge technologies the new tower provides gives area residents access to world class health care and services close to home and we look forward to opening soon.”

Since its opening in 1948, Houston Methodist Baytown Hospital has provided excellence in patient care with expertise in specialties such as emergency services, stroke care, cancer, heart and vascular, orthopedics and sports medicine, imaging, and a comprehensive network of virtual care, specialists, primary care physicians and much more. Its commitment to serving Baytown and the surrounding communities continues during the COVID-19 pandemic, with the hospital providing advanced care for COVID-19 patients and delivering thousands of vaccines in its role as a vaccine hub.
Houston Methodist Baytown Hospital CEO David Bernard (seventh from right) is joined by hospital board members and leadership, as well as community leaders for the groundbreaking ceremony for the five-story patient tower. Hospital board members and leadership on hand for the ceremony were (from right) Jennifer Vera, associate chief of nursing; Becky Chalupa, chief nursing officer; Tommy Clements, board member; RD Burnside, board member; Pete Alfaro, board member; Gilbert Santana, board chairman; David Bernard, CEO; Richard Peebles, board member; Wayne Baldwin, board member; Mary Hartman Brown-Cody, board member; Gary Schmidt, board member; Walter O’Hara, MD; George Colon, director, spiritual care; Adrienne Joseph, VP/COO; Laurie Terry, admin. director. The facility is scheduled to open in spring 2023 and will expand the hospital by 75 beds.

About Houston Methodist Baytown Hospital

Houston Methodist Baytown Hospital has provided Baytown and east Harris, Liberty and Chambers counties with quality medical care since opening its doors in 1948. The hospital has grown throughout the years with the community, providing comprehensive care at all stages of life. As a health care leader, the hospital is proud to have a fully integrated residency program focused on educating and inspiring future practitioners. Today, Houston Methodist Baytown provides some of the most advanced and innovative procedures while never wavering from its focus on compassionate and patient-centered care. Houstonmethodist.org/baytown.
The arrival of warmer weather will encourage many of us to get out and be more active, but for some that will mean experiencing joint pain, especially in the knees. According to Dr. Michael Hopson, orthopedic surgeon with Houston Methodist Orthopedics & Sports Medicine at Baytown, it is possible to combat the wearing down of cartilage (osteoarthritis) and the general wear and tear inflicted on the knees.

Strengthen Your Legs

The knee relies on the muscles around it to take some of the impact and pressure of everyday use. By strengthening your leg muscles, you can bolster the joint and relieve pressure.

“The main muscles to focus on are your quadriceps (the muscles above your knee on the front of your thigh) and hamstrings (back of your thigh), though the muscles in your calves, hips and core also play important roles in stability,” Hopson said.

Try starting with low-impact exercises like walking, cycling and yoga to build strength. For help with building a tailored strength-training regimen, speak with a physical therapist or trainer.

Lose Weight

It’s estimated that for every extra pound we carry, we add four pounds of pressure to our knees. That means a loss of even 10 pounds can relieve 40 pounds of pressure. By staying within a healthy body mass index range, usually from 18.5 to 24.9, you can prevent extra wear on your knees and ankles.

If you’re overweight, set a goal for weight loss that’s within your reach so you can make progress right away. For example, aim to lose five to 10 percent of your current weight.

Improve Flexibility

“A mobile, conditioned knee is less likely to develop overuse problems. Whether you work out frequently or joint issues keep you mostly stationary, improving your flexibility can alleviate pain and stiffness,” Hopson said.

Work on improving flexibility by stretching the muscles in your legs (quadriceps, hamstrings and calves).

Also, try a gentle yoga or tai chi class. Your doctor or physical therapist can recommend exercises that are right for you.

When knee pain and stiffness interfere with your daily activities, it’s time to speak to an orthopedic specialist about knee replacement surgery. Houston Methodist Orthopedics & Sports Medicine at Baytown offers a full spectrum of services, including:

- Minimally invasive knee replacement
- Advanced techniques to minimize postoperative discomfort and accelerate recovery
- Robotic-assisted partial knee replacement
- Complex joint revision surgery
- Therapy for arthritic knees

Houston Methodist Baytown Hospital screens all patients, ensuring only those without COVID-19 symptoms are seen in the office. Masks and personal protective equipment are required while providing patient care, and we have reorganized waiting rooms and check-in lines to ensure social distancing.

We have also implemented additional sanitation processes to disinfect all equipment and surfaces. Houston Methodist Baytown is designated as a COVID-19 vaccine hub. Get your vaccine today.

Walk-ins are welcome, but you may also schedule an appointment by visiting houstonmethodist.org/vaccine.

To schedule an appointment with a Houston Methodist Orthopedics & Sports Medicine at Baytown specialist, call 281-427-7400, or visit houstonmethodist.org/baytown.
From providing cutting-edge coronavirus treatments, to serving as a vaccine hub, Houston Methodist Baytown Hospital is taking a leading role in helping to safeguard the health of Baytown area residents.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, Houston Methodist Baytown’s physicians, nurses and staff have been committed to providing access to the COVID-19 vaccine to residents of Baytown and surrounding communities.

That commitment has been strengthened with Houston Methodist now accepting walk-ins for COVID-19 vaccinations. Residents can stop by Houston Methodist Baytown or any one of the seven Houston Methodist locations throughout the Houston area Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. to receive a vaccine. All individuals age 16 and older are eligible to receive the vaccine in Texas at no cost.

While appointments are still accepted, the ability to serve walk-in patients is intended to provide a more convenient option for people who haven’t received a vaccine yet.

“It is absolutely vital that as many people as possible take the vaccine. This is just another way Houston Methodist is doing our part to provide as many vaccines to the public as we can in our efforts to contain the virus and create herd immunity,” said Dr. Shawn Tittle, Houston Methodist Baytown’s chief medical officer/chief quality officer.

Since December’s arrival of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine, Houston Methodist has led the way in administering the vaccine in its role as a state of Texas-designated vaccine hub. Through late April, Houston Methodist has provided over 625,441 vaccines system-wide.

“I encourage everyone to take the vaccine when it’s made available to them and spread confidence in our community regarding its effectiveness and safety,” Tittle said.

In addition to serving as a vaccine hub, Houston Methodist Baytown continues to offer advanced coronavirus treatments, including the cutting-edge monoclonal antibody therapy, referred to as Bamlanivimab. The hospital has opened a new infusion unit dedicated to providing the intravenous therapy for adults who are at high risk of developing severe COVID-19 symptoms.

Houston Methodist Baytown continues to take every necessary precaution during the pandemic to keep patients and staff members safe, including, screening all patients, ensuring only those without COVID-19 symptoms are seen in the office; wearing masks and personal protective equipment while providing patient care; reorganizing waiting rooms and check-in lines to ensure social distancing, and implementing additional sanitation processes to disinfect all equipment and surfaces.

No Time to Let Our Guard Down

Even as infection rates and hospitalizations continue to trend downward across the Houston area, Tittle stresses that we should encourage friends, family and co-workers to get the vaccine and continue practicing virus prevention methods, including wearing masks, social distancing and hand hygiene that have proven highly effective against virus spread.

Visit houstonmethodist.org/texas-vaccine-hub to access comprehensive information on the COVID-19 vaccine, as well as answers to your vaccine questions.
VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS AND STUDENTS RECEIVE EMT TRAINING
By Mark Fleming

Training will be closer to home for the front-line emergency medical responders in Chambers County soon thanks to a new agreement between the county and Lee College.

“The closest EMT schools we had were Beaumont and outside of that was Galveston College,” said Ron Nichols Emergency Medical Services Director for Chambers County.

That will change in June when the first Anahuac-based class begins.

Nichols said that among the students in the first class will be volunteer firefighters from across the county.

There are several levels of medical first responders, beginning with EMR—emergency medical responder then moving up to EMT—emergency medical technician, Advanced EMT and paramedic.

Each level comes with increased training and increased capabilities. The EMTs are the first level trained to prepare patients for transport to further medical care.

“We have parts of our county where we have 15-20 minute [ambulance] response time because of distance,” he said. “By training the volunteer firefighters throughout the county and getting them certified we’ll actually have certified EMTs in other parts of the county to help start treatment on those patients while the ambulance is trying to get there.”

Training will include classroom time in Anahuac, simulator training at Lee College’s Liberty Center, and time in ambulances and emergency rooms to gain hands-on experience.
While the program will start with a single class in the summer, Nichols said he expects it to ramp up to two classes a semester.

Marsha Tuha, executive director of workforce and community development, said the new Chambers County program will continue and grow work the college is already doing.

While the Chambers County location of many of the classes particularly benefits residents in that part of the college’s service area, classes are open for any student to enroll.

She said she expects students from area industries, many of which maintain in-house emergency response operations.

The college has a five-year plan to move beyond its current capacity to train EMTs—something to which Nichols said he also looks forward.

In 2022, Healthcare Program Manager Jahnea Palfrey said she expects Lee College to begin offering Advanced EMT training. Approval from the state to offer continuing education is also in the works.

In the planning stage but a little farther down the road is the ability to offer full paramedic training.

“Paramedic programs have to be a college credit degree program,” Tuha said, which increases what is needed in preparation. “It is definitely one of the things we would like to work toward.”
For people dealing with complications related to obesity, losing weight can be a life saving proposition. Obesity can lead to very dire health conditions. Research indicates obesity—defined as a Body Mass Index of 30 or above—is linked to the development of a variety of potentially serious medical conditions, including type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, stroke and heart disease.

Bariatric surgery procedures restrict the amount of food you can eat and/or changes the route food takes through your body so that less food is absorbed. The Houston Methodist Weight Management Center-Baytown offers personalized care through medical nutritional counseling and bariatric (weight loss) surgery for patients affected by conditions attributed to obesity.

“Weight loss surgery helps patients reduce their calorie intake, but the procedures are combined with counseling and dietary education to help patients learn how to stay fit after they lose weight by altering their eating habits and becoming more active,” Houston Methodist Baytown Hospital bariatric surgeon Dr. Laura Choi said.

Patients whose BMI is 40 and above are eligible for bariatric surgery, while those whose BMI is in the 35-40 range are also eligible if they have existing medical conditions considered to be caused by or associated with obesity. According to the American Society for Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery, approximately 100,000 such surgeries are performed each year in the U.S.

The sleeve gastrectomy, which re-shapes the stomach into a thin, sleeve-shaped organ that helps to limit the amount of food that can be consumed at a given time, and the Roux-en-Y gastric bypass, are the most commonly performed weight loss surgery procedures in the U.S. With the Roux-en-Y gastric bypass, part of the stomach is stapled off, leaving a small pouch that will only hold a few ounces of food. The digestive tract is redirected to bypass the upper small intestine, which reduces total calories absorbed.

Dr. Kendell Sowards, bariatric surgeon at Houston Methodist Baytown Hospital, said bariatric surgery alone will not help patients achieve their weight loss goals.

“It is vital that patients be willing to make major lifestyle and dietary changes in order to achieve the best results following any bariatric surgery procedure. The Weight Management Center offers comprehensive nutritional counseling and after-care programs to help our patients adjust to the physical and emotional changes that frequently occur post-surgery,” Sowards said.

Houston Methodist Baytown Hospital screens all patients, ensuring only those without COVID-19 symptoms are seen in the office. Masks and personal protective equipment are required while providing patient care, and we have reorganized waiting rooms and check-in lines to ensure social distancing. We have also implemented additional sanitation processes to disinfect all equipment and surfaces. Houston Methodist Baytown is designated as a COVID-19 vaccine hub. Walk-ins are welcome, but you may also schedule an appointment by visiting houstonmethodist.org/vaccine.

For more information on the full range of services provided by the Houston Methodist Weight Management Center-Baytown and to schedule an appointment, visit houstonmethodist.org/baytown, or call 832-556-6046.
Through The Baytown Project, David Berkowitz shines a light on everyday people in the greater Baytown area. Follow along at thebaytownproject.com, or on Facebook and Instagram.

ROBERT GRESHAM

“When one of the older barbers retired, I inherited Mr. Charlie as a customer. I’ve been cutting his hair for at least 20 years. He lives in Anahuaec, but he’s been coming to Baytown all this time. More recently, he was doing good just to make it in. The next thing you know, his wife was bringing him. When she was unable to, a grandchild was doing it.

“Finally, it got to the point where it’s easier for me to just go to his house for a haircut and shave. I’ve done it about four times. I think he has Parkinson’s disease. He has around-the-clock care, and his wife is there with him. He’s a true gentleman and a super nice guy. I’m happy to drive out there for him.

“I turned 50 in March, and I’ve been cutting hair since I was 21. So I have a lot of longtime customers. If I’ve been cutting their hair for years, and if they followed me from the Trophy Barber Shop to my Baker Road location, and now to my new shop, that means something. These are not just customers. They’re friends, and I care about them. So when they call, or their wives call, and tell me they can no longer make it in, and ask if I can cut hair at their house — of course. I don’t mind at all.

“I’ve also cut hair at the Baytown hospital countless times. I’ve been to the medical center many times. I’ve been to every nursing home here in town. And I’ve even been to the funeral home twice. The wives will call and say, ‘He passed. Do you mind cutting his hair? Only you know how to do it.’

“The way I’ve always looked at it is, if I was laid up in the hospital or at a nursing home for a long time, I would want somebody to give me a haircut. To be able to make a person look better, feel better, and to have some pride in their appearance, it’s just a very meaningful thing.”

Robert Gresham opened Baytown Barber Shop, at 4810 N. Main, a few months before the COVID-19 pandemic.
“Being a little country girl from Beaumont, I was always tomboyish. Although I wasn't very girly, I was a cheerleader all through school. My junior year, I got kicked off the squad because I had the only fight in my entire life. So I needed something to do. I ended up being really good at powerlifting. I became the number one lifter in my weight class in the state and nation.

“But the one thing I always wanted to do was play football. I felt I was strong enough. So I approached the high school coach. At first, he wasn’t having it. He came around later and said that I could play, but not on varsity, only JV. Well, with my ego, I chose not to pursue it.

“Years later, I was in the gym working out when I heard on the radio that Houston had a professional women’s team. It was the Houston Lady Oilers in the new Women’s Arena Football League. I got a tryout. And at age 32, I made the team. We won the championship, but the league failed and fell apart. I moved on to the Texas Lady Jaguars in the Sugar ‘N Spice Football League, and we won the Super Bowl.

“Early in my career, they tried me out as a linebacker because of my size and strength. But I was more aggressive as a running back. I didn't like doing the hitting, but I loved getting hit. They called me Ironhead after Craig “Ironhead” Heyward. I have no regrets, but my body suffers from it now.

“After I retired, I had excrutiating back pain, and my neck bothered me. MRIs showed that I had degenerative discs in my neck and lower back, and some arthritis setting in. I also have a bad hip. I’m not a medication type person. But by working out, strengthening my core, and just trying to stay active, I’ve learned to deal with it.

“When I went in for pain injections a few years back, the doctor was like, ‘Either you were crazy or you just really loved the game.’ And I was like, “I really loved the game. But I guess I was a little bit crazy, too.”

Raquel Segura works at Houston Methodist Baytown Hospital, where she enjoys singing for patients and coworkers.

Through The Baytown Project, David Berkowitz shines a light on everyday people in the greater Baytown area. Follow along at thebaytownproject.com, or on Facebook and Instagram.
“By the time I was about 25, I started running around with people who did things that were just unheard of when I was growing up. That’s how I got into drugs. Except for the four years when I was bringing my children into the world, I had never been clean.

“Because of that addictive lifestyle, I had 26 arrests and 23 felonies. The only thing I was doing successfully was going to prison. When I was arrested for my 24th felony, I was looking at a 20-year term. Prison would have been a retirement home for me. I would have died there.

“So I began praying and campaigning about getting into the STAR Drug Court. With the help of my long-time criminal attorney, I was interviewed and approved. STAR stands for Success Through Addiction Recovery. It’s a very strict drug treatment program. If you complete the four years, then that felony is taken off your record. The deferred adjudication and not going down for 20 years was great. But what meant the most to me was that at age 57, I was finally able to be clean and sober.

“My mantra was, relapse is not an option today. It was a day-to-day, sometimes a moment-to-moment thing. Finally one day I just realized, hey, I didn’t even think about drugs today. That was an eye-opener for me. That was when I realized, I might just have this. Now I don’t get so comfortable as to think that I’ve got this licked. I’m always going to be an addict. But I’m not going to be a using addict. I’m an addict in recovery.

“You know, most people who have even one felony say, ‘Oh, I can’t get a job now. My life is ruined. It’s over.’ Well, it doesn’t have to be. I’m a prime example of that.”

Karen McKee, now 63, became a recovery coach. She currently serves as residential manager for a safe house at Rescue Us Mission in Houston.
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Pilot Club of Baytown makes a monetary donation to Houston Methodist Baytown Hospital for stroke education. Pictured from left are Dr. Shawn Tittle, chief medical officer; Becky Chalupa, chief nursing officer; Susan Zamora, stroke coordinator; and Julie DeTorre, Pilot Club member.

Pilot Club of Baytown Makes Donation to Traumatic Brain Injury Camp – Pictured from left are Baytown Pilots - Glenda Mosley, Clarissa Martinez (21-22 president), Susan Pitts (20-21 president), Cindy Nettles, Judy Wheat, Carolyn Parrish, Kerri Hurlbut, TBI President from Pilot Club of Winnsboro Joanna Horton, Baytown Pilot Allene DonCarlos, PI Texas District Governor from Pilot Club of Shiner and Baytown Pilot Susan Passmore
Pilot Club of Baytown makes a donation to Emma’s Hugs. The donation was made by Pilot President Susan Pitts, to Emma’s Hugs Executive Director Jenny Royer. Emma’s Hugs feels everyone needs a hug from time to time. Families who spend significant time in the Texas Medical Center often need hugs more than others. Emma’s Hugs provides parking assistance to families visiting the Medical Center in Houston.
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Greater Baytown - May 2021
Baytown Chamber scholarship recipient Ana Aguilar with Board Member Bob Hoskins and Chamber Chair Holly Jackson.

Angela Luis receives her scholarship from the Baytown Chamber of Commerce.

Daisy Alvarez receives her scholarship from the Baytown Chamber of Commerce.

Diego Arredondo Garcia receives his scholarship from the Baytown Chamber.

Marissa Villareal receives her scholarship from the Baytown Chamber of Commerce.

Stephanie Williams receives her scholarship from the Baytown Chamber of Commerce.

Partners in Education Community Toyota-Honda-Kia and Highlands Junior Principal Bernie Mulvaney Jim Wadzinski and Mandy King.

Stuart Career Tech High School Instructor Kylie Sobczak, Terry Swindoll III (Tre) and his father Terry Swindoll Jr.

B. P. Hopper and Enterprise, Courtney Caylor (Enterprise); Principal Maria Rosas and Soledad Harding (BP Hopper)

30-year Partners in Education ExxonMobil and San Jacinto Elementary, ExxonMobil's Connie Tilton and Susana Munoz are pictured with SJE's Rachael McAdam.

Beacon Federal Credit Union is presented an appreciation award for their continued sponsorship of the Partners in Education awards luncheon.

Tim Day, Leah Abbate (Alamo) and Harvey Oyler (Kiwanis Club) and Holly Jackson

photos by Carol Skewes
Enchanted Ballroom
By Carol Skewes

The BOB Alliance has been spotlighting Black-owned-businesses this year and the latest included four businesses at once.

The Enchanted Ballroom, Princess Event Planning, Sonya Carr Portrait Creations and Dot’s Catering hosted a mixer at The Enchanted Ballroom in Bay Plaza. Baytown’s Gina Guillory organized the BOB Alliance to bring attention to various small business owners for adding economic development to the City of Baytown.

The Enchanted Ballroom, located at 2232 N. Alexander Drive, has been in business since July of 2020 when co-owners Tiffany Lewis, Teresa Blake and Sonya Carr put their entrepreneurial energy together to become stronger together. Latrice Lockett, owner of Dot’s Catering, was introduced to them by Gina Guillory through the BOB Alliance and her catering business now has a permanent kitchen inside The Enchanted Ballroom. “We are very excited to be a part of this partnership,” said Sonya Carr, who has been doing photography since 1996, and has been in business since 2006. Carr now has her entire studio inside The Enchanted Ballroom. She does formal portraits, weddings, all types of photography and can be found on Facebook.

Teresa Blake always wanted to be in business for herself, but with a full-time career it’s was extremely difficult. “I also have a late nephew Eric, who had autism and I loved him dearly. Because of my love for him, I always wanted to do something to carry on his memory,” said Blake. Less than a year ago, Blake and Tiffany Lewis met when she contacted Tiffany to decorate her daughter Destinee’s baby shower. “I subsequently met Tiffany’s daughter, Skylar, also autistic, and she just melted my heart,” added Blake. “I met Sonya a few months later at Destinee’s shower. She was the photographer, but I greatly appreciated how much she helped us. I felt a great connection with both ladies and Skylar. I felt God and Eric leading me to connect with these three ladies to become who we are now, the owners of The Enchanted Ballroom,” said Blake.

Tiffany Lewis, Princess Event Planning is a one-stop shop. Her business is named for her eight-year-old daughter, whom she calls her miracle baby. She has been planning events for seven years. “Guests can DIY (do-it-yourself) and only rent the facility or have everything done for you (food, photography, DJ, bartender and decor. You are welcome to use all the furniture in the ballroom or you can bring in your own,” said Tiffany.

The small room holds 100 and has a private bar and restrooms, with access to the kitchen.

The larger room holds 350 with a bridal suite and access to the kitchen and restrooms. Together the rooms can be combined to hold 450 guests. The outdoor garden and gazebo are perfect for photo shoots.

If one rents the facility, one gets to rent the luxury glass tables included. Each event is catered to your decorative needs.

Dot’s Catering started her family-owned business back in 2012. Her business’ name came from her grandmother, Dorothy Harris. “By the grace of God, we are five years in now. We started catering from my home, then from my dad’s church and now we have a permanent kitchen here. As soon as everything is completed, we will start up our weekday meals. We are super excited to work with a team,” said Latrice Lockett.

“These women have a special gift to create magic. Call 832-926-4190 to book your event and experience the magic,” said Gina Guillory.
By Carol Skewes

Del Mont Properties was the featured business by the BOB Alliance spotlight April 9.

Four retail businesses are officed on the first floor of the historic Del Mont Hotel: Artistic Procreations (Suite 9), Eastwide Vintage (Suite 10), Baytown Nutrition (Suite 11) and Baytown Fit Club (Suite 12).

Seven residential lofts are rented in the remaining space of the two-story historic structure. A common outdoor patio space is located on the second floor for residents.

Baytown Nutrition, owned by Jamari and Morgan Gilbert, provided butter pecan, strawberry cheesecake and banana pudding healthy shakes to guests. The event was held inside of what will soon be Baytown Fit Club.

The Del Mont is part of Del Mont Properties, owned by Dr. Yvonne Thomas and Oscar Chapa.

They started out investing in homes. Realtor Terry Rivon told Yvonne about the Del Mont Hotel.

The original hotel had 15 hotel rooms with a manager’s office. After renovation, it now has six apartments upstairs, one downstairs, one manager’s office and the four retail spaces. The office is for their property manager that manages all their properties.

“This is my second act,” explained Yvonne Thomas. “My first act was as a dentist and I retired in 2015.”

Yvonne Thomas DMD still practices one day a month in La Porte to keep up her skills.

The rest of her time is spent volunteering. She loves the ACE District (Arts, Cultural and Entertainment District) in historic downtown Baytown.

“There is so much going on in this area,” said Thomas, “A new mural will be installed by the Detail Spot (across the street). Asphalt Art is going to be installed as well around the Town Square. Come and support our businesses. We appreciate you.”

For more information on the Del Mont Hotel or the ACE District, visit the Facebook pages for Del Mont Properties and the ACE District.
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