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THURSDAY EDITION,  
MAY 7, 2020

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## 3 COVID-19 recoveries reported in Howard Co.

Special to the Herald

For several weeks, City of Big Spring and Howard County officials have been tracking COVID-19 patient testing and the results of those tests. To date, Howard County has had six confirmed positive results. We are very pleased to announce that as of today, three (3) of those patients are now fully recovered from COVID-19, meaning they are now symptom-free and have completed the isolation process. There are currently still two outstanding confirmed cases that are isolated at home and recovering. We will continue to monitor COVID-19 in Howard County.

Patient recovery is an encouraging step for Big Spring and gives our community positive momentum. Please continue to follow proper hygiene recommendations and social distancing practices. We as a community are fighting this together and we are making progress.

**COVID-19 Update:**

**Confirmed: 6**

**Tests performed: 206**

**Pending: 75**

**Negative tests: 120**

**Recovered: 3**

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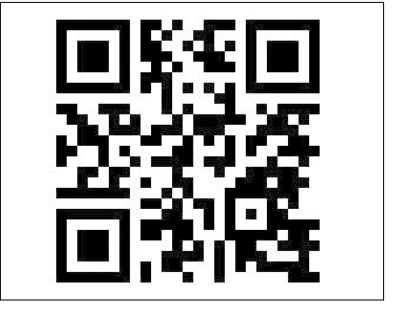
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## Barbershops, salons, able to open May 8 per Governor Abbott

By **AMANDA DUFORAT**  
Managing Editor

In a press conference Tuesday afternoon, Texas Governor Greg Abbott issued revisions to the list of businesses allowed to re-open. On May 1, Governor Abbott set Phase 1 in motion to re-open the state, with businesses – movie theatres, dine-in restaurant services, museums, libraries and churches - allowed to open at 25% capacity. Those counties who were reporting less than five cases were able to open up at 50% capacity, which is where Howard County sat.

While the authority had been granted for businesses to re-open there were some who chose not to open their doors just yet. Several local restaurants also chose to continue curbside service and

delivery options, with a few re-opening their dine-in with limited seating as advised.

The next set of businesses that will be allowed to re-open on May 8, according to the information provided during the Governor's press conference, will include barber shops, cosmetology/hair salons, nail salons and tanning salons.

"I feel within myself that it's time for us to open and get to work, but I can't help to feel so many different ways emotionally," Michael Rodriquez, stylist, said. "I know that doesn't make sense, but it seems that's how a handful of stylist feel."

According to Rodriquez, Hair By Jose has been closed for seven weeks. Returning to the salon and seeing his co-workers and clients is a moment that he has been counting down the moments

for.

"I'm anxious, nervous and scared all at once. I know everyone is ready to get their hair colored, highlighted and cut. Our clients have been troopers during this situation and I hope we don't have to correct at home colors or kitchen cuts," Rodriquez said.

While there were many stylists across the nation that were deeply impacted by the shutdown, Rodriquez said he counts himself blessed. The support he received from his salon owner and clients during these seven weeks helped him sustain until he could get back in to the salon.

"As a self employed stylist, I'm very fortunate to work for a salon owner who didn't require us to pay rent while not

See **OPEN**, Page 3

## National Nurses and Hospital Week opportunity to show appreciation for front line workers

By **AMANDA DUFORAT**  
Managing Editor

Nurses are one of the driving forces in today's healthcare setting. As the world battles the coronavirus pandemic, healthcare providers and nursing staff are amongst those on the front lines. This year, as National Nurses Week and National Hospital Week approaches, Scenic Mountain Medical Center is extending an invitation to the community to join in showing appreciation for all those on the front lines.

"As we work on our annual celebrations inside the hospital, we wanted to do something that would include the community while adhering to social distancing protocols," April Arms, SMMC Executive Assistant, said. "We have had such an outpouring from the community, and this is just one more way that local businesses and community members can show their support together."

National Nurses Week begins on May 6 each year and runs through May 12. National Nurses Week originally started out facing extensive opposition from various levels of government, but through perseverance eventually was recog-

nized. In October 1954, from Oct. 11-16 National Nurse Week took place in remembrance of Florence Nightingale's 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of her mission to Crimea. After that, for many years, there was no national recognition obtained. A bill was introduced to Congress in 1955, but no action was taken; a resolution was presented by the House of Representatives for the President to proclaim "National Registered Nurse Day," but it did not occur. Finally, in January 1974, the International Council of Nurses (ICN) proclaimed May 12 as International Nurse Day – Florence Nightingale's birthday – and since has been recognized. In February of that same year, a week was designated by the White House as National Nurse Week as President Nixon issued a proclamation. In 1990 the ANA Board of Directors expanded recognition of nurses to a week-long celebration declaring May 6-12, 1991 as National Nurses Week and in 1993 that week was recognized as permanent dates for the week long recognition beginning in 1994 and all subsequent years.

**May 6-12:**  
**National Nurses Week**

**May 9:**  
**SMMC Prayer**  
**at 8 p.m. in front of SMMC**

**May 10-16:**  
**National Hospital Week**  
*Businesses and community members are encouraged to show their appreciation by placing signs in front of SMMC through May 16*

"Our nurses are the lifeline for our providers, our staff and our patients," Arms said. "They provide day to day care for

See **WEEK**, Page 2

## Local Howard College professor turned author releases new book: 'Is a young Earth possible'

By **SAMANTHA RANEY**  
Herald Contributing Writer

Jay Hall has been in Big Spring for about 10 years. While living here he has become the Assistant Mathematics Professor at Howard College.

Hall Started writing a book in 2017, "Old Earth or Young Earth" which covers history and science. Hall earned a Master of Science degree in Mathematics from the University of Oklahoma. He has taught at the High School, Technical School and Community College levels, and has had experience in

the actuarial field covering insurance and consulting organizations.

"My latest book tackles the age-of-the-earth controversy," Hall said.

With a combination of history, science, President Eisenhower, dinosaurs, depression and planets, there are many facets to this book. Marco Rubio, Ben Carson and Rick Perry have all expressed their opinion on this vibrant issue.

"I hope to reach everyday people who have an interest in popular science and history," Hall said. "Those who question climate change hysteria may be willing to look at the facts that support a youthful world."

Hall said he wants to spread his knowledge and open up the

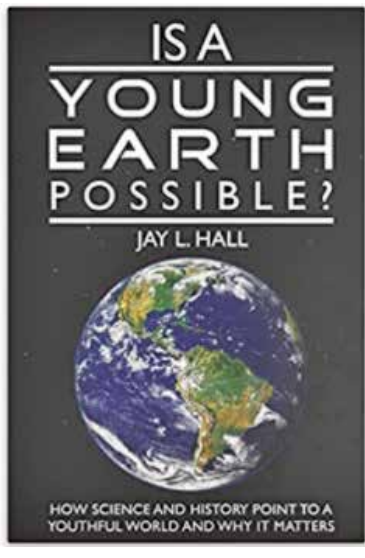
minds of people who are interested in this topic. History has a definite limit and this seems to question dating methods which put our cousins the Neanderthals into the distant past, say 300,000 years ago. Hall is looking to push these limits and know more about these times before civilization. Being skeptical of the science establishment, and have applied his critical thinking by exploring options, he has made many discoveries himself and will continue to. Sister planets seem to be young as well. Catastrophism, the view that most rocks were formed rapidly, fits in well with his young earth theory.

"We are more focused on our mortality and the meaning of life," Hall said.

His argument that strict Darwinism drains the purpose and drive from our existence and can actually verge on depression.

Let's consider one treatment for

See **BOOK**, Page 3



*Courtesy image*  
**Jay Hall's book can be purchased on Amazon for Kindle or hard-copy.**

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# BOOK

Continued from Page 1

COVID-19 that has had some success: chloroquine. This drug has been used to treat malaria for many years. About 440,000 people die from this dreaded disease every year, mostly young African children. The malarial parasite has developed a resistance to chloroquine and this is called "evolution."

However, this is just a slight variation in a basic type of protozoa and represents a loss in ability, not an increase in complexity as molecules-to-man transformation requires, according to Hall.

"My plan is to write a book on biological essentialism," Hall said.

This has an aspect that relates to gender identity, but his major focus will be on the fixity of types of living forms. This meaning of biological essentialism holds that there exist Essential Types of Life (ETL's), such as bears and penguins and that these comprise distinct kinds of organisms that do not have a common ancestor. 'Is a Young Earth Possible?' relates to a number of key

# OPEN

Continued from Page 1

working so that's been a huge blessing, I'm blessed to have clients that took care of me while I was out of work," Rodriguez said. "When I received my first blessing I was taken back because I knew right then and there God was going to take care of me. Not one time did I feel stressed about how I was going to make ends meet, but my heart did go out to my fellow people in the industry that do have children, those that are single parents as well."

He continued, "I have to say with all honesty that my faith in God as my provider was all I had during this time along side the support of my family, friends and clients! I tell you, having those those things in my corner is a great feeling."

Facilities that are choosing to re-open will need to place safety precautions in place and adhere to the guidance provided by Governor Abbott, including: those waiting should wait in their cars or outside at least six feet apart, only the person receiving the service should be present for the appointment, only schedule the number of clients that will allow for social distancing of at least six feet apart, posted signs to ensure clients have a number to call for appointment and signs notifying any customers showing symptoms must reschedule appointment. For a full list of protocols visit <https://gov.texas.gov/organization/opentexas>.

Rodriguez said that while the Governor allowed for salons to re-open on May 8, he is personally waiting until May 12 to take his first client. He is going to use the added time to ensure everything is in order

and ready to serve his clients safely. The owner of the salon, Jose, will also be taking the necessary precautions to ensure everyone operating in the building are safe and ensure clients will have a safe and clean environment to enter.

"It's just hard for me to fathom that every single person on this planet was affected one way or another by this virus," he said. "It helps to put into perspective what's of value in my life."

At this time, Governor Abbott said the Task Force is still working on safety guidance that will allow bars to re-open. There is no proposed date for bars to open at this time.

"As we open Texas, we are each called upon to be Texans: to act responsibly as we re-engage in the economy, to continue following all health precautions and sanitizing guidelines, and to care for our vulnerable neighbors. Lives depend on our actions. I know you will respond as Texans," Governor Greg Abbott said during his press conference.

Minimum health standards were also issued regarding manufacturers and office based work spaces. On May 18, non-essential manufacturing facilities may operate up to a 25% of the facilities total listed occupancy. The new protocol requires training of all employees and contractors on appropriate cleaning and disinfection, hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette. Screening for employees and contractors should be done before entering the facility and any employees or contractor meeting the following criteria should be sent home: cough, shortness of breath, chills,

issues in the public square such as climate change, homeschooling, government funding of science, bullying, depression, fake news, net censorship and free speech.

In addition to his most recent book Jay Hall also has other books he has written that go along the same lines of belief as his more previous book.

Hall's other books include: 'YES - Young Earth Science'; 'God's Wisdom for Man' (Proverbs and James), of which he was co-author; 'Sacred Cows in Science, which he was a contributor; 'Calculus is Easy';

'Who is the Intelligent Designer?' and 'My paper on MathWorld'

Hall's books can be found on Amazon. He also said he encourages those who want to contact him about the topics are welcome to by e-mail at [YoungEarthScience@yahoo.com](mailto:YoungEarthScience@yahoo.com).

## MYERS & SMITH FUNERAL HOME & CHAPEL

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Celdonio Salazar, 90, died Sunday. Private graveside services will be at 10:00 AM Thursday at Trinity Memorial Park.

Tim Crawford, 38, died Sunday. Visitation will be 9:00 AM until 9:00 PM Thursday at Myers & Smith Funeral Home. Funeral service will be at 10:00 AM Friday at Myers & Smith Chapel. Burial will be at the Texas State Veterans Cemetery in Abilene.

Robert Hale, 66, died Monday. Services are pending at Myers & Smith Funeral Home.

Vickey Weaver, 60, died Tuesday. Services are pending at Myers & Smith Funeral Home.

repeated shaking with chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat, loss of taste or smell, diarrhea, feeling feverish or measured temperature over 100 degrees and known close contact with a person who is lab confirmed with COVID-19. Those employees may not return to work until there has been at least three days since recovery - resolution of fever without fever reducing medications; individual symptoms have improved; and at least 10 days have passed since symptoms first appeared. Social distancing and proper hand washing techniques should also still be followed.

In addition, on May 18 gyms and exercise facilities will be able to open, and according to Governor Abbott, wedding venues and wedding reception venues are able to open immediately. As with other openings, social distancing is encouraged and the 25% capacity rule should be followed.

Amanda Duforat is the Managing Editor at the Big Spring Herald. To contact her, e-mail [editor@bigspringherald.com](mailto:editor@bigspringherald.com) or call 432-263-7331.

## Everday Heroes

Photo submitted by Samantha Rodriguez



Mary Gomez works at SMMC as a nurse. She was recognized by her sister Samantha Rodriguez as a hard worker and loves her

job. Samantha's husband, David Rodriguez, works at H-E-B as an overnight lead stock controller.

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### Five Forsan tennis players named to THSCA All-State Academic Teams



Courtesy Photos/Seth Johnson

Pictured above far left: Jonathon Gabehart (left) and Hunter Carter (right) pose together after taking second place in the Boys Doubles at Forsan Tournament. Pictured above middle left: Madison Smith poses after taking home the Girls Doubles title at the home meet. Pictured above middle right: Ty Moorman shows off the racket that helped him win the Boys Doubles title. Pictured above far right: Mallory Ezell poses after taking home second place in the Girls Doubles.

By SHAWN MORAN

Herald Sportswriter

We have almost hit the two-month mark without having any local or professional sports and at this point almost everyone is ready for the return of their favorite sports.

In the latest local news, the Texas High School Coaches Association (THSCA) has released their spring sport All-State Academic Teams. While no one qualified in the baseball, track & field or golf categories, the Forsan Buffaloes had a handful of athletes named to the Tennis All-State Academic Teams.

Forsan's Jonathon Gabehart was named to the First Team and was also excellent on the court and in every other sport that he plays. Gabehart was also named to the First Team All-Academic team and basketball team during his last year as a Buffalo. The senior will now be moving on to his next destination: college in the fall.

Hunter Carter qualified for the Second Team along with Ty Moorman. Even though the pair did not make the First Team, it is still a huge accomplishment to be recognized at all. The Buffaloes did not only excel in the classroom, but

they excelled on the court as well.

Finally, the duo of Mallory Ezell and Madison Smith were named to the Honorable Mentions list. Both girls were off to a strong start to their 2020 season but it was cut short because of the coronavirus pandemic.

This entire group's skill on the tennis court almost matches their skill in the classroom and they truly define what it means to be a student-athlete. They each were top-notch tennis players and also earning high grades in their classes that earned them the recognition throughout the entire state of Texas.

It is a great accomplishment everyone involved. Forsan State Head Coach Seth Johnson is very proud of his student-athletes and even tweeted out his excitement about the five athletes named to an All-Academic Team.

"Way to get it done on and off the court," Johnson said in a tweet.

Even when their spring sport was taken away from them, these student-athletes finished out the year strong and should be praised for their accomplishments during such a unique and trying time.

Shawn Moran is the sportswriter at the Big Spring Herald. To contact him, e-mail sports@bigspringherald.com or call 432-263-7331.

### Texans Touchback: The latest news from Houston

By SHAWN MORAN

Herald Sportswriter

#### Houston picks up Deshaun Watson's fifth year option

Last week was the deadline for teams to pick up or decline the fifth-year option for first-round picks from the 2017 NFL Draft. The Texans are said to have had "preliminary discussions" with Watson regarding a long-term extension. The Clemson product and Heisman Trophy-winner has built up a strong resume over the first three seasons of his career.

Even with some of the head-scratching personnel moves that have been made by Bill O'Brien, Houston fans should fully expect the two sides to come to an agreement before it is too late.

Watson is scheduled to earn \$4.4 million for the upcoming season and that number will jump dramatically in the fifth year of the deal if no long-term extension has been reached by then.

#### Texans cut Gipson, who is picked up by Bears

Houston decided to terminate the contract of starting safety Tashaun Gipson last week after just one season into his three-year, \$22.5 million contract with the Texans. The safety from Wyoming started 14 games last season and recorded 51 total tackles and three interceptions.

The Texans have a safety group now that includes

Justin Reid, A.J. Moore, Eric Murray, Jaylen Watkins and Michael Thomas. The Texans did not draft a safety but felt that this was the right time to move on from Gipson.

The Bears signed Gipson not long after the Texans released him and he is fully expected to slot right into the starting lineup.

#### Conley's fifth year option declined

On the opposite end of the spectrum from the Watson situation, the Texans declined to pick up the fifth-year option for cornerback Gareon Conley.

The deal would have cost the Texans a guaranteed \$10.24 million for the 2021 season but they will now not have to pay that amount and Conley will become a free agent after the upcoming season.

The Texans traded a third round pick to the Raiders for Conley last October and he will make just under \$2 million this season. In his pre-draft news conference, O'Brien was satisfied with Conley's performance last season and even expressed his excitement to have Conley as a part of his defense.

The Ohio State product recorded 50 tackles, 13 passes defended and one interception last season.

#### Longtime Texan Johnathan Joseph signs with Titans

The Tennessee Titans added a longtime division rival to their roster over the past week with the addition of Johnathan Joseph on a one-year deal. He had played for Houston since 2011 and is now 36 years old. Joseph is a two-time Pro Bowler and will add valuable experience to a secondary that lost starting corner Ryan Ryan this offseason.

"I'm familiar with the coaches and the division, and they went to the AFC title game last year," Joseph told ESPN's Josina Anderson.

The addition of Joseph will only help a hated division rival but the Texans feel as though they have the right group of cornerbacks on their roster.

See **TEXANS**, Page 10



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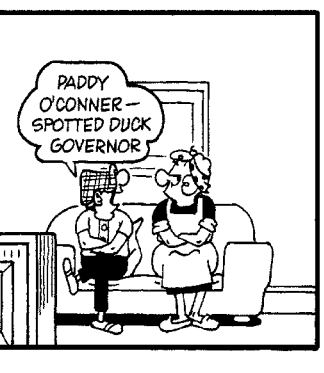
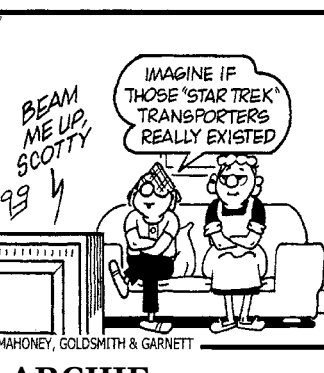
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Table with 30 columns (station call letters) and 24 rows (time slots from 10:30 AM to 7:00 PM). Lists program titles and channel numbers.

ANDY CAPP



AGNES



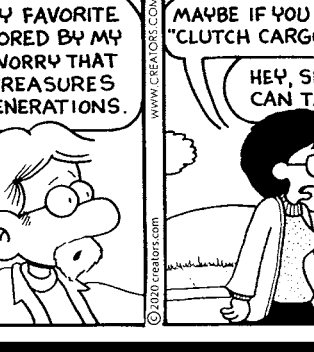
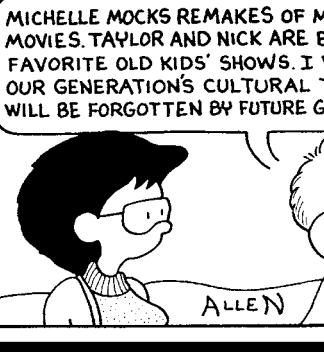
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ONE BIG HAPPY



NEST HEAD



MOMMA



This Date In History

Today in History Today is Thursday, May 7, the 128th day of 2020. There are 238 days left in the year. Today's Highlight in History: On May 7, 1789, America's first inaugural ball was held in New York in honor of President George Washington, who had taken the oath of office a week earlier. On this date: In 1889, the Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore opened its doors. In 1915, a German U-boat torpedoed and sank the British liner RMS Lusitania off the southern coast of Ireland, killing 1,198 people, including 128 Americans, out of the nearly 2,000 on board. In 1928, the minimum voting age for British women was lowered from 30 to 21 — the same age as men. In 1939, Germany and Italy announced a military and political alliance known as the Rome-Berlin Axis. In 1945, Germany signed an unconditional surrender at Allied headquarters in Rheims (rams), France, ending its role in World War II. In 1946, Sony Corp. had its beginnings as the Tokyo Telecommunications Engineering Corp. was founded in the Japanese capital by Akio Morita and Masaru Ibuka. In 1954, the 55-day Battle of Dien Bien Phu in Vietnam ended with Vietnamese insurgents overrunning French forces. In 1963, the United States launched the Telstar 2 communications satellite. In 1975, President Gerald R. Ford formally declared an end to the "Vietnam era." In Ho Chi Minh City — formerly Saigon — the Viet Cong celebrated its takeover. In 1992, the latest addition to America's space shuttle fleet, Endeavour, went on its first flight. In 1998, the United States of Mercedes-Benz agreed to buy Chrysler Corp. for more than \$37 billion. Londoners voted overwhelmingly to elect their own mayor for the first time in history. (In May 2000, Ken Livingstone was elected.) In 2004, Army Pfc. Lynndie England, shown in photographs smiling and pointing at naked Iraqi prisoners, was charged by the military with assaulting the detainees and conspiring to mistreat them. (England was later convicted of conspiracy, mistreating

detainees and committing an indecent act, and sentenced to 36 months; she served half that term.) Ten years ago: A BP-chartered vessel lowered a 100-ton concrete-and-steel vault onto the ruptured Deepwater Horizon well in an unprecedented, and ultimately unsuccessful, attempt to stop most of the gushing crude fouling the sea. Before a record hockey crowd of 77,803, the United States lost to host Germany 2-1 in the opening game of the world ice hockey championships. Dave Fisher, lead singer of the 1960s folk group the Highwaymen, died in Rye, New York, at age 69. Five years ago: After years of sharing power, British Prime Minister David Cameron pulled off an unexpected election triumph that gave the Conservative leader a second term with an outright parliamentary majority. A three-judge panel of the 2nd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in New York ruled that the National Security Agency's bulk collection of millions of Americans' phone records was illegal. Alex Rodriguez passed Willie Mays for fourth on the career home run list, connecting for No. 661 and helping the New York Yankees beat the Baltimore Orioles 4-3. One year ago: Two gunmen opened fire inside a charter school in a Denver suburb not far from Columbine High School, killing a student, 18-year-old Kendrick Castillo, who authorities said had charged at the shooters to protect classmates; two students at the school were charged in the attack. (A 16-year-old, Alec McKinney, pleaded guilty to 17 felonies and awaits sentencing; 19-year-old Devon Erickson pleaded not guilty to the same charges.) FBI Director Chris Wray told a Senate panel that he had no evidence that the FBI had illegally monitored President Donald Trump's campaign during the 2016 election. Two Reuters journalists who'd been imprisoned in Myanmar for reporting on the military's abuses of Ro-

hingya Muslims were freed in a mass presidential pardon. Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp signed into law one of the nation's most restrictive abortion laws, a measure that banned the procedure once a fetal heartbeat is detected. (A federal judge later blocked the law from taking effect.) Today's Birthdays: Rhythm-and-blues singer Thelma

Houston is 77. Actress Robin Strasser is 75. Singer-songwriter Bill Danoff is 74. Rock musician Bill Kreutzmann (Grateful Dead) is 74. Utah Gov. Gary Herbert is 73. Rock musician Prairie Prince is 70. Movie writer-director Amy Heckerling is 68. Actor Michael E. Knight is 61. Rock musician Phil Campbell (Motorhead) is 59. Country musician Rick

Schell is 57. Rock singer-musician Chris O'Connor (Primitive Radio Gods) is 55. Actress Traci Lords is 52. Actor Morocco Omari is 50. Singer Eagle-Eye Cherry is 49. Actor Breckin Meyer is 46. Rock musician Matt Helders (Arctic Monkeys) is 34. Actress-comedian Aidy Bryant is 33. Actor Taylor Abrahamse is 29. Actor Alexander Ludwig is 28. Actress Dylan

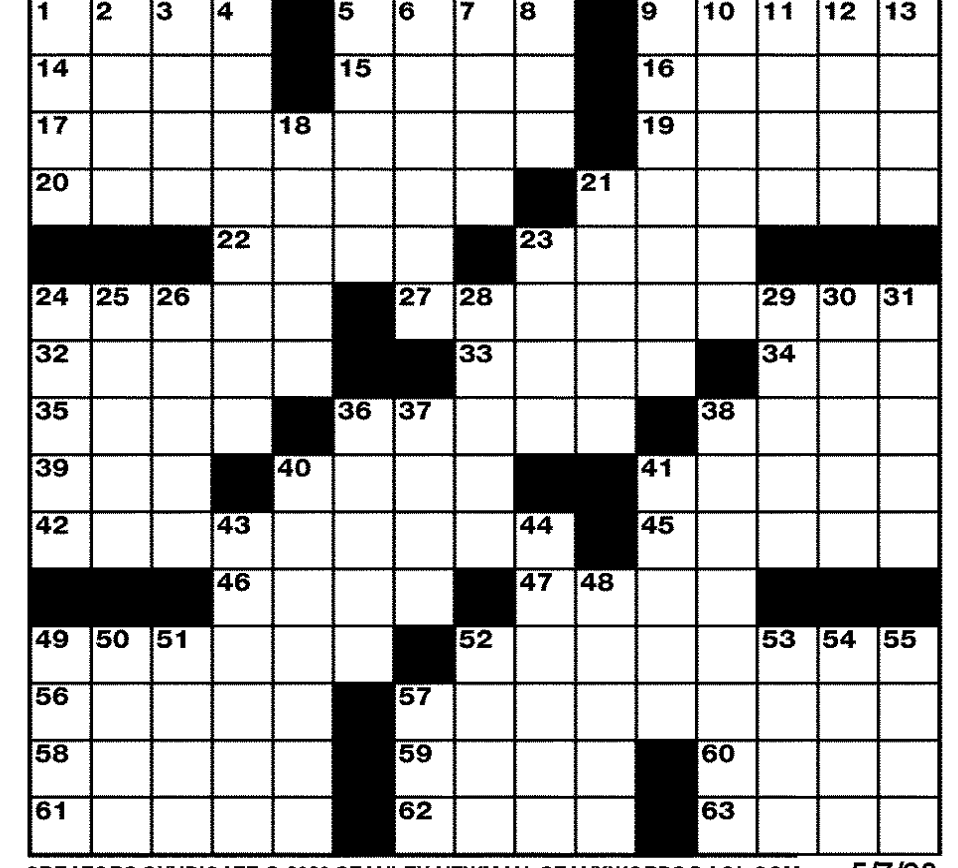
Gelula is 26. Thought for Today: "There are those who believe something, and therefore will tolerate nothing; and on the other hand, those who tolerate everything, because they believe nothing." — Robert Browning, English poet (born this date in 1812; died in 1889). © 2019 The Associated Press.

Newsday Crossword

TRAVEL OPTIONS by Mark McClain Edited by Stanley Newman www.stanxwords.com

- ACROSS 1 Moved it 5 Ultimate height 9 Passover potato pancake 14 Ticklish Muppet 15 Potter's purchase 16 Unpleasantly pungent 17 Nicole Kidman ex 19 Dred novelist (1856) 20 Legislative successes 21 Stockpiled 22 Prophetic observance 23 Unpaired performances 24 American League West player 27 Superior 32 Very tough to climb 33 Third of a triad 34 Resort where it's summer in February 35 Cattle in quantity 36 Great reverence 38 Tuscan loved one 39 It means "doer" 40 Ole Miss rival 41 Preferences, casually 42 Gravity excursion 45 Heretofore 46 Bobcat cousin 47 Pricing qualifier 49 Ham equipment 52 Sniffed out 56 Campus near Hartford

- 57 Hard-hit baseball 58 In a tizzy 59 Real estate listing stat 60 Change machine input 61 Recital performance 62 Wave at a salon 63 Extra for an exec DOWN 1 Music between breaks 2 Literary framework 3 Hermione, to Daniel's Harry 4 Tampered with 5 Intense 6 Agency customer 7 Large quantity 8 Observe, informally 9 Great Lakes explorer 10 Tosca conclusion 11 Walked across 12 Earthbound bird 13 Prime minister in The Crown 18 It ain't necessarily so 21 High-minded 23 "Tough" or "hot" place 24 Bonfire residue 25 Tail wagers of rhyme 26 \_ cotta 28 Weighty NBA great 29 Biscuit moistener 30 New staffer 31 Club sandwich surround 36 They may become queens 37 Big screen brand 38 Wheat or cotton 40 R&B singer with 24 Grammys 41 Confronted 43 Medical group 44 More intense 48 Elite squad 49 Roast cut 50 Berry in purple smoothies 51 All wrapped up 52 Highly worrisome 53 Silverware sticker 54 Ceaselessly 55 Office station 57 Once around



Answer to previous puzzle TAPE DATA ABBOT UNIT OVER SLIME BOXSPRING SOLES ADA RID ONECENT SERBIA LINK REND ANTLERS FETID OGRE ELON ERIC SNAGS TIKI LINK POLO ATEUP TEACHER NILE HAN STRAND ASSERTS ALE LOU RATED CUBEROOTS ARISE OMIT WHET BARER TATS LADY 5/7/20



# Texas eases underground oil storage rules, raising concerns

NEW YORK (AP) — Texas regulators are relaxing rules about where companies can store oil underground, raising concern among environmentalists about potential groundwater contamination and other dangers.

The members of the Railroad Commission of Texas voted Tuesday to allow companies to store oil underground in places other than salt caverns, which are considered better at preventing leaks than other geological formations.

"This order does not suspend any rule that protects public safety, health or the prevention of pollution," said Wayne Christian, chairman of the Railroad Commission of Texas, in the live-streamed meeting. "All it does is allow operators to begin storing crude oil in all formations where it may make sense to do so."

The shift aimed to help oil producers whose wells are spewing far more crude than the world can use after the coronavirus pandemic gutted global demand for jet fuel and gasoline.

Producers are running out of spaces to store the oil, leading some to pay traders to take oil off their hands as prices cratered more than 60% and tanks filled up.

But environmental groups warn that the surprise rule change, which was approved by regulators before the public had a chance to review it, could lead to serious environmental consequences.

"Using underground caverns, especially underground caverns that are not salt, where there's no barrier to prevent the liquefied oil or natural gas from leaking into aquifers, is incredibly dangerous, especially in a place like Texas," said Emma Pabst, global warming solutions associate for Environment Texas. It could risk contaminating the Edwards Aquifer, a drinking water source for 2 million people in Texas, she said.

Commissioner Ryan Sitton said he had received a copy of the proposal the day before the meeting. Nevertheless, he supported the proposal, which passed 3-0.

"I want to make sure we're being cautious. It sounds like you are," Sitton said, addressing the other commissioners. And it's great that we're moving quickly and allowing some additional storage quickly, but I don't want to hear a story in three months of how we put oil in some sort of cave somewhere and we ended up having groundwater pollution."

Under the new rule, which was suggested by a new task force of industry groups, companies that apply to do underground storage need to show that the formation is confined to prevent the waste or uncontrolled escape of crude oil, Christian said. The exemption will last for a year, and oil will have to be removed from the wells within five years.

"It's somewhat unprecedented, but I think it is

exciting that we're affording as much opportunity as possible in this emergency situation," Christian said.

The commissioners also voted to waive various fees and surcharges that producers typically pay. That decision could lead to millions of dollars in lost revenues that were used to hire inspectors and enforce environmental regulations, said Cyrus Reed, interim director of the Lone Star Chapter of the Sierra Club.

"If you don't have enough cops on the beat to see that laws are being broken ... then you might say we don't have a problem," Reed said. "Same thing with environmental rules."

The commission also discussed a proposal to enact a coordinated production cut to help ease oversupply, but they killed the proposal, in part because producers were already slashing production. Texas produces about 40% of the oil in the United States, and about 5% of the oil in the world.

Philip Verleger, a longtime energy economist, estimates U.S. production has already fallen to 8.5 million barrels per day, down from 12.4 million barrels a day in February.

He based his estimate on refinery runs, exports and other data.

"Production is already shut down," Verleger said. "They don't really need to do it. It's been done more brutally by the market."

# 'If this thing boomerangs': Second wave of infections feared

WASHINGTON (AP) — As Europe and the U.S. loosen their lockdowns against the coronavirus, health experts are expressing growing dread over what they say is an all-but-certain second wave of deaths and infections that could force governments to clamp back down.

"We're risking a backslide that will be intolerable," said Dr. Ian Lipkin of Columbia University's Center for Infection and Immunity.

Around the world, German authorities began drawing up plans in case of a resurgence of the virus. Experts in Italy urged intensified efforts to identify new victims and trace their contacts. And France, which hasn't yet eased its lockdown, has already worked up a "reconfinement plan" in the event of a new wave.

"There will be a second wave, but the problem is to which extent. Is it a small wave or a big wave? It's too early to say," said Olivier Schwartz, head of the virus unit at France's Pasteur Institute.

In the U.S., with about half of the states easing their shutdowns to get their economies restarted and cellphone data showing that people are becoming restless and increasingly leaving home, public health authorities are worried.

Many states have not put in place the robust testing that experts believe is necessary to detect and contain new outbreaks. And many governors have pressed ahead before their states met one of the key benchmarks in the Trump administration's guidelines for reopening -- a 14-day downward trajectory in new illnesses and infections.

"If we relax these measures without having the proper public health safeguards in place, we can expect many more cases and, unfortunately, more deaths," said Josh Michaud, associate director of global health policy with the Kaiser Family Foundation in Washington.

Cases have continued to rise steadily in places such as Iowa and Missouri since the governors began reopening, while new infections have yo-yoed in Georgia, Tennessee and Texas.

Lipkin said he is most worried about two things: the reopening of bars, where people crowd together and lose their inhibitions, and large gatherings such as sporting events, concerts and plays. Preventing outbreaks will require aggressive contact tracing powered by armies of public health workers hundreds of thousands of people strong, which the U.S. doesn't yet have, Lipkin said.

Worldwide the virus has infected more than 3.6 million people and killed over a quarter-million, according to a tally by Johns Hopkins University that experts agree understates the dimensions of the disaster because of limited testing, differences in counting the dead and concealment by some governments.

The U.S. has recorded over 70,000 deaths and 1.2 million confirmed infections, while Europe has reported over 140,000 dead.

This week, the researchers behind a widely cited model from the University of Washington nearly doubled their projection of deaths in the U.S. to around 134,000 through early August, in large part because of the easing of state stay-at-home restrictions. Newly confirmed infections per day in the U.S. exceed 20,000, and deaths per day are running well over 1,000.

In hard-hit New York City, which has managed to bring down deaths dramatically even as confirmed infections continue to rise around the rest of the country, Mayor Bill de Blasio warned that some states may be reopening too quickly.

"My message to the rest of the country is learn from how much effort, how much discipline it took to finally bring these numbers down and follow the same path until you're sure that it's being beaten back," he said on CNN, "or else if this thing boomerangs, you're putting off any kind of restart or recovery a hell of a lot longer."

A century ago, the Spanish flu epidemic's second wave was far deadlier than its first, in part because authorities allowed mass gatherings from Philadelphia to San Francisco.

"It's clear to me that we are in a critical moment of this fight. We risk complacency and accepting the preventable deaths of 2,000 Americans each day," epidemiologist Caitlin Rivers, a professor at Johns Hopkins, told a House subcommittee in Washington.

President Donald Trump, who has pressed hard to ease the restrictions that have throttled the economy and thrown more than 30 million Americans out of work, pulled back Wednesday on White House plans revealed a day earlier to wind down the coronavirus task force.

He tweeted that the task force will continue meeting indefinitely with a "focus on SAFETY & OPENING UP OUR COUNTRY AGAIN."

Underscoring those economic concerns, the European Union predicted the worst recession in its

quarter-century history. And the U.S. unemployment rate for April, which comes out Friday, is expected to hit a staggering 16 percent, a level last seen during the Great Depression of the 1930s.

Governors continue to face demands, even lawsuits, to reopen. In Michigan, where armed demonstrators entered the Capitol last week, the Republican-led Legislature sued Democratic Gov. Gretchen Whitmer, asking a judge to declare invalid her stay-at-home order, which runs at least through May 15.

In hard-hit Italy, which has begun easing restrictions, Dr. Silvio Brusaferrò, president of the Superior Institute of Health, urged "a huge investment" of resources to train medical personnel to monitor possible new cases of the virus, which has killed about 30,000 people nationwide.

He said that contact-tracing apps — which are being built by dozens of countries and companies — aren't enough to manage future waves of infection.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel said after meeting with the country's 16 governors that restaurants and other businesses will be allowed to reopen in the coming weeks but that regional authorities will have to draw up a "restriction concept" for any county that reports 50 new cases for every 100,000 inhabitants within a week.

Lothar Wieler, head of Germany's national disease control center, said scientists "know with great certainty that there will be a second wave" of infections.

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# TEXANS

Continued from Page 4

## Cooks feels wanted after third trade

"The way that I look at it, I take it as a positive and that I'm wanted, and that I'm valued at a high level still," Cooks said last Thursday to ESPN in his first public comments since he was traded to Houston from the Los Angeles Rams on April 9. "You look at all of the trades, they all were for a first-rounder, and this one, going for a second-rounder. To be honest with you, I'm blessed to be able to go around and play with so many different teams and different quarterbacks and different organizations... So I don't think of it as a negative. I look forward to it. I'm a guy that adjusts pretty quick, and wherever I go, like I tell people, I'm going to ball. So I'm not worried about that."

Cooks has played in 88 career games with 77 starts for three different teams: New Orleans Saints, New England Patriots and Los Angeles Rams.

He has compiled 402 career receptions for 5,730 yards (14.3 average) and 34 touchdowns. He has also rushed for 281 yards and an addition two scores.

"I think there's a lot of nuances that [were] going on last year -- not just for me but just from a team standpoint, we had a lot going on," Cooks said to ESPN. "At the end of the day, I dealt with some things on the field. But that does not go to show what type of player I am, the production that I've been putting in year in, year out since I've been in the league. That was just one of those off years. But it comes with the game, but that definitely is not the extreme that you should be looking from me as a player."

## Texans plan to hire facility hygiene coordinator

ESPN Staff Writer Sarah Barshop is reporting that: According to the Sports Business Journal, the facility hygiene coordinator

## NCAA waives minimum spending

The NCAA approved a waiver that will allow schools to spend below the minimum level on athletic scholarships required to compete in Division I.

The Division I Council Coordination Committee approved two other blanket waivers Wednesday that had been requested by several conferences in recent weeks in response to coronavirus pandemic.

Basketball and football players will be allowed to participate in summer athletic activities without being enrolled in school.

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who will "run coronavirus risk mitigation" throughout the Texans' facilities, is the "first known case of a major U.S. pro sports team hiring a dedicated industrial hygiene expert."

The person hired will report to Texans coordinator of medical administration Geoff Kaplan, and according to Easterby, "will be expected to swiftly implement new virus-protection protocols that are expected to be put in place by the NFL or public health organizations."

Easterby told SBJ that because the Texans do not own NRG Stadium, the person hired will mostly focus on the offices and practice facilities owned by the team, but will also "contribute to decisions made by the stadium partners."

Shawn Moran is the sportswriter at the Big Spring Herald. To contact him, e-mail [sports@bigspringherald.com](mailto:sports@bigspringherald.com) or call 432-263-7331.

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