



**Steve Radack, Commissioner**

Harris County Precinct 3

**PRECINCT THREE REPORT  
DECEMBER 2010**

With the opening of a long-planned facility dedicated to senior education, 2011 will mark another step forward in Precinct Three Commissioner Steve Radack's dynamic program for older Harris County residents who want to remain active and engaged.

The new 14,000 square foot senior education center, located on five acres at 16600 Pine Forest Drive near Texas 6 and Clay Road, is slated to open early next year. Classes are scheduled to begin there in the spring. Though construction is complete, staff members are putting finishing touches on the facility, which is the second of its kind in Precinct Three.

Precinct employees are also recruiting and training senior instructors for the facility. At this point, the energy efficient "green" building, which will have multiple classrooms, an auditorium and an astronomy and science room, is also being outfitted with "senior friendly" furniture, fixtures and high-tech computer and audio-visual gear that requires installation and testing.

Seniors who live in Harris County and are 55 and older will be able to take classes at the facility that cover topics like basic computer skills, Internet safety, astronomy, word processing, mental gymnastics, photo editing and emergency preparedness. There will also be money management classes for seniors and a course on activities in Precinct Three and a class on how to use the county's library system.

The new center, which will be dedicated with an official name in 2011, was paid for with a mix of local funds and \$1.9 million in grants from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. It was the next step in the Commissioner's senior program after he constructed and opened the popular Jim & JoAnn Fonteno Senior Education Center, 6600 Bissonnet, in 2004.

That 10,000 square foot facility has, in recent years, become the hub of the senior education program that Commissioner Radack started in 2000. Scores of seniors have taken classes at the center on Bissonnet and many have gone on to be instructors. The classes have also become so popular that some are now also taught in community centers in Precinct Three.

Anyone wanting more information on the Jim & JoAnn Fonteno Senior Education Center, the new center, senior education classes offered or what it takes to be an instructor or volunteer can call (713) 981-4703.

In other news, Harris County Commissioners Court recently approved a deal to place a new park under the care of Commissioner Radack.

McClendon Park, 3770 Summit Valley Drive in Mission Bend, was originally developed two years ago by Harris County Municipal Utility District No. 120, other municipal utility districts and community groups and neighborhood associations in the area.

The \$4 million project was paid for with a combination of local dollars and a grant from the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. The amenity-rich 20-acre facility features picnic pavilions, an amphitheater with a stage, a Frisbee golf course, trails for walkers, joggers and bikers, a detention pond, volleyball courts and a splash pad. Recently, after only having it

open for about two years, officials with the MUD approached Commissioner Radack about taking over care and maintenance of the facility and transferring it to the precinct at no cost to Harris County taxpayers. Commissioners Court later approved the deal, which stipulates that if the MUD later wants to add amenities to the park that it may do so at its own expense and upon county approval.

In other news concerning recreational facilities, sections of the Terry Hershey Trail near the Sam Houston Tollway and Memorial Drive area remain closed as work continues on a \$4.2 million erosion control project underway along Buffalo Bayou. About 40 percent of the project is complete.

Dates for closures of various sections are still being posted as the project moves forward and time permits. Sections are closed as crews work their way up and down the trail.

Amenities, trail additions and trail extensions are becoming necessary because the Harris County Toll Road Authority (HCTRA), which is leading the project, is requiring ready access to various sections of trail. Crews need access to those areas during the work and after the project is complete. As a result, the project will result in a new trail to the Deerwood area just south and west of Buffalo Bayou and tie into a pedestrian bridge, a new walkway along a parking lot in that area, a realignment of the existing trail across Rummel Creek and a new low-water crossing there.

HCTRA will provide new landscaping and amenities up and down the trail and the project will help Commissioner Radack realize his goal of providing access to Terry Hershey Park, 15200 Memorial Drive, from all four corners of the Sam Houston Tollway at Buffalo Bayou. Work on the project started this past summer. Anyone with questions about the project or trail closures can call the Precinct Three Park Office at (281) 531-1592.

Improvements are also continuing at the Precinct Three Soap Box Derby Park in Hockley – one of the few of its kind in the nation. Campgrounds for boy and girl scouts have been constructed, fishing lakes are being developed and an amphitheater that could handle more than 2,000 people is 75 percent complete.

All the enhancements to the facility are taking place as soap box derby racing events are being held at the facility for Greater Houston Soap Box Derby racers, seniors, local kids and those looking to feel the wind in their face as they careen down the giant racing hill.

The track, adjacent to the Hockley Community Center at 28515 Old Washington Road in Hockley, was a decade in planning and construction before it opened. Commissioner Radack expects the facility to be a big draw to west Harris County. Events have consistently been scheduled there since it opened last year.

The track is probably the closest replica in the nation to the well-known soap box derby facility in Akron. The Precinct Three track is 1,261 feet long – 985 feet of which is dedicated to racing – and it is 46.5 feet high.

Before it was paved over, the hill was fashioned with dirt excavated from Commissioner Radack's nearby "Chain of Lakes" project. In addition to the recent enhancements, the facility includes concession stands, restrooms, a soap box derby barn for repair and storage of soap box derby cars and a parking lot with 226 standard parking spaces and 14 handicapped spots. A large playground on the site was also completed after the opening.

In addition to sanctioned races by soap box derby aficionados, Commissioner Radack is allowing the track to be used by local charities to raise money through "challenge" races for adults and children. Special cars have been constructed for seniors to use the track. There are also plans to sell sponsorships for cars that adults and children will be able to use at the track.

In other news, Friday is the final day to participate in the annual "Toys for Tots" program in which Commissioner Radack joins forces with the U.S. Marine Corps, HCTRA and Santa Claus.

There will be two public HCTRA collection points in Precinct Three for the popular holiday program aimed at providing a Christmas to children who might not otherwise get a toy under the tree – the Dairy Ashford TAG Store, 4012 South Dairy Ashford, and the West TAG Store at 2707 West Sam Houston Parkway North.

New and unwrapped toys for boys and girls can be dropped off at either location by Friday at 5:30 p.m. Commissioner Radack’s office has also provided additional “Toys for Tots” collection points throughout the precinct. They are:

- **Harris County Administration Building, 1001 Preston, Suite 924.**
- **Northwest Branch Library, 11355 Regency Green in Cypress.**
- **Bear Creek Community Center, 3055 Bear Creek Drive.**
- **Mary Jo Peckham Community Center, 5597 Gardenia in Katy.**
- **Westside Service Center, 16635 Clay Road.**
- **Maud Smith Marks Branch Library, 1815 Westgreen in Katy.**
- **Sosa Community Center, 1414 Wirt Road.**
- **Precinct Three Parks Office, 3535 War Memorial Drive.**
- **Hockley Community Center, 28515 Old Washington Road in Hockley.**
- **West University Branch Library, 6108 Auden.**
- **Bayland Community Center, 6400 Bissonnet.**
- **Katy Branch Library, 5414 Franz Road in Katy.**
- **Katherine Tyra Branch Library, 16719 Clay Road.**
- **Tracy Gee Community Center, 3599 Westcenter Drive.**
- **Cy-Fair College Library, 9191 Barker Cypress at West Road.**
- **Kleb Wood Nature Center, 20301 Mueschke Road in Tomball.**

Donations can be dropped off at those additional locations during business hours, which vary depending on the facility.

Another holiday project in Precinct Three is the annual Christmas tree recycling program. It will run from Dec. 26 until Jan. 2 from 7 a.m. until 10 p.m. at Bear Creek Pioneers Park, 3535 War Memorial Drive, and George Bush Park, 16756 Westheimer Parkway.

People may drop off their Christmas trees for recycling. The Bear Creek drop-off location is on War Memorial Drive. In George Bush Park, it is west of Texas 6 on Westheimer Parkway. Follow the directional signs in each location and there is a limit of two trees per vehicle.

As always, Precinct Three encourages comments and questions. You can mail them to Commissioner Radack’s office at 1001 Preston, 9<sup>th</sup> Floor, Houston, Texas 77002 or email us at [pct3@hctx.net](mailto:pct3@hctx.net). Commissioner Radack and his staff wish you a Merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year.