

The Facts

COVERING BRAZORIA COUNTY ★ WHERE TEXAS BEGAN

\$1



KIDS COMPETE IN VEGAS LET 'EM RIDE

LADY BUCS READY FOR DISTRICT PLAY

TREESH 5K EARNS PRAISE, MONEY

TODAY IN SPORTS, 1B



GET TO KNOW COMMUNITY GUARDIANS

WEEKLY FEATURE, 5A

Ashton Oaks getting \$15 million overhaul

By STEPHANY GARZA

stephany.garza@thefacts.com

CLUTE — Renovations are underway at the city's largest apartment complex after a New York-based investment firm purchased the dilapidated structures in a bankruptcy sale, officials said.

Construction crews began working on a section of the Ashton Oaks property a few weeks ago with plans for Varden Capital Properties to spend more than \$15 million

on renovations alone, said Trace McCreary, president of the firm.

Lynd Real Estate, headquartered in San Antonio, still manages the property in the 200 block of Hackberry Street.

"We're working closely with the City of Clute to shore up and renovate the properties and make it habitable after years of neglect," McCreary said.

In May 2010, City Council decided to condemn two buildings because of exten-

sive mold damage, dangerous stairs, broken windows, exposed electrical wiring, cracked foundations and leaky pipes, according to The Facts archives.

The investment firm, which focuses on multi-family properties, made the purchase in July and began working with the city to get construction permits. Demolition started in the last couple weeks, he said.

The first eight buildings are expected to be completed in the next several months with

hopes of completing renovations in 12 to 18 months, McCreary said.

"They're going to basically rehab the entire property," Clute Deputy Fire Marshal and apartment inspector John Dahse Jr. said.

The city requires all 33 buildings in the 520-unit complex to meet the 2012 International Code Council's requirements, Dahse said.

"They're going to use the

■ See OAKS, Page 2A



SARAH RENCURREL/Facts file photo

Water collects at the bottom of a pool at the Ashton Oaks Apartments in Clute in March. A New York investment firm bought the complex at a bankruptcy auction in July and is planning \$15 million in renovations.

Richwood picks LJ official as manager

By STEPHANY GARZA

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RICHWOOD — After interviewing four potential candidates, City Council extended an offer to appoint Lake Jackson's assistant to city manager Michael Coon as Richwood's next top administrator.

All council members present voted in favor of the appointment; Councilmen Jarrod Beaty and Chris Hardison were absent.

"They were involved in the process. The decision council made, basically, would not have changed if they were here," Mayor Mark Guthrie said of the two absent members. "Unfortunately, they couldn't be here, but we feel or council feels, I'm sure that we made the decision that would be beneficial to all council."

All four candidates live in Texas, but only Coon resides in Brazoria County. The three other candidates were Community Development Director Jerry Baker for Hillsboro; Riverbend Water Resources District Executive Director Scott Albert in Houston; and Somerville City Manager Martin Mangum.

Leadership skills and experience in economic development from prior jobs were some of the

"He was very passionate, very excited to take his skills and his abilities and grow the city. He was all about Richwood."

— Mark Guthrie, Richwood mayor

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PRENTICE C. JAMES/Special to The Facts

Haleigh Pettit, 6, inspects her candy bag for gummy bears Sunday alongside her mother, Elaine Pettit, at the Junior Service League's Teddy Bear Tea at Lake Jackson Civic Center.

BEARY TEA

Junior Service League event doubles its toy collection

By STEPHANY GARZA

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LAKE JACKSON

Dressed with a big black bow and a light-blue fluffy dress, Victoria Tuttle came to the Junior Service League's Teddy Bear Tea Party at Lake Jackson Civic Center with an open heart and a sweet tooth.

Tuttle brought a plush Hello Kitty toy to be donated to Freeport's Blue Santa Program, but the desserts were what got her excited.

"Yeah, but look at the cookie," Tuttle said as she pointed to her cookie covered in multi-colored sprinkles at Sunday afternoon's event.

This year marked the fourth Teddy Bear Tea, which had an "Alice in Wonderland" theme with paper flowers the size of dinner plates and a photo backdrop with cut-outs of the different characters.

All who attended paid \$10 at the door for admission and were encouraged to bring a toy for families less fortunate, and



PRENTICE C. JAMES/Special to The Facts

Erin Spoor has her hands full with her 1-year-old son, Hunter, and a host of teddy bears Sunday at the Junior Service League's fourth annual Teddy Bear Tea at Lake Jackson Civic Center.

■ See TEA, Page 4A

District mourns teacher

'Coach Wagner' drowned while fishing Sunday

By ERINN CALLAHAN

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ANGLETON — Too young to aid in the search for his favorite coach, DeMarcus Randall stayed awake into the early Monday hours keeping a silent vigil for Jonathan "J.R." Wagner.

"He tried to stay up all night until he heard the news that they found him," Tanya Randall said of her son, an Angleton Junior High seventh-grader.

DeMarcus awoke to news no one in the community wanted to hear. Coast Guard crews found Wagner's body at about 2 a.m. Monday in Christmas Bay, not far from where he disappeared while wade fishing the day before.

"My son always came home from school talking about him. That's the only coach he talked about," Randall said. "He really had to have taken a lot of time out to have a special bond with him."

Wagner's relationship with DeMarcus was hardly an anomaly. The 30-year-old's death reverberated across the Angleton ISD community — particularly in the halls of the junior high, where he returned to teach P.E. and coach football after graduating from Angleton High School in 2004.

"It's a tough, tough day for us," Angleton ISD Superintendent Pat Montgomery said. "He was one of my kids for a long, long time."

Thoughts of Wagner's

■ See COACH, 2A



WAGNER

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Lauren "Barry" Buchanan

Lauren "Barry" Buchanan passed away on December 10, 2016, at the age of 79, surrounded by family at his home in Medina, Texas. Barry was born in San Antonio, Texas, to Mildred Fay and Lauren Lafayette Buchanan on October 6, 1937.

Barry graduated from Jefferson High School in 1955 and joined the U.S. Navy. He had to spend the first week of service in the Navy wearing his civilian moccasin shoes, as the Navy did not have military shoes to fit his size 15 feet. Barry would forever more be nicknamed "Bigfoot". Barry served on the USS Iowa as a Signalman, with his duties carrying him across the world - including the Arctic. Barry told his family that it was at this time, he vowed to never be lonely again. When he was discharged from the Navy, he met the love of his life, Yvonne Marie Robertson. He and Yvonne eloped to Lockhart, Texas, and married on August 1, 1959. They then went on to have five children, who then gave them eleven grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. So, it's safe to say Barry was never lonely again.

Barry attended San Antonio College and worked several jobs to support a growing family. After college, Barry worked as a Surveyor for the City Public Service during the day, and worked servicing residential air conditioners at night. From the 1960's to early 70's, Barry worked in the air conditioning industry, including running B&R Air Conditioning with his good friend and mentor, John Runkel, in San Antonio, Texas. In 1973, Barry and Yvonne decided to move to the Brazoria County, Texas area, where they started Texas Gulf Refrigeration (TGR), in Clute, Texas. Barry would start each day in his one and only service truck praying "Thy Will be Done". With Barry's faith, hard work, and professionalism, the business slowly grew over the years - evolving into a very successful business with over 40 employees. Barry was considered by many in the industry to be a pioneer in the designing and manufacturing of commercial mobile air conditioners.

Barry and Yvonne traveled to Venezuela on a business trip in 1974 and met their life long friends, Dean and Geraldine White. Dean and Barry shared many years of deer hunting, joint business ventures, and general mischievousness. Barry enjoyed his time with his dear friend Dean, and their story telling filled every room with joy and laughter.

In 1991, Barry and Yvonne moved to Medina, Texas, to their beautiful escape on the river. The love of his family was his top priority in life. He so enjoyed his children and their families coming and visiting him in Medina, swimming in the river, and riding four wheelers. One of his favorite past times was souping up his 1940 Ford Coupe, and taking a spin with his gorgeous bride thru the Texas hill country. Barry's favorite phrase was always "Life is Good!" while looking into



the faces of his family.

Barry was preceded in death by his loving wife, Yvonne Marie Buchanan; his father, Lauren Lafayette Buchanan; his mother, Mildred Fay Schweitzer; and his sister, Beverly Gay Cantu.

He is survived by daughter, Laura Buchanan Ripple and husband, Don Ray Ripple, of Cedar Hill, Texas; son, Lauren Barry "Bubba" Buchanan Jr. and wife, Tonya, of Lake Jackson, Texas; daughter, Lisa Dianne Buchanan, of Wimberley, Texas, daughter, Lynn Buchanan Shelton and husband, Eric, of Pipe Creek, Texas. He is also survived by his grandchildren, Ryan Joseph Ripple, Lauren Ebone Shelton, Lauren Marie Wiemers, Jess Elizabeth Shelton, Chad Lafayette Buchanan and wife, Alyssa Buchanan, Cameron Daniel Buscher and Courtney Negley, Collin Michael Buscher, Travis Benton Buchanan, Dalton Tyler Shelton, Carma Rhaye Cloutd, Cyalie Yvonne Buchanan, Benton Monroe Cloutd, West Lafayette Cloutd, Colton Walker Buchanan; and great-grandchildren, Kali Jade Buchanan and Kane Lafayette Buchanan.

Visitation will be from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. Tuesday, December 13th, 2016, at Brazos Pointe Fellowship in Lake Jackson, Texas.

Funeral Services will be held at 3:00 p.m. on Wednesday, December 14th, 2016, at Brazos Pointe Fellowship in Lake Jackson, Texas.

Graveside Services will be held at 11 a.m. on Friday, December 16, 2016, at Oak Rest Cemetery in Medina, Texas.

Pallbearers will be Ryan Ripple, Chad Buchanan, Travis Buchanan, Cameron Buscher, Collin Buscher, Gerald Shelton, Don Ripple, Eric Cloutd, and Jerry Monical.

Honorary Pallbearers will be Kane Buchanan, Colton Buchanan, Benton Cloutd, West Cloutd, Dalton Shelton, Dean White, Glen Wren, Octavio Tijerina, Jr., Kent Whitley, and Pete Soto.

Barry preferred jeans to a suit and tie, so please feel free to dress casually. The family also requests that you please "pay it forward" in lieu of flowers by supporting a benefit for someone in need, generously tipping your waiter / waitress, or by donating to the charity of your choice.

The family invites you to send condolences at www.grimesfuneralchapels.com by selecting the "Send Condolences" link.

Funeral arrangements are entrusted to Grimes Funeral Chapels of Bandera.

Guadalupe Salinas Gutierrez

Guadalupe Salinas Gutierrez, 66, went to be with her Lord and Savior on December 11, 2016. She was born on December 4, 1950, in Freeport, Texas, to Rosendo and Amalia Salinas.

She worked as a CDL driver for many years, recently retiring and dedicating her life to her grandchildren. Lupe loved dancing and spending time with her family. She was a very outspoken and giving person who will be forever missed.

She is survived by her mother, Amalia Salinas; children, Joey Mosqueda, Pete Mosqueda, Tamishe Bonner, Jesus Gutierrez, Lupita Gutierrez, and Abigail Gutierrez; grand-



children, Celest, Mateo, Alexia, Kevin, Kayla, Joshua, Cierra, Ramiro, Taris, Joey, Jesus, Kyrah, Gabriel, Michael, Antony, Malechi and Grace; sisters, Severa Lara, and MaryAnn Salinas; brothers, Rosendo Salinas, Johnny Salinas, Joe Salinas and Mike Salinas.

She is preceded in death by her father, Rosendo

Salinas; and sister, Josie Garcia.

A funeral service will be held on Thursday, December 15, 2016, 10:00 a.m. at Stroud Funeral Home in Clute, Texas. The internment will be at Colonial Cemetery in Brazoria, TX, immediately following the funeral service.

Pallbearers are as follows, Kevin T. Poulson, Mark Gomez, Sistos Lara, JoJo Salinas, Gerald Bonner and Leon Manrique.

Online condolences can be made to www.stroudfuneralhome.com.

STROUD

•FUNERAL HOME•
538 N. HWY 288B
CLUTE, TX 77531
979-265-1188

Gail Eugene Evans

Gail Eugene Evans, born July 12, 1936, passed on to his heavenly home on December 10, 2016, in Memorial Hermann Hospital, Houston, Texas.

Visitation will be held Wednesday, December 14, 2016, from 5:00 until 7:00 p.m. at Lakewood Funeral Chapel.

Services will be held Thursday, December 15, 2016, at 10:00 a.m. also at Lakewood Funeral Chapel.

Thomas Caldwell

Funeral service for Thomas Caldwell, 95, of Brazoria, are pending with Dixon Funeral Home of Brazoria.

He passed away on Monday, December 12, 2016, at Kindred Hospital in Sugar Land, Texas.

Coach

CONTINUED FROM COVER

mischievous nature and killer smile carried Montgomery through the school day as she remembered a former student who felt right at home among an often turbulent age group.

"That smile probably helped him out so many times," Montgomery said with a laugh. "He was one of those people who made you feel good just being around him."

"He had recently made the comment that he loved teaching at the junior high level. It takes somebody special who loves junior high kids, but he found his niche there. He loved being with those kids."

Wagner's vibrant personality and fierce Wildcat pride made him a student favorite, Angleton High School Varsity Football Coach Ryan Roark said, and that pride was never more apparent than the moment Wagner learned wife Katy was expecting the couple's first child.

"He was so fired up, he texted me a note saying, 'Hey, here's the next future Wildcat coming,'" Roark said. "He was genuinely giddy and excited about getting ready to be a father."

"He was the type of person that the kids gravitated towards - he was just fun to be around. The kids liked him, the parents liked him, the community liked him."

Wagner left his home about 4 a.m. Sunday for a solo wade-fishing trip, Brazoria County Sheriff's Lt. Varon Snelgrove said. He told his father he would be home within the hour at about 11 a.m. - the last contact anyone had with him, U.S. Coast Guard spokesman Petty Officer 1st Class Andrew Kendrick said.

His father called police when Wagner had not

returned by 7 p.m., Kendrick said.

Authorities found Wagner's vehicle parked on Bluewater Highway near the spot where he had been fishing, Kendrick said. Crews from the U.S. Coast Guard, the Gulf Coast Rescue Squad and Texas Parks and Wildlife searched for the man by air and boat for several hours before locating his body.

Searchers spotted Wagner's fishing equipment about 600 yards from the shore west of Key Largo By the Bay subdivision in Surfside, Gulf Coast Rescue Squad spokesman John Blankenship said.

Judge Sherry Kersh pronounced Wagner dead at the scene, Snelgrove said. His body was taken to the Galveston County medical examiner's office for an autopsy.

Authorities believe Wagner's death was accidental, Snelgrove said.

"We don't suspect any foul play," Snelgrove said. "It looks like an accident."

Savannah Fink, Wagner's cousin, thanked the community for the prayers and support on behalf of her family.

"We sure appreciate it," Fink said.

Wagner's wife and father did not respond to Facebook messages seeking comment Monday afternoon.

Current and former students spent Monday writing letters to Wagner's unborn son in the hopes the boy one day will have a sense of the father he'll never meet, Montgomery said.

"They want to make sure this little boy knows who his father was," she said. "I would tell him his daddy made a difference. He was loved by so many people."

Erinn Callahan is a reporter for The Facts. Contact her at 979-237-0150.

Oaks

CONTINUED FROM COVER

existing structure. They're going to gut them and add new infrastructure, new electrical, new plumbing, add sprinkler systems," Dahse said. "New Sheetrock, new cabinets, new appliances - new everything."

The complex was built in 1987, according to Apartments.com.

City officials inspected all 33 buildings in the complex and found 23 of them to be uninhabitable based on a 2012 city ordinance the city put in place to protect its residents from less-than-desirable living conditions. Every apartment complex pays a fee per unit to the city, which covers the cost for the city's apartment inspector to check each unit annually, according to The Facts archives.

NEWSROUNDUP

Compiled from wire reports

WASHINGTON GOP leaders back Russia hacking probe

Top Republicans in Congress on Monday endorsed investigations into the CIA's belief Russia meddled in last month's election to help Donald Trump win, suggesting potential battles ahead with the incoming commander in chief over Moscow and U.S. intelligence.

"The Russians are not our friends," declared Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell as GOP leaders steered toward a path contrasting starkly with the president-elect's belittling dismissal of the spy agency's assessment and his past praise for Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Shortly afterward, House Speaker Paul Ryan, R-Wis., released a statement backing an investigation the House Intelligence Committee has already started on cyber threats posed by foreign countries and extremist groups.

POLITICS Recount efforts end with Trump on top

Presidential election recount efforts came to an end Monday in Pennsylvania and Wisconsin, with both states certifying Republican Donald Trump as the winner in contests that helped put him over the top in the Electoral College stakes.

Trump's victory in Wisconsin was affirmed following a statewide vote recount that showed him defeating Democrat Hillary Clinton by nearly 23,000 votes. Meanwhile, a federal judge issued a stinging rejection of a Green Party-backed

request to recount paper ballots in Pennsylvania's presidential election and scan some counties' election systems for signs of hacking.

CHICAGO Rural areas drive drug addiction in newborns

A surge in U.S. infants born with symptoms of withdrawal from heroin or strong prescription painkillers is driven largely by rising drug use among women in rural areas, a new study found.

The problem in urban and rural areas was about the same in 2004 - about 1 in 1,000 births were affected. But by 2013, the rural rate had climbed to almost 8 in 1,000. In urban areas, it reached 5 per 1,000 births.

The rates correspond with women's use of opioid drugs during pregnancy. This includes use or misuse of oxycodone and other prescription opioid painkillers, and use of illegal narcotics.

Newborns whose mothers use these drugs during pregnancy are at risk for seizures, excessive crying, problems with breathing, sleeping and feeding and other withdrawal symptoms.

BEIRUT Syria rebels pull back

Syrian rebels retreated from former strongholds in eastern Aleppo in a "terrifying" collapse Monday, holding onto a small sliver of territory packed with fighters and thousands of civilians as government troops pressed on with their rapid advance.

The Syrian military said it had gained control of 99 percent of the former opposition enclave in eastern Aleppo.

As of Monday, six buildings are occupied. The plan is to rehabilitate the apartment complex in sections and move the residents into the newer buildings while they work on renovating those buildings, Dahse said.

"We're doing this in groups because the property is very large," Dahse said.

Ashton Oaks has the most units of all the apartment complexes in the

city, and at one time was two separate complexes, Dahse said.

"It's our biggest apartment complex, it hasn't always had the best reputation and we're ready for that to change," Dahse said. "We're glad they're investing in Clute and they see the potential that we've seen all along."

Stephany Garza is a reporter for The Facts. Contact her at 979-237-0151.

The Facts
Periodical postage in Clute, Texas 77531. Published daily by Southern Newspapers, Inc., dba The Brazosport Facts, located at 720 S. Main St., Clute, Texas 77531.
SUBSCRIPTION RATES: By carrier, daily and Sunday, \$14.75 per month suggested retail price.
By mail, daily and Sunday \$16 per month in continental U.S. Outside U.S., quotes upon request.
POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Brazosport Facts, P.O. Box 549, Clute, Texas 77531.
EDITORIAL POLICY: News reporting in this newspaper shall be accurate and fair. Editorial expressions shall always be independent, outspoken and conscientious.
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Vol. 103, No. 288
(USPS 304-270)

BRAZORIA COUNTY WEATHER

TODAY: 73
A 20 percent chance of showers, areas of dense fog before noon.

TONIGHT: 58
Showers possible after midnight. Patchy fog before midnight.

WEDNESDAY: 70/57
Partly sunny.

THURSDAY: 58/54
Partly sunny; cooler.

HIGH/LOW Yesterday: 78/66 Averages: 62/44 Records: 75 (2001)/28 (2010) RAINFALL Yesterday: 0.01 Month: 3.79 Year: 47.29

SUN
Sunrise: 7:07 a.m. Sunset: 5:25 p.m.

MOON
Moonrise: 5:34 a.m.
Moonset: 6:28 a.m.
Phases
Full: Dec 13
Last: Dec 20
New: Dec 29
First: Jan 5

AROUND TEXAS
Temperatures indicate yesterday's high and overnight low to 8 p.m.

	Hi	Lo	Prc	Otlk
Amarillo	62	32	Clr	
Abilene	59	22	PCldy	
Austin	67	44	Clcy	
Brownsville	81	67	Clcy	
Corpus Christi	75	62	Clcy	
Dallas-Ft Worth	55	36	PCldy	
El Paso	70	43	Clr	
Lubbock	60	27	PCldy	
Midland-Odessa	66	34	Clr	
San Antonio	70	45	Clcy	

AROUND THE NATION
Temperatures indicate yesterday's high and overnight low to 8 p.m.

	Hi	Lo	Prc	Otlk
Atlanta	64	40	Rain	
Boston	44	29	.44	PCldy
Chicago	23	22	.13	PCldy
Cleveland	37	32	.19	Clcy
Denver	44	19	Clcy	
Detroit	36	29	.20	Clcy
Indianapolis	33	32	.11	Snow
Las Vegas	62	46	PCldy	
Little Rock	55	45	.42	Clcy
Los Angeles	67	57	PCldy	

WATER MONITOR
Brazos River flow: 7,970 cuft./sec.
Brazos River level: 13.68 feet
Reservoir levels: 95.7% full

GULF FORECAST
Dense fog advisory until 10 a.m.
Southwest winds 5 to 10 knots. Seas 2 to 3 feet. A chance of showers in the morning. A slight chance of showers in the afternoon.