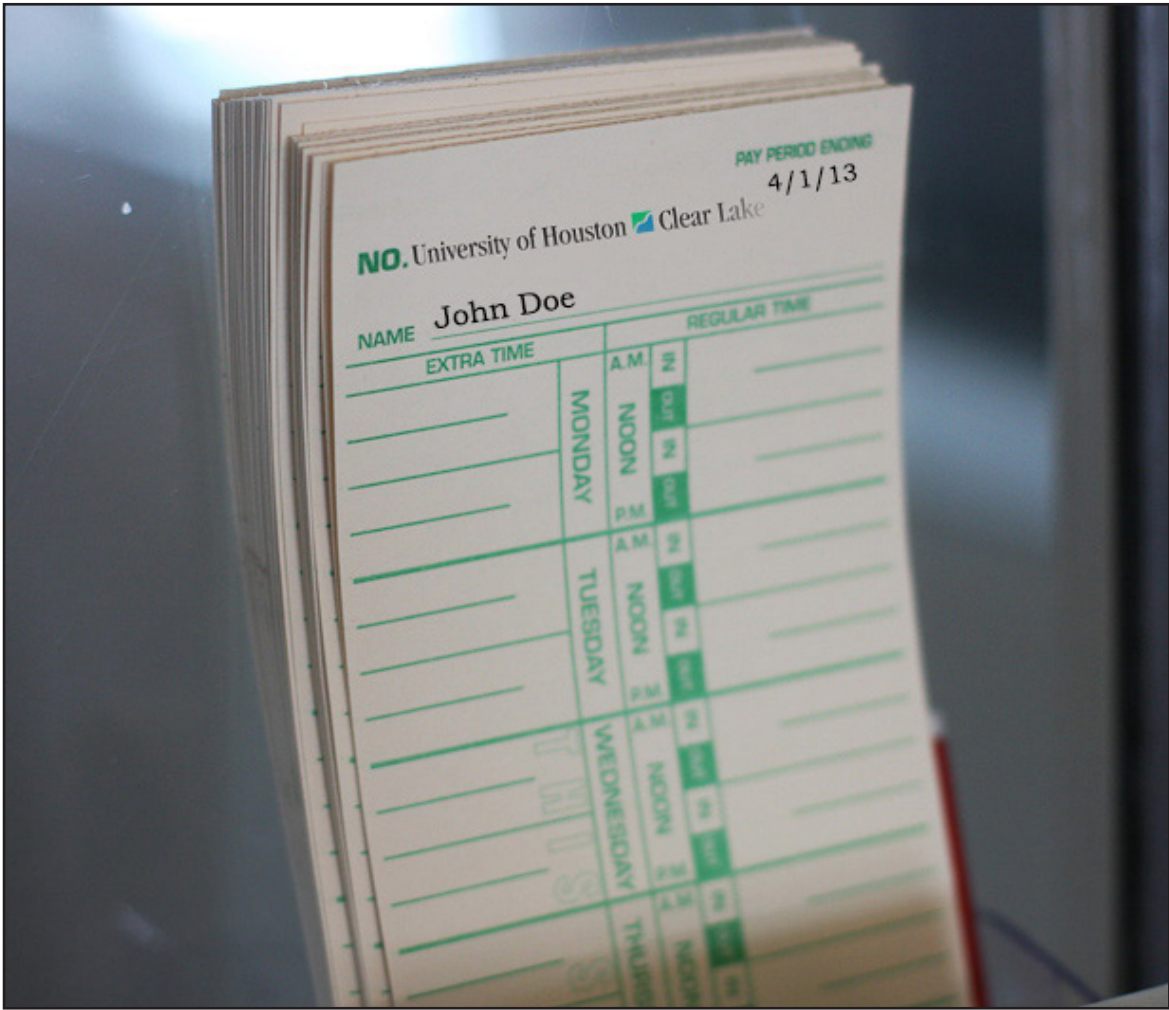


# Clock in before you punch out

## Soon, time cards will be required for hourly workers on campus



The UH System, including UHCL, will be going to a new electronic time punch system effective in early May.

**Dave Valdez**  
The Signal

It has long been said “time is money,” and a new TRAM system is coming to ensure that reporting time consistently is also part of accounting for “the money.”

Implemented by the UH System, the new Time Reporting and Absence Management system (TRAM) is going to be used as a digital time clock to manage time for a large percentage of UHCL employees.

Broken into two parts, 1) Time Reporting and 2) Absence Management, TRAM will be utilized by all employees except for Non-Benefits eligible monthly employees.

The new system will have the greatest impact on the bi-weekly employees who have to report daily schedules vacation and leave. These employees will use both parts of the TRAM system.

To accomplish the time reporting, the TRAM system will utilize one of two reporting methods; a fingerprint recognition system and an online utility.

The more popular method, predicts Katherine Justice,

executive director of human resources, will be the online time reporting tool called Web Clock. This method will require employees to log into their PASS system and enter their daily time for each day, clocking in and out at the start and ending of their days as well as their lunch and other breaks.

The fingerprinting method will track time using finger print scanners placed in all of the UHCL buildings in a centralized position. Employees whose access to a computer is limited will use this method.

“It is important that employees know that this fingerprinting system does not store fingerprints as a picture like the FBI database,” explained Gail Jackson, coordinator of payroll services for UHCL. “The system uses a calculation method to create a unique numeric identity for each employee that uses it.”

Provided by the University of Houston System, 6 fingerprint systems were issued to UHCL for the buildings on campus. They

**SEE TIME CARDS, PAGE 6**

## THE NATION HELD HOSTAGE

**Dorian Valenzuela**  
The Signal

The U.S. national debt currently rests at more than \$16 trillion.

In light of America’s growing budget deficit and a lack of compromise in Washington D.C., as of March 2013, the budget has been sequestered.

Sequestration is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as a noun that describes: “the action of taking legal possession of assets until a debt has been paid or other claims have been met...the action of making a general cut in government spending.”

In Aug. 2011, Republican and Democratic leaders could not agree on the most effective way to reduce the budget deficit. Democrats did not want to extend tax cuts to families making \$250,000 or more based on the notion that wealthier groups could best afford higher taxes in order to bring in more revenue. With this plan in place, mandatory programs like Social Security, Medicaid, and Medicare would be spared.

Republicans argue that a tax increase on the wealthy would not help with job creation among small businesses and that mandatory entitlement programs are the real source of our national debt. Both parties’ inability to make an agreement has led this nation into sequestration for the first time in American history.

The gridlock between Republicans and Democrats

**SEE SEQUESTER, PAGE 6**

## Bag Bans Find Their Way To Texas

**Veronica Lopez**  
The Signal

Efforts to reduce plastic bag litter motivated the Texas cities of Brownsville, Fort Stockton, South Padre Island and Austin to adopt single-use plastic bag bans and prompted several Texas councilmen to push bans in their cities.

Austin was the most recent city in Texas to enforce a single-use bag ban. It went into effect March 1. It regulates types of bags stores can provide to consumers by banning single-use, light-weight plastic bags and single-use paper bags, and replacing them with reusable bags. The ban permits reusable plastic bags a minimum of 4 millimeters thick and paper bags containing a minimum of 40 percent recycled content, which will increase to a minimum of 80 percent recycled content by March 1, 2014. The ban states all reusable bags must have handles whether they are made

of plastic, paper or cloth.

These bag regulations are intended to reduce the number of single-use plastic bags that litter communities, highways, waterways, sewage systems and landfills, which in turn can save marine animals and wildlife.

In 2012, Houston Councilman Ed Gonzalez proposed a bag ban to the Houston city council. One of his primary reasons is a current problem concerning single-use plastic bags clogging waterways. This puts increased stress on an already vulnerable flood risk and it costs an estimated \$1 million annually to clean just one section of Buffalo Bayou.

“If you go down to the waterways of Buffalo Bayou near downtown, plastic bags are all over and they cause quicker flooding because water rises faster and it costs

**SEE BAG BAN, PAGE 6**



LAUREN LOWRY:THE SIGNAL

A Kroger customer uses reusable bags to carry his groceries.





# Government by the lobbyists and for the lobbyists

Politicians use deplorable tactics to oust each other from office, while ignoring the implications that their political immaturity is having on our economy – namely, sequestration.

The inability of our politicians to compromise, has led to \$85 billion in spending cuts to various government programs within the next year, and a total budget reduction of \$1.2 Trillion within the next 10 years.

Since the formation of our three legislative branches, the right to control the federal budget has never been taken away from Congress.

By now, most of the U.S. population is aware of the dog-and-pony act called congressional debate. Political gridlock has become a common phrase in Washington and throughout the nation.

Congressional immaturity is at an all-time high. The nation’s leaders cannot even sit in the same room with each other for longer than a few hours. Or, they simply walk away from talks altogether, a reality that John Boehner, the current House Speaker, exemplifies quite well. Immaturity is not the only instrument in a politician’s arsenal of deception.

Propaganda has also been a useful tool for Republicans and Democrats alike. Both parties seem to have their own personal media affiliations that run to the rescue after any member of the opposing party makes a leadership decision or tries to craft

any legislation. And the smear campaign begins...

It is almost common knowledge that FOX indirectly regurgitates the issues and perspectives that the GOP represents, while very few conservatives support higher taxes. Likewise, almost every university and independent news media outlet in the world is considered inherently liberal.

Does this sort of leadership set a good example for future

## EDITORIAL

politicians headed to Washington? Should we continue to encourage partisan politics if it has failed us for this long?

Partisan politics have never worked and the blame game is far from reaching a legitimate proposal to reduce the national debt and get the federal budget under control. The nation’s place in the global market depends upon politicians who are willing to make compromises with each other.

It is time for an integrity check amongst congressional members. One proposal becoming ubiquitous in Washington is the signing of pledges to enforce party discipline.

These pledges attempt to force politicians to adhere to the issues they endorsed during their campaigns. It sounds nice on paper, but it is a potential disaster. Forcing politicians to endorse old legislation, even if they receive new information and have a better perspective from which to make a

decision, is a bad idea.

Pledges like the Taxpayer Protection Pledge, started by Americans For Tax Reform, was written and endorsed in 1985 by Grover Norquist. Norquist, a conservative libertarian from Pennsylvania, has spent the last two decades getting more than 95 percent of the Republican Party to sign this pledge, which opposes tax increases. If a Republican who signed the pledge votes in favor of a tax increase, he or she is politically humiliated.

The pledges appear to be, more accurately, a sort of childhood nostalgia associated with keeping pacts, making clubhouses and thinking girls are gross.

Meanwhile, no one seems to notice the effects of the sequestration on our nation, even if appropriations bills are being passed to ease the pain of the initial spending cuts.

Agencies being spared through appropriations bills and funding transfers will simply pass the debt along to other government agencies. Reallocation of debt is not the solution we want to balance the federal budget.

Sadly, some of the organizations that will suffer



Cartoon by: Kalan Lyra

the toughest budget cuts are affiliated with child nutrition, early education and wellness programs. For instance, more than 70,000 children will be cut from the Head Start program because of sequestration cuts. Other programs may have more flexibility to shift their budgets in preparation of the spending cuts.

Cutting entitlement programs and putting government employees on furlough is not a good solution for balancing the

federal budget. This undoes all of the economic recovery that has ensued since the recent economic recession and further slows future growth in the nation.

It is time for the nation’s politicians to grow up and start compromising with each other before America goes bankrupt to the tune of partisan politics. Seeking a bipartisan solution is in the best interest of every party involved, especially the American people.

# Sex?... No thank you: Raising awareness on asexuality

Jason Seidel  
The Signal

I never thought I’d be on the receiving end of a “coming out” conversation. I definitely didn’t think that it would be coming from my wife.

Hold on, I’m getting ahead of myself.

For six years now, I have wine and dined. I have worked out and beefed up. I have cooked and cleaned. I have been romantic and passionate, and not once have I been able to drive my wife into a lust-filled frenzy.

We have seen several doctors and therapist and counselors, spending thousands of dollars trying to figure out why my wife, Liz, didn’t have a passion for sex.

As it turns out, there is nothing wrong with Liz or with me. Liz is asexual.

To be clear, someone who is asexual does not experience sexual attraction. Asexuals do not have an intrinsic desire to make sex a part of their relationship. This does not mean that they have a lack of desire to be romantic.

Most non-asexuals reaction to individuals who identify as asexuals is to automatically assume that something happened to that person, whether it be a terrible experience, fear of intimacy, anti-social behavior, etc. As it turns out, there is no linked trait among the asexual community. The asexual would rather just have cake.

It is estimated that one percent of the U.S. population is asexual. That would mean there are more than 3 million citizens who identify themselves as asexual.

If the only time you heard the



## STAFF COLUMN

term “asexual” was in a science class, don’t feel bad; you are not alone. The movement to raise awareness for asexuality is only a couple of years old. Case in point, none of the professionals that Liz and I went to see had ever mentioned it as a possibility.

After we realized what the issue was for us, I called our

current (now former) counselor to see what she knew. “Nothing really, sorry.” This woman is a trained professional with fancy framed pieces of paper all around her office stating such, and even she couldn’t tell me about asexuality.

So where does that leave me? My initial reaction to it was something along the lines of “aw man, bummer.” It’s not like she came out and said, “I’m gay.” That I could handle. No, instead it’s the lifetime equivalent of “not tonight, I have a headache.”

It basically boiled down to one question: “Is the need to feel sexual desire from my partner worth throwing away my marriage to a woman who is 99 percent most likely my soul mate?”

Nah.  
I’m 31. I don’t expect to

look this good for much longer. Seriously though, we were able to reach a compromise. Keep in mind, just because asexuals don’t have a desire for sex does not mean they can’t enjoy sex.

A common question is do asexuals masturbate? The best answer I can give is that it is person dependent, just like it is with hetro-, homo- and bi-sexuals. Some experience sexual arousal, some do not. Sexuality is not black and white; it has a whole mess of gray in the middle.

If you think you may be asexual, or think you know someone who is, check out asexuality.org. The site was created by David Jay, asexual, who is largely responsible for creating awareness on asexuality.

# THE SIGNAL

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# Confessions of a college mind

Graham Clifford  
The Signal

It is Tuesday morning and someone on campus loves bondage sex so much that he or she is scared by it. No need for alarm, sex usually dominates the University of Houston-Clear Lake’s Facebook confessions page.

“UHCL Confessions” is a student-run site that is not affiliated with the university and therefore not monitored by the university. The anonymity provided by the third-party postings means that students might feel free to say whatever they want without fear of censorship or reprisals.

Other than those responding to a “confession,” whose Facebook credentials are clearly shown, identities on the site are hidden and the topics of discussion vary widely. There might be an issue with a roommate or a spurned lovers cry to whoever will listen, but it seems to mostly center on people looking for love, or sex, or love and then sex.

Some recent posts read:  
“Cute guy in the front row...if i only had you for one night. mm-MMmMm...the things i would do to you and/or let you do to me are unimaginable!”  
“I wish I wasn’t stuck here in Delta every morning. There is ZERO eye candy here. All the hot girls are in the Bayou and Student Building. I should of went to main campus.”  
“I secretly have a crush on one of my professor. She’s def a cougar...and I’m not talking about the UH mascot.”

It is not a big leap to figure out what most of these posts have in common, other than a penchant for sketchy grammar. The minds of most college students are squarely fixed on getting freaky and an anonymous forum provides a vehicle for airing those feelings.

“It is just funny that everyone is always crushing on people but nobody ever comes forth,” said Ronald Phillips, an applied cognitive psychology and human factors/ergonomics graduate student. “Maybe we need to start a dating service at the school to help all of these people meet one another because I just want to read about funny campus issues not love lives.”

There is, however, more to “UHCL Confessions” and like so many other sites popping up all over the country, it can also be a way for students to talk about issues that might be hard to admit in face-to-face meetings. It can bring students together over shared concerns and complaints.

Some examples of this type of post include:  
“This school is full of nice people. I swear everyone is always willing and ready to help you if you ask. 3rd year here and I haven’t met any douchebag yet.”  
“What makes me ANGRY is that the food people in charge of Cappuccino Bono is closing it down TODAY and has NEVER made a formal announcement about it, not really even to the student workers. It’s all been word of mouth. PLEASE GO SUPPORT

THE STUDENTS TODAY AND BUY FROM CAPPUC-CINO BONO(IN SSCB), NOT PATIO CAFE (IN BAYOU)!! (Share this post so everyone else knows about this sad injustice.)”

Reading these types of posts makes it clear that the “UHCL Confessions” can be a way for students to remain updated on campus news and be part of the campus community even from afar.

“UHCL being a commuter school, there is not a whole lot of campus living and ‘UHCL Confessions’ brings students together,” said Roman Rama III, a digital media studies master’s student.

This might also explain why the topics on the “Confessions” page so often revolve around who likes whom and which professors are “hot.”

“Everyone is always talking about love/sex because this isn’t a normal college where everyone lives on campus and there are parties on campus and people meet in that way,” said Jade McCoy, a humanities major.



←

UHCL confessions

Mar 18 · 🌐

I love bondage sex so much it scares me

Like · Comment

UHCL confessions

Yesterday at 6:57pm · 🌐

I confess...I LOVE sex!

Like · Comment

👍 Ronald Phillips and 2 others like this.

William Jayden

WTF u love sex ????

Like · 8 hours ago

Shanea Johnson

Congratulations?

Like · 👍 1 · 7 hours ago

Write a comment...

Write a comment...

CONFESS YOURSELF:

Scan the QR code to view the “UHCL Confessions” page on Facebook.

POSTS FROM THE UHCL CONFESSIONS FACEBOOK PAGE.  
HAWK GRAPHIC BY CAMERON PALMER: THE SIGNAL.

Cultural  
ARTS

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Any person needing an accommodation for a disability in order to participate in this program should contact the Office of Student Life at 281-283-2560 at least one week prior to the event.

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7 P.M., SSCB 1.100

President Mohamed Nasheed is trying to prevent 385,000 people from drowning. His nation of 1,200 low-lying islands, the Maldives, is sinking into the Indian Ocean as sea levels rise due to global warming. Climate change experts say that some of the islands will be submerged within 20 years, threatening the lives of the largely impoverished inhabitants as well as inundating the lavish resorts that dot the islands. Nasheed’s unprecedented contingency plan is to move his entire population to a new homeland. As he conducts serious discussions about this with Sri Lanka and Australia, Nasheed is doing all he can to prevent this looming disaster by trying to convince world leaders to halt global warming.

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ASHLEY HONC: THE SIGNAL

Disha Patel, Chandni Sejal, Matura Dhamdhare, Khyati Buddhadev and Shraddha Rane perform a Rajasthani dance.



ASHLEY HONC: THE SIGNAL

Clare Leonard representing Wales in the Cultural Walk.



ASHLEY HONC: THE SIGNAL

Front row: Truc Nguyen; Second row from left: Nhu Lam, Loan Le, Nhi Nguyen and Thu Nguyen; Third row from left: Khue Vu, Nguyen Ly, Quyen Vo, My Le and Nhu Nguyen; Far right: Khanh Lam representing Vietnam and performing to the song *Ngay Tet Que em*.



ASHLEY HONC: THE SIGNAL

Cloe Acuna and Yasmine Calabaza perform the Brazilian Samba by LD.

## CULTURAL EXTRAVAGANZA

WHERE STUDENTS, FACULTY, STAFF & THE LOCAL COMMUNITY SHOWCASE THEIR CULTURE THROUGH MUSIC, DANCE, POETRY, AND OTHER TALENTS.

### Lynsie Whitehead

The Signal

Colorful costumes, vivacious music and energetic performances made for a spectacular production held at the University of Houston Clear Lake March 23.

Cultural Extravaganza, an annual event sponsored by Intercultural and International Student Services (IISS), entertained students, faculty and staff with performances that displayed the diverse group of cultures represented at UHCL.

"Cultural Extravaganza is a program that is designed to highlight the numerous cultures that are present on this campus," explained Linda Bullock, assistant dean of student diversity and director of IISS. "A concerted effort is made to solicit performances by students from all cultures. Our intention is that Cultural Extravaganza is a vehicle that not only showcases our very diverse environment, but also serves as an educational tool about the global society we live in."

Among the 22 performances were several cultural dances, including "Atilwogu," a traditional dance from the Igbo ethnic group of Nigeria; "Brazilian Samba by LD," a dance performed all over South America and Brazil; and "Rajasthani Dance," an Indian folk and tribal dance meant to express joy for every occasion.

"I love to perform on stages," said Disha Patel, biotechnology major and "Rajasthani Dance" performer. "It is great to have the opportunity to showcase our culture, that normally people wouldn't see."

Along with several dance performances, many chose to display their talents through song during acts such as *Yemito*, a song performed in the southern Indian language Telugu; *Supe Que Me Amabas*, a love song originally performed by Mexican musician Marcela Gandara; and *Ngay Tet Que Em*, a traditional

song celebrated during Vietnam's Lunar New Year.

The closing of the show featured what is known as the "Cultural Walk," where each person involved with the production carried their country's flag on to the stage. An impressive 24 countries were represented during the closing of the program.

The reasons students get involved in the Cultural Extravaganza may vary, but one thing seems to be consistent: they are proud of their countries and want to represent them positively.

"I decided to do it because I wanted to show my talent, and I want to be a part of this show to represent my culture," expressed Dorian Ayala, biological science major and ambassador for IISS.

Even though students are generally aware of the cultural diversity on campus, programs like the Cultural Extravaganza help showcase students' varied backgrounds and also promote a sense of unity.

"My observation is that many of us welcome different cultures and the diversity we enjoy on this campus," said Bullock. "However, this learning process is ongoing and we must continue to offer programs and events that help us understand the global perspective."

Any student interested in performing or volunteering their time for next year's Cultural Extravaganza can find more information available in the IISS office, located in SSCB 1203, or by phone at 281-283-2575.

### WATCH MORE ONLINE:

Use your smartphone to scan the QR code to view a slideshow of this year's Cultural Extravaganza.





# NEON Splash Dash

## THE DASH CAUSING A SPLASH IN HOUSTON

**Richard Higgins**  
The Signal

It was not Christmas, Halloween, Saint Patrick's Day or even Mardi Gras, but zombies and fairies moved through the crowd.

There was not a primary or pastel color in sight, but there were plenty of black lights and neon colors.

The Neon Splash Dash, self-proclaimed as "The most magical 5k on earth!" originated Oct. 20, 2012, in Chandler, AZ. Houston's recent splash dash was a nighttime fun run/walk to benefit local charity Team Red White and Blue that took place at Reliant Stadium March 23.

Houston was chosen because "we felt like this was a fun, young city," said Moriah Smith, event coordinator.

The charity recipient, Team RWB, is an organization started in 2006 to benefit soldiers who have returned from active duty. The organization's mission is "to connect America's veterans to their community through physical and social activity."

"This is a great combination of those two activities," said Melanie Bundoc, Army veteran and Team RWB athletic director. "It's our turn to help."

The organization has roots in Houston and plans to stay.

"We are here for the long run and do not want to simply give a vet a new car or house and simply walk away," said Gregg Besozzi, Army veteran and Team RWB social events director.

"We reached out to Team Red White and Blue and they agreed that Houston would eagerly support and participate in the dash," Smith said.

The Houston event proved to possess all of the craziness and fun advertised on the Neon Splash Dash's website. Participants included young and old, men and women and professionals and college students.

Runners, walkers and dancers were encouraged to wear outlandish outfits. The only stipulation was to wear a white shirt of some sort over their outfit.

It quickly became evident that the shirt would not remain white for long. As the participants ambled through a course surrounding Reliant Stadium, volunteers would appear with bottles of colored neon paint that they would use to spray everyone from head to toe.

Several spectators did not wear a white shirt - a decision soon regretted as they were also sprayed with paint.

At the finish line, participants were covered with a spectrum of brightly colored neon paints. Their shirts were no longer white.

the **MOST**  
**MAGICAL**  
**5K** on **EARTH**

One group called themselves the Technicolor Zombies. They were dressed in bright neon colors with their faces adorned with dark paint and makeup scars.

"I am here to support the charity and my mom, who wants to get more exercise for her health," said Brianna Porter, technicolor zombie and sophomore at Dickinson High School.

Likewise, the excitement was common with the entire team.

"This is a great outlet to have fun with the family," said Caetlyn Franzke, fellow zombie and sophomore at Santa Fe High School.

There were several corporate sponsors, including Sports Authority, Leukemia and Lymphoma Society KRBE Radio and Texas Boot Camp.

KRBE had a family team that arrived early so they would not miss any of the activities.

"This is a fun family and kid time," said Monica Conner, KRBE employee and runner from Houston.

Then there were those on the team that were all about the fun.

"I wanted to have family here with me so someone could drive me home after all the exercise," said Annie Musil, KRBE employee and walker. "I just wanted to get my glow on."

It was a wild, wacky and entertaining event for runners and spectators alike.

This was Neon Splash Dash's maiden event in Houston and, as such, there were some minor glitches.

"There was a two-hour wait to pick up team packets the day before the event," said Chelsey Tullis, sales manager for the Post Oak location of Sports Authority. "We need to improve that process."

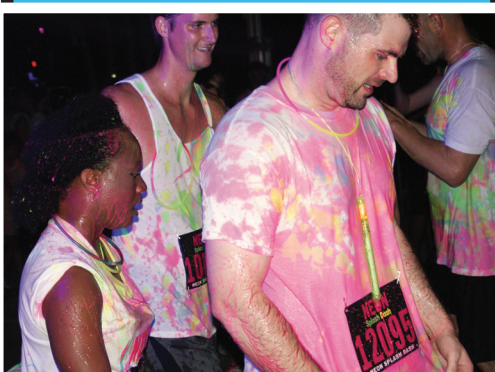
Postings and comments on social media sites like Twitter and Facebook have shown an enthusiasm for and curiosity about future Neon Splash Dash events in Houston.

Although there is not currently another Neon Splash Dash scheduled for Houston, based on the turnout of more than 6,000 participants and the interest on social media, there will probably be another visit of this event to our city.

Information about the Neon Splash Dash can be found on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/NeonSplashDash?fref=ts> or on their website at <http://www.neonsplashdash.com/>.



REGGIE BUTLER:THE SIGNAL  
Kasey Damiata and Rachel Collins, joke around during the costume contest.



REGGIE BUTLER:THE SIGNAL  
Tenesha Bryant, Jason Klesel, and Matt Geidel, catch their breath after completed the three mile race.



REGGIE BUTLER:THE SIGNAL  
Tenesha Bryant, Shannon Smith, Jason Klesel, and Britney Marshall, rock out before the race begins.



TIME CARDS: continued from page 1

were provided without any impact to the UHCL budget. UHCL will be responsible for the costs if any additional machines will be needed in the future.

The Absence Management side of the TRAM system will affect all benefits-eligible employees. Benefits-eligible employees will be required to input their vacations, college release, sick and other leave through the online Absence Management utility.

Non-benefit employees, such as student workers, will not have to report their absences although they will be required to change their current time reporting system and will have to show their time spent on a daily basis by either using the fingerprint system or the online system.

“There are many advantages to the Absence Management system,” Justice said. “It allows supervisors to be the single approvers for the leave that their employees take. The system will automatically populate the employee’s timesheet.”

Instead of a multi-person approval process, Justice said this should “streamline” the approval process.

In addition, the TRAM system will only allow an employee to take leave that has been accrued.

“If you do not have leave time available, the system will inform you when you try to request time off,” Jackson said.

Opponents of the TRAM system include those who have to manage employees and are responsible for monitoring employee’s time.

“Just having to go in and make any kind of corrections will take time when there is a large group, especially if they forget to log in and out and approver has to do it

for them,” stated Deirdre Taylor, staff assistant for the Intercultural and International Services office.

“Since we have 15 student workers and one staff employee, anytime there is a big event and they have to work longer hours, it will be time consuming changing their time to reflect the regularly scheduled hours since they are only allowed 20 hours per week.”

Some managers see both the benefits and the disadvantages of the TRAM system.

“As a monthly employee it is great,” said Kathy Kirchner, Support Center supervisor. “As a manager it is not as great. It saves on paper, but the amount of time working on schedules and leave is much higher.”

Proponents of the TRAM system see numerous benefits to the system.

“We spend a lot of time on sorting and storing all that paper, and so do the other departments,” Jackson said. “That goes away altogether.”

Employee Theresa Chance, program assistant for the Center for Advanced Management Programs office, accepts the TRAM system as being part of the current business world.

“I came from the corporate world,” Chance said. “I am surprised it took this long to start using a time clock system. It is great; you get paid for what you work, and this type of system ensures that.”

To assist in transitioning employees to the TRAM system, the human resources department will provide training options.

“A training video is being created, and hands-on training will be offered as well. It should be pretty painless,” Jackson said.

The TRAM system is set to make its UHCL debut early May.

BAG BAN: continued from page 1

about \$1 million per year to get down there and clean up plastic bag debris,” Gonzalez said.

Dallas city council rejected the idea of a bag ban in the past, but Councilman Dwaine Caraway believes it is urgent they reconsider. Soon after Austin’s ban went into effect he requested an ordinance be composed immediately by city attorney Tom Perkins for council review. Caraway stated the amount of plastic bag litter is too extreme to wait to figure out who is responsible for cleaning it.

“Plastic bags are airborne and are all over fence lines and in the water,” Caraway said. “One bag today means 100 in five years in one location, and someone has to be responsible for cleaning it up and we need to act right now to find an alternative.”

Brownsville was the first city in Texas to enforce a single-use plastic bag ban in January 2011, which has produced positive results concerning plastic bag litter.

“We continue to assess the effects of the ordinance and find that litter of single-use bags has declined,” stated Beulah Mendez-Ramirez, of the Brownsville Public Health Director’s office.

Although single-use bag bans have support from councilmembers and produce positive results, there are those who fight to stop them. One group is the Texas Retailers Association (TRA), who claim Austin’s bag ban violates Texas Health and Safety Code because Section 261.0961 states “A local government or other political subdivision may not adopt an ordinance, rule, or regulation to: prohibit or restrict, for solid waste management purposes, the sale or use of a container or package in

a manner not authorized by state law.”

In February the TRA filed a petition in Travis County District Court to clarify if Austin is in violation. President and CEO of the TRA Ronnie Volkening explained it is vital the court provide this because right now the validity of Austin’s ban is questionable.

“THE ENTIRE PLASIC BAG LITTER PROBLEM STEMS FROM PEOPLE NOT LEARNING HOW TO REDUCE, REUSE AND RECYCLE, SO WE NEED TO FOCUS FIRST ON EDUATING AND SPEND A LITTLE MONEY THERE INSTEAD OF ON TRAINING FOR BAG BAN TRANSITION.”  
  
— Ronnie Volkening  
President and CEO  
Texas Retailers Association

“We are seeking a declaratory judgment from the court saying ‘we believe this state statute preempts the city of Austin’s actions’ and therefore we want a ruling to support that,” Volkening said.

Volkening realizes the accused code violation should have been noticed by the court and the TRA prior to the ordinance passing.

“No one was aware of the statute at the time, no one brought it up, and we should have known as well as Austin, but later an attorney working on a separate matter brought it to our attention,” Volkening stated.

Early in March Texas Representative Drew Springer, R-Muenster, filed the Shopping

Bag Freedom Act which could overturn Austin’s bag ban. Springer has reported the act is about consumers’ rights to make their own decisions. He also wants Austin’s ban killed because he believes reusable bags pose serious health threats, such as E. coli, because people do not wash them.

The American Progressive Bag Alliance (APBA) is an organization comprised of American plastic bag manufacturers focused on protecting jobs and their industry by promoting bag reuse, litter prevention and recycling opportunities; correcting plastic bag misperceptions and myths; and aiming to stop bag bans.

APBA’s spokesperson Donna Dempsey stated 30,800 American manufacturing jobs are at risk nationwide from bag bans.

“Enough bans on the products we produce will inevitably threaten jobs,” Dempsey said. “Defending our employees’ livelihoods is a priority for our entire industry.”

Both sides of the bag ban issue agree education is the key.

“The most important thing is that council continues a dialogue concerning the issue so every option on what might work can be considered, and we must make every effort to educate communities,” Gonzalez said.

Volkening believes the alternative to bag bans is educating about “reduce, reuse, recycle” programs.

“The entire plastic bag litter problem stems from people not learning how to reduce, reuse and recycle, so we need to focus first on educating and spend a little money there instead of on training for bag ban transitions,” Volkening said.

SEQUESTER: continued from page 1

has led the nation to automatic, across the board, spending cuts to federal agencies including: military defense, NASA, and Medicare.

“The inability of the Republican leaders to get the rank and file members to compromise and the White House’s inability to forge a long-term deal to cut spending created an environment where both sides needed some kind of trigger to initiate a deal,” said Brandon J. Rottinghaus, associate professor of political science at the University of Houston.

The history of sequestration traces back to 1985 with the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings Deficit Reduction Act; this was the first time a mechanism was generated in order to reduce the size of the federal budget.

The Budget Control Act of 2011, also known as the debt ceiling compromise, has been automatically put into effect because congress failed to create a deficit reduction plan in the amount of \$1.2 trillion to lower the U.S. debt

ceiling by Dec. 2012, the original deadline. An extended deadline was added and congress failed once again to come to an agreement before March 1, 2013.

“Sequestration is a poor exercise in showing the GOP and conservatives that increased taxes are needed to move this country forward,” said William Hoston, professor of political science at the UHCL. “If we can’t increase taxes, then the alternative is deep budget cuts. While GOP members are split over support, they understand without raising taxes it is necessary to address budgetary issues. The main reason the sequestration is taking place is because GOP lawmakers held the American economy hostage and did not extend an olive branch to the Obama administration.”

In 2011, experts predicted consequences as a result of sequestration, but not many were able to fully explain to Americans which programs would be hit first and to what extent, generating

uncertainty across the nation.

“This tactic is unsettling because much needed governmental programs have

“SEQUESTRATION IS A POOR EXERCISE IN SHOWING THE GOP AND CONSERVATIVES THAT INCREASED TAXES ARE NEEDED TO MOVE THIS COUNTRY FORWARD.”  
  
- William T. Hoston,  
Professor of Political Science  
University of Houston-Clear Lake

been hit,” Hoston said. “It is imperative to cut spending, but the sequestration is [a] grim and dangerous way to do it. Its day-to-day impact will have an effect on important factions in our society.”

The automatic cuts will be evenly split between domestic and defense programs. The defense sector will feel the effect in its discretionary spending, which includes weapon purchases, base operations, construction work, etc. In the domestic sector, mandatory

and discretionary spending will be affected.

It is expected that the cuts will reach \$85 million this fiscal year and \$1.2 trillion over the next decade.

“Several government units will have to tighten their belts and reduce their outlays,” Rottinghaus said. “This will cause

government entities to make hard choices about how to remedy the loss of funds.”

In the wake of President Barack Obama’s re-election, many Americans are looking toward the White House in search of answers and hope that the current administration can find some form of tactic to deal with the current economic crisis.

“The president has few options other than some shifting of funds within departments to lessen the harm of the across-

the-board cuts,” said Richard W. Murray, professor of political science at the University of Houston. Many short-term effects are expected among the different federal agencies. The projected immediate result of sequestration includes: air travel disruption, slower extreme-weather forecasts, immigration backlog, increased risk of homelessness among Americans, etc.

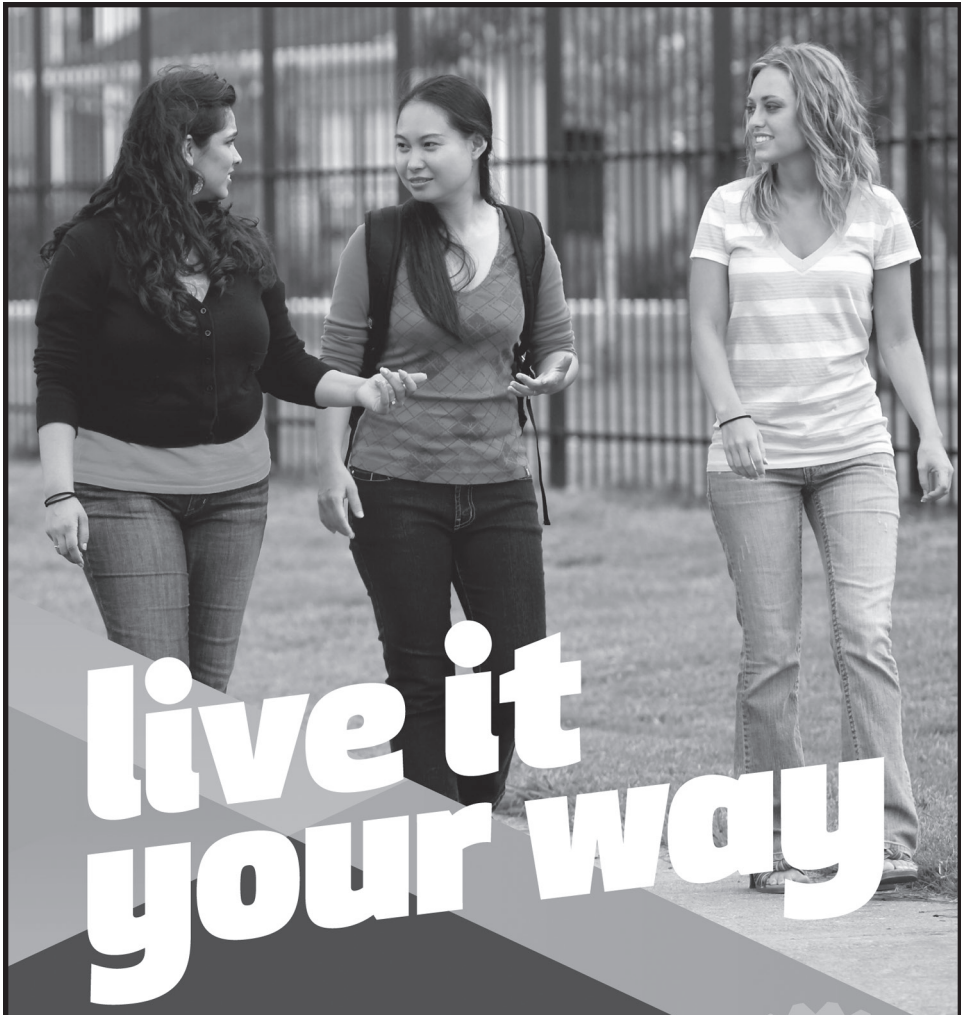
While there will be short-term effects, long-term effects of sequestration might not be as bad as some Americans expect.

“There is probably no long-term economic or financial consequence,” Rottinghaus concluded. “The cuts are too modest to reform larger structural economic issues facing the budget. In the short term, some sectors of the government (and those working for or with the government) will feel a pinch.”

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# Dr. Seuss' Fantastical, Magical Musical Extravaganza

**Elisa Morales**  
The Signal

Bay Area Houston Ballet and Theatre brings characters from the classic pages of Dr. Seuss' readers' all-time favorite books to the University of Houston-Clear Lake's Bayou Theater in four special performances of "Seussical" April 12-14.

For nearly 25 years, BAHBT has been a part of UHCL and the community with performances in the Bayou Theater. Over the last eight years, they have produced six musicals including "Grease," "Hair-spray," "Annie," the classic holiday favorite "The Nutcracker," and for the first time, "Seussical."

"The Bay Area Houston Ballet & Theatre company has a long-standing history of presenting high-quality ballets and musicals on our campus," said Andrew Reitberger, acting director of UHCL's student life. "They work very hard to bring in professionals that elevate the performance to a level that you wouldn't normally find in a community-based performing arts group. I think 'Seussical' is a great opportunity to see great art locally."

UHCL's Bayou Theater sets the stage for the production.

"BAHBT is the Bay Area's only professional ballet and theatre company and UHCL's Bayou Theater is the premiere theater in the area...it is a perfect match," said Vanessa Handrick Garner, producer for BAHBT. "The Bayou Theater is a perfect size for our audience, as well as serving our technical needs to create a fantastic show!"

"Seussical" is a musical by Lynn Ahrens and Stephen Flaherty based on the works of Dr. Seuss. The BAHBT production of "Seussical" will be under the direction of Broadway veteran Kevin Cahoon.

"What makes 'Seussical' different from the other productions I have directed for BAHBT, is that 'Seussical' feels like a blank canvas," Cahoon said.

"'Annie' you have to set in Depression era NYC; 'Hairspray,' Baltimore in 1968. These productions



COURTESY: BAY AREA HOUSTON BALLET AND THEATRE

are rooted in history. 'Seussical' is rooted in the imagination. It is the world of Dr. Seuss, which allows you to go anywhere stylistically. It's all about the imagination."

Attendees can expect to see Cat in the Hat as the narrator in a circus-themed production that is geared to entertain an audience of all ages. Some of the beloved characters from readers' favorite books like "Oh, the Thinks You Can Think!," "Green Eggs and Ham" and "Horton Hears a Who" will include Horton the Elephant, Mayzie La Bird, Gertrude McFuzz and a little boy with quite an imagination - Jojo.

"Bring your family," Cahoon said. "Whether you are 5 or 85 you will connect with the journey of these characters. Also, don't expect your typical

production of 'Seussical.' We have lots of surprises up our sleeves for the Bayou Theatre."

"Seussical's" musical production creates a family-oriented environment. Dr. Larry Fleming, veterinarian at the Marina Bay Animal Clinic, performing in the role of the Mayor of Whoville, has the opportunity to perform beside his 14-year-old son Andrew, who has already been a part of approximately 15 productions with BAHBT. Andrew will portray one of the Wickersham Brothers.

"There is a lot of color, a lot of activity and excitement that would keep little kids interested," Fleming said. "There are also little jokes and humorous things that occur that a lot of students would find very entertaining."

Come experience an evening of imagination with Dr. Seuss at UHCL's Bayou Theater.

Performance times are 7:30 p.m. April 12, 2 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. April 13, and 2 p.m. April 14. Regular-priced tickets are \$25 and \$35. Tickets for students and children 18 and under are half off regular price and \$20 for students, seniors and military. Purchase tickets online by visiting the website at www.bahbt.org or by calling 281-480-1617.

"I like Dr. Seuss, like most of us," said Terry Feagin, professor of computer science at UHCL. "I'm glad it's coming to UHCL. Sounds like it would be great for kids and an opportunity for a family outing."

As Dr. Seuss would say, "You're off to Great Places! Today is your day! Your mountain is waiting. So... get on your way!"



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