

THE SIGNAL

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Yuletide Texas



Courtesy of Texas Parks & Wildlife Department

Keeping with the season, the sick bay inside of the Battleship Texas is decorated in traditional Christmas style.

Jeffrey Meier
The Signal Staff

This year during the entire month of December, people of all ages can enjoy an event called Yuletide Texas, in which the Battleship Texas is decorated with Christmas ornaments and decorations the way officers and sailors did during their service in World War II.

“I think this is a wonderful idea for the community,” said Jim Lamb, a lieutenant junior grade aboard the Battleship Texas.

Lamb enlisted in 1942 at the age of 20 and served four years in the Navy. Lamb was promoted 16 ranks during his time of service. In 1945, he was asked to attend Annapolis Naval Academy. After the war was over, Lamb returned to his Texas residence.

The Battleship Texas was first decorated in 1945 off the coast of San Pedro, Calif., by its deckhands after their return from the fierce battle of Santa Cruz, also known as the battle of the South Pacific, and the bombardment of Iwo Jima.

The crew, made up of young men in their teens and early 20s, strung Christmas lights around the Texas and decorated a Christmas tree with a star on top to bring a feeling of Christmas to the sailors who were away from their families.

“On Christmas Day we attended a church service, then we ate turkey and dressing aboard Texas,” Lamb said. “All of the ships in the harbor were decorated, including the tug boats.”

After World War II was officially over, the Texas

Yuletide: continued on page 10

Diversity Series: Mentoring and support the key to success for first-generation students

Amy Garcia
The Signal Staff

Every day different faces, young and old, fill our classrooms and halls where cultures mix into a big educational melting pot. UHCL prides itself on this. This semester, each issue of The Signal will focus on a different aspect of diversity on our campus. This fifth article in a series of five reaches across diversity lines and focuses on first-generation college students and the challenges they face.

Think about the process all students go through to start college. Prospective students have to research different college campuses to find the right fit, apply for admittance, apply for financial aid, register for classes and navigate the world known as higher education. Now imagine having to do it all without help because you are the first in your family to attend college.

“When a student graduates from high school, unless you have a parent or someone very close to you that knows how to operate in the system, you’re lost,” said Linda Bullock, assistant dean of student diversity. “Typically, we don’t know about scholarships. The illusion, the fallacy that we have, is that scholarships are for very smart people and we may not be so we don’t qualify and we don’t apply.”

Many students deal with the dilemma of having to navigate a world that is foreign to them. First-generation college students come from all backgrounds. There are two types of first-generation college students: the first being the students whose families are very supportive or even push them to attend; the second being the students who decide on their own to attend and must convince their families

Mentoring: continued on page 10

UHCL employee arrested on theft charges

Stacy Parent
The Signal Staff

A crime occurred at the University of Houston-Clear Lake during the early morning hours of Oct. 31.

“We were alerted that a university employee was removing items from the Bayou Building early in the morning,” said Paul Willingham, UHCL chief of police.

A witness observed the employee removing computers from the basement and placing them in his vehicle.

Campus police approached the employee in a hallway and questioned him about the theft.

Sgt. Paul Jones said the employee cooperated with the investigation.

However, the case took an unusual turn upon the discovery of the computers in the employee’s vehicle.

“He agreed to the vehicle search, but he denies the theft,” Jones said.

“The employee was arrested for Class A theft and transported to Harris County Jail,” Willingham said.

“The location of the property was a restricted-access area of the basement,” said Greg Scoggins, asset management coordinator. “Using serial numbers provided by UHCL police Lt. Cory Mickens, I verified that the items were property of UHCL.”

The computers were retired and stored in the basement pending vendor trade-in or transfer to other institutions.

“The transfer of retired computers to public schools is certainly preferable, but it is our historical experience that the technical specifications of UHCL’s retired computers do

Theft: continued on page 10

Anything but Christmas as usual



Karen Raney: The Signal

A small glimmer of hope adorns one house in Fish Village. Many homes in Galveston are still twisted and torn by the left-over wrath of Ike.

Amanda Fittge
The Signal Staff

“Then the Grinch thought of something he hadn’t before! ‘Maybe Christmas’, he thought, ‘doesn’t come from a store. Maybe Christmas...perhaps...means a little bit more!’” excerpt from ‘How the Grinch Stole Christmas’ by Dr. Seuss.

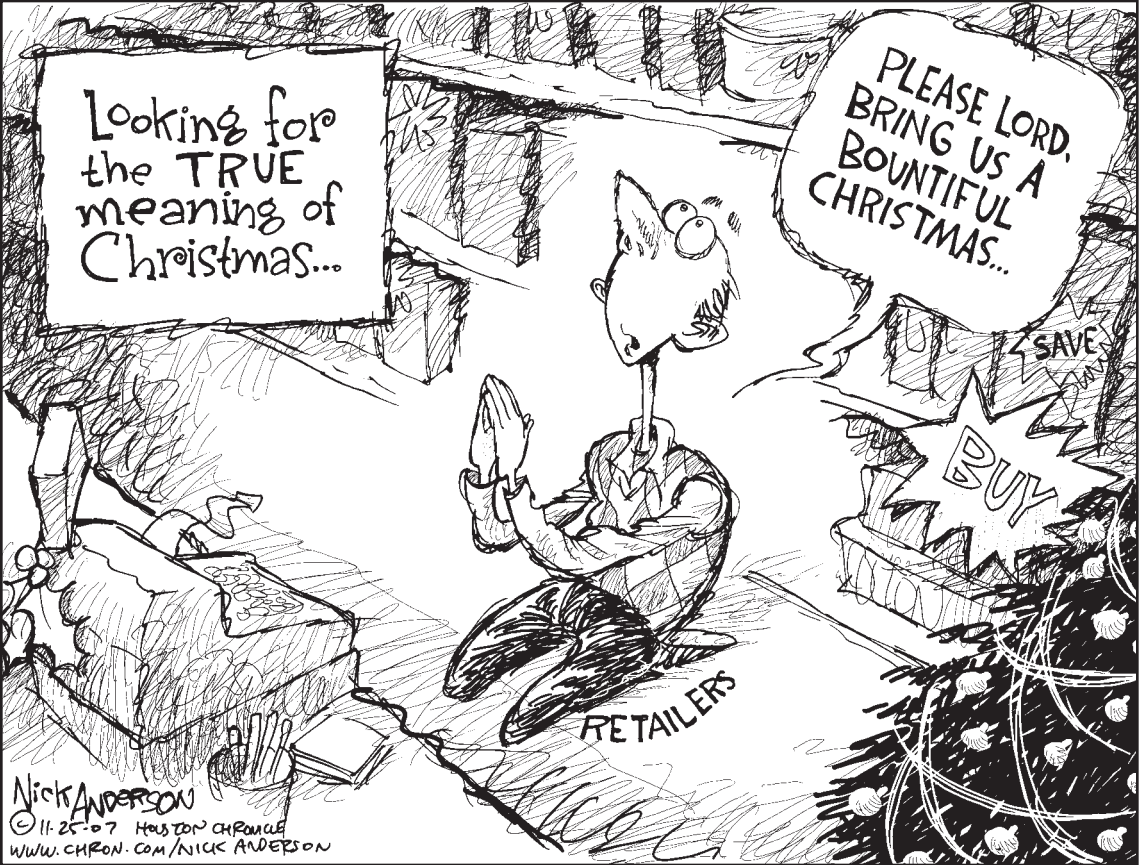
Where once stood Santa with his eight tiny reindeer, well, nine including bright, red-nosed Rudolph, on roofs lined with hanging icicle lights now stands walls with collapsed roofs of homes that are deemed unlivable after Hurricane Ike.

Parents who once stood waiting in line during the wee hours of the morning on Black Friday to get that latest video game are now concerned that they will not have enough money to pay their bills after being laid off from one of the many companies affected by the failing economy.

For most in the Greater Houston area, this Christmas is going to be anything but Christmas as usual. Whether people are dealing with the loss of a home, a job or, heaven forbid, both, Christmas has never come at a worse time.

Christmas: continued on page 10

In the aftermath, don't forget the true meaning of the holidays



As the end of the year nears, preparation for the holiday season begins. During this time, it is not out of the ordinary to decorate the house, shop for gifts or entertain family. People everywhere can usually be found shopping in the

early morning hours or buying as many decorations as possible to make the house feel as holiday oriented as possible. In the midst of this year's holiday season, the passing of Hurricane Ike will have left its three-month mark since the

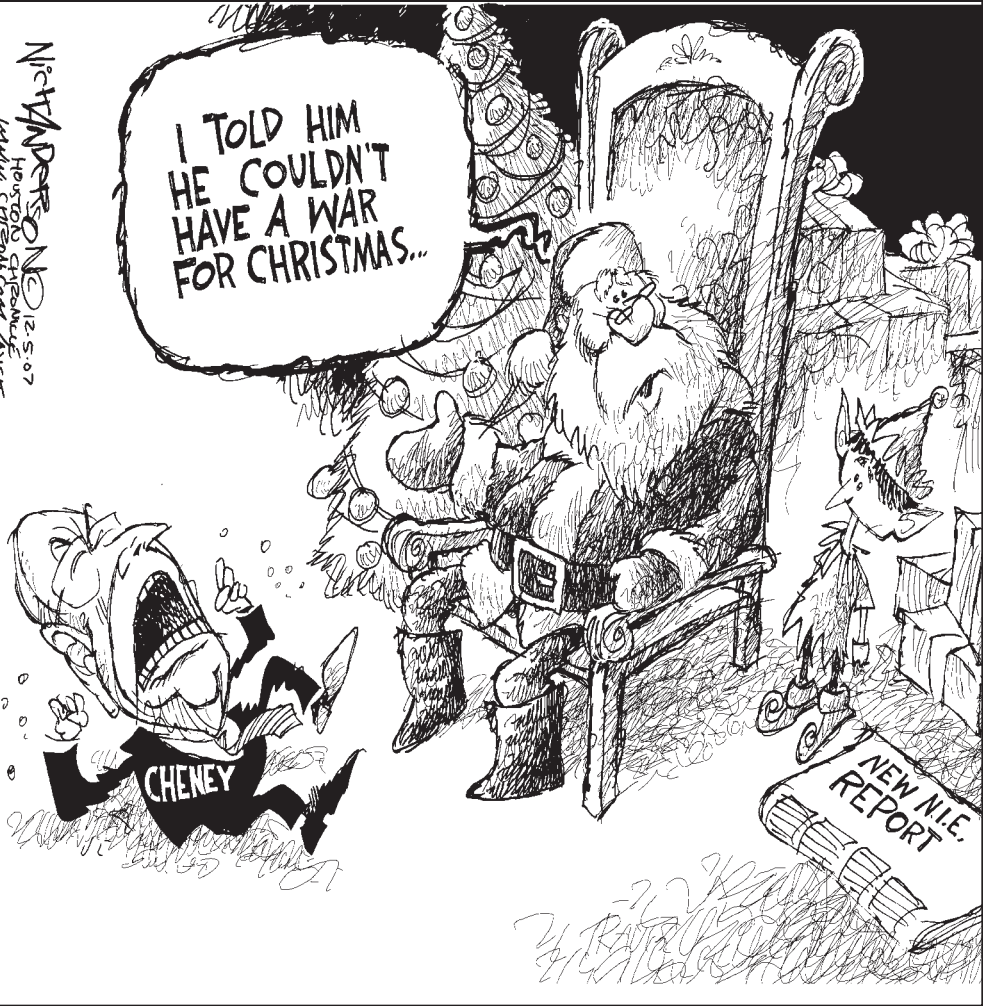
storm made landfall in September. Having been through the worst storm in years, some may not necessarily be thinking about putting up a tree or picking out presents. Millions of people were affected by the storm. Many were briefly inconvenienced and left without power; however, there are those who know the real feelings of loss. These people who lost homes, vehicles, pets – everything that was “home” to them – are not looking forward to a superfluous holiday season. Thousands are still displaced from their houses. Some have been forced to move and leave everything behind. Others have chosen to remain, camped out on their own property where their homes once stood. With everything they own destroyed in a matter of hours, it can be easy for anyone to feel blue or angry at the situation so many are living in months later. Many will agree that this definitely isn't Christmas as usual. After everything that

has happened over the course of the year, it can be hard to get in the spirit of what is a normally joyous holiday. However, in this season of brotherly love, it is good to think of all the things to be grateful for this year. It is because of Ike that people have been more motivated to reach out to others in a time of need. Everywhere on the coast, people experienced their own struggles and saw the struggles of their friends, family and neighbors. What these past few months have proved is that during this unfortunate time, people have still managed to come together to help each other recover. Christmas can be a time to dwell on the things we are fortunate to have, rather than the things that have been lost. This is truly the chance for people everywhere to search for the deeper meaning of Christmas. In this age of commercialized holidays, it is easy to lose sight of that, especially in a time of frustration and adversity. It is during this holiday season that now, more than ever, people should continue to hold on to the traditions that have brought comfort in years past. The help and consideration from a neighbor, the love between family and friends, and the goodwill from people everywhere are all a part of the true spirit of Christmas that should never be forgotten.

Cross Signals

The Signal staff members want to know about your experiences regarding Black Friday. Join the discussion by logging on to The Signal blog at:
www.myspace.com/signal_UHCL

This year Black Friday earned its name when the shopping day resulted in multiple tragedies, including the trampling death of a Wal-Mart employee. What was your Black Friday experience?



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The Signal is a public forum and will print letters to the editor subject to the following: letters must be no longer than 500 words. Where necessary, letters will be edited for grammar, spelling and style requirements. Letters must be signed and include the writer's full name, address and phone number. The editors reserve the right to refuse letters, announcements and contributed articles deemed libelous.	Address letters to: The Signal UH-Clear Lake 2700 Bay Area Blvd., Box 456 Houston, TX 77058
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Long semester of trimesters

Every semester brings new challenges. Writing papers and taking exams make life stressful. For a student starting the school year five months pregnant, the semester can be even more overwhelming.

Trying to concentrate on my assignments after a day at school is difficult. Pregnancy makes me extremely tired physically and mentally. It's hard to study when my bundle of joy is kicking and moving around in my tummy like a washing machine. His strong kicks are sending me a message that he is OK and ready to meet the world.

Walking to the car after class, my feet are so swollen that my toes look like the fat little sausages I have for breakfast. Walking is a good source of exercise and beneficial for labor, but it can speed up the process of giving birth, which is not good when I have to finish the semester. I'm trying to turn in all my work before my due date.

Trying to listen to my professors as they lecture is often a challenge when I'm thinking about food. A juicy Whopper with lots of sour pickles from Burger King would be good

right now, or a hot crispy chicken strip salad with cold ranch dressing, crunchy croutons, bacon bits and sweet sunflower seeds. I eat before class, but for some reason I get hungry within an hour into class. My unborn child absorbs all the nutrients I take in, so I usually have snacks in my purse. Apples, peaches and chocolate candy are some of my favorite snacks. Even though I'm not suppose to be eating too much chocolate, it's hard not to.

Trying to pay attention to my professors

when my back is aching can also be a challenge. Sitting on a plastic chair that is not comfortable for three-hour stretches is painful. I can only think about having

a massage with hot oil to relieve my pain and achy muscles. Carrying my baby is a beautiful feeling, but it is also extremely tiring.

Setting up my doctor appointments around my classes is hard. It can be done if the receptionist is nice and understands the situation. Some are not so nice and have given me a hard time as I try to schedule an appointment that is good

for me. One receptionist looked at me as if I did not care for my baby because I wanted to work my appointments around my classes.

The receptionist once told me "You have to miss class."

I replied, "No, I don't. Just give me the appointment on Friday when I don't have class please."

My academic career and my family are both top priorities for me. A degree can open many doors, which can make my family's life stable and suitable. My experience so far as a pregnant student has been challenging. As

the semester goes by, I just get bigger and bigger. I'm holding on to the hope that I will finish the semester and then deliver my baby, Alexander. My greatest challenge is about to come; motherhood is a challenge for which a degree cannot prepare me. Dirty diapers, making bottles and waking up around 2 or 3 a.m. are some of the things I'm looking forward to. The long hours and lack of sleep do not scare me. After all, my due date is the week of finals.



Kimberly Olivarez
The Signal

"It's hard to study when my bundle of joy is kicking and moving around in my tummy like a washing machine."

- Kimberly Olivarez
The Signal Reporter

The journey, not the destination

It is Dec. 8. I will graduate in eleven days.

I embarked on this journey more than four years ago. It has been sometimes difficult, and always long. Yet, I linger.

The path is familiar; I know it well. My life has passed in classrooms, and I have come to find comfort within their walls.

I have always loved books, so it is no surprise that I have spent my days within their pages.

My impending graduation stirs up a range of emotions. I exult in the culmination of my studies while I wistfully prepare for life beyond the stage.

There is truth in the saying that life is about the journey, not the destination. Life happens during the journey. Trials are overcome and victories won.

It is the challenge of the climb that makes the summit so sweet. The destination is merely the passage from one journey to the next.

I will arrive at my destination soon. I believe my heart will pound with trepidation and excitement as I cross the stage and leave the life I have known behind and greet the one that lies before.

Even now, I reminisce of my days at Lee College and University of Houston – Clear Lake.

Daylight Saving Time ended. I set my clock back, the catchy little phrase went through my mind: Fall back, spring forward.

Such a time is this. My heart yearns

to fall back into the arms of familiarity, while the stage ahead beckons me to spring forward into the unknown.

I will cherish these days preceding graduation. I can only imagine the bittersweet emotion that will wash over me as I type the last period on my last paper.

A period signifies the end. It signifies completion. On that day, how symbolic that period shall be.

Eleven days. I have been waiting for this day for so long; it is hard to believe it is almost here.

Crowned with a cap and enrobed with a gown, I shall receive my reward. For a moment in time, I shall inhabit my destination.

Then I will descend from the

stage - that sweet summit – onto a path untrod. As the days pass by, I know that the uncertain shall become clear; and the path once feared shall become as dear as the one before.

The lights are dim. The curtain is closing. There

will be no encore. Life does not allow repeat performances.

I will leave the stage. I will travel on and carve new paths.

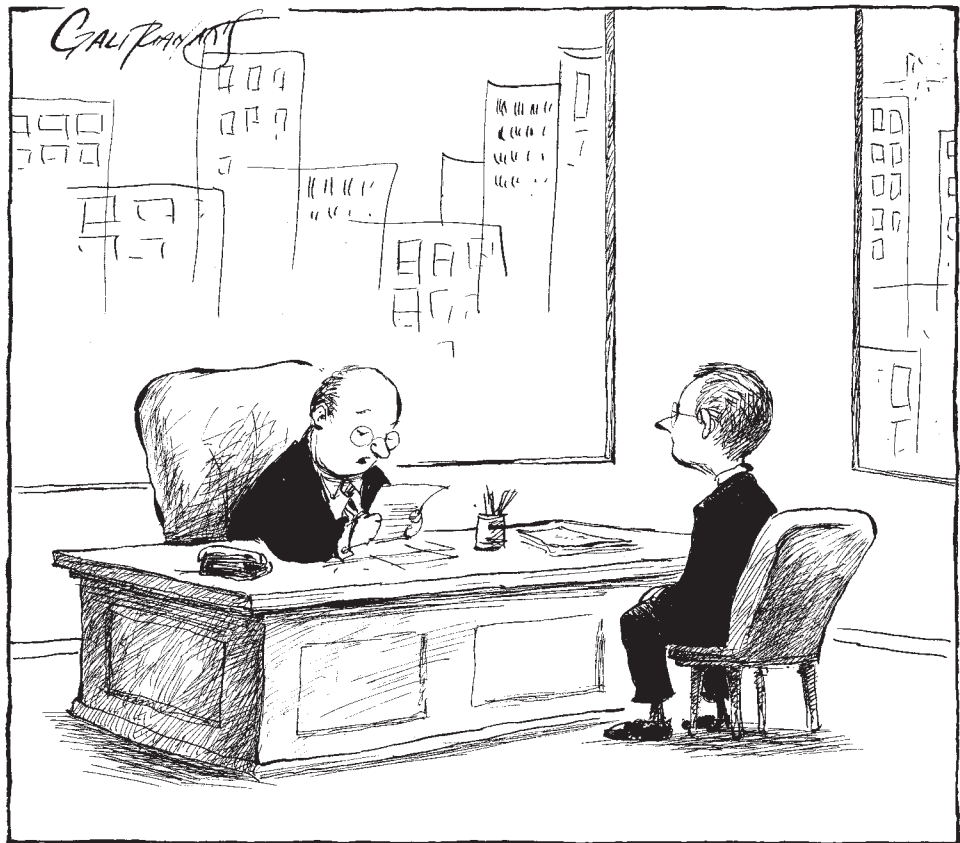
It is the flow of the river that shapes the rocks.



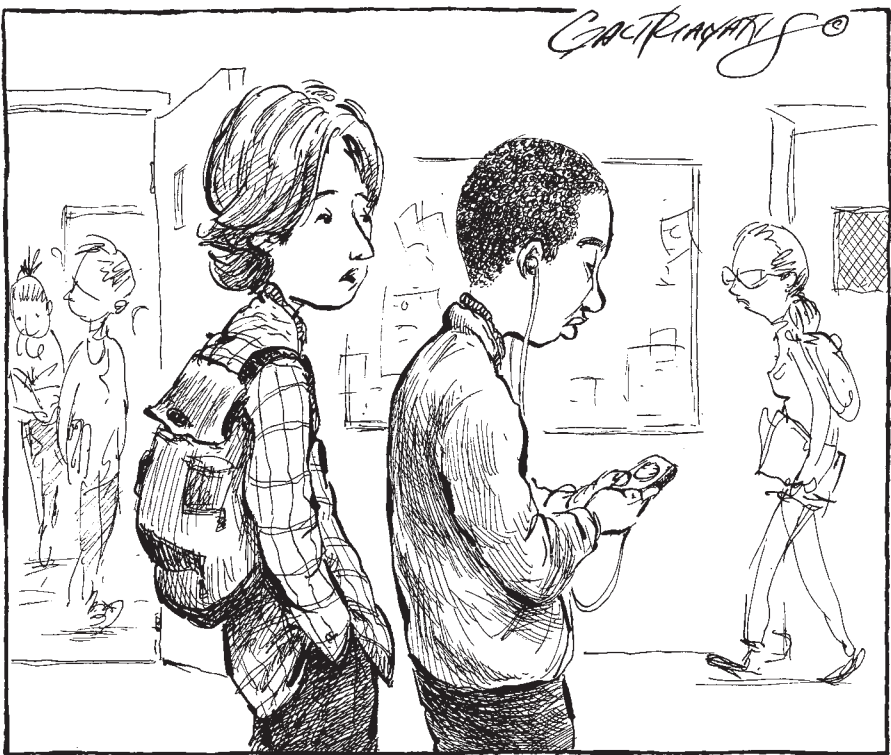
Stacy Parent
The Signal

"There is truth in the saying that life is about the journey, not the destination."

- Stacy Parent
The Signal Reporter



I SEE YOU NEVER GOT INTO TROUBLE IN HIGH SCHOOL.



TELL YOUR MOM THAT TRUSTING YOU MEANS TRUSTING SHE RAISED YOU WELL. MY MOM'S A SUCKER FOR THAT.

Houston Brings Dinosaurs Back!



Srshti Saini:The Signal

Velociraptor, a carnivore that lived in the late Cretaceous Period, hunted in packs using its most formidable weapon, the curved claws on its hind feet.

Srshti Saini
The Signal Staff

An exhibition featuring Leonardo, the oldest plant-eating dinosaur fossil ever discovered, is on display at the Houston Museum of Natural Science through Jan. 11, 2009.

Leonardo is a 77-million-year-old dinosaur mummy found covered with soft tissue – skin, scales, muscle, and foot pads. The actual tissue was replaced by minerals over the years.

Leonardo is a brachylophosaurus, a plant-eating dinosaur fossil. It is classified as a mummy because of the soft tissue that is preserved. After careful observation, Leonardo helped scientists discover what a plant-eating dinosaur ate; his last meal consisted of leaves, including ferns, magnolias and conifers.

In addition to Leonardo, one of the exhibitions’ other



Srshti Saini:The Signal

Tyrannosaurus, found in a variety of rock formations dating back to the last three million years of the Cretaceous Period, was among the first non-avian dinosaurs to exist prior to Cretaceous-Tertiary extinction.

displays is Triceratops, a horned dinosaur or ceratopsian. Triceratops

were one of the largest of the horned dinosaurs that lived at the end of the Cretaceous Period. Triceratops probably used their frills and horns for protection against predators.

In Western Cretaceous Seaway, United States’ and Canada’s rock formations were deposited. The seaway extended from the Gulf of Mexico to the Arctic. It preserved the animals that lived in the seaway, such as ammonites, fish and marine reptiles – plesiosaurs, mosasaurs and sea turtles.

Also on exhibit is a Stegoceras. This plant-eating dinosaur drinks from a waterfall while keeping alert to avoid possible danger from the unseen predators. The skull of the Stegoceras has a thick, bony dome surrounded by a fringe of horny lumps and knobs.

In the exhibition, visitors can explore the history and discovery of some unique and amazing fossils, or amuse themselves with the video of “Dinosaur Mummy CSI

Timeline” shown through the exhibition.

The national funding for Dinosaur Mummy CSI: Cretaceous Science Investigation is provided by Carestream Health, ConAm, Eastman Kodak, Ford Motor Company, NDT Group, Randa Trucking and Sealed Air; and the local funding is provided by BP, Spectra Energy and Weatherford International Ltd.

Entrance to Dinosaur Mummy CSI costs \$12 for university and college students. To plan your trip, visit the Houston Museum of Natural Science Web site, www.hmns.org.



Triceratops Skull

Vagina Monologues raise awareness

Ashley Helms
The Signal Staff

“My vagina a live wet water village. They invaded it. Butchered it. And burned it down.”

A small fragment extracted from the award-winning off-Broadway show, *The Vagina Monologues*, does not begin to give justice to the many chilling stories of more than 200 women told to Eve Ensler, abuse victim and playwright.

The Vagina Monologues is not only about overcoming sexual abuse, but also about how women relate to their bodies in general. It is not all about abuse or torture; it is also full of laughter and feelings of empowerment. The play has won an Obie award and has been shown in more than 20 countries. Ensler is also the founder of V-Day, an annual event taking place around Valentine’s Day.

Kara Kurczeski, coordinator of women and lesbian, gay, bi-sexual and transgender services at University of Houston-Clear Lake, and fellow students are trying to raise awareness of sexual violence by hosting a benefit event for the V-Day campaign where they will put on a production of the *The Vagina Monologues*.

Each year the national campaign chooses to “spotlight” a certain group of people or a part of the world that is adversely affected by violence against women. The Spotlight Campaign provides awareness about issues that mainstream America might not have heard of otherwise. This year the focus is on the Democratic Republic of Congo.

“Rape and sexual torture are used in the DRC as a

weapon and tactic of war,” Kurczeski said. “Women’s bodies are the battleground.”

The campaign is organized through the Web site www.vday.org. This site has resources and information about how to end violence against women. It is the home to *The Vagina Monologues* and other plays by Ensler, and the V-Day College Campaign, of which UHCL is a part. It also provides resources to high school and college students as well as to the public on how to end violence against women in their communities and how to get men involved in the movement.

“I really hope that we can get more men involved in this movement,” Kurczeski said. “Sexual violence affects men too. Not only are one in thirty-three men sexually assaulted, but they likely have mothers, daughters, sisters, friends, and wives that have been affected.”

The V-Day Web site also gives the history of V-Day, and the play, as well as tips that will help visitors understand the importance of ending violence against women. It includes testimonials from women and men and lets you submit your own testimonial by e-mailing it to info@vday.org.

“When I read *The Vagina Monologues* in high school, I felt like I had found salvation,” said Tova Feldmanstern in her testimonial. “This was a message that every woman, man and child needed to hear. It was truth and beauty and hope, and you didn’t even have to believe in God to see that. I wanted to spread it like gospel... I believe that there

is not a man, woman or child who would not benefit from seeing the light of *The Vagina Monologues*.”

The auditions for UHCL’s production of *The Vagina Monologues* were held the first week of December and were open to anyone who identified themselves as a woman. Everyone who tried out will have a role in the production.

The performance will be held Feb. 13 and 14 in the Bayou Theatre. Presale tickets are \$3 for students with a current UHCL ID and \$5 for faculty, staff and the general public. Tickets are available at the door for \$5 for students with a current UHCL ID and \$7 for faculty, staff and the general public. The presale tickets are available in the office of Intercultural

and International Student Services in the Student Services and Classroom Building, Room 1203. The money raised will go toward the V-Day’s Spotlight Campaign and to local organization Bay Area Turning Point. Donations are also welcome. For more information on tickets or the play contact Kara Kurczeski at kurczeski@uhcl.edu.

“I’d like to encourage everyone to come to *The Vagina Monologues*,” Kurczeski said. “The title may make you uncomfortable and the topic may sound weird, but ultimately two things will happen: you will assist your community organizations in ending violence against women and you will undoubtedly be moved to laughter and tears.”

“When I read The Vagina Monologues in high school, I felt like I had found salvation.”

- Tova Feldmanstern
from her testimonial

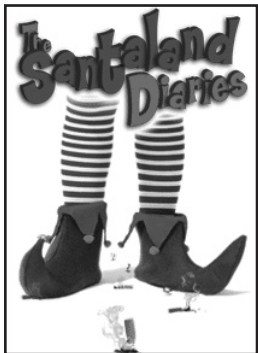
UPCOMING EVENTS



The Heritage Society's 46th Annual Candlelight Tour Dec. 12 – 13 Sam Houston Park, 6:30 – 9:30 p.m. Tickets: \$5 – \$10 Call 713-655-1912 to purchase tickets.



Irving Berlin's White Christmas at Theatre Under the Stars Through Dec. 21. Call the box office at 713-588-TUTS or visit www.tuts.com for ticket prices and show times.



David Sedaris' The Santaland Diaries at Alley Theatre Through Dec. 28. Call the box office at 713-222-5700 or visit www.alleytheatre.org for ticket prices and showtimes.



The Radio City Christmas Spectacular at Toyota Center Jan. 2 – 4, 2009. Visit www.houston-toyotacenter.com or call 866-4HOUTIX for tickets.



Blake Sharp: The Signal

Visitors enjoy the rare treat of ice skating in Houston at The Ice at Discovery Green. The rink will be open through Jan. 19, 2009.

DISCOVERING HOUSTON'S GREENER HOLIDAY SIDE

Discovery Green offers eco-friendly family fun in the heart of downtown

Blake Sharp
The Signal Staff

With its direct proximity to the George R. Brown Convention Center, Minute Maid Park and the Toyota Center, Houston's recently opened Discovery Green is having no problem attracting visitors.

Since its grand opening April 13, the 12-acre park has yet to go a day without anyone utilizing its eco-friendly art, dining or recreational features. These features include, but are not limited to, a one-acre lake, amphitheater, dog runs and multiple public art works.

The park is the brainchild of Mayor Bill White who wanted to provide for the community a place to interact, retreat and simply have fun. The mayor officially began construction of the \$122 million park in October 2006, replacing concrete parking lots with lush greenery and interesting attractions. Discovery Green also offers free Wi-Fi Internet for those who want to check their e-mail or get some work done while enjoying the park.

"The exercise classes are what originally got me interested in coming here," said Lorraine Newton, a frequent park visitor. "There are a lot of different classes, but I usually do the pilates on Tuesday evenings after work."

Along with pilates, zumba and yoga classes, there is also an organic produce market for health-conscious shoppers. The Central City Co-Op's Downtown Green Market is open every Thursday from 4 to 7:30 p.m. and features 100 percent organic produce and live cooking demonstrations.

As Discovery Green matures, there are increasing amounts of activities added to the daily itineraries. For entertainment purposes, there are happy hour concerts every Thursday from 6 to 8:30 p.m., as well as concerts and other entertainment provided on Sundays from 1 to 3 p.m.

For eco-friendly people, the park features Recycling Saturdays, from 8 a.m. to noon. Anyone can bring recyclable materials to the park's drop-off location and enjoy product demonstrations and activities that promote a cleaner and healthier lifestyle.

Along with health and entertainment, the park also offers educational activities. Saturdays are filled with learning activities for children and young adults to enjoy. Young Writers Workshops, classes that teach writing techniques and strategies, are held every Saturday from 10:30 to 11:30 a.m. For younger kids, the Children's Discovery Series is held on Saturdays from noon to 1 p.m.

The park also offers seasonal activities, and what better way to bring in the holiday season than with an outdoor ice rink. The Ice at Discovery Green is a Houston Chronicle-sponsored event that features ice skating on Kinder Lake for all ages, snacks, gift shops and a toddler-friendly ice rink called the Snow Box.

"I love the ice rink because it allows my husband and I to relax and enjoy the scenery while our kids get rid of some of their energy out there," said Marie Espinosa, a park visitor. The Ice runs from Nov. 27 through Jan. 19, 2009, and skate rental is included in the \$10 admission cost.

Another holiday event is the ice carving competition Jan. 10. Ice artists from all around the U.S. will compete to see who can create the best artwork using only chainsaws and blowtorches. Park visitors can watch for free as competitors attempt to turn huge blocks of ice into masterpieces.

With all Discovery Green has to offer, it has proved to be a beneficial investment and a welcome addition to Houston's growing list of attractions. For more information, call the Discovery Green Conservancy at 713-400-7336.



Blake Sharp: The Signal

Pictorial globes featuring snapshots taken of children hang from trees in the park.



Blake Sharp: The Signal

Waterworks situated next to one of Discovery Green's restaurants provide visitors relief from the frequent Houston heat – even in December.



Blake Sharp: The Signal

The Mist Tree, located next to the children's playground, is visible from beyond the park's grounds and offers yet another way for Houstonians to beat the heat in the summer.

FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS at Moody Gardens

Story, photos and design by Jessica Taylor



Nothing puts an extra skip in your step, twinkle in your eye or warmth in your heart like the nearing of the holiday season. Moody Gardens in Galveston is aiding once again in lifting the spirits of those who visit their seventh annual Festival of Lights.

An event many have made a holiday tradition, FOL at Moody Gardens features dozens of twinkling light displays set on a winding, yet easily walked, trail that reflect beautifully off of a recently darkened Galveston Bay.

When you think of a holiday festival location, Galveston may not be the locale you picture since cold weather is scarce and snow is almost impossible. However, the comparatively mild weather of southeast Texas is a welcome change for some.

“It’s a lot warmer than back home,” said Mitch Vauva, who brought his family to the festival Nov. 29. “It’s a welcome change from the below-freezing temperatures in Nebraska.”

The event includes live holiday-themed music and entertainment nightly, as well as the holiday-themed film “The Light Before Christmas,” which is shown during festival hours in the IMAX Theater. The festival does not skip on educating those who visit. A short explanation on how stop-motion animation is used to create the film follows the feature presentation.

The Ridefilm Theater allows guests to buckle up their seat belts and experience the thrills of “Santa’s Late,” and “Glacier Run.” The festival also includes showings of “Polar Express 4D” in the 4D Special FX Theater. The experience includes special effects like rumbling seats that mimic an actual train ride, snow, wind and the smell of hot

chocolate that make viewers feel like a part of the film.

The Aquarium Pyramid and Colonel Paddlewheel Boat rides are included in the festival, and a holiday buffet is offered in the

Garden Restaurant located inside the Visitors Center from 4 to 9 p.m. every night the festival is open.

The first large-scale event on the island since Hurricane Ike, FOL illuminates a Galveston that continues to recover from the September storm. Not only does FOL literally light up a still dark and damaged island, it brings much-needed visitor commerce to a struggling Galveston economy.

“It’s really important that people come out to FOL to support the Galveston economy,” said Monica Stout, communications coordinator at Moody Gardens. “Galveston needs the help of visitors to get back on its feet again.”

Moody Gardens was not spared the wrath of Hurricane Ike, and this year’s FOL is different as a result.

“The trail was previously a mile long,” Stout said. “Many of the electrical components in the ground used for FOL got damaged, so the trail is only three-eighths of a mile long this year.”

There are usually more than a million sparkling lights, whereas there are fewer light displays this year. The ice rink and gated snow pits that are usually included will also not be available at this year’s FOL due to the storm.

The team at Moody Gardens has not let the obvious setbacks deter them from bringing new traditions to this year’s FOL. Island Star Performances’ *The Gift of Christmas – Live* will be held at the Moody Gardens Convention Center Dec. 18 - 28. The event includes a traditional, three-course Christmas dinner prepared by award-winning Executive Chef Urs Schmid, as well as a show featuring young Texas talent.

Despite the many setbacks, the perseverance of FOL is an example of the undying spirit of Galveston Island and exemplifies the spirit of the holidays. Although Galveston is not yet in premium condition, regular festival-goers have not been deterred.

“We love it,” said festival-goer Carrie Cunningham. “We come every year.”

The event began Nov. 22 when Santa Claus parachuted down to switch on the lights, and will run through Dec. 31. Festival hours are from 6 to 10 p.m. Thursday through Saturday Nov. 22 - Dec. 18, and nightly Dec. 18 - 31.

Admission into the Festival of Lights is \$3.95 per person. Tickets to additional attractions including the holiday IMAX film, the Aquarium Pyramid, holiday Ridefilm and Colonel Paddlewheel Boat can be purchased for \$5 each with a FOL ticket. A special evening pass will be sold beginning at 4:45 p.m., which includes admission to the Festival of Lights and all of the Moody Gardens attractions for \$19.

For more information, call Moody Gardens at 800-582-4673 or visit www.moodygardens.org.



Counter-clockwise from top: The “Moody Ville” display at Festival of Lights; a jovial Chef Santa Claus displays the holiday buffet menu in front of the Garden Room in the Visitors Center at Moody Gardens; the “Moody Station” display invites walkers and train-riders alike; a large Christmas Tree made out of poinsettias graces the hall in the Visitors Center at Moody Gardens; a nativity scene at Festival of Lights dazzles in the dark of night.

The Season of Giving

Story and photos by
Amy Carr

Christmas is a time to give. Maybe that’s why so many people get into the spirit of the holidays by going out of their way to buy the perfect gifts for their friends and loved ones. Every year, a week or two before Thanksgiving, shopping malls and department stores prepare for the holidays because the day after Thanksgiving is the busiest shopping day of the year. This day is called Black Friday.

Every Black Friday people camp out in front of stores early in the morning or even the night before so they can be among the first in line. This year on Black Friday several tragedies occurred. Perhaps the saddest involved the employee killed at a Wal-Mart in Long Island, New York; shoppers broke down the doors and trampled the man to death. Store employees who tried to help rescue the man from the crowd were knocked down with him. Four other people were injured, including a woman who was eight months pregnant.

Commercially, Black Friday was a huge success this year despite the dire predictions. Although the economy is low, many people still managed to come out for the deals and they spent 3 percent more than they did last year.

For many years our society has depended on malls and their decorations to build-up our Christmas spirit. Most parents take their kids to visit Santa Claus at the mall so the kids can tell Santa what they want for Christmas.

shoppers.

“I’ve had my moments where I would like to turn around and go home,” said Rachel Voigt, a regular Black Friday shopper. “The crowds are too much for me to handle at times.”

Despite the crowds and the lines, the lure of discounted merchandise is too big for many to ignore. It can be hard for shoppers to budget their money when the appeal of everything on sale is so great.

“I have to make a list and stick by that list or else I will be tempted to buy things I don’t need,” Voigt said. “I go through my coupons and make sure I don’t buy anything that is not on sale. I have been going shopping the day after Thanksgiving for the last six years. I don’t always buy, but I do like to go out and see what things are being offered.”

For many Americans today, malls are a big part of what gets them into the spirit of Christmas. The stores are filled with lit Christmas trees, presents wrapped with beautiful ribbon, and displays of festive decorations. Around the holidays, the mall is full of joyful, Christmas music. Everywhere you walk, there are the sights, sounds and smells of Christmas.

In the movie “A Christmas Story,” Ralphie really wants a Red Ryder BB gun. When all the adults seem to conspire against him – “You’ll shoot your eye out,

kid” – he knows the only way he’ll ever get his wish is to go over their heads and tell Santa. So where does he go? The local department store of course. If there had been a mall in the 1940s, that is where Ralphie would have gone to find Santa.



Amy Carr: The Signal

The Galleria’s Christmas Tree sits in the center of the ice rink for all to see.



Amy Carr: The Signal

Left: Alexis Pikoff, 6, sits on Santa’s lap at the Galleria while her brother Harrison, 4, and mother Erin pose beside them.
Right: A display of Godiva chocolate taunts Macy’s shoppers.

A NUTCRACKER CHRISTMAS

Amy Parsons
The Signal

Visions of sugarplums, or the Sugar Plum Fairy, fill the stage at University of Houston-Clear Lake’s Bayou Theater.

Bay Area Houston Ballet and Theatre, the Bay Area’s professional ballet company, presented its annual production of “The Nutcracker,” Dec. 5-7 and continues Dec. 12-14, as its 2008-2009 season, “A Season With Sizzle!” continues.

“The Nutcracker” is an amazing journey that begins when the mysterious Dr. Drosselmeyer gives young Clara a nutcracker at a holiday party. Clara falls asleep with the nutcracker in her arms and is taken on a magical adventure with dancing dolls, toy soldiers, the Rat King, the Nutcracker Prince and the Sugar Plum Fairy.



Heather Steele as the Sugar Plum Fairy.

BAHBT has been performing this beloved ballet for 32 years. Their performances were brought to UHCL in 1983, after Hurricane Alicia damaged their facility.

“We needed a location, so we went to UHCL and we’ve been there ever since,” said Jill Reason, volunteer executive director. “We love it. The intimacy of the UHCL auditorium is great. There is not a bad seat in the house.”

This year’s production of “The Nutcracker” has a cast of almost 200. There are two different casts for the six performances, except for the major roles which will be performed by the paid professional company dancers. BAHBT staff and dancers are volunteers, ranging in age from four to 77.

Heather Steele performed as the Sugar Plum Fairy during the first weekend of “The Nutcracker.”

“It’s wonderful. It’s awesome. It’s nerve-racking, but it’s great,” Steele said. “They [the cast] are all like professional level dancers who are hardworking and treat it like they are pros.”

On the second weekend of this year’s performances, a guest artist, Carrie Leigh Riggins, will perform the role of the Sugar Plum

Fairy. Riggins has performed with the New York City Ballet and was recently seen in performances of BAHBT’s “Dance Combustion.”

“The New York City Ballet is arguably the most prestigious ballet company in the U.S. and for us to have the honor and privilege to have a star of her caliber is wonderful,” said Lynette Mason Gregg, volunteer artistic director and founder of BAHBT.

Two young dancers, Ashton Reason, 13, and Erinn Jaet, 13, will perform in their debut roles as the story’s main character, Clara. Reason and Jaet will share the role in different performances throughout the ballet’s run this season.

“It’s every little girl’s dream to get to be Clara,” Jaet said.

“I’m really excited to have the main role,” Reason said. “There are a lot of rehearsals. It’s busy, but it’s fun.”

Both girls have been performing in “The Nutcracker” as ginger children, cooks and party girls for years. This will be Reason’s ninth year and Jaet’s seventh year in this ballet.

Eric Anderson, 12, will perform the role of the Nutcracker Prince.

“It’s fun,” Anderson said. “It’s a lot of responsibility, but it’s fun knowing that kind of pressure is on you.”

Anderson has been dancing since he was 8 years old.

“The Nutcracker” is the kick start to the Christmas season,” Reason said. “It’s a magical tradition for young and old alike.”

BAHBT will have evening and matinee performances of “The Nutcracker” Dec. 12-14 in Bayou Theater, Bayou Building, Room 2604. Tickets start at \$25. Student and group discounts are available. For tickets and information, call 281-480-1617.



Amy Parsons: The Signal

Clara, played by Ashton Reason, enjoys a holiday party with her family and friends in BAHBT’s production of “The Nutcracker,” at UHCL’s Bayou Theater.

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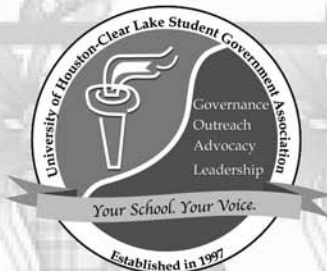
Happy Holidays!

**Our next meeting will be
Tuesday, January 20, 2009**

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CALENDAR

December 8 – 13
Fall 2008 Final Exam Period

December 12
Career Exploration
Workshop #3,
8:30 a.m.-5 p.m.
\$25 for UHCL students.
Requires intake appointment.
Call 281-283-2590.

December 18
Commencement Kick-Off,
5:30-7 p.m., Bayou Atrium I
Tickets available in
Student Life Office, SSCB I.204.
Call 281-283-2041.

December 19
Fall 2008 Grades Available over
UHCL Telephone Registration
System and E-Services

Fall 2008 Commencement,
7 p.m., Reliant Arena

January 16
Fee Payment Deadline for
Spring 2009 Early & Open
Registratioin

January 17 – 27
Spring 2009 Late Registration

January 20
First Class Day of Spring 2009

January 28
Fee Payment Deadline for
Spring 2009 Late Registration

**Ongoing through
January 5**
“Along the Rio Grande:
A New World Becoming,”
Monday – Thursday:
8 a.m.-5 p.m.,
Friday: 8 a.m.-noon,
Bayou Art Gallery
Call 281-283-2480.

**Ongoing through
January 16**
Spring 2009 Open Registration
& Open Enrollment
Applications for admission
must be received by January 14.
Call 281-283-2500.



Shay Davis
Fitness Zone

Holiday season is right around the corner and it is the time that people get sick and eat too much! I have had many people ask me “what are some good tips to keep in mind during this holiday season?” So, I thought this would be a great article for everyone.

Wellness is the quality or state of being healthy in body and mind; the condition of good physical and mental health, especially when maintained by proper diet, exercise and habits.

A simple reminder for this upcoming holiday season is to get a flu shot. If you are elderly, have a chronic disease (such as diabetes and arthritis), have a compromised immune system, or if you just want to play it safe, get a flu shot. Flu shots are available in Health Services (on campus) for Students, Faculty, and Staff for only \$25. There is no appointment needed.

Another helpful reminder

for the season is to wash your hands. Many people disregard this suggestion, but it helps to protect you against the common cold and other germs. Also, avoid sick people if you can. It may be difficult if you have a sick loved one, but try to avoid prolonged contact with large groups of sick people (children, nursing homes, etc.).

Because the holidays are coming up, it is easy for us to participate in eating habits that we wouldn’t normally participate in regularly. However, you can make smaller healthier choices and still enjoy food, family and fun during the holidays.

Simple choices can go a long way with not indulging too much in your favorite holiday dishes. For example, between visits or meals, aim for fruit and vegetables. I know some of you like salt; however, you do NOT have to add salt to everything you eat. Easy on the salt please!

Try to limit your foods after 8 p.m. For those who visit

with family and friends late at night during the holidays, fruits and vegetables are great late-night substitutions. Your body can easily burn off fruits and vegetables compared to heavy turkey and dressing.

Also, try a new food with each meal. This can be something simple as adding a small salad to your first plate and maybe a whole grain roll on your second plate.

Staying fit during the holidays can also be a challenge. The holidays are a time to celebrate and we can make the best of it. We eat, we drink and we indulge. At the end of the evening, we feel bloated and sleepy. With the holidays, it is a common understanding that unlimited eating and less exercise is expected. But adding exercise to your holiday plans can be easy.

Here are some fit tips to try for the holidays:

- Shorten your cardio – instead of your normal 45 minute cardio workout, try 15-30 minutes.
- Exercise whenever and

wherever you can – this is great when there are a lot of children. Chasing them around is fun and beneficial at the same time!

• Make it a family affair – if it’s nice outside, go for a stroll with family members around the neighborhood or around the corner. It’s more fun when everyone participates.

Although the holidays are coming up and you don’t want to eat as much as last year, remember to have fun and enjoy yourself. Try to nibble on food throughout the day instead of stuffing all of the stuffing at once! If you can, try to skip the gravy, dressing and high calorie condiments. Don’t forget to drink plenty of water this holiday season. Finally, if you are going to have more than one dessert plate, try to have smaller dessert servings.

Enjoy and have a safe holiday season from the Fitness Zone family!

2008 Santa’s Christmas Magic: The Musical
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Mentoring: continued from page 1

it is the right path for them.

Anthony Jenkins, dean of students, has dealt with both types of students. Jenkins, a first-generation student himself, had the support of his mother. She connected him with many successful people who mentored him and got him to where he is today. His experience taught him how much of a difference it can make when there is somebody there for support.

The second group of students is the group Jenkins feels needs additional outside support. They must convince their family that college is the right thing to do and that it is not a negative thing.

“They walk in dual worlds,” Jenkins said. “They have to walk in their family world and not skip a beat, and they have to walk in this uncharted world called higher education. That takes a lot of tenacity; it takes a lot of determination and a lot of drive.”

The key to success for these students is for the universities to reach out with mentoring and developmental programs. Both Jenkins and Bullock have seen the difference mentoring can make on a student.

“It is imperative for institutions of higher learning to make sure that first-generation

students have a campus environment that embraces them and embraces their culture,” Jenkins said. “That it is demonstrated through every facet of the campus, through the academic curriculum, through Web site presentation and through the university’s homepage that you see continuum of diversity. The university must take the lead in making these students feel valued.”

Being comfortable, feeling valued and having the resources available to succeed are all important for first-generation college students. Bullock feels diversity in staff is also important to the success of students. If students see people like them in place, they will feel more comfortable asking the questions they need to succeed. Bullock, also a first-generation student, had her mother to push her to go to college and received support at home.

“Each generation is supposed to get better than the previous,” Jenkins said. “Hopefully you will live a better life than your parents and, hopefully, your children will live a better life than you. That is the evolutionary process and higher education plays a significant role in that.”

School of Education offers new degree for teachers

Andrea Drake
Signal Staff

The University of Houston-Clear Lake has introduced a new degree certification. The UHCL School of Education has added a Bachelor of Science in Interdisciplinary Studies with an EC-6 Reading (concentration) Generalist Certification.

The School of Education’s Office of Academic Advising staff counselors will guide students concerning initial certification, supplemental certificates, professional certificates and UHCL certificates.

Information for the Bachelor of Science in Interdisciplinary Studies degree is available for students in the Office of Academic Advising and online. The office has a list of all core requirements, lower level courses and field of study courses. Counselors will introduce prerequisite courses for admission to the Teacher Education Program, Academic Specialization, Pedagogy and other required courses that include 12 hours of science. Admission for the degree plan will be accepted pending the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board approval.

There are two options for students seeking the Interdisciplinary Studies program. The first option is to teach early childhood years that consist of children from pre-kindergarten to the second grade. The second option is to teach grades 3-6. Both options will provide more course work and preparation skills for teaching these grades.

The Interdisciplinary program brings together training skills for child development with early childhood education and family relations. By

combining theory and practice, students can leap forward into a professional career in education. The EC-6 Reading Generalist Certification enhances students aptitude for teaching methods and instructional strategies.

The Interdisciplinary program teaches curriculum design and assessment, theories of educational psychology, classroom management and discipline, critical thinking and decision making skills, and organizational and communication skills.

A former UHCL student who attempted a degree in education, but changed her degree plan, says the new certification is a good idea.

“I was going to teach at the elementary school near my house as a special education teacher, but I needed more science background,” said Tracy Van Horne. “The additional science requirements for teachers will be a plus for future students.”

“As an NCATE-accredited School of Education, we continually seek from our students and school district partners about our programs,” said James Sherrill, school of education associate dean. “We’re excited to be able to offer these two new degree certifications to better serve the needs of our students and community.”

For information about the Bachelor of Science in Interdisciplinary Studies with an EC-6 Reading Generalist Certification contact the School of Education’s Office of Academic Advising.

Also check for state regulations and requirements on the Web site www.sbec.state.tx.us.

Yuletide: continued from page 1



Courtesy of Texas Parks & Wildlife Department

An excited party-goer joins Santa in a dance on the platform outside of the Battleship Texas.

was assigned to a mission called Operation Magic Carpet. On this mission, the Texas made five trips from San Pedro to the Pacific to bring American military personnel home.

Another event to take place on Battleship Texas on Dec. 13 is Santa’s Swingin’ ‘40s Christmas. Families will be able to take their picture with Santa Claus aboard the Texas, enjoy 1940s swing music and drink hot wassail. Kids can send a letter to Santa via the naval post office drop box located on the ship.

“These events started two years ago and it’s awesome to see the kids’ faces light up with excitement,” said Angela McCleaf, curator of Battleship Texas. “This is a nice way to give back to our community.”

Battleship Texas BB-35 was commissioned in 1914 in Virginia and was one of only two battleships that served in both World War I and World War II. In 1946, the Texas was decommissioned. It became the first memorial ship and the United States’ first battleship claimed as a national historic landmark.

For more information about the Battleship Texas, visit their Web site www.tpwd.state.tx.us or call 281-479-2431.

Theft: continued from page 1

not meet the minimum standards already in place in the local districts,” Scoggins said. “Public schools in other areas of the state have shown interest, but geographic distance has made it cost-prohibitive for them to use UHCL as a resource.

“In accordance with state policy, retired computers not transferred to public schools or not covered by UHCL’s vendor trade-in agreement are transferred to Texas Department of Criminal Justice. To request a pick-up, UHCL must have enough equipment to fill a TDCJ truck. Since the majority of UHCL’s retired computers are traded-in, TDCJ pick-ups are not frequent.”

“Trade allowances for retired computers are received when new computers are purchased under UHCL’s Desktop Project. Allowances are itemized as credits on the vendor’s invoices, thereby reducing the final cost of the replacements. Desktop Project computers are replaced three years from their in-service dates.

Jones said there has never been such a major theft by an employee at UHCL.

“Employee thefts are very few and far between,” Jones said. “They are generally minor.”

Campus police are unable to comment further on the circumstances of the crime because the proceedings are ongoing.

Officials were unable to comment on the employment status of the individual.

Christmas: continued from page 1

The small bit of good news for shoppers this Christmas is that stores are also reeling from these same circumstances, which means lower prices for the consumer. Even before Black Friday, stores had already begun rolling out the red tags. Businesses are left with little choice after the downward shift in the economy and survey after survey predicting that shoppers are going to be much thrifter this year.

Consumers really have no choice but to be thrifter, especially those hit hardest by Ike. Most in the Galveston area, and coastal communities like Shoreacres and Seabrook, cannot even live in their homes; they are forced to temporarily take residence in motels, or with friends or family, or in tents or pop-up trailers, or in what remains of their house despite its deplorable condition. Who has time to worry about buying extravagant gifts when they are still trying to rebuild their homes?

“We feel so blessed at just being able to be back in our home,” said Leona Roberts while holding back tears. The Roberts family had been living in a rent home for the past three months. “The little things like eating dinner together

in our own home we’d taken for granted.”

In the midst of all the adversity and uncertainty, there shines that glimmer of hope for a bright new year. The residents of these hurting communities like Galveston have kicked off this holiday season with festivities as usual in an attempt to get back some normalcy.

Friday, Nov. 28, was the annual tree lighting ceremony at the Hotel Galvez. Moody Gardens has already opened the Festival of Lights, which continues through Dec. 31. Even the East End Christmas Homes Tour went on as scheduled on Friday,

“We have been jolted back into the reality that family is the lifeline to everything in this life.”

- Julie Sparks
East Chambers County Resident

Dec. 5. As much as possible, those who have every excuse in the world to wallow in self-pity are, instead, trying to break through the devastation of this year and reclaim their lives, even if it means creating a new idea of a normal holiday season.

“It’s no longer a monetary thing; it gives us a chance to get back to the roots of what Christmas is really about,” said Shawn Schafer, whose home suffered a great deal of damage during the hurricane.

“The things that have happened this year could have destroyed our family’s way of life,” said Julie Sparks of East Chambers County who is still rebuilding her damaged home. “But instead, we have been jolted back into the reality that family is the lifeline to everything in this life.”

Roberts, Schafer, Sparks and even the Grinch are reminding everyone that Christmas means more than decorations and presents; it is about togetherness and love for our fellow man. This Christmas, with all its economy woes and rebuilding concerns, families have the chance to focus on the most important gift of all, each other.

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Exploring the Cincinnati Zoo: A Texan's Perspective

by Katherine Antes

As a native Texan, I am no stranger to heat and humidity, so when my husband's family from up north forewarned me about their "awful hot" summers in Cincy, I simply scoffed and dismissed the information as another exaggeration made by my inherited relatives.

I had no idea it could be as muggy and sauna-like in Cincinnati, Ohio, as it could be in the Bayou City from which I derive.

After spending a sweltering day in the Cincinnati Zoo in the middle of July, however, I am now a believer. If it weren't for the great exhibits and beautiful scenery found at the nation's second-oldest zoo, I surely would have succumbed to the heat.

As it were, I survived by taking many water breaks in the shade, visiting the creatively engineered, life-saving misting stations, and spending an hour dreamily watching the polar bear do the backstroke across a lap pool.

The Cincinnati Zoo has a wealth of interesting and educational information on its Web site to acquaint visitors with its history. The zoo opened in 1875 and originally consisted of 65 acres and a very small collection of assorted animals. Over the past 130 years, the zoo's collection has grown to include more than 500 animal and 3,000 plant species, making it one of the largest

zoo collections in the country. It is rated by peer zoological parks as one of the best zoos in the nation. As a testament to its popularity, more than 1.2 million people visit the zoo annually.

Interestingly, the zoo is also part of the city's public school system and hosts

a four-year college preparatory program – Zoo Academy. More than 300,000 students participate in the zoo's educational programs annually.

As my family and I made our way through the park, we especially enjoyed watching the giraffes playfully prancing around their pens in pursuit of rabbits. The rabbits happened to be wild, but had taken up residence in the lushly vegetated enclosure. We also enjoyed the carousel, so much so, in fact, that we rode it twice.

One attraction that stands out in my mind that was particularly exciting was the 4-D Special FX Theater attraction. It was a uniquely interactive experience to say the least. The best way to describe the

attraction is that it's a movie with "touch." The zoo describes the experience as "you'll see it. You'll move with it. You'll taste it and you'll even smell it. Believe it or not, it will even touch you." Every bit is true. You must experience it to believe it.

Additional interactive exhibits at the Cincinnati Zoo that we enjoyed included: "Great Manatees," "Vanishing Giants," "Lords of the Arctic," "Wings of the World: A Celebration of Flight" and "Wonders Down Under." The zoo also features endangered species such as black rhinos and Siegfried and Roy's white lions.

There is something for everyone at the Cincinnati Zoo, it

seems, no matter what your age. With lush landscaping, well-designed and maintained animal enclosures and an awesome array of animal species to discover and observe, my family and I had a fun (and educational) time exploring the park – in spite of the Texas-like heat.



Katherine Antes:TheSignal

This polar bear at the Cincinnati Zoo takes a break from swimming laps in his refreshing lap pool.



Katherine Antes:TheSignal

A pair of tigers snuggle at the Cincinnati Zoo as they enjoy the warmth of the sunshine after a short swim in their enclosure.

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