Serving the Cities of River Oaks and Westworth Village

River Oaks News

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From River Oaks News Staff Writers

CISD Board of Education Approves Contracts, Equipment Purchases at April 6 Meeting

The Castleberry Independent School District Board of Trustees approved a series of contracts, purchases and planning items during its regular meeting April 6.

Trustees approved minutes from the March 9 meeting and authorized a joint election agreement with Tarrant County Elections for the upcoming school board election, which will be held May 2.

Pictured above: At the April 6 meeting, Joseph Kelly, Assistant Principal of Castleberry High School, and Michelle Hoselton, CTE Instructional Coach, introduced students who recognized staff and students at Castleberry High School and in the CTE program who are en route to Destination Success.

Students honored Mrs. Dulce Luna, Spanish teacher; Chef Lacy Ferrier, culinary teacher; and Ms. Katherine Monzon, counselor.

Dr. Jennifer Garcia, Secondary ELA Coordinator, was also recognized for her dedication to tutoring English Language Arts retesters.

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From the City of River Oaks

Early Voting Locations, Hours Announced for Local Elections

Local residents will have several nearby options for early voting in the upcoming joint general and special elections, with polling locations open across the area beginning Monday, April 20.

Among the closest sites for residents are the White Settlement Public Library, located at 8215 White Settlement Road; Tarrant County College Northwest Campus, 4801 Marine Creek Parkway; and the River Oaks Event Center, 5300 Blackstone Drive.

Early voting will run April 20-28, with varying hours throughout the period. Polls will be open from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. on April 20. Voting will be closed April 21.

From April 22 through April 24, polling locations will again operate from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Extended hours will be offered April 25 and April 27-28, when polls will be open from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.

On April 26, voting hours will be 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Officials encourage residents to take advantage of early voting to avoid long lines on Election Day.

From the City of River Oaks

CRUD Mobile Offers Free Waste Disposal April 18

Residents can safely dispose of household chemical waste when the City of Fort Worth's CRUD Mobile visits City Hall from 9 to 11 a.m. Saturday, April 18. The free service is available to Fort Worth and participating city residents.

The mobile unit, part of the Environmental Collection Center, accepts items such as paint, motor oil, antifreeze, batteries, fertilizers, pesticides, pool chemicals, solvents, fluorescent bulbs and pharmaceuticals.

Items not accepted include ammunition, asbestos, building materials, electronics, explosives, medical waste, propane or butane cylinders, tires, televisions, smoke detectors and radioactive materials.

Residents should bring a recent water bill for proof of residency, keep items in original containers when possible, sort liquid paint by type and transport chemicals in the trunk.

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• ***Engagement Announcements*** must be published four weeks prior to the wedding. ***Wedding Announcements*** have a 350 word limit. ***Anniversaries*** are limited to 150 words. • ***Obituaries*** are limited to 250 words and cost $100.

Mistakes in stories or ads must be reported by Friday at 4 p.m. following Thursday's edition for corrections. Advertising payments are due by 10 a.m. Monday.

Castleberry ISD School Board Meeting

(continued from page 1)

The board also approved the district's 2026-27 certification of instructional materials, verifying that students have access to resources aligned with the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills standards in all required subjects, except physical education.

Additional approvals included renewal of auditing services with Hankins, Eastup, Deaton, Tonn and Seay for the 2025 fiscal year, the district's 2026-27 professional learning plan and a list of library books for purchase.

Trustees authorized facilities-related expenditures at Castleberry High School, including the purchase of HVAC equipment from TRANE Inc. not to exceed $255,000. The board also approved the purchase of 63 video surveillance cameras, 24 exterior and 39 interior, from Security Technology Solutions, totaling no more than $59,767.

Contract renewals for campus academic leaders, assistant principals and other professional staff for the 2026-27 school year were also approved.

During presentations, district staff provided updates on academic progress, finances and ongoing projects. Kristen Schmitt, third- through fifth-grade English language arts coordinator, and Whitney Harper, lead elementary coordinator, presented an update on the district improvement plan, focusing on third-grade reading and math outcomes.

Chief Financial Officer William Wooten led Budget Work Session III, outlining revenue estimates, expenditure planning and compensation priorities for the upcoming school year. He also delivered a monthly financial update.

Bond Program Manager Cameron Hollomon updated trustees on construction progress tied to the 2024 bond program at Castleberry High School, including early and Phase 1 work.

Superintendent Renee Smith-Faulkner and Zach Christensen of Centrix reviewed proposed districtwide projects involving LED lighting, HVAC systems, roofing and controls, aimed at reducing long-term operational costs.

Adrian Galvan of Baker Tilly Municipal Advisors presented a proposed plan of finance for the issuance of Maintenance Tax Notes, Series 2026, totaling approximately $5.56 million. The plan outlined infrastructure projects, projected savings, debt service requirements and the timeline for implementation.

Denise Chedville, director of assessment, advanced academics, instructional materials and parent and family engagement, also addressed the board regarding instructional materials certification.

In reports to the board, Wooten presented the monthly expenditure report covering Jan. 20 through Feb. 20, as well as the Tarrant County tax collection report, detailing monthly and year-to-date collections.

Athletics Director Didi Pierce provided an update on boys and girls soccer programs, highlighting successes and areas for improvement. Assistant Superintendent Lenny Lasher reported on capital improvement projects scheduled through the 2026-27 school year.

The next regular meeting of the Castleberry Independent School District Board of Trustees is scheduled for May 4. Meetings are held in the Castleberry Board Room located at 5228 Ohio Garden Fort Worth, TX 76114. Meeting Notices and Agendas are available to view on the district's website.

Castleberry ISD Welcomes Ginny Blickenstaff as the District's New Child Nutrition Director

Blickenstaff began her career in education 22 years ago and has since held leadership roles in both school nutrition and the private sector, but most recently served as Nutrition Services Program Manager in Portland Public Schools.

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Suburban Newspapers, Inc. Staff Writers

Fort Worth Botanic Garden to Host Free Earth Day Celebration April 24

The Fort Worth Botanic Garden will open the gates for a full day of free, family-friendly programming during its "*Neighbors in Nature: An Earth Day Celebration*" on Friday, April 24.

The event invites visitors of all ages to explore nature through interactive activities, wellness sessions and educational programs designed to inspire a deeper connection to the environment.

General admission to the garden will be free throughout the day, with a variety of scheduled events taking place across the grounds.

The celebration begins with an all-levels Vinyasa yoga session at 8 a.m., followed by family-friendly yoga classes at 9:30 a.m. and 2:30 p.m. on the Fuller Garden Lawn.

Children and families can also attend nature-themed story times with the Fort Worth Public Library at 9 a.m. and 2 p.m.

A native plant sale will run from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., offering visitors an opportunity to purchase plants suited for North Texas landscapes.

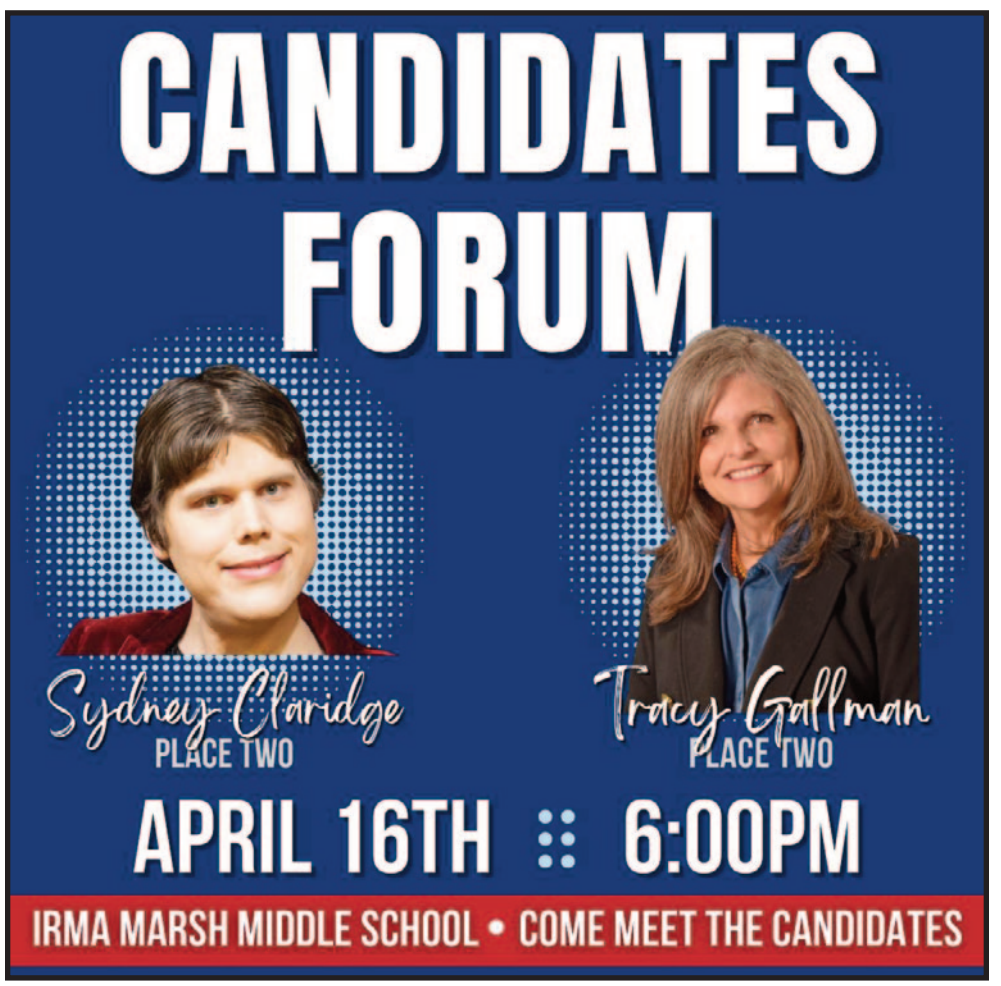
At 10 a.m., author Jill Mays will present "Your Child's Motor Development Story," focusing on the role of outdoor play and sensory exploration in childhood development. Admission to the presentation requires a ticket.

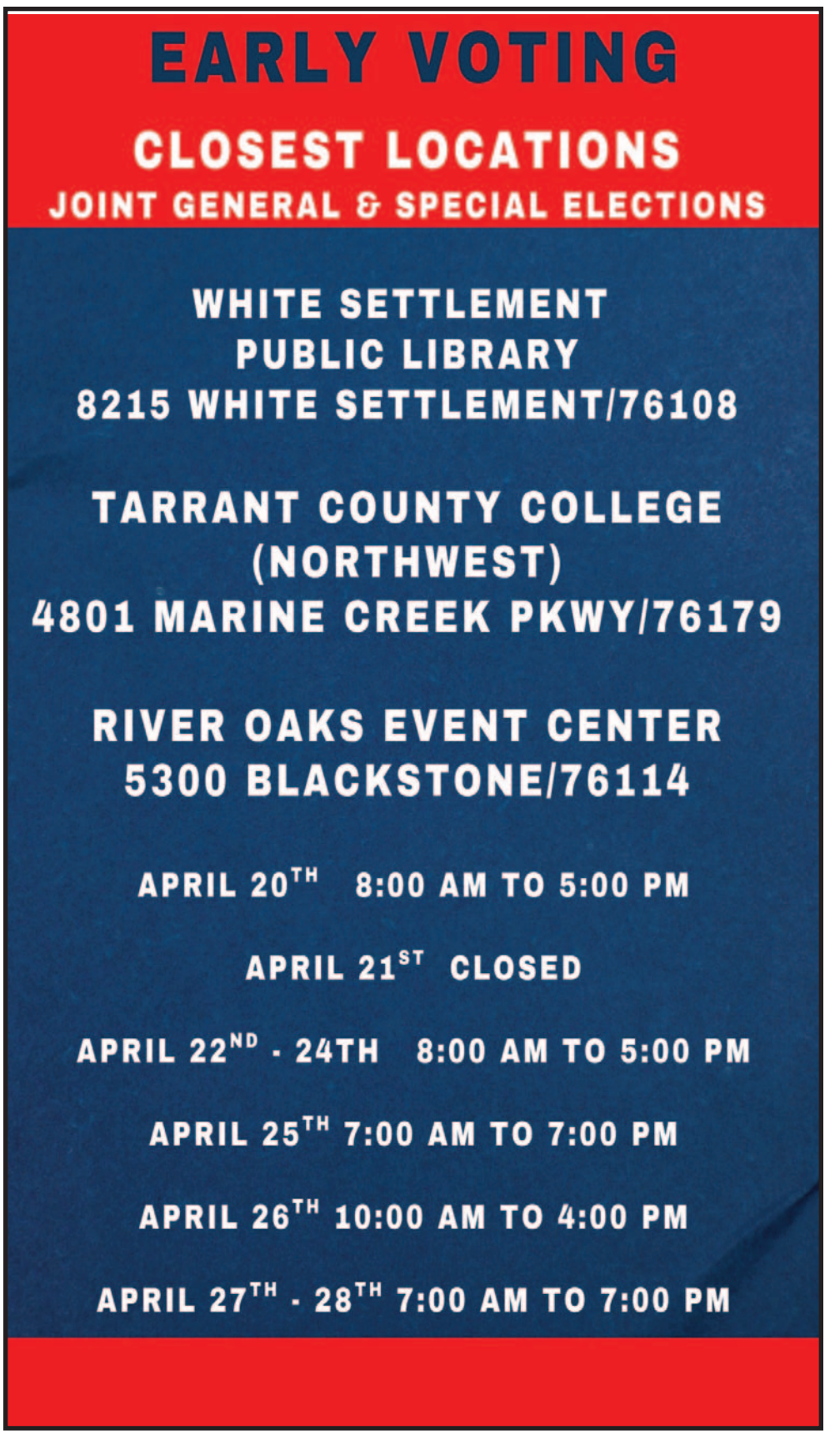
Additional programming includes guided plant walks led by garden research staff at 1 p.m. and forest therapy walks in the Japanese Garden at 1:30 p.m. and 2 p.m. The small-group sessions are designed to promote relaxation and well-being through immersive nature experiences.

Two screenings of the documentary "The Extraordinary Caterpillar" are scheduled for 1 p.m. and 3 p.m. The film highlights the role of insects in sustaining ecosystems. Admission is free, though tickets are required.

Organizers note that entry to "Butterflies in the Garden" is not included with the complimentary Earth Day admission and requires a separate ticket.

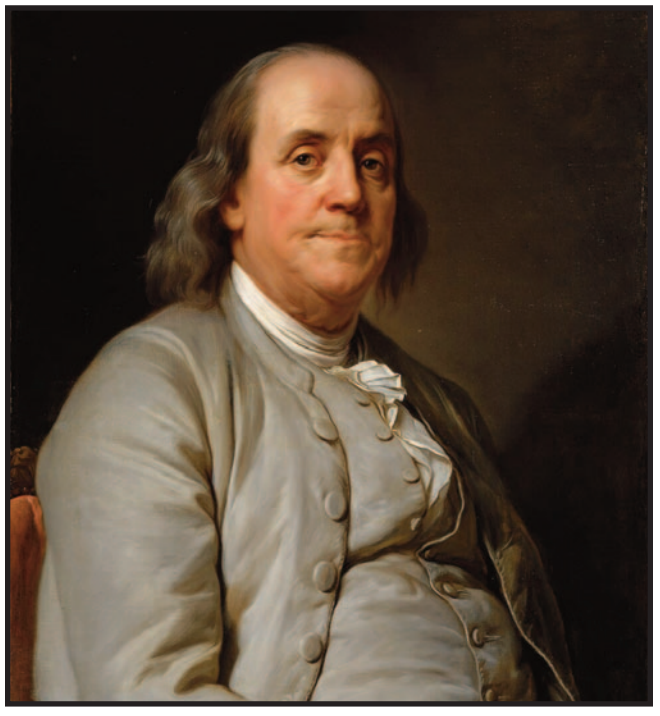
For more information or to reserve tickets for select programs, visit fwbg.org.





Texas History Minute by Dr. Ken Bridges

Benjamin Franklin: From Printer to Founding Father and Champion of American Liberty



"Those who would sacrifice a little liberty for a little security shall get and deserve neither." This was the warning of Benjamin Franklin, a scientist, thinker, and defender of American freedom. He became one of the most well-known figures of the American Revolution for his sharp observations of human nature, quick wit, noted inventions, and steadfast principles.

Franklin was born in Boston in 1706, one of 17 children. Franklin loved to read as a child, teaching himself grammar, philosophy, and math. His father, Josiah, a candlemaker and an English immigrant, had hoped for his son to become a minister, but he could only afford to send him to the Boston Latin Grammar School for a couple of years. At the age of 12, his father sent Franklin to be an apprentice to his 21-year old brother, James, a printer and also publisher of the *New-England Courant*. After five years, Ben Franklin decided to leave Boston and start a life on his own.

He was 17 when he arrived in Philadelphia. He took a few jobs working for local printers. In 1727, he formed the "Junto," an organization of young professionals to discuss ideas. The organization helped form Philadelphia's first library by 1731.

In 1728, Franklin set up his own print shop and began publishing *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, a newspaper which quickly became popular through Franklin's own witty observations. Franklin had a keen sense for opportunity and developed partnerships to start other newspapers. Within 20 or so years, Franklin was part-owner of nearly half the English-language newspapers in the colonies. In 1732, he began publishing *Poor Richard's Almanac*, which he wrote under a series of pen names. It sold thousands of copies each year, and its success gave Franklin financial security.

He had a strong sense of civic duty, often using his imagination and creativity to benefit Philadelphia. In 1736, he created one of the first volunteer fire departments in the colonies. Officials named him postmaster of Philadelphia in 1737. Soon after, Franklin founded the American Philosophical Society in 1743 to promote science and education, becoming the first scholarly organization in the colonies. Working with a group of prominent Philadelphians, he co-founded the College of Philadelphia in 1749, which would later become the University of Pennsylvania. By 1748, he was elected to the Philadelphia city council. This was followed by a brief turn as a justice of the peace and then to the Pennsylvania legislature by 1751. While in the legislature, he quickly pushed for a charter to establish the first hospital in Pennsylvania, Pennsylvania Hospital, which was only the second hospital in North America.

Franklin's scientific achievements were widely respected. He became one of the foremost experts on electricity in the world. In 1749, Franklin developed the lightning rod, a simple device that saved countless lives and property from the destructive force of lightning. Instead of patenting it, he made the design free to the public. In 1752, he conducted his famous experiment with a kite and key during a storm and was able to prove that lightning was electricity. He would go on to develop bifocals and the Franklin stove among other inventions. Because of his achievements, he was inducted into the Royal Society of Arts in 1756.

As early as 1754, Franklin supported the Thirteen Colonies acting more in unison. This would become even more important with the French and Indian War.

By 1757, the colonies hired Franklin to act as a lobbyist in London to speak to Parliament for American interests. He noted that with the rising economic development of the colonies that one day the economic center of the British Empire would be in America. After the war, Britain's increasingly heavy-handed tactics toward the colonies brought Franklin into a far more visible position in defending the colonies and becoming one of the leaders calling for independence.

Part II

"We must either hang together or be hanged separately." Ben Franklin warned of the need for unity among the colonists as they declared independence in 1776. As a keen observer, his wit and his intelligence had made him respected and successful, and he spent decades serving his community and the nation. Franklin would be responsible for such a wide array of accomplishments, including the idea of the Gulf Stream in 1770, the first use of the pro and con list in 1772. Of the many inventions and innovations Franklin created that would change the world, the creation of the independent United States with the other Founding Fathers would further cement his place in history.

For over a year, Franklin had already been serving as postmaster general of the colonies, devising what would become the US Post Office. This was after several years of serving as a colonial agent in England, warning Parliament of its disastrous policies. Now as the Continental Congress prepared for independence in Philadelphia in June 1776, Franklin joined Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, Roger Sherman, and Robert R. Livingston in a committee tasked by Congress to make a statement to the world why the colonies were moving for independence. Though *(continued on page 6)*

Benjamin Franklin (continued from page 5)

the *Declaration of Independence* was overwhelmingly the work of Jefferson, Franklin made important suggestions and contributions. Most notably, where Jefferson repeated philosopher John Locke's assertion that a government's responsibility is to protect "life, liberty, and property," Franklin suggested the change to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness," saying that the new nation was more than just about possessions but was about letting people live their own lives on their own terms under freedom.

Shortly after the *Declaration of Independence* was approved on July 4, Franklin, now past 70, left for France as the nation's first ambassador to that nation. France had already been quietly supplying gunpowder to the Continental Army, but Franklin's job was to secure recognition for American independence and to persuade the French to join the cause. He did the slow, careful work of building relationships that diplomacy requires, working to charm the French public and nobility. The American victory at the Battle of Saratoga in 1777 convinced France that America was a winning cause. In February 1778, France became the first nation to recognize American independence and signed an alliance, bringing the French army and navy into the fight.

At the end of the fighting in 1781, he led the American delegation for the treaty negotiations. The *Treaty of Paris of 1783* secured British recognition of US independence and a border set at the Mississippi River, among other concessions. In 1785, he returned to the US and was elected to the Supreme Executive Council of Pennsylvania, becoming one of the three governors of the state, serving until 1788. In 1787, he became president of the Pennsylvania Abolition Society.

In 1787, delegates gathered in Philadelphia to devise a new constitution. At 81, Franklin was the oldest delegate. He offered insights and ideas, for he still believed in the importance of imagination, integrity, and fairness in government. Independence Hall, where debate took place, was just a few blocks from his home. Franklin had built a successful career based on freedom of the press and speaking his mind. He understood the necessity of free thought to preserving a free nation. "Without freedom of thought there can be no such thing as wisdom; and no such thing as public liberty, without freedom of speech," he wrote.

After months of negotiations, the Constitution was drafted and sent to the states for ratification. When asked what kind of government the new Constitution created, Franklin is said to have replied, "A republic. If you can keep it."

The Constitutional Convention would serve as Franklin's last major public role. He continued to correspond and visit with friends and even sent a petition to Congress calling for the end of slavery. However, his health was declining.

He died in April 1790 at age 84. Almost the entire population of Philadelphia attended the processional at his funeral. Though he was not much of a churchgoer, he openly supported Christian and Jewish congregations throughout Philadelphia. At his funeral, every minister and rabbi in the city led the march in honor of their beloved neighbor. As the years passed, dozens of communities and counties would be named for him as well as many schools and colleges.

Even at the end, Franklin was still thinking ahead. In his will, he set up trust funds for Boston and Philadelphia to be used for future education training, a trust he designed to mature in 200 years. Philadelphia devoted what came to be a $2 million fund for scholarships for high school students. In 1908, Boston used what became a $5 million fund to create the Franklin Institute of Boston, a trade school.

From the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department

11th Annual City Nature Challenge Kicks Off April 24

The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, through its Texas Nature Trackers program, invites Texans to join the 11th annual City Nature Challenge, a four-day community science event across 16 metropolitan areas, April 24-27.

Participants use the free iNaturalist app to document plants, animals and other wildlife while exploring nature close to home, from backyards to local green spaces.

Whether joining a group, exploring with family or participating solo, Texans are encouraged to share observations online and contribute to a global effort to track local biodiversity.

Those outside participating metro areas can join the City Nature Challenge 2026 Global Project and submit observations through iNaturalist. Participants can also help identify species recorded during the challenge in the following two weeks.

The global event is co-organized by the California Academy of Sciences in San Francisco and the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County. Texas Nature Trackers encourages use of the hashtag #CityNatureChallenge on social media and iNaturalist.

More information, including links to Texas projects and the global initiative, is available on the City Nature Challenge website.

For assistance, contact Texas Nature Trackers biologists at tracker@tpwd.texas.gov.

April is National Volunteer Month!

Wondering how you can get involved?

Top areas include: food bank assistance, environmental cleanup, animal shelter support, tutoring, and organizing donation drives!

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Weekend Forecast

Friday, April 17:

AM - Partly sunny, high near 83. South wind 15 to 20 mph, gusts as high as 30 mph.
PM - A 50% chance of showers and thunderstorms. Mostly cloudy, low around 55. South wind around 15 mph, gusts as high as 25 mph.

Saturday, April 18:

AM - A chance of showers and thunderstorms. Mostly cloudy, high near 66. North wind 15 to 20 mph, gusts as high as 30 mph. Chance of precipitation is 40%
PM - Partly cloudy, low around 46. North northeast wind 5 to 15 mph, with gusts as high as 20 mph.

Sunday, April 19:

AM - Mostly sunny, high near 71. East wind 5 to 10 mph.
PM - Mostly cloudy, low around 51. East wind 5 to 10 mph.

Extended Forecast Click Here