



The Insider

Development Ramps Up at Valley Ranch Town Center

The landscape of East Montgomery County is rapidly changing. Where there was once a dead end to Community Drive and a forest of pine trees now stands the Grand Parkway and the 240-acre retail destination, Valley Ranch Town Center. Development in this region has been fast and furious. Since September, 2016, we've seen Academy Sports + Outdoors, GNC, Lin's China Diner, Nails of America, Panda Express, Party City, Sally Beauty, Sam's Club, SportClips, Subway, and SuperCuts open. Anchor stores Hobby Lobby and the Kroger Marketplace opened this spring to delighted crowds. Chili's Grill & Bar, which opened April 17, is filling seats and bellies at lunch time and throughout the evening.

"I think the excitement about these stores and dining establishments goes to show the need that has been building among residents in East Montgomery County," said Frank McCrady, EMCID President and CEO. "Everyone has been so used to driving to Humble for simple shopping and dining needs. The Valley Ranch Town Center brings those amenities within a couple of minutes of residents so they don't have to drive into the traffic at Interstate 69 and FM 1960."

"The Valley Ranch master-planned community and in particular the development of Valley Ranch Town Center is bringing a wide selection of national retailers to East Montgomery County. Thanks to the heavy support and visionary leadership of EMCID board members and CEO Frank McCrady, today, you are witnessing the exciting results from a plan put in place over a decade ago to create thousands of jobs and hundreds of millions [of dollars] in tax base. We are quite proud to deliver to our community conveniences and high quality shopping, dining and entertainment that will serve the entire I-69/Grand Parkway Corridor for the foreseeable future," said Daniel Signorelli, President and CEO of The Signorelli Company.

This summer should usher in Chick-fil-A and AT&T. Later this fall, anticipated openings are for retail outlets Burlington, PetSmart, Rack Room Shoes, Ross Dress for Less, and TJ Maxx and eating establishments Five Guys Burgers and Fries and Shogun Japanese Sushi & Grill. Cinemark Theatres is targeting an end-of-year debut.



Valley Ranch
TOWN CENTER



A Message from Our President & CEO

The Leadership Landscape

As a lieutenant colonel in the Army Reserves, one concept we practiced in the military was called “shaping the battlefield.” This is where you force your enemy into actions in which you can prepare for, taking advantage of the advance knowledge of how they will respond to your actions. You do this so that **you** lead the battle instead of your enemy.

We have that choice in economic development, too. Not with an enemy, so to speak, but with **who** directs the development in our area. Being on the cusp of new development sometimes poses concerns for our community leaders. Should we be complacent and see how our area develops, or should we be aggressive and shape our own future by reaching for higher expectations than just the normal type of development project?

For our elected officials it is easy to become resigned and simply run again for re-election involving ourselves in little controversy. However, making difficult decisions defines our character and conveys who we really are. You may not be aware but our Board has made numerous difficult decisions in allocating resources and incentive programs to ensure new shopping, entertainment and restaurant venues, and job opportunities are being created in our area. Offering business incentives and tax abatements and other programs such as sales tax rebates sometimes comes with controversy for locally elected officials. In an increasing competitive environment for development, though, it is imperative we remain diligent to secure the commitment of additional retail and commercial development opportunities.

Two areas beyond local decision-making which impact our East Montgomery County development include state programs and the overall federal posturing in dealing with domestic and international companies.

State incentive programs play a key role in keeping Texas in a superior competitive advantage against other states. You may have read in the proposed state budget for Texas that legislators stripped the Governor’s Office of funding for the Texas Enterprise Fund, which is used to recruit corporations and create thousands of jobs for Texans. In the East Texas region alone the Texas Enterprise Fund has provided \$134 million and nearly 16,000 pledged jobs since 2004. Eliminating funding of this important recruiting tool would provide an opportunity for surrounding states — our competitors.

In our industry in economic development we always look for weaknesses in our competitors when posturing ourselves to compete for projects in which incentives may need to be used for the project to be viable. It is never good to lose a competitive advantage. Losing this state program would result in the EMCID office and our elected officials having to be more aggressive in proposing incentive packages for business expansion and relocation opportunities in East Montgomery County.

Although there appear to be funding issues at the state level, one outstanding aspect at the federal level is the new leadership in the White House and their ability to shape the new domestic business environment. The new administration’s posturing with the international business community over the past 60 days has positively resulted in companies from Belgium, Sweden, Mexico, and Singapore all entering into discussions on the prospect of opening facilities in our local area or at sites in Texas. International companies are worried about proposed new tariffs, or taxes, being imposed on the products they import into the U.S. To navigate this unknown political environment and avoid disrupting international business operations, the companies would rather expand into the U.S. In addition, companies already located within the states are exploding with expansions and relocations. That same pressure from the White House to buy domestically results in companies refraining from putting their supply chain in jeopardy in the event a tariff could be imposed overseas in the future. This is a refreshing new approach from Washington which has benefited our area and thus far has had a significant positive impact.

And finally, here are two more indicators which bode well for our area: one is industrial and business investment into Mexico will slow substantially, thus benefiting the Texas economy. Texas will attract some of those investors a bit reluctant to jump across the border with an unknown or clear policy on potential tariffs for those who invest in Mexico. The second indicator is that the industrial real estate market is under-built and opportunities are currently available to those who have site-ready development opportunities like the East Montgomery County Industrial Park. You should see no less than four and up to six companies under construction at some point this summer into fall.

Whether you were a red or blue fan during the election the above items are all factual and occurring as I write this, and you can visibly see our area is in an unprecedented growth stage which will continue for the foreseeable future.



Frank McCrady
President & CEO

Economy

EPX Controls Breaks Ground at Industrial Park



EPX Controls and EMCID broke ground on the company’s new 10,000 sf facility at the East Montgomery County Industrial Park March 9. The UL panel shop, currently located in northwest Houston, makes explosion-proof electrical controls, such as disconnects, panelboards and motor starters. The move to East Montgomery County should be complete this summer. The relocation and expansion brings about 15 new jobs to the area.

Community

Local Artist Lowell Shapley’s Mural Displayed in New Kroger Store



Left: The finished mural is displayed in the café area of the Kroger Marketplace at the Valley Ranch Town Center. Right: Local artist Lowell Shapley uses caulk to blend the three separate canvases into one large mural.

Most people choose their career paths, but for local artist Lowell Shapley, he says his career chose him. “I’ve been drawing most of my life, from the time I was about two years old.”

Shapley grew up in New Caney, graduated from New Caney High School and got his degree from Fort Lewis College in Durango, Colo. In 2002 when he was still a college junior, the East Montgomery County Improvement District, impressed with his abilities, commissioned him to paint 10 murals for the building. Fifteen years later The Kroger Co. was inspired by Shapley’s talents and knowledge of the area and chose him to paint a 12-foot by 5-foot mural for its café area inside the 123,000-square-foot grocery store anchor inside the Valley Ranch Town Center.

The artwork, which was installed on March 2, promotes and celebrates the East Montgomery County community.

“They [Kroger] want people to come in from all walks of life and feel like part of the community,” said Shapley. “This mural shows aspects of history and the way the community celebrates heritage.”



That means you’ll see depictions of the old Fostoria Mill, the Granger Well, the East Montgomery County Fair and Friday night football.

“Partnering with an artist who could authentically capture the essence of East Montgomery County was important to us,” said Joy Partain, public affairs manager for Kroger. “The customized art reflects our commitment to offering every customer a customized, unique experience every time they shop with us.”

To see more of Shapley’s work, go to his facebook page @Lowellshapleyart or his website gulfoastpaintings.com.

Splash Pads Set to Help Cool Down the Hot Days of Summer



Kids in East Montgomery County have a new cool spot to hang out. EMCID spent nearly \$1 million on the design, construction and installation of splash pad parks in Splendora and Roman Forest. The Splendora splash pad site at Heritage Park is open May 1 - October 1 from 10 - 8 p.m. each day. The splash pad in Roman Forest is open from daylight to dark. Both splash pad parks are free and open to the public.

“The City of Roman Forest is so thankful for EMCID to build a splash pad inside our city park,” said Liz Mullane, city administrator. “Many times we have been asked to include the smaller children in our plans for park improvements, and this is going to be just the thing that will include children of all ages.”

“We’re happy to see families enjoying themselves,” said Frank McCrady, EMCID President and CEO. That was the intent the Board of Directors had when approving these special projects. The Board plans to build a larger splash pad park in the entertainment district of the Valley Ranch Town Center.

Left: Children enjoy the cool water at the splash pad park in Splendora at its grand opening, held March 13 during spring break.

Shred It EMC Helps Free Up Residents’ Attic Space, Business Storage Rooms



Left: Shred-It employee Thorny Haynes enjoys a brief respite before cars show up. In the background, EMCID Director Martin Zepeda checks out the shredding truck. Right: Buster Brown Propane was the first customer in line at the free shredding event.

Residents from East Montgomery County and surrounding communities did some major spring cleaning as they hauled boxes and trash bags full of documents to be shredded at EMCID’s annual free Shred It EMC event, held Saturday, April 1.

Lines formed early, with some residents and businesses opting to transport years of sensitive information, like tax returns, old letters, business files and credit card statements, on trailers and

in pick up beds. Shred-It Houston estimated its truck shredded about 7,500 pounds of documents.

“I told my mom we needed to get rid of this stuff before the attic fell in!” laughed one participant.

“I think people feel better leaving here a little lighter than when they arrived,” said Frank McCrady, President and CEO, who has hinted the event may be offered every six months instead of once a year going forward.

Twelve Honored as Officers of the Year for East Montgomery County

EMCID recognized 12 local Officers of the Year at its annual Law Enforcement Appreciation Dinner held Monday, February 27. The 13th annual event honored officers who were selected by their superiors from the local school districts and college, city police departments, the Constable’s Office, Montgomery County Sheriff’s Office, and the Texas Department of Public Safety. EMCID President and CEO Frank McCrady and Brenda Webb, Chairman of the Board, presented the officers with trophies and gift bags with items donated from local businesses.

“We appreciate the dedication and service of our law enforcement and that’s what this event is about,” said Webb. “We know our police chiefs also look forward to having their officers recognized among their peers. It’s a big honor for all of them.”

Chase Hughes was the night’s guest speaker. Raised in Houston, Hughes is a Chief in the Naval Expeditionary Combat Command. He specializes in behavioral science, from profiling and lie-detection to engineering human behavior. He is the founder of Ellipsis Behavior Laboratories and is author to three books, including *The Ellipsis Manual: analysis and engineering human behavior*, currently on Amazon.com’s Best Seller list.

Hughes provided the audience with insights on non-verbal communication and detecting deception. He joked that his techniques could be used not only in the field but at home among family members.

The officers who were recognized were:

- Lone Star College Police Dept. – Ofc. Nicholas Franklin
- New Caney ISD Police Dept. – Ofc. Kevin Potter
- Splendora ISD Police Dept. – Ofc. Robert C. Alex
- Patton Village Police Dept. – Sgt. Stacey Baumgartner, awarded posthumously
- Roman Forest Police Dept. – Ofc. Randall Blackketter
- Splendora Police Dept. – Sgt. Troy Teller
- Woodbranch Police Dept. – Ofc. Roxana Castillo
- Montgomery Co. Constable’s Office, Pct. 4 – Investigator Eric Prado
- Montgomery Co. Sheriff’s Office (Detective) – Det. Kristy Wroten
- Montgomery Co. Sheriff’s Office (Patrol) – Dep. Kevin Pickerill
- Texas Dept. of Public Safety – Cpl. Sam Larson
- Texas Dept. of Public Safety – Trooper Benjamin Polansky



Above: The Officers of the Year. Below left: Chief Chase Hughes with the Naval Expeditionary Combat Command talks about interrogating witnesses and clues to look for that can give away suspects. Hughes provided each of the attendees a digital copy of The Field Guide and the Behavioral Table of Elements. Below Right: Donna Baumgartner, widow of Sgt. Stacey Baumgartner, and daughter Chloe accept an award from Chairman of the Board Brenda Webb.



Twenty Local College Students Awarded Scholarships in 2017

Two years ago the East Montgomery County Scholarship Foundation set out to expand its offering of scholarships to local students. That expansion included a \$500 merit-based scholarship available to college students from East Montgomery County with 48 college hours. Students are eligible to apply for and receive the scholarship each year, as long as criteria is met.

In 2015, six students applied for the 20 available scholarships. This year, 20 students applied, and each received \$500.

Students are getting the message that the Foundation is here for them to provide financial support in their post-secondary endeavors! We're proud of these students!

2017

Elizabeth Barrera, Texas A&M University, Porter High School Class of 2014

Kyle Conn, William Carey University, New Caney High School Class of 2013

Amy Czarnik, University of Texas at Tyler, Home School Class of 2015

Megan Davis, Liberty University, Home School Class of 2015

Karla Flores, Sam Houston State University, New Caney High School Class of 2013

Hunter Johnson, Sam Houston State University, Porter High School Class of 2014

Hayley Johnson, Sam Houston State University, Porter High School Class of 2014

Egon Lyttle, University of Texas at Austin, Porter High School Class of 2013

Miguel Machado, University of Houston, Porter High School Class of 2013

Andrew Martinez, Sam Houston State University, Porter High School Class of 2013

Phillip McCrady, South Texas College of Law Houston, Porter High School Class of 2012

Kylee Milton, University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Porter High School Class of 2012

Grant Neal, Texas A&M University, Splendora High School Class of 2016

Logan Patureau, University of Houston, Porter High School Class of 2015

Guadalupe Perez, University of Houston, Porter High School Class of 2014

Jamie Pizano, Culinary Institute LeNôtre, New Caney High School Class of 2009

Cristina Pizano, University of North Texas, New Caney High School Class of 2013

Imran Qureshi, University of North Texas, Porter High School Class of 2012

Nia Ramirez, Sam Houston State University, Splendora High School Class of 2012

Brennen Simpson, University of Houston, Porter High School Class of 2014

2016

Elizabeth Barrera, Lone Star College - Kingwood, PHS 2014

Brian Garcia, Lone Star College - Kingwood, PHS 2014

Suhaily Garcia, Lone Star College - Kingwood, PHS 2013

Jacob Gollihar, Lamar University, SECHS 2013

Rachel Gonzales, Texas A&M University, NCHS 2013

Meagan Silva Hartwick, Lamar University, NCHS 2010

Egon Lyttle, University of Texas at Austin, PHS 2013

Phillip McCrady, University of Arkansas, PHS 2012

Leo Meshell, Sam Houston State University, NCHS 2014

Kylee Milton, University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, PHS 2012

Catherine Naquin, Sam Houston State University, SHS 2014

2016 continued

Imran Qureshi, University of North Texas, PHS 2012

Nia Ramirez, Sam Houston State University, SHS 2012

2015

Rachel Gonzales, Texas A&M University, NCHS 2013

Meagan Silva Hartwick, Lamar University, NCHS 2010

Phillip McCrady, University of Arkansas, PHS 2012

Brent Neal, Stephen F. Austin State University, SHS 2012

Nia Ramirez, Sam Houston State University, SHS 2012

Shannon Seelye, Texas A&M University, NCHS 2012

Receive \$750 for College by Interning for EMCID!

The East Montgomery County Scholarship Foundation (EMCSF) wants to pay — that's right, PAY — three local seniors to learn how EMCID's economic, community and educational development initiatives impact the community! These students will also participate in activities that will advance their knowledge and skills in either business, communications or event planning.

The paid internship consists of a 10-week work study program, beginning on or about September 1, 2017 that is available to three students — one each from New Caney, Porter and Splendora high schools.

Criteria:

- Completed application received by August 1, 2017.
- Must have passed the 11th grade but not graduated prior to September 1, 2017.
- Previous knowledge of and desire to advance skills in accounting, business, communications, festival and event planning, general office, journalism, photography, public relations or travel and tourism.
- Must have reliable transportation.

To download an application, visit:

www.emctx.com/scholarships/work-study-program



Left: EMCID's 2016 interns, Cindy Flores (Porter HS), Karoline Jones (Splendora HS) and Jordan Butler (New Caney HS), sold raffle tickets for a diamond bracelet that was given away at the EMCSF Gala in November, 2016. The students also worked at EMCID's festivals, including the Back to School Bash and Fall Extravaganza.

Did you know you can get \$1,000 just for graduating from high school?

It's SUPER EASY!

1) Attend Lone Star College (any campus) and get credited on tuition up to \$1,000

OR

2) Submit tuition receipts from any college or trade school and get reimbursed!



Go to www.emctx.com/scholarships/applications for full details.



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Back to School Bash

Tuesday, September 12, 5 - 8 p.m.

Important Dates

June 2017 - August 2017

Greater EMC Chamber Luncheon	June 7	11:30 a.m.	EMCID Complex Atrium
EMC Scholarship Foundation Meeting	*June 8	12 p.m.	EMCID Complex Conference Rm.
EMC Economic Development Corporation Meeting	*June 8	1:30 p.m.	EMCID Complex Conference Rm.
EMCID Regular Meeting	*June 8	6 p.m.	EMCID Complex Board Rm.
Free Children's Immunizations	June 27	9:30 - 1:30 p.m.	EMCID Complex
Independence Day Holiday (EMCID Complex Closed)	July 4	All Day	
Greater EMC Chamber Luncheon	July 5	11:30 a.m.	EMCID Complex Atrium
EMCID Regular Meeting	*July 13	6 p.m.	EMCID Complex Board Rm.
Greater EMC Chamber Luncheon	August 2	11:30 a.m.	EMCID Complex Atrium
EMCID Regular Meeting	*August 10	6 p.m.	EMCID Complex Board Rm.
Free Children's Immunizations	August 29	9:30 - 1:30 p.m.	EMCID Complex

**Dates subject to change*

Please visit www.emctx.com/calendar for an up-to-date listing of events.

The Insider is a quarterly newsletter produced by the East Montgomery County Improvement District. Please direct questions or comments to: Kelley Mattlage, Director of Communications, kmattlage@emctx.com.