



# The Insider

## Our EMC SUPERHEROES



First  
Responders



Restaurant  
Retail



Shoppers



Educators



Law  
Enforcement

# Our EMC SUPERHEROES



We are fortunate that we live in a county that recognizes personal freedom and business needs in a positive way. Montgomery County has incorporated safe but business-friendly policies during this pandemic, and those policies have benefited East Montgomery County's economy. Our neighbors to the south have not gotten to experience this degree of freedom, which clearly makes our area a preferred location to live and do business.

In discussing our economy, the overall sales tax decrease was only 10 percent per month for our area during the most difficult two months of the pandemic (April and May). Maybe the staycation, or "safecation," contributed to this, as there was not much air traffic overhead. The resiliency of our area clearly differentiates our retail economy from the economies of Houston and The Woodlands — specifically in regard to restaurants. Our local restaurants developed new revenue streams to supplement their income and provided a means for them to stay open, thus keeping many of their employees working and bringing home paychecks. Some restaurants had their take-out business, which would typically be five percent of their revenue, increase to almost one-third of their food sales.

I want to recognize the Texas Restaurant Association for the outstanding job it has done in coordinating with the governor's office and mediating legal issues relating to restaurant operations during the pandemic. I feel the organization has truly become the voice of the restaurant industry and has created a bridge between legal and operational challenges, and that is refreshing. Some examples of their support have included alcohol-to-go and more flexibility relating to licensing and operations, plus more flexibility in calculating food and beverage percentages. The restaurant industry has identified strategies, such as maintaining higher margin food on menus and reducing lower margin items to help generate additional revenue. Other strategies include family pack meals and pre-packaged menu selections instead of individual or à la carte choices.

The East Montgomery County Improvement District also helped some restaurants and other businesses during this  
2 down time by creating the OPEN loan program. Businesses

can apply for up to \$20,000 at two percent interest spread out over 10 years. Since the program's inception, we have funded more than 30 loans to businesses located within the EMCID boundaries. We have expended about two-thirds of our funds and would like to place the balance of our funds with businesses that are looking to grow and expand, maintain their operations, as well as maintain employees during this difficult time. If this loan does not particularly apply to you and you happen to know of someone in the area that could benefit from it, please have them call our office at 281-354-4419.

I would like to say thank you again to our restaurant workers, retail industry workers, teachers, our local first responders, and law enforcement officers. It is difficult to see the criticism and constant scrutiny of law enforcement nationwide. However, it is good to know we have a great team of law enforcement officers locally who clearly have the support of our community. They perform incredible tasks that many of us would not want to undertake on a daily basis to keep our community safe and provide an environment we can raise our children in without fear.

Finally, I want to thank you, the residents — our unsung heroes, for playing a part in keeping our community and economy strong; because it's your commitment to shopping locally that keeps our area merchants open and our community employed.



*Frank McCrady*  
President & CEO

# Vertere Coffee Roasters Expands in Porter



The smell of freshly roasted coffee beans wafts through the air as Vertere Coffee Roasters' owner Steve Criswell prepares to roast another batch at his Porter shop.

Vertere Coffee Roasters opened in 2014 on Ford Road, across from Porter Elementary, after receiving a positive reception of his initial product samples and finding the perfect location to open the shop.

"At the beginning of 2012, I was laid off from my job in packaging material sales. After almost a two-year job search with many ups and downs, it became clear to me one Sunday in my church in 2013 that coffee was my path forward as a new career," said Criswell. "I knew that coffee would provide for my family and potentially for the families of others who would work for our company, thus, Vertere Coffee Roasters was born. Vertere is a Latin word meaning 'to turn,' as in 'to turn the page.' This name seemed fitting, as I was turning a page in my own life toward a new career that would in turn help people turn the page on their own coffee experience."

After transforming the space into a shop for Vertere Coffee Roasters, the new roaster arrived and was installed that July, and in August 2014, Criswell began the real process of roasting and selling coffee to all those who wanted to experience fresh, locally-roasted coffee.

"We want to be known as the go-to coffee resource in the Kingwood, Humble, Atascocita, Porter and New Caney areas, as well as to have a presence in Houston and nationally through online mail-order," said Criswell. "We sell a wide variety of freshly-roasted, single-origin, blended and flavored coffee, specialty loose tea, and personal brewing equipment and supplies for home and office coffee enthusiasts. We also have a growing network of commercial customers in these areas, helping them with equipment, coffee and training needs."

Vertere Coffee is available to customers in a variety of ways that is convenient for them. For some customers, that is by mail-order; for some, it is home or office delivery. Customers can also stop by the roastery in Porter to pick something freshly roasted and visit about coffee.

"We always enjoy hearing how our customers experience coffee as a routine or special part of their day," said Criswell. "Some are just beginning their journey, while others are well down the road, fine-tuning their brewing methods and coffee preferences. For each of these customer needs, Vertere is eager and pleased to help."

Since the time of the initial equipment installation in August 2014, Vertere has made many improvements to workflow such as the addition of storage capacity, production tools, an espresso machine and other brewing equipment, and a more automated packaging machine for large bag and pouch orders.

In 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic and uncertainty, Vertere took a bold step to expand its building space to double its warehouse, even though business was down. With this increased warehouse space, Vertere split its footprint into production space and warehouse space, enabling a more streamlined and efficient production workflow and inventory tracking capability. In uncertain times, Vertere wanted to increase its preparedness to fulfill new service models and increases in its retail business.

"We have always been there to support our customers, and our current expansion positions Vertere to support them in an even greater way," said Criswell. "We will always have our eye on improvements as they make sense, and Vertere will continue making operational investments to make tasks easier and safer for our employees and to improve the quality of our products and services."

Also new to Vertere Coffee Roasters is the addition of several coffees such as a single estate coffee from Colombia; a Barrel-Aged Series, which is Arabica coffee aged for several weeks in oak barrels previously used to manufacture premium American bourbon whiskey; and the Texas Independence Series, coffee with fresh, fighting spirit.

"We want to grow our brand, and we realize that growth depends on satisfying the coffee needs of our customers. The Vertere brand represents quality, community and positive change," said Criswell.



# Pit Row Pit Stop To Open Soon in New Caney

It's like stepping into a 1950's diner when guests walk in the door of the Pit Row Pit Stop Restaurant being constructed on FM 1485 in New Caney.

Complete with black-and-white checkered floors, colorful booths and walls bedecked with memorabilia, Frankie Vinci, the owner of Pit Row Pit Stop, could not have made his dream come true for a second restaurant without the East Montgomery County Improvement District's assistance.

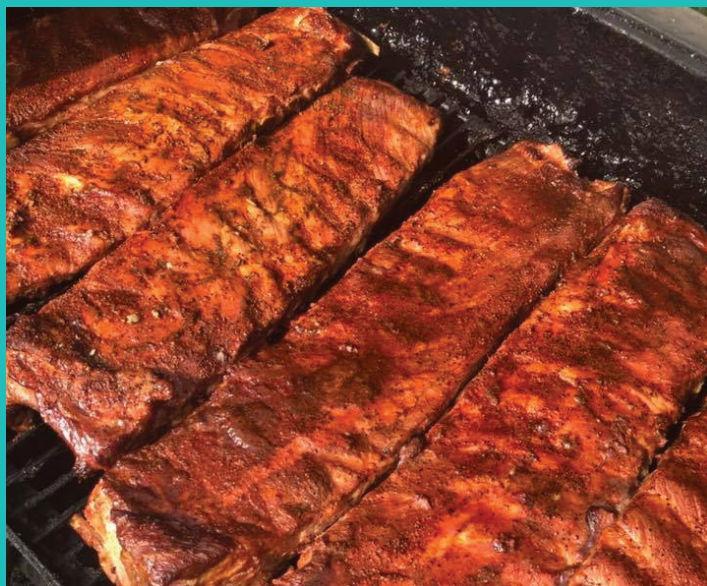
"EMCID's President/CEO Frank McCrady along with EMCID Chairman Brenda Webb and Director Fred Wetz have eaten at my restaurant in Livingston several times and inquired if I would be interested in opening a location in New Caney," said Frankie. "For months, Frank helped me locate the perfect property for a second restaurant and EMCID provided me with low-interest business loans to renovate the building. I couldn't have done any of this without EMCID's help; it's been a blessing."

Six years ago, Frankie opened the first location of Pit Row Pit Stop in Livingston which has become a popular spot for many to enjoy barbecue like brisket and ribs, hamburgers, chicken fried steak and the crowd-pleasing ice cream bar.

"I have always loved to cook," said Frankie. "I came up with the idea to open my restaurant traveling with a friend in California. We would come across these old, rundown diners and I was inspired to open my own. I moved back to the area and came across an old gas station that I transformed into the first Pit Row Pit Stop restaurant."

The name, Pit Row Pit Stop, alludes to Frankie's love of hot rods and cars. To follow along with the theme, he plans to have car shows at the New Caney location like they often have in Livingston.

Additionally, the new location will be larger with a side room and the main focal point – the ice cream bar with glass shelving and painted bright colors.



"We are kid-friendly and will seat approximately 200 people with 20-25 in the meeting/Bible study room. We will have a lot more room at this second location," said Frankie. "I built a larger, more spacious kitchen in the New Caney location. Our portions are large, too. We make ice cream sundaes that you can't finish. We will have banana splits, multiple flavors of ice cream and every topping you can imagine. Our guests will leave full and happy."

Since the New Caney and surrounding communities have been so welcoming, Frankie wants to find a way to give back to a nonprofit that supports victims of domestic abuse, sexual abuse and/or human trafficking.

Frankie added, "when guests walk into Pit Row Pit Stop restaurant, they can expect to feel welcome and enjoy great food. I greet and visit with every customer who walks in the door and I can't wait to meet-and-greet the New Caney and surrounding communities."



# Gates Engineered Lubricants Sells Sanitizer

As customers clamored for hand sanitizer and grocery store shelves cleared during the COVID-19 pandemic, New Caney's Gates Engineered Lubricants rose to the challenge to provide a safe, sustainable supply of hand sanitizer for the business community.

Located in the East Montgomery County Industrial Park, Gates Lubricants purchases the sanitizer from a bottling company that packages the hand sanitizer made in bulk by a manufacturer into 1-gallon jugs.

In addition to the hand sanitizer, Gates Engineered Lubricants normally produces a full line of innovative specialty industrial fluids to businesses throughout the Houston area for improved functionality from their equipment while making sure consumers are safe, which is why providing the hand sanitizer was a win-win.

"We were given the opportunity by one of our customers who began manufacturing sanitizer to partner with them and ensure our fellow community members were getting the hand sanitizer they need," said Jerry Gates, owner of Gates Lubricants. "At the time we first started this partnership, it was next to impossible to find. We are offering our customers, all of which are manufacturers and have from 10 to 2,000 employees, these gallons of hand sanitizers to help keep their plants clean and safe."

Gates Engineered Lubricants has remained open during the



COVID-19 pandemic to make sure consumers can access and purchase the industrial fluids they need to continue operating and provide the hand sanitizer as a bonus.

"Gates Engineered Lubricants has remained open the entire time frame of the COVID-19 pandemic as an essential supplier to manufacturing," Jerry added.

Going forward, if hand sanitizer is hard to find once again, Gates Engineered Lubricants will consider manufacturing both the gel and liquid sanitizer at the New Caney facility.

"We will have a staff meeting shortly to decide if this is an avenue we wish to explore," said Jerry. "Should the final decision be made to move forward with the project, we will construct a new building and blend plant dedicated to hand sanitizer."

## New Business Openings in EMC



A variety of different businesses have recently decided to call the EMC community home. The following businesses have either opened or will open this year:

Swamp Donkeys Crawfish and Seafood, April  
Quick Quack Car Wash, May  
Alpha Omega Gymnastics and Dance, June  
Kingwood Nutrition Shack, June  
Splendor Nutrition Depot, June  
America's Best Contacts and Eyeglasses, July  
Grand Parkway Nutrition Shack, July  
Monarch Health & Wellness, July  
La Michoacana (New Caney,) Fall  
Chipotle, Fall  
MOD Pizza, Fall  
Pinspiration, Fall  
Starbucks (New Caney,) Fall  
Whitewater Express Car Wash, Fall

*\*Dates are accurate prior to printing of publication. Dates may change.*

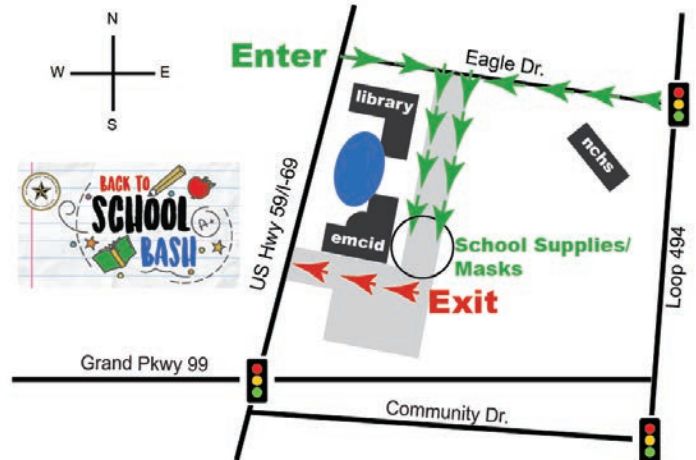
# Drive-Thru Back to School Bash Rolls on Sept. 3

Stock up on those much-needed school supplies at the annual EMCID Back to School Bash on Thursday, Sept. 3.

Because of traditionally dense crowds and limited building and grounds space, this year's event will be a drive-thru. School supplies and washable kids' face masks will be passed out to each child, pre-K through 8th grade until supplies run out.

In order to receive supplies, the child must be present in the vehicle. The event begins at 5 p.m.

For more information, visit [www.emctx.com/community/festivals/btsb2020](http://www.emctx.com/community/festivals/btsb2020).



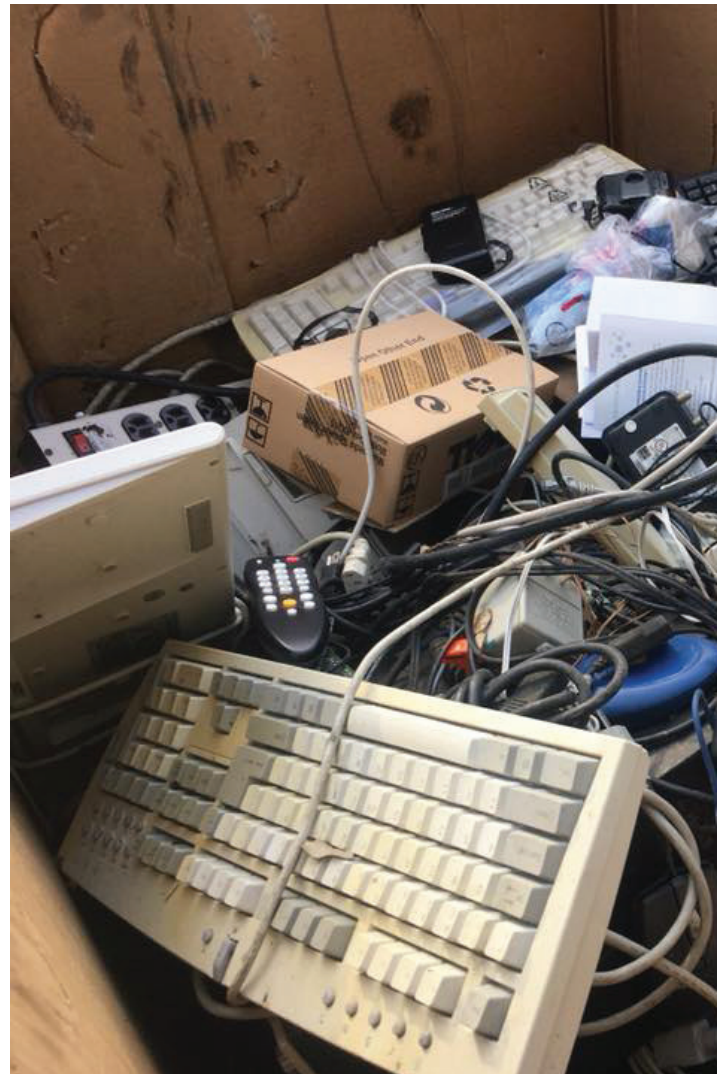
# Electronics Recycling to be Held on Sept. 12

EMCID will host an Electronics Recycling Event Saturday, Sept. 12 at the EMCID parking lot from 8 a.m.-2 p.m. With the help of CompuCycle, most electronics are accepted and will be recycled at no cost.

Accepted items: Computers, laptops, monitors, hard drives, cables and cords, desktop printers, cell phones, TVs (LCD, LED and plasma) up to 50", CRT TVs up to 27", cable TV boxes, stereo amplifiers and iPads/tablets..

For questions concerning acceptable and unacceptable items, call CompuCycle at 713-869-6700.

For additional information, visit [www.emctx.com/community/festivals/ere2020](http://www.emctx.com/community/festivals/ere2020).





# Creg Mixon Joins EMCID Staff

As a lifelong resident of New Caney, Creg Mixon has dedicated most of his life to giving back to the East Montgomery County area and is excited to start a new chapter. He will be working in the community he loves as the Director of Facilities & Vendor Management at EMCID.

Creg comes to EMCID from United Airlines where he has worked for the past 20 years as a procurement professional focused on sourcing, vendor management and strategic planning.

"Over the past 20 years, I have developed significant experience in procurement, finance/accounting, operations, training and management," said Creg. "My corporate experience working with cross-functional teams has taught me the importance of building trusted relationships and inspiring a shared project vision.

As a 1999 New Caney High School graduate, it was even more pertinent for Creg to serve his community when voters elected him to the New Caney ISD school board where he has served for the past six years.

"I am first and foremost, a husband and father," said Creg. "I met my beautiful wife at Porter Elementary in the third grade, and we have been married for 15 years. We have two girls, Haven and Juliann."

In addition to working and spending time with his family, Creg has a wide range of hobbies that include photography, graphic design and he loves to be outdoors hunting and fishing.



"I consider myself somewhat of a renaissance man," said Creg. "Working in the travel industry for the past 20 years, I have enjoyed traveling around the globe experiencing many different cultures. However, there is no greater experience than traveling back home to Texas. As a quote by John Gunther said, 'If a man is from Texas, he'll tell you. If not, why embarrass him by asking.' I love being home in Texas and I love New Caney and the surrounding communities."



## THE FALL EXTRAVAGANZA

**THURSDAY, OCTOBER 29TH**

ONLY AT THE EMCID COMPLEX  
21575 US-59, NEW CANEY, TEXAS 77357

**FREE FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY**  
**SPOOKY FUN,**  
**TRICKS & TREATS,**  
**COSTUME CONTEST**  
**& MUCH MORE!**

Plans are currently underway for our annual Fall Extravaganza on Thursday, Oct. 29 beginning at 5 p.m. Community and health conditions are constantly being monitored and any possible changes to the event will be updated at [emctx.com/community/festivals/FallExtravaganza2020](http://emctx.com/community/festivals/FallExtravaganza2020).



\*\*\*\*\*ECRWSS\*\*\*\*

Local  
Postal Customer

PRST STD  
ECRWSS  
U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
EDDM Retail

East Montgomery County Improvement District 21575 U.S. Highway 59, Ste. 200, New Caney, TX 77357 281.354.4419



## ELECTRONICS — RECYCLING EVENT —

Saturday, September 12 | 8am-2pm



### ACCEPTABLE RESIDENTIAL MATERIALS:

Computers, Laptops, Monitors,  
TVs (CRT TVs up to 27" in size)  
(No wooden cased TVs),  
TVs (LCD/Plasma/LED up to 50" in size),  
Printers (desktop only), Cable Boxes,  
Power Cords and Cables,  
Stereo Amplifiers, VCRs,  
Cellular Phones (removed from cases),  
Hard Drive, iPads / Tablets

## Important Dates

### September-October 2020

Drive-Thru Back to School Bash  
Labor Day (EMCID Complex Closed)  
EMC Scholarship Foundation Meeting  
EMC Economic Development Corp. Meeting  
EMCID Regular Meeting  
Electronics Recycling Event  
Greater EMC Chamber Biz Fest  
Deadline for Community Development Grants  
EMCID Regular Meeting  
Greater EMC Chamber Grand Prix  
Fall Extravaganza

*\*Dates subject to change*

Please visit [www.emctx.com/calendar](http://www.emctx.com/calendar) for an up-to-date listing of events.

September 3	5 p.m.	EMCID Parking Lot
September 7		
September 10*	12 p.m.	EMCID Complex, Suite 200
September 10*	1:30 p.m.	EMCID Complex, Suite 200
September 10*	5:30 p.m.	EMCID Complex, Suite 103
September 12	8-2 p.m.	EMCID Parking Lot
September 24	9-5 p.m.	Virtual
September 28	5 p.m.	EMCID Complex, Suite 200
October 8*	5:30 p.m.	EMCID Complex, Suite 103
October 23*	11-5 p.m.	Speedsportz Racing Park
October 29	5-8 p.m.	EMCID Parking Lot

The Insider is a bi-monthly newsletter produced by the East Montgomery County Improvement District. Please direct questions or comments to: Kelley Mattlage, Chief Communications Officer, [kmattlage@emctx.com](mailto:kmattlage@emctx.com).