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MAGAZINE

June 2020

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POWER TECHNOLOGIES LLC

Giving Power to the People

How Grasten Power Technologies Is Keeping the Lights on for Lake Conroe Communities with Standby Generators *See page 8*



Lake Conroe Clean Rivers Sampling Program: Earning A 5-star (er, Frog) Rating

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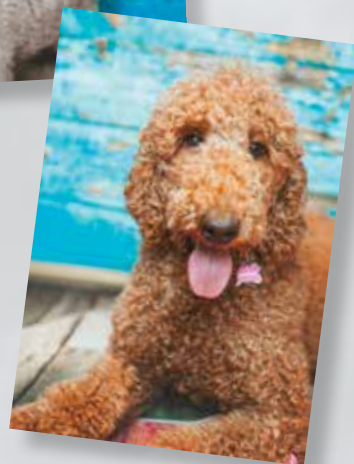
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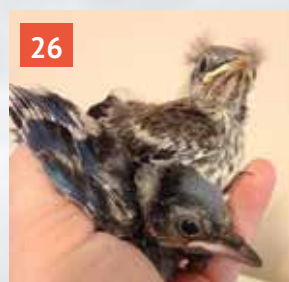
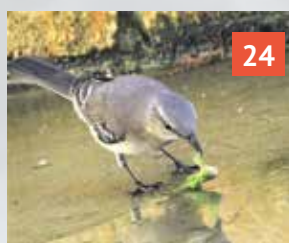
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This year our kick off to summer has a much different meaning than years past. Although we will still have beach days and cookouts there will also be social distancing, smaller gatherings and more staycations. Our new normal is anything but normal. It is true our vocabulary has changed with the continuation of phrases such as zoom meetings, social distancing and wearing masks, followed by the elimination of words like hugs, large gatherings and togetherness. Throughout all this change, some things remain the same. We are a community of resilience, compassion and generosity. It has become apparent now more than ever what a great community in which we live. We encourage everyone to take a look around, celebrate the little things and support your local businesses. They need your support now more than ever as we all struggle to navigate our way through this unique time in which we are living. If we all stick together we will be stronger than ever. Until next month...

Bentley & Ellie 

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ON THE COVER



Hurricane season is fast approaching. Don't wait. Get a standby generator installed and never worry about losing power again. If you'd like to get a free quote on a standby generator for your home, contact Grasten Power Technologies today. Call them at 281-259-6500 or fill out the easy form online at www.grastengenerators.com.

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Angela Glezman
PUBLISHER/EDITOR

Bentley/Ellie
MANAGING EDITORS

Kelly L. O'Quinn
ART DIRECTOR

David Donahoo, Colton Rucker
SEO SPECIALISTS

Stephanie Davis
SALES ASSOCIATES

Brian Sherman
 Matthew Calhoun
WRITERS

Jessie Smith
 D&K Photography
PHOTOGRAPHERS

CONTRIBUTORS:

Dr. Lindsey Thomas, DC
 James M. Bright
 Lisa Wolling
 Sara Preisler
 Adam Isbell
 Derek Pietsch
 Bronwyn Clear

DOCK LINE MAGAZINE - TOMBALL
 is published by:
 Magic Marketing, Inc.
 P.O. Box 174
 Conroe, TX 77301
 Telephone: 936-828-4296
 Fax: 936-307-1300
 E-mail: angela@docklinemagazine.com

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 Conroe, TX 77301

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Giving Power to the People



How Grasten Power Technologies Is Keeping the Lights on for Lake Conroe Communities with Standby Generators

By: Brian Sherman



In 2005, Hurricane Rita, like many major storms that have come through Texas, came with little warning and left an unprecedented amount of damage in its path. The major storms that came in the years that followed proved just as devastating in their own ways. Hurricane Ike left 2.1 million people without power, and Hurricane Harvey, along with devastating flooding, caused power outages for over 500,000 people. For many, it took weeks to have full power restored.

It was after that nightmare of a storm, Hur-



ricane Rita, that Grasten Power Technologies was started. Joshua Keller of Grasten saw the gaping hole in the standby generator industry and knew it needed to be filled the right way. With hundreds of thousands of people without power, the demand for backup generators skyrocketed. However, the biggest problem wasn't that people couldn't get a standby generator, but the service was missing. "With Rita, we saw that there really weren't enough good, quality installers and good, quality service companies. You had a lot of bad installations and very few people were taking care of the generators." He adds. "We wanted to come in and provide five-star service, along with top quality installations."

Grasten quickly became the best standby generator installer in the region. "We have THE best reviews in the generator industry. On every review site, we are five-star rated, with hundreds of reviews," says Joshua Keller. "I can confidently say that we are the best generator installation company in the region."

In fact, Grasten's customers seem to strongly agree:

"I cannot thank you all enough for handling our generator needs. Not only was your quote lower than your competitors, we also ended up with a larger generator. The entire experience was nothing short of amazing. Everyone was always prompt, efficient, professional, and always willing to help or make changes as needed. Could not be more pleased and hope to work with you all again for my personal generator needs"

—Karen P.

If you've ever lost power to your home for even just a few hours, you know how inconvenient and stressful it can be. So, if you're wondering if a standby generator is right for you, let's take a look at two of the biggest reasons

hundreds of homeowners are having them installed in their homes this year:

Natural Disasters

If you've lived in southeast Texas for even just a short time, you know the real threat that hurricanes bring to the area. Nearly every year, it seems we are threatened by another looming storm churning off the Gulf or in the Atlantic, slowly working its way to the Texas coast. People can panic, causing gridlocked traffic as people evacuate and empty shelves in stores as people prepare for the worst, buying food and supplies. Not to mention, these storms bring a high chance of losing power to your home - maybe for days and weeks.

With a standby generator, you'll never have to worry about losing power. In fact, the instant your home loses power, your home will be powered by your generator. You'll never notice the switch.

Failing Infrastructure

The Greater Houston and Lake Conroe areas are growing fast. More and more homes and businesses are moving into the area and the strain on our power grids is scary. Our electrical grids are in great need of renovations and upgrades, and frequent power outages are becoming commonplace. "The grid infrastructure is really, really, old and failing us more and more" warns Joshua. "And they're expecting more storms and more power outages." Even with advancements in renewable energy like solar power coming in the future, the gap is ever widening and the strain on the electrical grid is only growing.

It's easy to get a standby generator installed in your home. In fact, if you're building a new home right now, it's the perfect time to

Continued on page 10 ➞

Continued on page 10 ➞



install a standby generator. It can be installed much more aesthetically and efficiently with your new build.

So, you might be thinking now that a standby generator could save you a lot of stress and uncertainty. With hurricane season right around the corner, the chances of you losing power is about to go through the roof. Now might be the perfect time to invest in a standby generator for your home.

More affordable than you think - especially now.

Before you worry that a standby generator is going to be too expensive, Grasten makes it easy to afford one for your home, on pretty much any budget - especially considering the economic season we are going into with the shutdown. As Joshua Keller explains, "We want to be respectful of everyone's health and time. We understand we're going through trying times. For that reason, we have zero-down financing and zero interest for 18 months, and payments as low as \$100 a month. Even someone on social security can afford it."

You don't have to break the bank to secure your home with dependable power.

Special programs for you right now.

Are you a Centerpoint Energy customer? Grasten has a special offer of up to \$1,500 off

a qualifying generator, and for a limited time, when you purchase a Kohler generator, you'll also get a free 10-year extended warranty, worth up to \$1,795.

Also, Grasten is offering a special deal on Generac generators. Right now, you can receive a 10-year warranty and your first year of maintenance FREE with your qualifying purchase - a \$1,395 value.

If you already own a standby generator Grasten can provide all the maintenance on it regularly so you'll never have to worry about it not working when you need it.

Social Distancing? No Problem.

Grasten is paving the way to make their service as safe and customer-friendly as possible. "We have developed a virtual in-home consultation service," says Joshua. Customers can work with a Grasten technician over a video chat to identify generator issues and determine the service necessary. "We also have a self-site survey link on our website where a customer can walk through the process of choosing the right generator before contacting us directly," Joshua adds. "And generator installs are done outside - you'll never have to come in contact with us." In addition, Grasten is offering a no-touch service all around, including email receipts and digital paperwork.

Leading the Way in the Face of Uncertainty

As many businesses are shutting down, slowing down, or stuck in a holding pattern, waiting out the pandemic, Grasten is pushing forward. In early May, they closed on a new facility to expand their operations. As Joshua explains, "This is huge for us. It's a two acre piece of property, right off the highway. We're going to be building a 13,000 sq. ft. corporate headquarters." Despite the uncertainty, Grasten is growing into the future to provide even better service and care for their community. "We've become a staple in the generator industry. We're now one of the largest generator dealers in Texas. This new corporate headquarters is going to be good for us."

Hurricane season is fast approaching. Don't wait. Get a standby generator installed and never worry about losing power again.

If you'd like to get a free quote on a standby generator for your home, contact Grasten Power Technologies today. Call them at 281-259-6500 or fill out the easy form online at www.grastengenerators.com. Their sales and service staff are available Monday - Friday from 8am to 4:30pm, and their emergency service team is available 24/7. ♦



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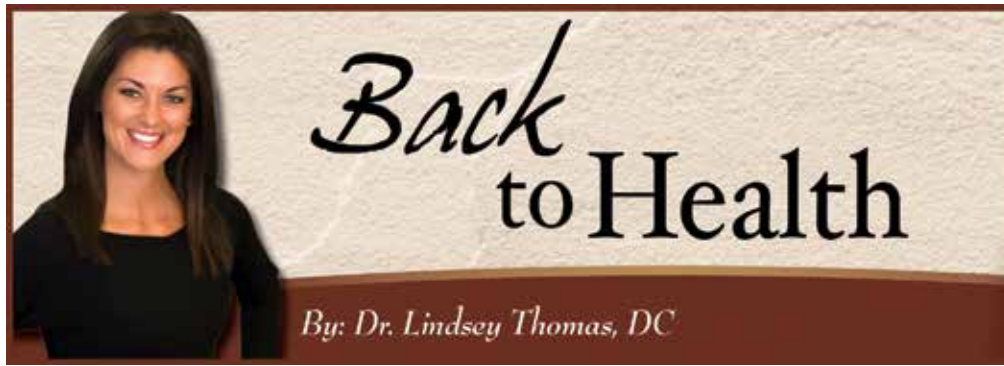


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Movement = Development

There are so many important reasons why infants and children need to move. Early movement experiences are essential to the neural stimulation needed for your child's healthy brain development. An infant's brain is full of brain cells at birth and over time these cells form as many as 15,000 connections with other brain cells. It is during the first three years that most of these connections are made. Physical activity

connections between the two sides of the brain. When the baby coordinates his movements to move in one direction, he moves the right arm and the left leg and then the left arm and the right leg; this is called a cross crawl pattern. This pattern allows both sides of the brain to communicate and interchange information very fast. These are the same patterns that later in life will be used to perform more difficult tasks



and play during early childhood has a crucial role in the sensory and physiological stimulation that creates more of these connections in the brain.

Infants are spending upwards of 60 waking hours every week in things - walkers, carriers, car seats, etc. Not only is this confining to your child, it doesn't allow them to have the ever important tummy or floor time. Placing your child in the upright position rather than on the floor tells the brain to start thinking walking rather than rolling over, creeping and crawling. Playing on the floor, your child is able to throw and reach for objects and toys which he will repeat often. This is how your infant discovers rolling and finally starts to crawl.

All parents accept that crawling is a milestone but many do not realize why it is so important. Crawling not only means a new way of locomotion but it allows the infant to create

like walking, running, passing one object from one hand to the other, or even taking notes in class while listening to the teacher.

When crawling, the infant's body must remain in equilibrium or balance. This helps to strengthen the spine and properly develop the curves in the neck and lower back, setting the stage for proper spinal development and posture.

As the infant moves, he touches different surfaces and textures that will help to develop the senses on his palms and fingers. This will allow him in the future to grasp and hold objects like a pencil or crayon to draw, or play a musical instrument.

Another area where crawling is important is the visual aspect of the infant's development. Crawling helps the infant measure the world around him; the distance between his eyes and hands, at what distance an object is located, its

volume and its size. This ability will be important in the future to clearly see things that are near or far. Knowing the distance and volume of objects will also help him with puzzles, brain teasers, solve problems, jump obstacles, understand spatial relationships and will also set the basis for reading and writing skills.

It's a parent's responsibility to stimulate their child's developing brain and nervous system with every motion and activity. In the busyness of your day to day life, it is easy to sit your child in front of the television to watch one of the many "educational" videos available today but it is important to remember that these videos do not stimulate the same neural pathways in the brain as active play activities. Play activities should include stimulation of all five senses (sight, touch, sound, smell and taste).

- Sight: Blowing bubbles, using both hands to draw shapes and letters, or tossing soft objects

- Touch: Different textures (smooth, rough, uneven), splashing water in the bathtub, building blocks or petting and feeding animals

- Sound: Dancing or moving to music, beating rhythm on instruments, musical chairs or singing sounds where words needed to be added ("B-I-N-G-O")

- Smells and Tastes: Introduce your child to different tastes and smells and look for the appropriate reaction or have your child name different smells

- Equilibrium and Balance: Spinning in circles, walking on uneven surfaces (sand, grass), crawling through small spaces, balancing on a teeter-totter, or tummy time

- Proprioceptive (sense stimuli): Pushing and pulling toys or wagon, playing catch with a ball, getting in or out of seatbelts, jackets, shoes and socks, stretching up to the sky, or pouring water or sand from one container to another

We are all hardwired to move and play. Start incorporating these active play activities into your child's daily routine and most importantly, have fun with your child. Good play routines can last a lifetime. Always remember your infant or child is never "just moving" or "just playing". Every action improves upon your child's development in some way!

For more information on this topic, as well as how chiropractic can benefit the development of your child please feel free to contact our office at (281) 789-7586. ♦



Taking Dominion of your Finances: Smart Money Moves

Cynthia Daly moved to Houston, TX from the Washington, DC area in 2011. She is originally from Charleston, SC (ranked the #1 tourist destination for 2019)! She earned her Bachelor of Science degree from the University of South Carolina and her MBA in Finance from Argosy University. Cynthia is also a Certified Public Accountant (CPA). Currently, she is the Director of Internal Audit at People's Trust Federal Credit Union in downtown Houston.

She served our country for 28 years in the US Army in the field of communications and retired as a Lieutenant Colonel. Cynthia always had a keen interest about finances and wealth. She decided 35 years ago to educate herself through reading many financial books, magazines, blogs and newspapers. She also attended financial seminars and watched and listened to other successful financial experts such as Mellody Hobson, Jean Chatzsky, Suze Orman, Michelle Singletary, David Bach, and Warren Buffet to name a few.

Cynthia was first certified as a financial counselor in 2009 and taught financial education for the University of Virginia Cooperative Education Department from 2009 - 2011. After relocating to Houston, she developed her own financial education program to primarily educate women and children about smart money decisions. She founded the C.A.N. Foundation in 2018 to promote financial literacy within our communities and she teaches a six-week course twice a year at the Tracy Gee Community Center.

Also, Cynthia is a licensed life, health and accident insurance agent. She is currently studying for her series 6 licenses in securities to further help those who are ready to take dominion over their finances. Her motto is "Bring Wall Street to Main Street."

In her free time, she volunteers with the Financial Ministry at Lakewood Church, enjoys traveling, mentoring and coaching others to be rich in mind, attitude and spirit.

About Cy-Fair Express Network (CYFEN)

Now over 60 members strong, Cy-Fair Express Network's vision is to be a community and national leader for the support of professional women by providing a nurturing environment for business development, networking, education and mentoring. Our members have opportunities to pursue excellence and achieve both local and national recognition. CYFEN is part of the national organization of American Business Women's Association (ABWA), for more information go to www.CYFEN.org.

ness Women's Association (ABWA), for more information go to www.CYFEN.org.

About American Business Women's Association (ABWA)

Founded in 1949, ABWA provides business training and networking opportunities for women of diverse occupations and backgrounds. ABWA has dedicated 60 years to women's education, workplace skills and career development training. For more information, visit, www.abwa.org. ♦

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STAGE RIGHT of Texas

PRESENTS PETER PAN

By: Sara Preisler Photos created by: Sara Preisler and Adam Isbell



Madison Mapes as Peter Pan

The magical musical *Peter Pan* is planning on coming to the Crighton Stage sometime this Summer / Fall of 2020. Presented by Stage Right of Texas, this musical that is full of imagination is sure to thrill and entertain audiences of all ages. The show's memorable songs include "Never Never Land", "I Won't Grow Up" and "I'm Flying" and just like the songs says, Peter Pan will be flying in this production. This production is directed by multiple Montie Award winner: Sara Preisler.

Peter and his mischievous fairy sidekick, Tinkerbell, visit the nursery of the Darling children late one night and, with a sprinkle of pixie

dust, begin a magical journey across the stars that none of them will ever forget. In the adventure of a lifetime, the travelers come face to face with a ticking crocodile, a fierce Indian tribe, a band of bungling pirates and, of course, the villainous Captain Hook.

Sara has put together a cast of extraordinary proportions to bring this fairytale to life. Leading the cast as Peter Pan is Madison Mapes. Audiences may remember her most recently as Grace, a stepsister in Stage-Right's production of *Cinderella* or as Dorothy Brock from *Thoroughly Modern Millie*. Madison definitely brings the charm, wit, and humor of *Peter Pan* to life, which is what helped earn her this title role. Playing her arch nemesis, Captain Hook, is Wyatt Langehenig. This is Wyatt's first theatre production with Stage-Right. Wyatt is currently studying at LSCM, but has been seen performing at the Texas Ren Faire. Wyatt's por-



Wyatt as Captain Hook

trayal of Hook definitely showcases his ability to bring comedy and cruelty to life, however



The Darling Family

School, has already been spending her summer's training in dance at the Joffrey Academy in New York. Sara has been mentoring both of these girls since they were 6 years old and is so excited to have them back and both on stage together again.

Rounding out the cast of principle roles is John Kenward as Smee, Chelsea Sato as the Crocodile and Keali Krueger as Nana/Jane. John Kenward will humor audiences with his comedic portrayal of Smee. And the Crighton's most loved costumer, Debbie Preisler will truly be transforming Chelsea and Keali into our love-

able animal friends.

Sara Preisler brings together many new and old faces to round out other roles in this production. Some of the folks you will get to see in this production, Mia Brandimarte, The Rickwalt Sisters, Wesley Burns, Cash Fournier are a few of the Lost Boys. A couple of Hook's trusty pirates are played by Matthew Wehrig, Todd Brady, Josh Fine, Carlos Sato and Heba Toulah. And a few of our advanced dancing Indians, Danielle Stringfellow, Elianna Barosh, Ad-

Continued on page 16

Dates: Temp. July 10 - 26th, 2020

Call or Visit: 936 - 441 -7469

stage-right.org for info

**Crighton Theatre
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still remaining likeable to an audience.

Also returning to the stage is a Conroe favorite, Katie Kowalik as Wendy Darling. Katie, who will soon be a sophomore in high school, was last seen on the Crighton Stage as Anne Frank in the *Diary of Anne Frank*. The other roles of the darling family are played by Keegan Pepper as John, Austin Krueger as Michael and Christina Sato as Mrs. Darling. You may remember Keegan as the blanket-toting Linus in *A Charlie Brown Christmas*. Austin was most recently seen in *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever* and last season had audiences rolling as Gus-Gus in *Cinderella*. A new Crighton Favorite, Christina Sato, returns after recently catching the theatre bug from her roles as Muzzy in *Thoroughly Modern Millie* and the Evil Stepmother in *Cinderella*.

Finally returning to the Crighton Stage are the Manning sisters. Paige Manning is taking on the role of Tiger Lily, the dance lead, Indian princess in this version. Paige will no doubt be amazing in this role after all her dance training, she currently is an instructor at Crowd Pleasers Dance. Sara knows she is going to blow audiences away when the crowd finally gets to see her. Paige's younger sister, Parker Manning, will be taking on the role of Liza, the ballet-dancing Darling family housekeeper. Parker, still in High

**STAGE
RIGHT**

Stage Right Announces:

PETER PAN

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Additional Lyrics by Betty Comden Adolph Green
Additional Music by Jule Styne Based on the play by Sir J. M. Barrie

By arrangement with Music Theatre International MTISHOWS.COM
Funded in part by the City of Conroe CVB visitconroe.com



Parker Manning as Liza



Christina as Ms. Darling

dison Burleson, Cosette Czarnopis, and Emma Dantzler.

Sara's artistic team is made up of Cricket Pepper and Layne Roberts, who recently all worked together on the showstopper *Cinderella*. Cricket, who some may say is a perfectionist, is taking on the role of Stage Manager, Set Designer, Prop Mistress and Co-Choreographer and Asst. Director. Her attention to detail and spunky assertiveness definitely make her a stand out in all her job titles. Multiple award-winning actress Layne Roberts is Music and Assistant Directing in this production. Layne, sometimes known as the musical genius of Conroe, is up for the challenge of teaching the entire cast to sing over online rehearsals. Right

now the entire production process is having to take place via ZOOM meetings until it is safe for a cast this size to rehearse. Of course, if it's a Preisler production, it can't be done without outstanding costumer and mother, Debbie Preisler. And helping bring the set and props to life is Kara Kowalik, who isn't afraid of glitter, which is a requirement for this production.

Peter Pan will be presented at the Historic Crichton Theatre (Recently named one of the top 10 venues in the state by BestThingsTx.com

to see live theatre). Located at 234 N Main Street, Conroe, Texas 77301. Stage Right currently has the show running July 10 – 26th of 2020, but those dates could change depending on the current situation. Fridays and Saturdays at 8pm and Sundays at 2 pm. For updated information on this production and to purchase tickets please visit online at www.stage-right.org or by calling the box office at 936-441-7469. Discounts are available by calling the box office. More Information about STAGE RIGHT can be found out on our website at www.stage-right.org. ♦



Paige Manning as Tiger Lily

This Summer ADOPT, Don't Shop



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Pandemic-Proof Your Business

Lessons Learned from COVID-19 about Marketing Your Business Online

The COVID-19 pandemic brought with it a lot of hard lessons for business owners. If your business was deemed non-essential, then no-doubt you are facing a lot of uncertainty and may be struggling to keep your doors open (quite literally). However, we also learned that if your business has a strong online presence, then the blow was softened considerably as you could still sell your products and services online. All it took was a shift in attention and some creative marketing strategies and your business was rocking and rolling again. At the very least, you weren't stuck waiting as you struggled to pay for your staff and to keep the lights on.

So let's look at the specific ways businesses struggled during the COVID-19 pandemic because they weren't equipped to operate online.

1. If your business is not online at all...get online now!

Many businesses had to shut their doors to the public, bringing their interaction with customers - and sales as a result - to a grinding halt. People weren't spending their time shopping in stores, but it doesn't mean they weren't still shopping. With everybody stuck at home and spending more time browsing online, any shopping outside of essential businesses like grocery stores moved online. People weren't spending their time in brick and mortar stores, but in online stores.

If your business has a functional, value-driven website then there is opportunity for you to get people's attention and point them toward your products and services. If you don't have a website, or have an old, poorly designed website with little content, then you're going to lose out on tons of potential business. In fact, if your website is the only impression you give consumers and it is a bad impression, it could not only prevent people from using your services, but it could hurt your business down the road by creating a negative association with your brand. The point is this: get online, build a strong presence, offer your services and products through your website, and create content that brings people to your site. And do it now.

2. If your business is not active on social media...get active now!

Facebook and Instagram are the best channels for small businesses, with Instagram by far being the best channel for organic engagement. Why Instagram? Well, consumers love visual content more than anything else. In fact, during the COVID-19 pandemic, Instagram posts got 20x more engagement on average compared to Facebook.

Now, this isn't to say that you shouldn't also be active on Facebook. Facebook is one of the very best places to advertise your business. Facebook ads can work wonders if you target them correctly and your offer is good.

However, if you aren't active on social media, then you are missing out on a huge opportunity to build your business. Nearly all of your ideal customers are on social media in some way. As a business, you need to be active on the channels your potential customers are on, and you need to provide valuable, helpful content to attract them. Try posting once a day if possible and make sure it has a visual aspect - photo or video based.

3. If your business does not produce content specifically for online audiences...start it now!

Video is, by far, the number one way people like to consume content online. The next best thing is also visual-based - posting photos. However, just as important as the visual aspect itself is the copy you use - the words associated with each post. Many businesses make the mistake of just selling all the time. That's the fastest way to lose people's attention and persuade them to stop following you. Instead post content that is valuable, helpful, inspirational, or charitable.

You may not be a professional copywriter, but you can still post content that people love just by being genuine. However, if you can hire a professional, by all means do it. People love a story, and they love when you make them the hero - not yourself. This means that you shouldn't just talk about yourself or your business unless it is done in a way that directly

benefits the consumer. For instance, your story of building your business can be an inspiration for someone who needs hope. But as a general rule, make the consumer the focus. Nurture them along so they become fans of your brand, then when the time is right you can offer them something.

4. If you don't have products or services you can sell online... create them now!

Speaking of your "offer", are you able to sell your products or services online? We learned during the pandemic just how detrimental it can be if your business is not deemed essential and you don't have something to sell online. If you can relate to that then it's time to think outside the box when it comes to traditional business. Plain and simple you need to do one of two things. First, if you do have products or services that you can sell online, but don't have an online store on your website, then you need to create one now. If you think your products or services can't be sold online, then you need to get innovative and create them.

For instance, if you offer a service that requires face-to-face interaction with customers, then you can create a video chat alternative that can be done remotely. If you offer automotive services that require your customers to come to you, find a way to offer the same service by going to them - in a safe and secure way. The point is, whatever you offer can be transformed into an online offering. Yes, it may require some out-of-the-

box thinking, but it might just transform your business.

If you find yourself fitting one or several of these categories above and your business needs to get online ASAP, then let us know. At Dock Line we specialize in getting businesses online. From social media services where we do everything for you like creating captivating content and managing your audience, to web design services that give you an online store for your offerings and valuable content to attract consumers. We also provide exceptional video services to create valuable content that your customers will love, and so much more. Let us know how we can help! Just reach out at ozzy@thedockline.com. ♦



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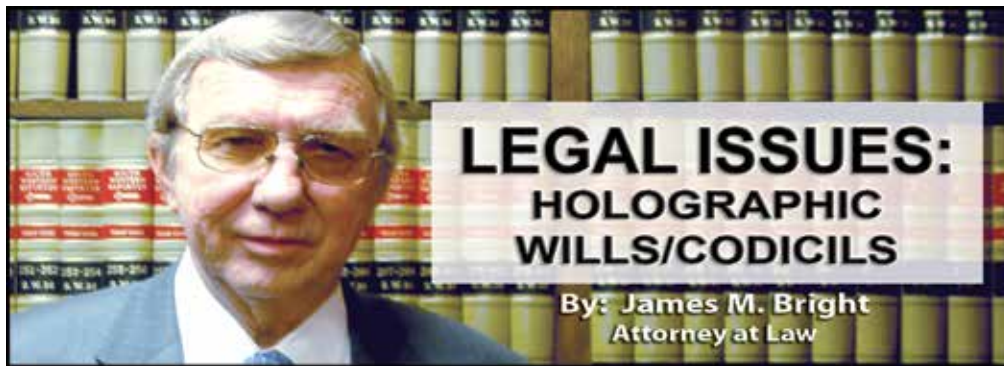
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The following is provided for informational purposes only and is not, nor should it be construed as legal advice.

Holographic wills/codicils are those last wills and testaments and/or codicils that are totally in the handwriting of and signed by the decedent.

Many people ask me if holographic wills are recognized in Texas as valid wills and if they can be probated in Texas courts. The answer is "Yes," holographic wills are common in this state, and they demand the same respect as an attorney-prepared will even though they may present special problems at time of probate. Holographic wills must meet the requirements of being a will and be specific enough to understand the intent of the testator.

The first requirement to probate any will, holographic or formal, is that the document of-

ferred is "in fact" a will or codicil. The following essential elements are necessary to probate any will or codicil, but they become even more pronounced when the document offered is holographic.

1. The Will or Codicil must identify the testator. This element is usually met fairly easily, but on rare occasions is omitted. A good example is from my own practice where the testator had a formal will prepared by an attorney, but decided for some unknown reason to make some changes through a handwritten codicil. The formal will stated that he might wish to make a list of personal items that he wanted to pass to particular individuals, and that he would keep that list with his formal will as instruction for his executor. Often testators leave instructions to executors through documents that do not meet the formal requirements of a

will for gifts of small and non-valuable assets and which the executor has the option to follow or not to follow. If you wish for your codicil to be enforceable under the law, it must meet all four of the elements outlined in this article. Unfortunately, in the cited case, when the testator left the list, it not only contained numerous high value art items, but it was unsigned and showed no intent to make a gift. The list was nothing more than an inventory list of art items, and, therefore, was unenforceable.

2. The Will or Codicil must be written with testamentary intent. In order to be admitted to probate and for the testator's wishes to be enforceable, it must be clear that the person making the will or codicil intends to have the document treated as a testamentary directive. The most common and least ambiguous way to do this is to make a statement that "this is my last will and testament," but it is not uncommon in holographic wills for the testator to simply start listing how property is to pass without making it clear that such listing is an expression of testamentary intent. If the intent cannot be unambiguously determined by a simple reading of the document, then it probably will not be considered a will or codicil.

3. The person writing the Will must have "testamentary capacity." For this element, it does not matter if the will is holographic or formal. If the testator lacks testamentary

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capacity on the day that the will or codicil is signed, then the document is not an enforceable will/codicil. Standards for establishing testamentary capacity are well established by both statute and case law. The important thing to determine is that the testator had capacity on the exact date of the will.

4. The Will or Codicil itself must adhere to requisite testamentary formalities. For a holographic will or codicil to be upheld, it must be totally in the handwriting of the testator and signed by the testator. On occasions, this firm has found that sometimes a well meaning person will add additional language by typing, printing or handwriting. If a portion of the will/codicil is typewritten, printed or in the handwriting of a person who is not the testator, then courts will likely apply the "surplusage rule." If applied, this rule will allow probate of the offered will, but will disregard the language that is not in the testator's handwriting.

Although adherence to the above basic elements will qualify a holographic will for probate, they do not ensure that the enforcement of the will provisions can be followed without extreme difficulty and added expense. For example, on one holographic will handled by this firm, the testatrix met the burden on all the above-cited elements, but inadvertently created two more time-consuming problems as follow:

- Intended heirs were not clearly identified because the testator simply referred to seven named beneficiaries by their first names only. This did not make the will impossible to probate, but it did make it necessary to clarify the identity of each named person and to show the relationship with the decedent/testator. This required a separate legal action designed to identify the heirs who had been identified by first names only and to have a declaration by the court showing the identities. This procedure would not have been needed if the will had been properly drafted.

- The testator decided to make additions to the will after the date of the original signing. Although the changes were still in her handwriting, they were made and dated approximately three months later and did not include a new signature. As a result, the part added later (i.e., the codicil) did not meet all of the requisites of a valid codicil and was ignored by the Court.

The testatrix was able to save a few dollars at the time of drafting by leaving a holographic will, but caused her family to spend three or four times more than would have been required to probate the will than if it had been professionally prepared.

The bottom line is this: It is usually less expensive to let a professional draft the needed documents. If you are the only living person

in an aircraft that is doomed to crash unless safely landed, it is not only wise but also prudent to try to land the aircraft yourself. However, if there is a professional pilot on board who knows how to avoid the crash, you will probably be best served by turning over the controls to the professional. The same is true when it comes to drafting your will.

James Bright has been admitted to practice before the Federal Courts for the Southern District of Texas and Eastern District of Texas as well as all of the Justice Courts, Probate Courts, County Courts at Law, District Courts, Courts of Appeal and Supreme Court for the State of Texas. He maintains an office in Houston and by appointment another at 208 McCown Street in the heart of historic Montgomery. Contact may be made by telephone (936) 449-4455 or (281) 586-8277. For more information about wills or probate in Texas, please see- www.houstontxprobate.com. ♦

IF YOU WISH TO SUGGEST A TOPIC FOR THIS COLUMN, SEND TO:

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Lake Conroe Clean Rivers Sampling Program: Earning A 5-star (er, Frog) Rating

Lake Conroe was constructed in the late 1960s to the early 1970s in a joint venture between the San Jacinto River Authority (SJRA) and City of Houston with the sole purpose of providing a drinking water source to serve future demand in the greater Houston Metropolitan area.

As a partner in the project, SJRA takes great pride in operating and maintaining the Lake Conroe Dam and Reservoir. Included in the responsibilities is the charge of assessing the quality of the water in the reservoir. In cooperation with the Houston Galveston Area Council (HGAC), SJRA administers the Clean Rivers Program (CRP) on Lake Conroe. The CRP is a water quality initiative overseen by Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) for the purpose of monitoring the overall health of Texas Waterways.

Continuous monitoring of the quality of water in Lake Conroe is important not only because of its function as a regional drinking water source, but also due to its popularity as a recreational destination for boating, fishing, and a variety of other water sports and hobbies. The TCEQ requires water bodies to meet established water quality standards based on their "use." The official "uses" of Lake Conroe, as designated by TCEQ, are drinking water supply, recreation, and fish consumption. Therefore Lake Conroe is held to the most stringent water quality standards set forth by TCEQ.

There are currently ten monitoring sites in the Lake Conroe CRP Program (Figure 1). These sites are all located in the main body of the lake and were chosen to capture water quality parameters from all of the major contributing tributaries. At each designated site, SJRA samples for 11 different water quality parameters (See Table 1). Some specimens are collected, preserved, and delivered to an outside lab for detailed analysis.

Other samples are considered field parameters and are collected instantaneously with a water quality measuring device called a sonde (See Figure 3). The sonde is deployed over the side of a boat to different depths in the water column. At each defined depth, four water quality parameters are measured: pH, specific conductivity, temperature, and dissolved oxygen. Data collected with the sonde can be downloaded to a personal computer and charted in order to detect changes in water quality throughout the water column for each month of the year. This information is useful to Texas Parks and Wildlife fisheries biologists as well as water treatment facility operators.

Another sampling device is known as a secchi disk and is used to measure the turbidity—or level of clarity—of water (See Figure 4). The secchi disk is lowered into the water until it is no longer vis-

ible, at which point a depth measurement is taken and recorded. The greater the depth that the secchi disk remains visible, the less turbid the water. These extensive sampling procedures allow SJRA to establish a complete picture of the water quality in Lake Conroe.

Data gathered from each sampling site is then compared to TCEQ water quality standards and screening levels. If a parameter exceeds the standard or screening level for a continued period of time, the lake will be deemed impaired by TCEQ. To date, Lake Conroe has



Water Sampling



never been determined to be impaired and, in fact, remains one of the cleanest water bodies in the region. Each year HGAC issues a Basin Highlights/ Summary Report, which ranks all water bodies in the region based on overall water quality. The rankings range from poor water quality, identified as a one frog rating, to excellent water quality, receiving a five frog rating (See Figure 2). SJRA is proud that Lake Conroe is considered a 5-frog reservoir (See Figure 1).

Lake Conroe has excellent water quality and SJRA works diligently to protect this great resource for the public. It will take SJRA and the public working together to keep water quality at such a high level. If you have any questions about the water quality program on Lake Conroe, please contact Shane Simpson at ssimpson@sjra.net.

Precautions Regarding COVID-19

(Lake Conroe open to families at this time)

Lake Conroe continues to stay open and can provide a welcome change to staying indoors. If visiting Lake Conroe, please continue to observe federal, state, and local COVID-19 guidelines including:

- Follow CDC recommendations on social distancing.
- Limit gatherings of people to a family unit.
- Follow recommended hygiene practices including frequent hand washing when visiting any common spaces such as marinas, gas stations, or boat launches.

“Our highest priority is for the health and well-being of Lake Conroe visitors and businesses,” said SJRA General Manager Jace Houston. “We want people to get outside with their families and enjoy the lake. We just need people to do it in a way that keeps them safe and healthy.”

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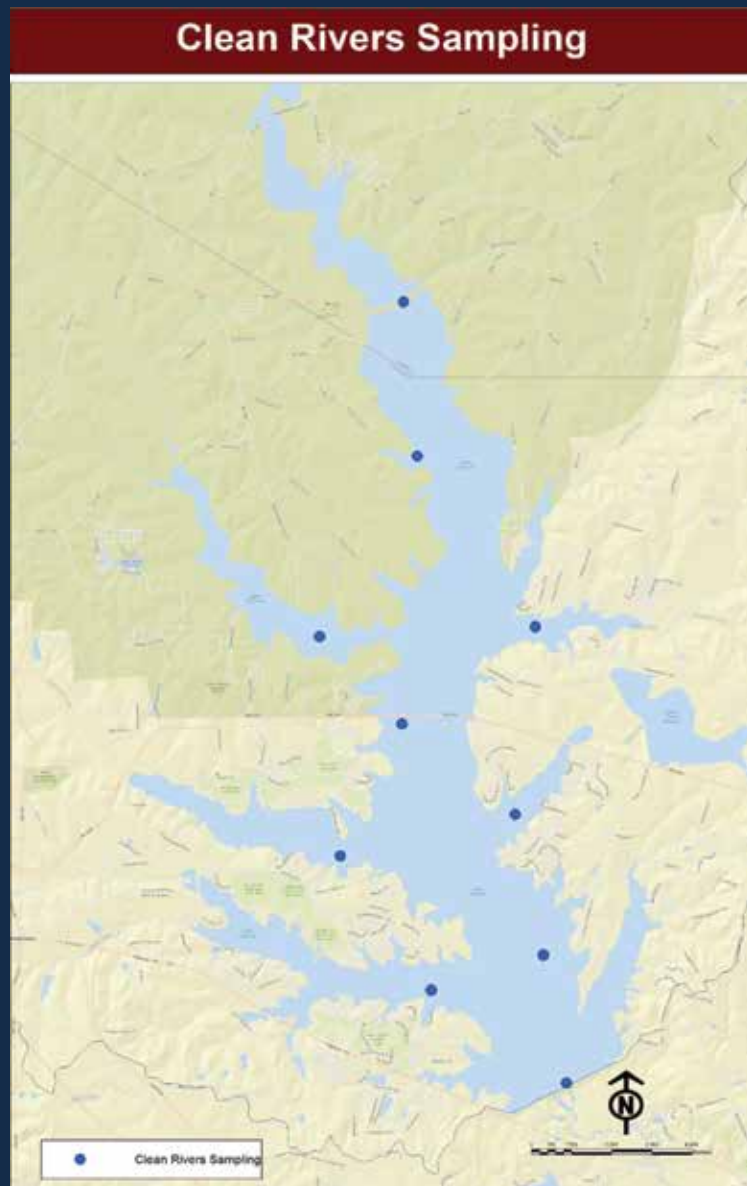


Fig 1. CRP Lake Conroe Sampling Locations

“Precinct 1 advises everyone to enjoy Lake Conroe but make sure that you are following best practices and social distancing while on the water,” said Lt. Cade Montgomery County Precinct 1 Constable’s Office. “Make sure to keep your party to family units only, wash your hands, and for more information regarding COVID-19 visit www.mctx.org.”

One of the major river authorities in Texas, SJRA’s mission is to develop, conserve, and protect the water resources of the San Jacinto River basin. Covering all or part of seven counties, the organization’s jurisdiction includes the entire San Jacinto River watershed, excluding Harris County. For additional information on SJRA visit our website at www.sjra.net, like SJRA on Facebook @SanJacintoRiverAuthority, follow us on Twitter @SJRA_1937, or find us on Instagram @SanJacintoRiverAuthoritySJRA. ♦



Fig 2: HGAC 2019 Regional Water Quality Summary Frog Chart

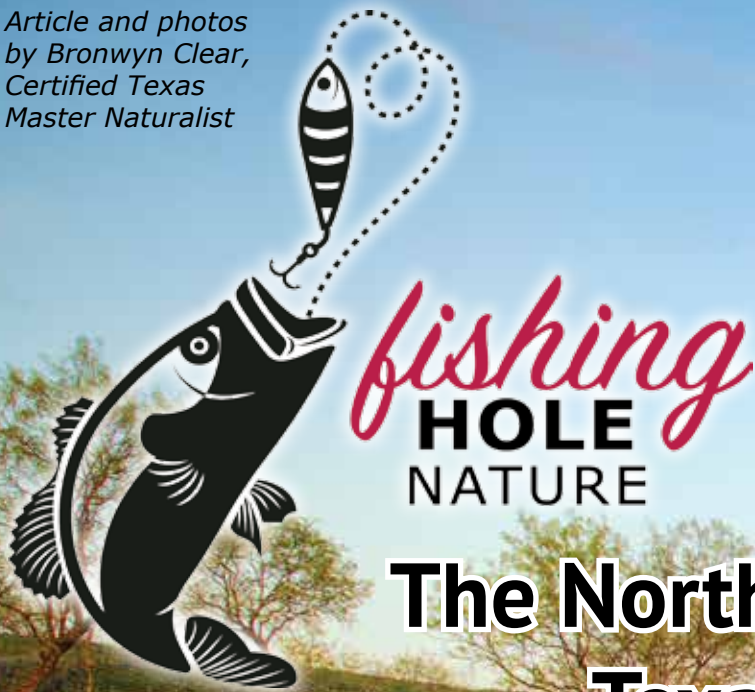
Parameters	TCEQ Screening Levels/ Standards Limits
Alkalinity	N/A
Chloride	>50 mg/L
E Coli	MPN/ 100mL
Ammonia	0.11 mg/L
Nitrate	> 37 mg/L
Secchi Depth	N/A
Sulfate	>50 mg/L
Total Phosphorus	> 20 mg/L
Total Suspended Solids	N/A
Chlorophyll	>26.7 ppb
Total Kjeldahl Nitrogen	N/A
Dissolved Oxygen	<3.0 mg/L
Specific Conductivity	N/A
Temperature	> 32.22 °C
pH	N/A

Table 1: Parameters and TCEQ Screening Levels/ Standards Limits for CRP Lake Conroe



Fig. 3: MS5 Hydrolab Water Quality Sonde

Article and photos
by Bronwyn Clear,
Certified Texas
Master Naturalist



When not singing in the trees, they can be spotted foraging through the grass for a meal.

The Northern Mockingbird Texas State Bird

"Mockingbirds don't do one thing but make music for us to enjoy. They don't eat up people's gardens, don't nest in corncribs, they don't do one thing but sing their hearts out for us. That's why it's a sin to kill a mockingbird."

– To Kill a Mockingbird by Harper Lee.



You won't find them at your seed feeders because they eat insects in the warmer months and berries in winter.

The Northern Mockingbird is a very popular and intelligent character. They hold a place in our culture, songs, books and movies. Mockers are found in great numbers nesting all over North America, and they are such delightful songbirds that they have been named the state bird for 5 different states, including Texas.

Medium in size, mockingbirds have striking white patches on their wings and tails that can be prominently seen while in flight. Otherwise, they have rather bland gray bodies with long legs and tails, small heads, skinny bodies, but very colorful personalities! During mating season, the male makes most of the nest. It has an outer geometric structure of large twigs and a center of softer material for the eggs and chicks. If a female likes his songs and nest work, she will lay a clutch of blue eggs with brown speckles. The chicks will hatch about two weeks afterward,

and in two more weeks the chicks will fledge.

Named for its ability to mimic, the mockingbird's medley is copied from many other birds such as bluebirds, cardinals, and even bald eagles. Sometimes from frogs and toads as well! The better he is at singing, the better he will be at attracting a lady. It is not unusual for one bird to have many songs in its current repertoire, and both females and males sing complex tunes. Although you may think there are 5 different birds singing in a nearby tree, the songs could all be coming from just one gleeful hopeful mockingbird. They sing anytime of the day, and amazingly, even at night!

Although they sing high up in the trees, they are ground foraging omnivores. Mockingbirds prefer bugs from the grass in summertime, and berries from low shrubs in the winter. A few summers ago one particular mocker fol-

lowed behind our lawnmower, gobbling grasshoppers that flipped up as the mower went by. Every week this mockingbird would swoop down and chase behind the mower! It was an easy meal for an intelligent opportunistic bird, and great entertainment for us bystanders.

To hear a mocker's birdsong, go to https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Northern_Mockingbird. Recorded birdsong is a service offered by Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Or just walk outside to your back porch and listen. Sit back and enjoy the free concert given by your little winged virtuoso!

Learn more about the incredible nature in our area by joining a chapter of the Texas Master Naturalist organization. To find a chapter close to you, or to read about the state program, go online to www.txmn.org. Volunteer and get involved! ♦



A mockingbird nest has a geometric twig framework with a center nest made of soft Spanish Moss. Their eggs are light blue with brown speckles.

Mockingbirds are plain in looks, but beautiful in song!



SPRING & SUMMER; THE BIRDS ARE NESTING!

By: Lisa Wolling, Executive Director

As we move from spring into summer, no doubt you will continue to see lots of busy backyard birds and hear them singing their beautiful courtship songs. Due to our warmer weather for an extended period of months, songbirds here may nest and raise several broods of young each

tail, and many are easily recognizable (as in "that's a baby blue jay"). Baby birds "fledge" and leave the nest TO learn how to fly, not WHEN they know how to fly. This is natural behavior. They can be seen hopping around on the ground or flitting from low bush to low bush. This is completely



Photos left and left center show nestling birds. Note they are not fully feathered. Birds in left center photo have "pin feathers", which resemble toothpicks. The birds in right center and right photos are fledglings. Notice they are fully feathered and more recognizable as to what species they are (blue bird, blue jay, and mockingbird).

year, starting in early spring and then continuing through summer and into early fall.

At our intake center, we commonly get calls from people who have rescued baby birds. There are times when a nest may fall, or a hatching or nestling baby bird may get blown or knocked out of its nest. Very young baby birds found on the ground do need help; these baby birds are either unfeathered, or have a little fuzz, or are just beginning to get feathers (pin feathers look a bit like toothpicks sticking out of a baby bird). These babies are helpless and cannot fly yet, or even walk or hop. If a nest can be located, the baby can be placed back into the nest. It is not true that if a baby bird is picked up or has "human scent" on it the parents will reject it (in fact, most songbirds have little or no sense of smell anyway). If a nest cannot be reached or located, many times it is possible to put up a substitute nest. Simply take a small basket, or small plastic container (like a Cool Whip or margarine container), poke a couple of drainage holes in the bottom, and line it with some grass and leaves. Then take the new nest and attach it to a tree (with bungee cord, string, or even nail it) close to where the baby was found. Put the baby or babies in the new nest and observe from a distance to see if the parent birds resume caring for the baby or babies. With most songbirds, both the male and female tend to the young, so even if something happens to one parent, the remaining parent should still be able to raise the chick(s). If parents do not return after a few hours, please call for assistance. Do not feed the baby birds anything; dehydrated or cold babies cannot digest any food, so attempting to feed them could do more harm than good. If it is late in the day, simply keep the babies warm and quiet overnight (parents do not feed their babies after dark in the wild anyway). A heating pad on LOW can be put half under the makeshift nest if needed. If babies are found late in the day, you can try re-nesting the following morning to see if reuniting is successful. Please call us if you have any concerns or questions about what to do.

Quite often when we get calls on baby birds, they are actually fledglings. These are baby birds that are fully feathered with a little stubby

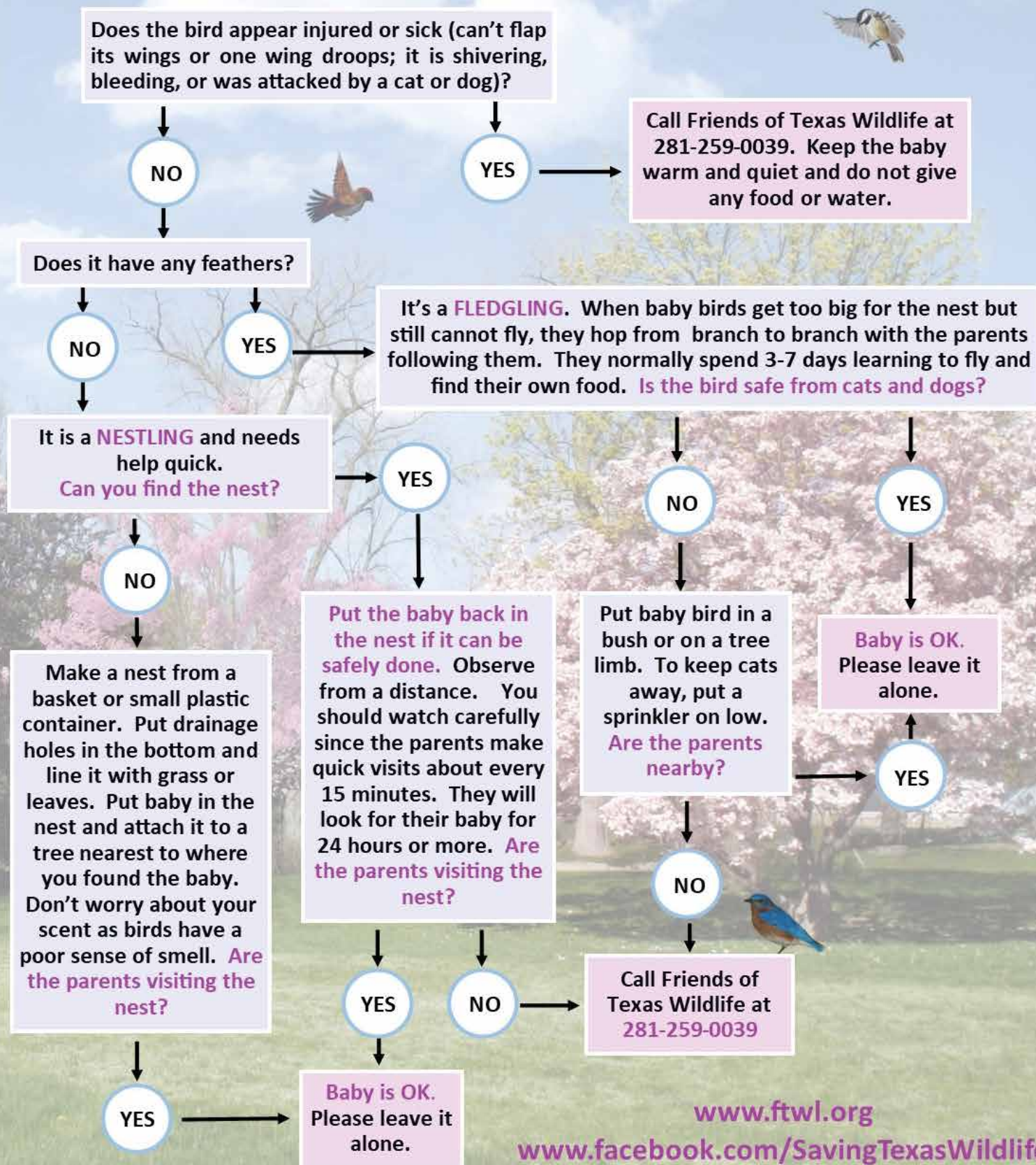
normal. As they learn to fly, their parents are still tending to them and bringing them food. These birds do not need rescuing! This is the most dangerous time for baby birds, but they just need a day or two before they can fly quite well. Try to keep cats and dogs inside during the day if fledglings are seen, or if they are in danger from domestic pets perhaps try moving the fledgling(s) away from dangerous areas by placing them in a low bush or tree. It is simply not possible for wildlife centers or rehabilitators to take fledgling birds simply to protect them from domestic dogs or cats. Just imagine the numbers of animals involved in such a scenario...not to mention licensing guidelines limit rehabbers to "injured or orphaned animals". It is not feasible to take fledglings simply to protect them from what "might" happen. Also, a word about cats...we love ALL animals, and many (most?) rehabbers also have lots of domestic pets. However, allowing unsupervised cats outside to predate on birds (as well as other small wildlife animals) has a huge impact on songbird mortality. It is much safer for cats as well as wildlife to keep cats inside. We see first hand every day the damage domestic cats inflict on many types of wildlife, but particularly on birds. If you do let your cats outside, then at least refrain from intentionally attracting birds to your yard (no birdfeeders, birdhouses, hummingbird feeders, etc.). Remember that bird houses will eventually mean fledgling baby birds, so unless you can keep your cat inside when babies are present, it would be kinder to not encourage them to nest where the cats are present.

Most often simply understanding what normal behavior is for nestling birds is the best way to keep them safe and not unnecessarily separate them from their parents. We have more helpful information on our website at www.ftwl.org. To learn more about what we do and view pictures of many of the animals we assist, please visit our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/SavingTexasWildlife. We will continue to post on our website and Facebook page about our hours of operation and protocols during the Covid-19 concerns; at this time, unfortunately, our educational center remains closed. ♦



I Found a Baby Bird

Every year, countless baby birds are “rescued” by well-meaning people who find fledgling babies out of the nest. Fledgling baby birds are old enough to be out of the nest, but they cannot yet fly. Assessing when a baby bird may need help (or not) is important to know. If you find a baby bird you are concerned about, please refer to this chart for guidance.



www.ftwl.org

www.facebook.com/SavingTexasWildlife



5-11-20 BACK IN THE BOAT BASS FISHING

Today I went out in the boat on Lake Conroe. It was a beautiful day to fish. The temperature was in the 70's and a nice breeze was



blowing. I could fish all day in this weather. I have not been fishing that much lately, so I decided today was the day I would try to locate some fish. The first few spots I went to when I started were not good. The blue herons were sitting around watching me to see if I was going to catch something. Not at that spot. Maybe I am just throwing the wrong bait. I knew the fish were around, I just had to find them and give them something appetizing to eat.

I came up to a brush pile then changed the bait I had been using and bam. Caught one.

It was about 3 pounds. I moved to another location and caught another small one. I went to a few more places trying to find them and nothing. It was time to go put some gas in the boat. Good thing I got there when I did because I didn't realize I was running on fumes. I headed back home to take a break.

Several hours later I decided I was going to go back out again. I was catching fish and it was a great day to be on the water. Not many boats were on the lake. Soon after I left I had a nice big bass on. I caught this one on a Carolina rig. It was approximately 6 or 7 pounds, not sure because I didn't have my scale. Fished till dark. Caught a few more but they were all smalls. The big one got me fired up.

5-12-20 Tuesday Night Tournament- Conroe Bass

Parker called me last week and asked if I



would fish with him and I told him no because I had not been on the lake and didn't know where the fish were. This time I said, "Yes" because I went out and found some pretty nice fish and felt confident to go ahead and invest my money and give it my best.

There were 37 teams fishing tonight. It was raining super hard when we got to the take-off, so we're delayed 45 minutes. Even



though we drew number 5, it didn't help us because it was a shotgun start since we were late taking off. We were one of the last boats to leave. Since we were delayed everyone had the same weigh in time, which was 9 p.m. There were 37 teams fishing in the Tuesday Night Tournament on Lake Conroe.

It rained on us for the first hour of the tournament. At least it slowed down because when we arrived it was coming down in heavy sheets and drifting across the water. Parker's dog, Chance was on board and he was getting wet as well. My mom told us he would be the good luck charm for tonight. We arrived at the first spot and Parker caught a little one. Then he hooked another fish and it hung him up and broke him off in a brush pile.

Our second spot we went offshore and I caught 1 on a Texas rig. Next spot I caught 3 on a Texas rig and a crank bait. Parker also caught 3.

We were going down the bank when Parker set the hook, the drag was loose, causing it to slip and the fish jumped twice. When he was pulling it in the net it jumped and threw the hook and the head was coming out of the net. I said, "Where do you think you are going?" and scooped it back in the net. Parker put him in the live well. We kept fishing and going down the bank. We caught some 2-3 pounders, culling along the way.

I was throwing a Texas rig and a fish thumped it hard and my eyes got big. I knew I had a "Big One". It jumped twice. I said, "Big One, Big One!" Parker netted it. I got it in the boat and we high fived. It was a 6 pounder. We culled another fish.

I was fishing and got hung up on the bank. While I was busy shaking it off and getting it unhung Parker was throwing a crank bait. He caught a 3 pounder and we culled our last fish. We felt we had a great day of fishing even though we were cut short 45 minutes by the delay.

We proudly pulled our fish out of the well and were excited to get in line to see what we had in our bag. We raced up the hill with Chance tagging along wagging his tail. I think he was proud of the fish we had in our bag. There were several anglers and captains





from Montgomery High School competing at this tournament. We got to the scales and we couldn't decide which one of our big fish was the largest so we weighed both of them. I caught one and so did Parker. My fish weighed 6-11. It was nice size but it was not the big fish for the night. There were two different guys that had 9 pounders. They put our 3 fish on the scale and the total weight was 15.55. That was a good bag, but there were still anglers in line so we had to wait to see the final out-



come. Then another team came up, they pulled a beast out of their bag. It weighed 9.4 pounds. We waited anxiously to see how much his total bag weight was. Luckily it was less than ours. I was scared when another guy pulled out 2 six pounders and was worried the third fish was going to be a 4 pounder. Thank goodness it was a 2 pounder. We talked to Mr. Clepper as we waited.

They announced all the winners and then they called out our names and we won first place. Parker and I caught fish on every spot. It was so much fun and I am glad I fished.
THROW IT OUT, POP IT IN, FISH ON! ♦



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