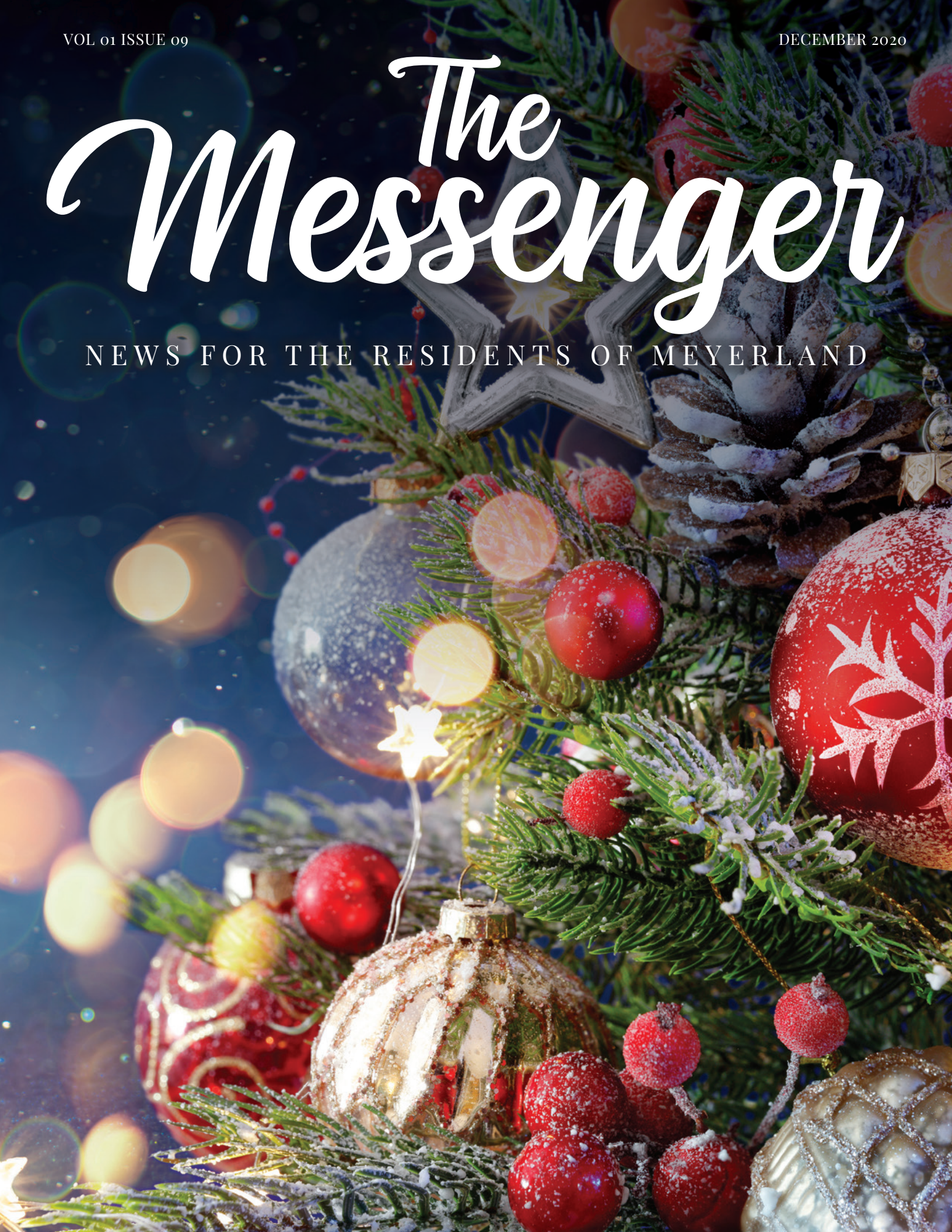


VOL 01 ISSUE 09

DECEMBER 2020

# The Messenger

NEWS FOR THE RESIDENTS OF MEYERLAND







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**Houston Police Dept.**  
**Non-Emergency**  
713-884-3131

## CITY OF HOUSTON

**Houston Help &  
Information** 311 or 713-  
837-0311

**District C Council**  
**Member, Abbie Kaman:**  
832-393-3004

**Godwin Park**  
**Community Center**  
713-393-1840

**CenterPoint Energy**  
Electric outages or  
electric emergencies  
713-207-2222  
or 800-332-7143

**Suspected natural gas leak**  
713-659-2111  
or 888-876-5786

**For missed garbage pickup,  
water line break, dead  
animals, traffic signals, and  
other city services:** 311

Some mobile phone users  
may need to dial:  
713-837-0311

## Newsletter Information

Peel Inc is committed to making The Messenger a valuable tool for the residents of Meyerland. Please submit any community news, events and updates to [themessenger@peelinc.com](mailto:themessenger@peelinc.com)

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# Voting With A Message

by Jackie Devine

750 Harris County polls were operating on Election Day, and 122 were open during early voting, which ran from October 13 through October 30. This year, a number of people living in Cypress participated in the election process. A sampling of various ways included posting information on social media, placing a sign in their yard, or walking the block and campaigning.

For my contribution, as your editor, I choose to work the polls at John Paul Landing Environmental Education Center (JPLEEC). I wanted an up-close and personal way to meet and greet the voters and gain first-hand knowledge of how the political process works. Regardless of media spin, hopefully, what I encountered was not an anomaly or a statistical outlier of the voting process but an accurate representation of what is possible when people come together for the common cause of ensuring our nation's freedoms.

When our team assembled to set up the polling station at JPLEEC on Monday, October 12, we were complete strangers. The Presiding Judge Randi Houston introduced herself, as did Alternate Judge Mark Woodson.

First up to speak, Randi set the tone for all future activities, explaining, "I took on this job because I encountered a bad experience at a primary this year; the clerk kept saying if you have a complaint,

then call this number. I didn't want to complain because I have a business and know what it's like to deal with grievances. So I decided that I could help fix the situation by being part of the solution instead of the problem.

"After extensive research, I found that my skills fit perfectly with the clerk job description, so I volunteered. A few weeks later, I got a call saying they received my application. The interviewer told me that she wanted me to work in the PJ position and asked when I would be available. 'What is a PJ,' I asked. 'That sounds important.'

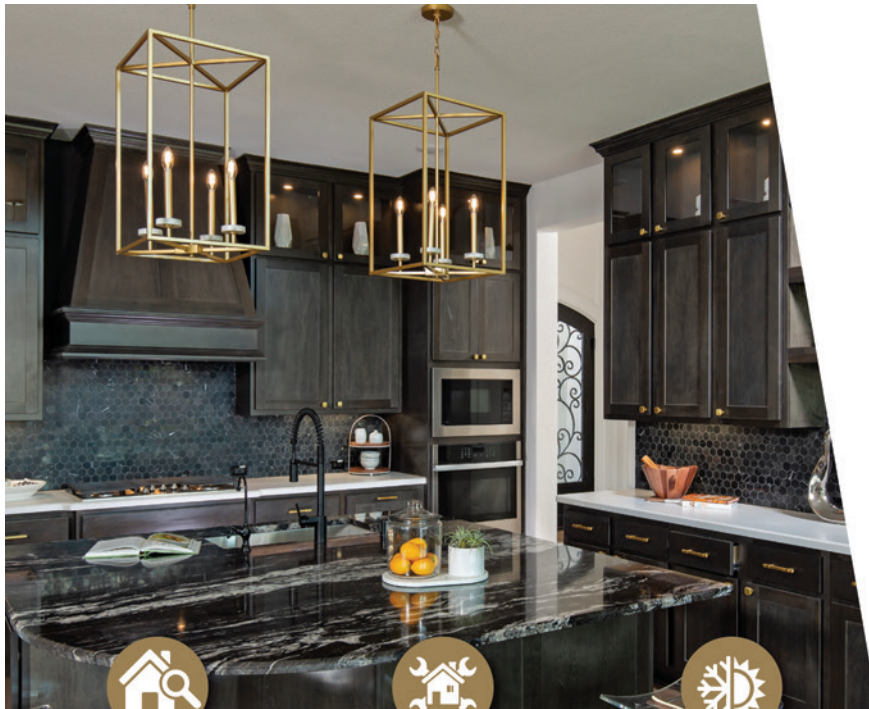
The lady said, "Oh, I'm sorry, it's a Presiding Judge, and yes, it is important."

Randi continued, "That little girl inside of me said, 'You've got this. You can do it.' But then, in real-time, I was like, 'Yes, you have it, but do you have the time to do this?'

"Although I didn't know what to expect, I knew this would be part of a historical event, and it was the perfect opportunity to witness how elections work.

"I figured that there would be a lot of Baby Boomers, Generation Xers, and Ys, as well as scores of the high school and college students who would be casting their very first ballot.

*Continued on Page 6*



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DECEMBER 2020						
SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
		1 TRASH	2	3	4	5
6	7	8 T/R	9 JUNK	10	11	12
13	14	15 TRASH	16	17	18	19
20	21	22 T/R	23	24	25	26
27	28	29 TRASH	30	31		

JANUARY 2021						
SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
					1	2
3	4	5 T/R	6 JUNK	7	8	9
10	11	12 TRASH	13	14	15	16
17	18	19 T/R	20	21	22	23
24 31	25	26 TRASH	27	28	29	30

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- Tax benefits



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*Continued from Page 4*

I felt this was my chance to help people have a positive and memorable voting experience."

Mark Woodson, the Alternate Judge, who became the Presiding Judge on Election Day, also a first-time poll worker, stepped forward and explained his position. He felt the upcoming election was a critical one, emphasizing that he wanted to do his part in ensuring that we are handing off an intact political system to the next generation.

He outlined the group expectation It was to be a people-first, party last approach. Black, White, Brown, Democrat, Republican, or Independent, we were free to embrace our own opinions---however, not while we were serving the citizens of Harris County.

Each morning, we gathered for a team meeting to assess the previous events of the day, outline new information distributed through the county, review difficulties voters may have faced, bottlenecks witnessed in the voting process, and give kudos for jobs well done.

Both Randi and Mark operated from a top-down/bottom-up management style. All team members were expected to join in, pull their weight, and assist where needed. Every day all clerks switched positions thus requiring all to work (and think) together. Seamlessly we moved from one position to the other.

Voters were welcomed on the sidewalk outside the entrance and greeted once again in the lobby. We learned their names, applauded them for coming, and celebrated our first-time voters for their effort.

Clerks jumped at the chance to walk portable voting machines out to drive-up voters.

It was a common occurrence to overhear voters say, "That was so much fun, I'm going to vote here again next time."

On the last day, I asked a number of my counterparts how they felt about the experience. Although they permitted me to quote them, I've left the names off their comments for safety reasons. A composite of their answers includes:

"We came together from different countries, cultures, backgrounds, and parts of the city to work together as a team to achieve one great goal, and that was to provide a safe environment that was efficient, fair, and inspirational. This team would be a good team to show to the rest of the state."

"I was wondering how we could function as a team with so little training. As it turned out, we shared our experiences, and that made us all stronger."

"We got together, shared our experiences, cross-trained, and learned how to work each position, laughed together, but got serious about our work when the time came."

In addition to natural-born citizens, our team represented Columbia, Nigeria, Pakistan, and Hawaii. We reflected a variety of various ages and religions, differing levels of education, and diverse walks of life. As a team, we accomplished what our forefathers envisioned when our country was created. We performed as one nation, indivisible, and together we represented liberty and justice for all.

# IT'S JUST DUCKY

*By Cheryl Conley, TWRC Wildlife Center*

Unless you suffer from ornithophobia (a fear of birds) or anatidaephobia (the fear that you are being watched by a duck), you probably enjoy watching ducks. It's a way to get us outside to enjoy nature, it's free and it's year-round. Besides, they're cute, especially the babies. It's so touching to see ducklings paddling like crazy to keep up with Mom. How do they know which duck is Mom? Before they hatch, ducklings hear their mother from inside the shell and then, when they hatch, they know who their mother is.

You'll likely see several different species of ducks in our area but here are two species that are very common.

You will more than likely see Muscovy ducks in area ponds and lakes. The males have fleshy red caruncles (warty bumps) on the face and at the base of the bill. Females have smaller caruncles or have none at all.

Muscovies are not native except in three Texas counties near the Mexican border. With the exception of these three counties, Muscovy ducks are considered invasive which means they can take over habitats, can stress the natural ecosystems and even eradicate native plants and animals. They are prolific breeders and it doesn't take long for their populations to increase dramatically driving away native species.

Feral Muscovy ducks have become a real problem for many neighborhoods in and around the Houston area. They wander into yards and leave their waste droppings everywhere including sidewalks, porches, driveways, patios, on cars and even in pools. They can destroy landscaping while foraging for food. They can be a hazard for drivers as they waddle across neighborhood streets. Some report that the ducks are aggressive.

In November of 2019, controversy arose in Pearland when city officials gave the go-ahead for residents to legally kill Muscovy ducks on their own property. They had become a nuisance and many homeowners were complaining.

On the other hand, some are happy to have Muscovies around. They eat algae and weeds in ponds, flies, roaches, ants, spiders, small fishes, reptiles and slugs. They also eat mosquitos. For this reason, they are very valuable in keeping unwanted insect populations down. They are "dabbling" ducks which means they float and tip themselves forward, butts up in the air, to grab insects, small fish, etc.

## MALLARDS

Mallard ducks are the most common ducks in North America. The male duck has a bright green head, yellow beak, a light-colored body and dark brown chest. The female is much less colorful and is light brown with dark brown mottling from the neck down.

Mallards begin pairing up in the fall but courtship can extend into early spring. Generally speaking, they are monogamous. I say "generally" because males will engage in "forced copulations." Several males will chase a female and then forcefully mate with her.

*Continued on Page 7*





Mallards are omnivores with 2/3 of their diet consisting of plant matter and 1/3 animal protein. They eat small fish, snails, moths, flies, bugs, grass, seeds, grains and fruits. They are dabbling ducks, too, just like the Muscovy.

- Ducks eat gravel, small stones and sand. However, it's not because they're hungry. The rocks are stored in the gizzard and help break down food.

- Ducks have a field of vision of 340 degrees and can see up close and far away simultaneously. They also see in color.

- Ducks have no blood vessels or nerves in their feet so their feet don't feel the cold in icy waters.

- Ducks normally don't fly over 4,000 feet in the air when they migrate. However, they have the capability of flying much higher. A jet once struck a Mallard at 21,000 feet! This is the highest recorded flight of any duck.

- Preening is a method used to clean the feathers of dirt, dust and parasites. When they preen, they also spread a waxy oil on their feathers making them waterproof.

- Male ducks are drakes; females are hens and babies are ducklings.

Before you grab that loaf of bread to go feed the ducks, please choose a healthier option. Bread has little nutritional value. This applies to popcorn, chips, crackers, donuts and cereal as well. Ducks can fill up on these and not eat more nutritional foods. Uneaten bread can get moldy and cause ducks to get sick. It can also add to algae growth affecting water quality. Ducklings can get "angel wing" by eating too much bread. This is a condition causing the wings to point out and making it impossible for the ducks to fly. So, what are healthy alternatives to bread? Peas, cut up grapes, corn, rice, and cut up lettuce and other greens. Dry dog and cat food are good, too.

Many city parks and subdivision ponds and lakes forbid the feeding of ducks so make sure you check.

TWRC Wildlife Center is your source for information on Texas wildlife. Have questions? Call us, email us or check our website.

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# EAGLE SCOUT COMPLETES SERVICE PROJECT AT AVONDALE HOUSE

*Bellaire Eagle Scout candidate chooses nonprofit that assists individuals living with autism.*



- Eagle Scout candidate from Bellaire, Texas impacts Avondale House with curricular enrichment
- Learns project management and leadership skills in the process
- On his way to accomplishing the Eagle Scout rank that only a small percentage of boy scouts ever obtain.

November 11, 2020, Houston, Texas

Eagle Scout candidate from Bellaire Troop 222, James Palke, completed his Eagle Scout project at Avondale House on Saturday, Nov. 9 with a team of 12 volunteers. James designed, obtained the materials, and recruited a team of 12 to complete a project to benefit Avondale House students and clients.

“Thanks to James’ efforts, our students will benefit greatly from the opportunity to learn gardening skills as a part of their curriculum and the vegetables that are grown will be used for meal preparation for our residents”, said Steve Vetrano, CEO of Avondale House.

James and his fellow scouts from various ranks built a 10 x 10 raised garden bed for Avondale House to use for gardening. The Eagle Scout team also readied the box for planting by filling it with soil and gravel. This project has produced a garden bed for school and adult program to plant, grow, and care for vegetables.

James said, “I chose AH because of the support and flexibility offered. Because my family is impacted by autism, it was important to me to serve an organization that provides autism services. This dramatically increased my fulfillment of this Eagle Project.”

About Avondale House:

Avondale House provides vital programs and services that support individuals (and their families) with autism. Services include day schooling for students ages 3-21, long-term residential services, supported employment opportunities and adult day programming. Avondale House is a 501.3c not-for-profit organization that depends on community partnerships, volunteers, and the generosity of donors to perform its mission. For more information please visit [avondalehouse.org](http://avondalehouse.org) or follow us @avondalehouse on Twitter.



For more information about this story, please contact Michele Wiseley at [mwiseley@avondalehouse.org](mailto:mwiseley@avondalehouse.org).



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## Pershing PTO Update

Pershing has been fortunate to keep some Fall fun going for the staff and students with hospitality for the teachers and staff, school store pop-up shops, spirit events at local restaurants and a virtual raffle fundraiser for fun prizes! While we are able to host fun events for our school community we recognize that this is a very difficult time for some of our student body. With the direction of Alicia Williams, our in house Student Support Manager from Communities in Schools, we are contributing to a new Emergency on-campus Pantry for Pershing families to have access to. Ms. Williams kicked off the emergency pantry by having a competition between the homeroom classes to bring in the most food items. That was a fun and creative way to encourage students to engage in their community and to help out peers in need.

Continuing a long standing tradition the Pershing PTO will partner with Ms. Williams in hosting an Angel Tree for Pershing students in need. Please check on the PTO website ([www.PershingPTO.org](http://www.PershingPTO.org)) for more details!



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