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The Woodlands High School students participate in their annual Red & Green Parade Oct. 19 to commemorate homecoming.

Photos by Michael Wyke/Contributor

## Highlanders Homecoming

The Woodlands H.S. conducts 41st Red & Green Parade

The Woodlands High School held its 41st annual Red & Green Parade on Wednesday to celebrate homecoming.

The Woodlands (6-2, 5-1) plays Caney Creek (1-6, 0-5) at 7 p.m. Friday at Woodforest Bank Stadium in Shenandoah.



## Conroe names finance director

A search for a new Conroe city administrator is underway

By Catherine Dominguez  
STAFF WRITER

The city of Conroe has named Collin Boothe to head its finance department and is beginning a nationwide search for a new city administrator after the former leaders came under fire for lack of communication and oversight on city projects.

Boothe has been serving as interim director since Aug. 11 after former Director of Finance Steve Williams Williams re-

Director continues on A3

## Conroe teen stars in Apple TV+ series

By Sondra Hernandez  
STAFF WRITER

Because of her parents' adventurous spirit, Daire — pronounced "Dare" — McLeod was taught at a young age to try everything.

From surfing in Hawaii to chasing fairies in Scotland to learning Karate and breaking boards to horseback riding, the Conroe-raised 15-year-old explored numerous activities as a curious child — hunting for the one she loved most.

At the age of five she found her calling — to use her imaginative talents to make people smile or feel a little better just for a while.

Now she has taken that passion from the stage at the Crighton Theatre all the way to Los Angeles, New York and Canada where she joins the cast the AppleTV+'s streaming series "Ghostwriter" for Sea-

Teen continues on A3

## Retailers say they're prepped for holiday shopping season

By Megan Munce  
STAFF WRITER

While retailers started preparing for the holiday season even earlier this year, consumers are still haunted by the ghost of supply chain past, survey data shows.

Last year, retailers struggled to get their holiday stock in time for the shopping season. At Port Houston, ships waited days for an opening to unload cargo and even longer for that cargo to be transported off the

dock.

And consumers bore witness to it all. Parents fought to find coveted Sony Playstation 5s and Nintendo Switch OLEDs to put under Christmas trees. In a 2021 survey, over three-quarters of consumers said they were worried they wouldn't find the holiday items they needed. In October of last year alone, U.S. consumers encountered over 2 billion out-of-stock messages online, according to Adobe Analytics.

Retail and shipping indus-

tries say they are better prepared as many of the supply chain kinks have been worked out. In June, Port Houston added extra operation hours and began opening on Saturdays to handle increased trade and reduce backlogs. This year is on track to set a record for retail imports for the third year in a row, according to the National Retail Federation.

Most of those imports already have made it into the U.S. ahead of the busy holiday sea-

Supply continues on A3



Michael Wyke/Contributor

Shipping containers are seen at the Bayport Terminal at the Port of Houston Authority in 2021 in Seabrook, Texas.

INSIDE

Classified.....A12  
Comics.....A10-11  
Crossword.....A11

Dear Abby.....A10  
Horoscope.....A11  
Opinion.....A4  
Sports.....A7-9  
Weather.....A2



# Abbott, O'Rourke woo Hispanics with TV ads

Robert T. Garrett  
THE DALLAS MORNING NEWS

AUSTIN — In their latest television ads, Gov. Greg Abbott and challenger Beto O'Rourke are both scrambling to woo Hispanic voters as they continue trying to shore up their bases of support.

Conspicuously absent are mentions of former President Donald Trump and, with one exception, pictures of other racial-ethnic minorities, said four experts on political commercials who reviewed 10 broadcast TV ads that had the most dollars behind them this month.

The most frequently run spots by O'Rourke and a pro-Democratic, dark money group hammer the state's ruling Republicans for the electric grid's failure, the Uvalde school shooting, uninsured Texans being turned away at hospitals and a lack of investment in public schools.

For Abbott, who prepaid for many of his ads months ago, the focus is "Joe Biden's inflation," fentanyl pouring across the border, his eagerness to protect police funding and the adoration of his wife's niece. Not coincidentally, the young single mom is Hispanic.

From Oct. 1-18, O'Rourke and

*"The Republican message to their electorate is, 'Be fearful of the border, immigration, crime, human trafficking. It's in your neighborhood.' And the Democratic commercials have to defend against that."*

Cal Jillson, Southern Methodist University political scientist

the group Coulda Been Worse LLC, whose funders don't have to be disclosed, have spent more than \$8.5 million on broadcast TV ads, compared with nearly \$5.6 million shelled out by Abbott, according to ad-tracking service AdImpact.com.

There was a huge Democratic edge in the state's biggest TV markets such as Dallas-Fort Worth, Houston and San Antonio, and some in Waco and Harlingen.

But elsewhere in border region markets — El Paso, Laredo and Corpus Christi — Abbott is the month's top spender on



Photos by Brandon Bell/Getty Images  
Texas Gov. Greg Abbott

broadcast TV ads. And his ads have gone unanswered by O'Rourke and the dark money group in smaller-city markets — from Odessa to Shreveport, La., and from San Angelo to Beaumont.

Many experts believe O'Rourke must do well in South Texas and suppress Abbott's victory margins in rural areas to have a chance of unseating Abbott on Nov. 8. The spottiness of the former El Paso congressman's TV ad buys — O'Rourke commercials rarely reach the state's entire TV-viewing audience — contrasts with the huge advantage Abbott enjoys from his relentless fund-



Texas Democratic candidate Beto O'Rourke

raising.

Since Abbott launched his general-election ads in mid-August, nearly \$62 million has been spent on ads of all kinds in the governor's race — 59% of them placed on broadcast TV, according to AdImpact.com.

In the fastest-growing type of ad, "connected TV" ads, which appear on devices that support streaming of premium content, the two sides enjoyed rough parity. Together, O'Rourke and Coulda Been Worse spent almost \$5.2 million, while Abbott spent nearly \$5.1 million. Abbott spent \$3.8 million on cable TV (82% more than the Democrats) and \$2.7 million on radio

(22 times more), while O'Rourke's more than \$3.1 million digital-ad buy was twice Abbott's buy.

In buying broadcast TV time, Democrats who rely on outside groups face structural disadvantages, said Southern Methodist University political scientist Cal Jillson.

"The PACs and other groups [such as Coulda Been Worse] pay much higher rates" than candidates, as federal law requires broadcast stations to offer candidates the lowest rates, he said. "The money doesn't go nearly as far."

Abbott political strategist Dave Carney called Coulda Been Worse's ads "garbage" and ineffectual.

"They spent \$12 million and didn't move the needle," he said. "I don't think their \$4 million dollars they're going to spend the last three weeks is going to move the needle."

SMU's Jillson said "Republicans get 70% of the Anglo votes," and Abbott's commercials reflect that reality.

"The Republican message to their electorate is, 'Be fearful of the border, immigration, crime, human trafficking. It's in your neighborhood.' And the Democratic commercials have to defend against that," he said.

## DIRECTOR

From page A1

signed under the threat of being fired and City Administrator Paul Virgadamo Jr. was fired. The council cited concerns from a toxic work environment to financial mismanagement for the decision to fire Virgadamo.

"I am honored to work in the city that my family and I call home," Boothe said. "I appreciate

ate the mayor and city council for this opportunity. I look forward to serving the mayor, city council and the citizens of Conroe."

Boothe began his career with the city in 2006 as a financial analyst. He is a Baylor University graduate and has a master's degree in public administration from the University of North Texas.

Scott said the city has selected Keller-based SGR to assist in

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Collin Boothe, City of Conroe Finance Director

conducting this nationwide search for a new administrator. SGR specializes in recruiting

and assessing leaders for local governments.

Conroe has a mayor-council

form of government. Conroe's elected mayor and five council members are the legislative body for the city and set policies, laws and the direction for the community. The city administrator is appointed by the mayor and is subject to the approval of the city council.

Scott said the search process for a new administrator could take about four months.

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## TEEN

From page A1

son 3.

Season 3 launches Friday. A private local premier will take place Sunday for her friends and family.

At the premier and as the new season launches, McLeod is using this exposure to shine a light on the Montgomery County nonprofit Love Heals Youth.

The treatment program founded by Rebecca Smith-Nash helps youth in foster care find long-term recovery through individual, group and family counseling.

"Mental health is grossly neglected for foster kids," Nash said. "By raising awareness, we want to show these foster kids, that there are people who love and care and want to help. We also want to show the community what we're doing to help foster kids with mental health services."

Love Heals Youth will be promoted at the premier event. Love Heals Youth is also collecting books for teens and full-size toiletry items.

The items will be used in welcome home bags put together by Love Heals Youth volunteers.

The bags include full-sized



Photo by Ryan West

Conroe teen Daire McLeod is a part of the new season of "Ghostwriters," which launches Friday on AppleTV+.

hygiene products, a journal, a note from another kid in the community and something extra like a book. The foster children receive these items in a

nice duffel bag, Nash said.

"You don't realize how important full-size toiletries are until you've been using travel size for a while," she said.

Donations of these items from the public are welcome. Call 936-750-1880 to make arrangements to donate.

"Our welcome home bags have been a huge success. The kids are so grateful for the company and a bag of useful items to make them feel at home," Nash said. "We are so excited to add an item that will help them enjoy their imagination by reading during their leisure time. More often than not, the kids are confined in the group home with such limited leisure activities. This is a huge gesture with a simple gift."

McLeod too is passionate about reading and has started the nonprofit "Daire to Read."

"I want to put a book in the hands of any kid who needs or wants one," she said. "By putting a book in someone's hands, you can transport them into a world that can maybe make them feel better or transport them to anywhere they want to go."

McLeod first performed with Conroe theater group Stage Right of Texas when she was four or five.

She said her first role was a double role where she played a bird who delivered a warning to Snow White. She was also a card holder who did a jazz walk across the stage.

It was enough for her to fall

in love with theater.

From there she went on to participate in numerous Stage Right shows at the Crighton Theatre. Then she set her dreams for New York and Los Angeles.

Prior to "Ghostwriter," McLeod filmed several short films and participated in numerous musical theater productions, and most recently she was in "Mysteries At The Museum," "Coop and Cami: Ask The World" and "Danger Force."

In the "Ghostwriter" series, McLeod plays Charli Allen who she described as a magician and a real firecracker.

Characters from "The Wizard of Oz" pop into the current world to help solve a mystery on Season 3 of "Ghostwriter."

The season three cast also features Princess Mapp from "Sydney to the Max," and Nour Assaf from "The Casagrandes."

The series was filmed in Canada during the first half of 2021.

"It's the same story but this time it'll be flipped on its head," she said.

See <https://youtu.be/rr5rK1NLUk> for a trailer of Season 3.

Visit [lovehealsyouth.com](http://lovehealsyouth.com) for more on Love Heals Youth.

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## SUPPLY

From page A1

son. From January through June, retail import volume outpaced 2021 numbers, according to the National Retail Federation and Hackett Associates Global Port Tracker.

The reason behind it is planning ahead. Many retailers brought in products earlier than normal this year to avoid supply chain delays, according to the National Retail Federation.

In a Deloitte survey of 40 retail industry executives, all said they anticipate receiving holiday inventory on time, compared to just 57 percent in the same survey last year.

But consumers are expecting the opposite.

Over half of consumers surveyed by Deloitte expected stockouts in electronics and accessories, and 40 percent expect they won't be able to find their favorite toys on the shelves.



Jon Shapley/Staff photographer

Ships sit in the Houston Ship Channel in La Porte. Retail import numbers are on track to set another record this year.

"The consumer doesn't have access to a tremendous amount of information as to what the inventory levels are at a company, and so they're really speaking

from past experience," said Tony Torres, audit leader for Deloitte's Houston office. "If you go back to last year, the supply chain was the Grinch of

Christmas."

Instead, more shoppers are heading to stores early or buying gift cards out of fear that retailers won't have items on their

lists in stock by the time Black Friday rolls around.

Nearly 40 percent of consumers surveyed said they're likely to shop earlier than they did last year. Between the launch of Amazon Prime's Early Access Prime Sale in early October and other major sales from Target and Walmart, Deloitte estimates that nearly a quarter of holiday budgets will be spent in the month of October.

On average, nearly a fifth of that spending will go to gift cards — the only retail category where surveyed shoppers plan to spend more this year compared to last year.

But that doesn't mean traditional holiday shopping season is dead, Torres said. Nearly half of holiday shoppers surveyed plan to shop on Thanksgiving week, holding steady with rates from 2020 and 2021. And they're set to be pleasantly surprised by the inventory they'll see still on the shelves.

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