

## Huston-Tillotson Volleyball



Huston-Tillotson Volleyball Team 2018 - 2019

by **John Harris Jr. VILLAGER Sports Writer**

Asked to compare his two most recent teams as they entered the Red River Athletic Conference (RRAC) tournament, Huston-Tillotson coach Daniel Behnke was quick with his answer.

Following a first-round bye, No. 1-seed HT plays its first tournament game Friday at 5 p.m. against the winner of No. 4-seed St. Thomas-Houston and No. 5-seed Southwest at Our Lady of the Lake in San Antonio.

This marks the first time in 21 years that HT finished the regular-season as co-champion.

"Two very good teams, but when it comes to competing, this one is just a little bit tougher overall," said Behnke, whose Lady

Rams concluded the regular season with a 27-4 record and 9-3 in conference play and was 2-0 against Division I Prairie View. "Last year we knew we were going to be good, but we surprised ourselves. But maturity-wise, we just weren't ready. We had six freshmen on our team. This year, there's definitely a higher level of maturity."

Behnke said last year's team entered the tournament as the No. 2 seed but didn't handle the pressure of facing Our Lady of the Lake in the championship, losing in straight sets. He added that this year's team, fortified with several junior-college transfers, is better equipped for the challenge.

Those transfers include juniors Briana Domino, Mir Tillman, Anabel Bustamente,

Keyonna Ganious, Cierra Harris and Arianna Brooks, who was the No. 1 blocker nationally in junior college.

"I purposely went after a lot of junior-college kids that had experience not just playing at the college level, but experience in winning," Behnke said. "A lot of our players are just used to winning. They bring that championship-level maturity to the gym. That has helped tremendously."

Only the tournament champion advances to the NAIA national tournament, which is why HT's runner-up finish at last year's tournament was so painful and this year's squad is so determined, Behnke said.

"The kids realize that and they're definitely up for the challenge," Behnke said.

## PHP Breast Cancer Awareness Outreach



Awesome & Festive Participants of the Pink Party

by **Tsoke (Chuch) Adjavon | Villager Columnist**

During October, PHP Financial agency hosted a Pink Party for breast cancer awareness. PHP prides itself in helping protect people through life insurance. Moreover, the Pink party's theme was the 80's and served as a method to give back to cancer research. Guests danced and also had the opportunity to partake in a silent auction, food, drinks, live entertainment.

According to statistics, "about 1 in 8 U.S. women (about 12.4%) will develop invasive breast cancer over the course of her lifetime. In 2018, an estimated 266,120 new cases of invasive breast cancer are expected to be diagnosed in women in the United States, along with 63,960 new cases

of non-invasive breast cancer."

Not only did attendees have fun, but also made a difference in the fight against breast cancer. According to PHP, "monies that were raised went to the Breast Cancer Research Center, which, for the past 20 years has been seeing breast cancer patient at no cost." Moreover, they seek to hold another fundraiser for 2019.

## South Asian Moms Host Diwali Fest 2018



Pictured left to right are: Diwali Festival Organizers Deep, Pooja and Irene. Photo by Tsoke (Chuch) Adjavon

by **Tsoke (Chuch) Adjavon | Villager Columnist**

Saturday, November 3, 2018, the South Asian Moms of Central Texas organized and hosted the Diwali Festival at the Domain. The Diwali Fest is an Indian (Hindu) celebration of lights held in Autumn and that marks the victory of light over darkness. Furthermore, it was an opportunity for the Indian American community to showcase their culture and history to the rest of Texas.

The family-friendly event catered to both adults and children. There were numerous performances and activities for attendees. A fashion show, dance, and children stations were among the activities available.

Finally, the South Asian Moms mission is to, "provide a safe space for moms to explore and discuss the varied aspects of maternal and family life, such as parenting, education, culture, health, home, entertainment, and so much more."

## 20-Year-Old Guru Develops Chatbot to Increase Texas' Early Voting Turnout

by **Jeffrey L. Boney Houston Forward Times Associate Editor**

Regardless of whether you like the results of the midterm elections or not, there is one positive story coming out of Texas that everyone should like, as it warrants some much-needed attention.

At 20 years old, he's barely able to vote, but Houston-native Nile

Dixon is a young, Black tech guru, who recently created a new chatbot that has been able to help Texans in many counties across the state effectively get to the polls in droves for early voting during the midterm elections. Inspired by the lack of voter turnout in previous years, Dixon created a free "Text to Polls" text bot in his spare time that allows voters to find out where their nearest early

voting location is, as well as directions on how to get there, whether they were traveling by car or by public transportation. By simply texting the word "VOTE" to telephone number 832-558-8306, potential voters receive a response encouraging them to follow specific prompts that help them identify their closest early voting polling location. The service is available in several languages, including En-

glish, Spanish, Vietnamese, Cantonese and Arabic.

Dixon states that based on Vote.org's research, SMS (text messages) that help people find their polling locations could help increase voter turnout by 0.2%, which would lead to an additional 20,000 voters in Harris County alone. Dixon is interested in applying more big data techniques to improve how we organize as a society and increase voter turnout. Currently, he is working on a research paper to use machine learning to possibly improve the selection process of early voting locations in Harris County, Texas. He is hopeful that his new technology will encourage more young people to get engaged in the political process by

## East Austin Fall Festival

by **Tsoke (Chuch) Adjavon | Villager Columnist**

On November 3, 2018, East Austin Neighborhood Associations came together to organize the 5th Annual East Austin Festival. Moreover, the Fall Festival is an opportunity for the Associations to promote unity within the community. According to organizers, "As a community, we are supporting the Capital Area Food Bank and making an effort to stop hunger. We can share the history of our neighborhood, enjoy good food and listen to some music in addition to supporting a great



Pictured left to right are: Tich, Susan and John. Photo by Tsoke (Chuch) Adjavon

cause."

Moreover, this was family-friendly and community oriented. Residents from neighborhoods all across Austin attended. According to the organizers, "It's a fact that East Austin is rapidly growing and changing. Get a chance to meet your neighbors

at the East Austin Community Festival."

There were numerous vendors at the festival that showcased various types of services and products. In addition, many performers came out; Athrazhur; Edda Jean; The Woolly Vicars; MirageThe Great Muzik; and Dj Such\_N\_Such.



**Nile Dixon Black Tech Guru**

at the East Austin Community Festival."

voting.

One of the things that Dixon has been most inspired by the most relative to his new text bot being widely used has been the number of people with disabilities who have been able to use the technology to assist them during the midterm elections. A lot of websites are not ADA compliant, but text messaging apps usually are. This increases accessibility to a demographic of people who are often overlooked.

Dixon is a junior, majoring in Sociology at the University of Houston-Downtown.