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LEARNING NOT TO BULLY: A theater group is offering an educational program for schools to teach youngsters the problems with bullying and offer solutions to the problem.

AROUND THE AREA

NEW CANEY

Park program is on hummingbirds

The Lake Houston Park will offer a program about hummingbirds at 10 a.m. Saturday at the park, located at 22031 Baptist Encampment Road. The multi-media program will help identify hummingbirds as well as provide tips on how to attract them. Hummingbirds will soon be arriving in the area. All ages are welcome. For more information, call 281-354-6881.

HUMBLE

Blood drive set for Monday

The Gulf Coast Regional Blood Center will have a blood donation drive from 7:30 a.m. to 11 a.m. Monday at Lake Houston Dental Care and Orthodontics, 7651 FM 1960 East in Humble. This is part of a citywide effort in cooperation with several dental offices. For more info, visit www.giveblood.org.

Easter Bunny will visit the mall

The Easter Bunny will set up shop beginning March 16 at the Deerbrook Mall. Hours are 11 a.m.-7 p.m., Monday through Saturday and noon-6 p.m., Sunday, through April 7. There is no charge to visit the Easter Bunny and each child will receive a fun seasonal surprise. Photo prices begin at \$13.95. For more information, call Tami Benton at 281-466-6626 or e-mail tami.benton@ggp.com.

KINGWOOD

College offers driving program

The Kingwood College Driver Education program will give new student drivers the tools to make their driving habits a positive experience. The driver education course will earn students a Department of Public Safety-approved certificate which is required to obtain a Learner's Permit. Vehicle crashes are the number one cause of death for people between the ages of 16 and 21. Classroom driver education is offered from 6-8 p.m. Monday through Thursday at the college. The course costs \$110 plus textbook. The next class begins March 19. To register or for more information, visit www.kingwoodcollege.com/goto/ce or call 281-312-1660. For general information about Kingwood College, call 281-312-1613 or visit the college's Web site at www.kingwoodcollege.com.

BUSINESS

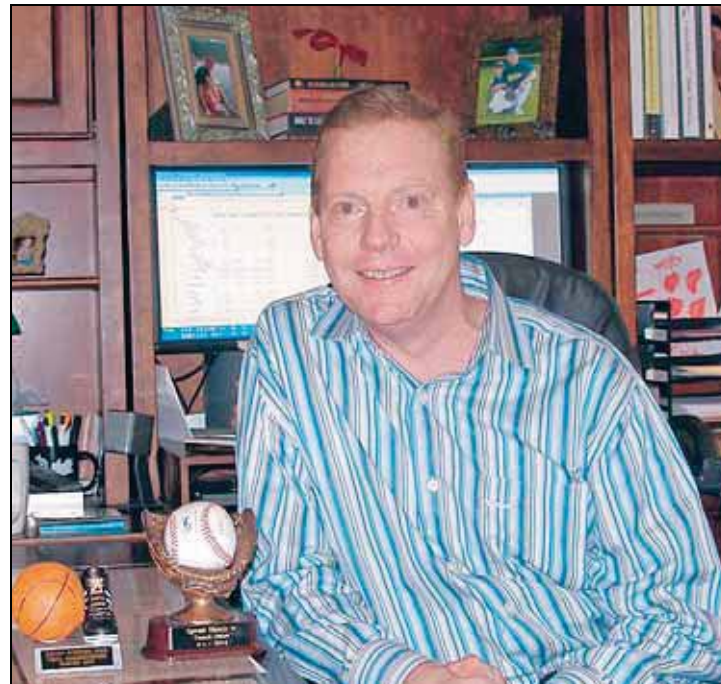
Stephen King wants to put people first

■ Business stresses work, life balance

By HARRY WILLIAMSON
 CHRONICLE CORRESPONDENT

"Fun" and "accounting" are not generally used together, nor is it common for a company to stress its employees' families come first, especially a company whose goal is to one day match Administaff's \$1.3 billion in sales. Both are part of the bottom line philosophy at GrowthForce in Kingwood, said its founder, president and CEO, Stephen King. King was head of the Financial Management Services Division at Administaff before he started GrowthForce in 2004. "One of the things I learned from Administaff is how to put people first," King said. "At GrowthFirst, we want our staff to have a great work-life balance where their families come first." For example, the two trophies occupying the most prominent spaces in King's office are for coaching his two children's sport teams in Kingwood. King came from New York to Kingwood to work for Administaff in 2001 after he sold the firm the bookkeeping business he had started in 1995 and built into \$43 million in sales. "I was born in Queens and had lived 41 years within five miles of the Empire State Building. "I never owned a car until I moved to Kingwood," he said. From its recently expanded offices in Kingwood, GrowthForce has 65 small business clients throughout the U.S. King and his 15-person staff, which he wants to double within the next six months,

provides accounting services on an "a la carte" basis, as much or as little assistance the company might want. The services range from billing and collectibles, to paying bills, reconciling bank accounts and preparing sales and income tax reports. King said the basic small business principal of OPM or using other people's money, has now been expanded to OPR or using other people's resources. "We spend an inordinate amount of time in staff training, which is difficult for many small businesses," he said. "Every business needs an accountant, and once a business signs up with our system they won't go back." King said finding new customers is not his problem. It is finding new employees, especially people who have two or three years experience in accounting and in using the software program QuickBooks. Accountants are hot properties, King said, because of a strong economy, and to recent changes in U.S. law. King referred to the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002, created in response to Enron and other corporate scandals, which, among many other changes, require CEOs to sign accounting documents to say they concur. The big firms are snapping up all the good accountants, while the number of people going into accounting has declined in recent years, he said. So, getting and keeping good people is where the fun comes in. Perks can include flexible hours and the latest technology in the office, to events such as Final February Friday Fiesta held last week at Carrabba's for his employees. "I've copied a lot of from Administaff in creating a really



HARRY WILLIAMSON: FOR THE CHRONICLE
ON THE MOVE: Family and business are equally important to Stephen King, founder and CEO of GrowthForce, as he displays the trophies he received for coaching his children's sports teams in Kingwood.

great place to work, where people can have fun, get promoted, get bonuses and still have an good work-life balance," he said. People interested in accounting positions can send their resumes to jobs@growthforce.com.

Alsbaugh's Hardware celebrates 20 years

During the week of March 19 and on March 24, the date the business officially started in Kingwood, Alsbaugh's Ace Hardware will be celebrating its 20th anniversary. Owner Rick Alsbaugh said there will be specials all week, door prizes, give-a-ways "and some really hot grill prices." Leading up to the event, the Karl Edwards Scotts Busch race car will be on display Friday from 1-6 p.m. at the store, which is located at 2720 W. Lake Houston Parkway.

Tell us about your business or a great business you know about in the Kingwood-Humble area by emailing businesscolumn@cebridge.net.



PAM GIBBENS
ON TOUR: Todd Miller is director of the Kingwood Chorale and department head at Kingwood College.

On stage in New York

The Kingwood Chorale knows how to get to Carnegie Hall — and it does involve practice.

STORY ON PAGE 5

More HISD seniors taking dual courses

■ College district reports 20% hike in program signup, dual credit interest

By KIMBERLY STAUFFER
 HOUSTON CHRONICLE

More high school students are taking courses at Kingwood College and getting dual credit for their efforts than ever before. During the North Harris Montgomery Community College District board meeting last week, Steve Head, executive vice chancellor, said more than 20 percent of seniors in the Humble Independent School district are attending college district classes. The district reported 3,932 students enrolled in concurrent credit courses this semester, an increase of 15.2 percent compared to last spring. Humble, Magnolia, Splendora,

Spring and Klein school districts reported more than 20 percent of their seniors attending classes. For Humble, the actual student number is 643. The college district board unanimously voted to name the Montgomery College Art Gallery the Mary Matteson-Parrish Art Gallery in honor of the longtime board member. Matteson-Parrish served on the board from 1993-2005. Randy Bates, chair of the board, said her work in the district led to the creation of campus satellite centers. She also was instrumental in joining Conroe ISD with the college district in 1991. "I had the opportunity to call Mary and tell her the board was thinking about this. She feels so unworthy of us doing this," Bates said. "Certainly honored, but she said there were so many more people who did so many more things. This is a small token of our appreciation to Mary."



MARGARET BOWLES: FOR THE CHRONICLE

On to state

KINGWOOD'S Mike Singletary blocks a shot by Clear Lake's Kendrell Thompson. The Mustangs won their third straight Region III title, defeating the Clear Lake Falcons March 3 to go to the final four in Austin this weekend. **STORY ON PAGE 6**

EDUCATION
Can you spell 'champ?'
 Pupils from throughout the area are in competition for the annual Houston Chronicle Spelling Bee. **PAGE 2**

FINANCE
Stadium needs
 The Huffman school board OKs May 12 bond election. **PAGE 2**

COMMUNITY
In concert
 Harpist Sheila Sondergaard will perform Sunday. **PAGE 4**

BUSINESS
Huntin' with the big dogs
 GrowthForce owner Stephen King models his Kingwood firm after the giant, Administaff. **PAGE 12**