

Written by LEE BUTLER

Photography by
Lisa Mangos and Lee Butler

Life Begins at 55

Many Active, Vibrant Senior Citizens are Moving to Katy to be Closer to Loved Ones

The rapid growth of the Katy area and the Katy Independent School District has long been recognized. Less well known, however, is the rapid increase in numbers of the senior population, generally considered to be those fifty years of age or above. This growth, and the projections for the continued growth for the next several years, has been noted by area senior's groups, civic officials and community leaders. Even local churches are adding church events for those who have hair (what there is of it, in some cases) that is beginning to pick up a little frost.

County Commissioner Steve Radack, whose district encompasses a lot of what is considered the Greater Katy Area, is one of those impressed by the numbers. Commissioner Radack said, "I value the diversity, knowledge, and maturity that senior citizens bring to the area...after all...seniors built this community." Radack has promoted several programs with the older generation the main beneficiaries.

The Commissioner has an Observatory and Multigenerational Science Learning Center, as well as the Westside Senior Education Center. He has many other activities in the area designed for seniors, including arranging transportation for groups to attend many events taking place throughout the county. More information may be obtained on these services by contacting the Commissioner's office at 713-755-6306 or by visiting pct3.hctx.net.

Architectural and engineering work on the Westside Senior Education Center is expected to be completed and construction will begin this fall. Facilities will be designed and the staff trained to meet the unique learning needs of the patrons. Partnerships will be maintained with the University of Houston Graduate College of Social Work, Harris County Public Health Department, and Harris County Social Services Department.



Hilde, Marge, Lu and Nancy enjoy a rousing game of Bridge



Many Katy seniors are finding unique ways to stay fit

Senior Growth Will Continue to Increase

According to demographers, the median age of a Katy area resident will rise from an estimated 33.24 years in 2006 to 34.22 years by 2011. The median age of local householders will increase from 46.7 years to 48.78 years in that same period. Concurrently, the area population of those over fifty rose from 15,807 in the year 2000 to

27,875 in 2006 and will climb to an estimated 41,806 by the year 2011, less than five years from now.

This information indicates the age groups over fifty years makes up around 22% of the Greater Katy Area population currently, but will have a substantial increase to over 27% by 2011.

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Katy Seniors line dancing at Woodland Park



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Reasons for Senior Growth

A large number of seniors questioned gave the overriding reason as the desire to be close to family. As parents move to this area to take advantage of the outstanding Katy Independent School District, the grandparents are not far behind.

Area businesses, churches, and social agencies have been quick to catch on. Several senior communities have materialized. At least one church for the older group has been organized. An entire senior single family housing subdivision has risen from the ground in the Cinco Ranch area. That development, the Heritage Grand, has homes priced from \$150,000 to more than \$320,000, with front and back yards and outside home maintenance performed by the Home Owners Association.

For one couple purchasing a home in Heritage Grand, that was the main reason for the purchase. Jim and Jo Ann Porter are both busy and active seniors, involved in church, community, and with family. "I have spent a great portion of my adult life mowing lawns, keeping up the yard and maintaining a home," Jim said. "The maintenance provided allows me to go on trips, keep up with investments or just play with my computer and/or watch television. I can do this without feeling any guilt at all," he commented. His wife smiled. "I still have a 'honey-do' list," she said.



O'Neil displays his patriotism

Local Resources for Katy Area Seniors

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21803 Oak Park Trails Dr
Katy, TX
713-870-1393

Cinco Ranch Alzheimer's
Special Care Center
3206 S Fry Rd
Katy, TX
281-599-3334

APARTMENTS FOR 55+

Providence Place
20300 Saums Rd
Katy, TX
281-647-6470

Villas of Park Grove
600 Park Grove Ln.
Katy, TX
281-398-1411

ASSISTED LIVING

Sunrise Senior Living
21939 Cinco Ranch Blvd
Katy, TX
281-240-0500

Spanish Meadows
1480 Katy Flewellen
Katy, TX
281-394-0088

Parkway Place
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Houston, TX
281-556-9200

HOME HEALTH CARE

Direct Home Care Services
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Houston, TX
713-932-0407



Senior Helpers
10039 Bissonnet, #308
Houston, TX
713-995-5044

INDEPENDENT LIVING

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Senior Services

City of Katy Senior Center
281-391-4837

Sheltering Arms Senior
Services 713-558-6300

Transportation Services
HCCTP 713-313-1765

County Commissioner's Office
281-492-3680

Senior Care Advisors of Texas
713-961-5433

Bear Creek Community Center
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Seniors Looking for Housing

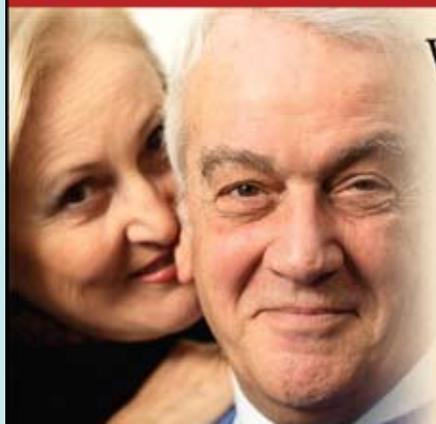
A dramatic sign of the desirability of living in the Katy area for seniors can be found in a new retirement community, Providence Place Apartments, located on Saums Road, between Fry Road and Mason. That project consists of 174 units, some single story and with attached garages. They rent from \$508 to \$1,235 monthly. Providence Place opened in May of 2006 and immediately had a long waiting list of those desiring to become tenants.

“With only a sign in front of the project advertising them, we had over 300 telephone calls of inquiry,” the manager said. “When we announced we would start taking applications, a line began forming several hours before we opened the door,” said Linda Barham, Community Director. Currently, the priority list (those who have made deposits) stands at 60. It is expected that there will be a future increase in available apartments with new construction. Other communities in the area designed for older residents include: Camden, Villas at Park Grove, Carriage Inn, Eagle’s Trace, and Parkway Place.



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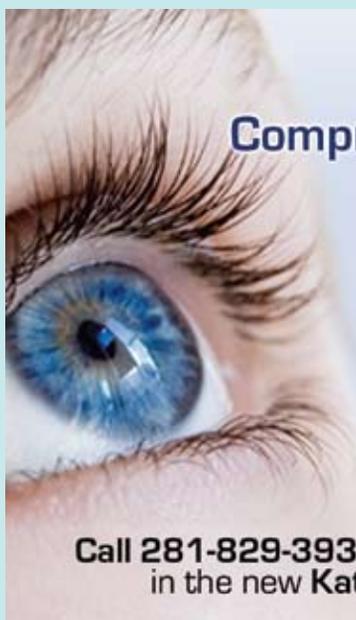
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ties and trips to happy destinations. “We are greatly blessed by the lessons they teach us of the past and the example they set for our younger generations,” Mayor Elder said.

Plenty of Activities

Activities abound for the Katy area seniors. From water aerobics to organized trips to historic and entertainment areas, such as to the San Jacinto Monument and the Battleship Texas, to gambling casinos, baseball games, museums, etc. The local seniors have no difficulty keeping busy. One senior group had a garage sale; another is planning a Craft Extravaganza in October, with the money used to upgrade and buy equipment for their community clubhouse. Many donate their time to local charities and assist as volunteers in the local schools.

Churches Extend Welcome to Seniors

Several area churches have special services designed for the over fifty crowd, and one, West Houston Christian Fellowship Church, is composed entirely of seniors and features many activities, such as lunches, socials, Bible study, etc. They even furnish a Chaplain for one of the retirement communities. The Living Word Lutheran Church of Katy are local sponsors of the Angel Food Ministries, which provides quality food at greatly reduced prices to all who want it, regardless of age or income. They also have special programs for the seniors of the church and neighborhood. Many seniors volunteer to assist the church in their food program.

The senior years, often called “the golden years” can be a time for rest and relaxation for many, or if one chooses, some of the busiest times of their lives, especially if they live in the greater Katy area!

KM

Lee Butler is a former news reporter and a proud veteran of the U.S. Marine Corps. He is the father of five sons and has lived in Texas since his college days at the University of Oklahoma. Two of his sons graduated from Katy Taylor High School.

The Katy Area Chamber of Commerce receives a lot of inquiries about attractions in the area.

According to Ann F. Hodge, President/CEO of the Chamber, senior residents bring a wealth of life experiences and knowledge to the community. “We believe we are greatly enhanced by these outstanding individuals,” she said.

City of Katy Values Seniors

Katy Mayor Don Elder commented that “Statistics show that about one in every eight of the population is an older American and the number of Americans aged 45-64 who will reach 65 over the next two decades, has increased by 40% during this decade.” Elder continued, “This not only shows the strength of the older population to this country, but proves their immeasurable value to our society.”

The Mayor said we should strive to strengthen senior programs and ensure the well-being and retirement security of older Americans. He said the City of Katy Social Services Department provides numerous services to the senior citizens, including crafts, activi-

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