

INSIDE: Toni King's Medicare column

# The Pasadena Citizen

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## A rush to save pieces of Texas history soaked during freeze



Kirk Sides photos / Staff photographer

San Jacinto Museum of History curator Lisa Struthers says this collar, used on a camel that the U.S. Army brought to Texas in the 1850s, is among unique artifacts that were soaked when a pipe broke at the museum during the recent winter storm.

By Yvette Orozco  
STAFF WRITER

Two days into the February winter storm, lines and lines of soggy antique paper currency lay across tables set up in the ground-floor lobby of the San Jacinto Museum of History in La Porte.

The tables were part of a makeshift "triage" area set up by museum staff and members of the Texas Historical Commission, in an emergency attempt to salvage thousands of artifacts that had been stored in one of the museum's basements when ruptured pipes sent torrents of water in from the second floor.

The water had seeped down walls of the elevator lobby and into the basement, which was a curatorial space for numerous historical pieces, including thousands of sheets of currency dating to the 17th century that had been stored in plastic sleeves.

### What to save first?

When she got the call from interim museum director David Avila about the water in the basement, Lisa Struthers said

### Groups rally after burst pipes flood basement at Battleground museum



Water marks from a leak are visible on a 19th century painting at the museum.

she was in crisis mode. Struthers, director of the museum's Albert and Ethel Herzstein Library, was so focused on the step-by-step recovery process playing in her mind she didn't have time to think of magnitude of what

loss of the artifacts might mean.

"I have done a little emergency training for this kind of scenario, and I was mentally prioritizing what to rescue first," she said. "When I heard from David about the water, I

was thinking: what is low to the ground? What is likely to be wet? What do we have that is irreplaceable and truly unique that is in the water?"

Other artifacts stored in the basement included more paper documents, metal-based weaponry, a bust of Sam Houston and one-of-a-kind pieces like a leather collar worn by the lead camel of a herd brought to Texas by the U.S. Army in the 1850s.

"At this point, we just wanted to get (the artifacts) out of harm's way before it became worse than it already was," said Avila.

Using pumps provided by the Battleship Texas Foundation, the group was able to remove roughly 6 inches of water from the basement.

### Delicate, painstaking work

The recovery effort was a delicate operation, Avila said. "We didn't want to create splash hazard on the artifacts and cause more damage that had already occurred," he said.

In addition, five paintings in

## SmartPod expands healthcare access in region

Pasadena-based facility offers free COVID testing, expected to add services

By Yvette Orozco  
STAFF WRITER

When Baylor College of Medicine was developing the concept of a mobile healthcare unit made of aluminum, it was focused on the 2014 Ebola outbreak in Africa.

Through a partnership with Harris County Precinct 2 Commissioner Adrian Garcia, one of the compact SmartPod structures now has been deployed closer to home in Pasadena, where it provides free COVID-19 testing and is planned to eventually provide services related to the coronavirus pandemic and a range of primary care needs.

Unveiled in February at East Harris County Activity Center, 7340 Spencer Highway, Services are expected to broaden to include participation in the vaccine rollout and treatment for other illnesses, said Amanda Hollenbaugh, administrator for Baylor Global Health, an administrative division over BCM's international programs and initiatives related to health. The Pasadena facility is intended to make the SmartPod accessible to medically underserved residents in the Pasadena, Deer Park and La Porte communities.

SmartPods, which can be folded up in minutes to transport where needed, include an isolation clinic, a regular clinic space, pharmacy and biosafety laboratories.

Precinct 2 is spending \$2.9 million in county funding on the SmartPod units in Pasadena and Aldine. The money covers costs for design, construction, transport, medical equipment and medical services. The federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES) is expected to reimburse the money.

The Aldine unit at at Northeast Community Center opened in the fall.

The idea to bring the the NASA-engineered SmartPod to Harris County originated long before the coronavirus, Garcia said, as a tool to close the gaps in access to quality health care service.

"This conversation started before the pandemic, (COVID) wasn't the catalyst," he said.

Referring to the Texas Medical Center in Houston, he said, "For the most part, many people in these communities don't realize, and quite frankly don't care, that we have the worldwide epicenter of medicine in our backyard because they can't access it."

Access continues on A5

### Belief

#### Palm Sunday

The Rev. Jack Womack reflects on the lessons of the Sunday before Easter.

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### News in brief

#### Fall under Spooky's spell

Spooky is an entertaining Brussels griffon-mix awaiting a home at A New Dawn Pet Adoption.

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**ACCESS**  
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Parts of Precinct 2 have been cited as among the most at-risk communities during the pandemic, and the region has continually ranked as having one of the highest mortality rates and incidences of cancer in the Houston area. Lack of expansive public transportation is another factor in lack of access, Garcia said.

"Families work hard keep roofs over their head, and so to have this partnership (with Baylor College of Medicine), and for them to extend themselves to a medically underserved area is what I've been striving for," he said. Garcia's relationship with BCM began when he wanted to address health-care access problems in the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey in 2017, according to Hollenbaugh.

"When Harvey hit, and Precinct 2 was heavily impacted, there were a lot of clinics that shut down, and

(the region) became a health desert," Hollenbaugh said. "The clinics that are here (in Precinct 2) are not easy to get to for a lot of the community."

Initially designed to respond to the Ebola crisis in West Africa, the SmartPod has been modified to serve in different capacities.

For COVID, Baylor Global Health had to switched gears, shapeshifting the original design to accommodate different sets of needs, said Elena Petrova, BCM's assistant director of technology development.

That meant developing isolation units for COVID management.

SmartPods were always intended to respond to primary healthcare needs, including routine vaccinations, women's health and treatment for infectious diseases. The Pasadena facility's proximity to the region's petrochemical industry isn't random.

The SmartPods are equipped to respond to industrial and natural disasters,

Hollenbaugh said.

"One of the reasons (for the location) is to be close to the refineries," she said. "The SmartPod is not just for COVID. It's flexible enough to become a general clinic and to be deployed in disasters. If here is a disaster in one of the refineries, this unit can be packed up and moved."


Garcia likens the SmartPod to a version of a MASH unit, a mobile facility prepared to uproot at any given time.

"As Baylor Global Health, we're used to deploying pods globally, and focusing outside of the U.S.," Hollenbaugh said. "Now we're very focused locally in our hometown (Houston) to impact our neighbors." While the disparities in access were always there, the pandemic crisis made them more visible, Garcia said.


"It just highlights the fact that medically underserved community are most vulnerable," he said.

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The Kaneka Foundation is pleased to announce the appointment of Mr. Alvin Proctor as its President. Mr. Proctor is also the Vice President of Human Resources for Kaneka Americas Holding, Inc. and has been with Kaneka for over 30 years. We look forward to Mr. Proctor advancing the Kaneka Foundation's vision of being a source of inspiration and pride for Kaneka employees, and having our outreach be a positive impact on the lives of millions of people around the world.



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