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Check out how this home's design embraces the heart of Port Aransas.
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State honors
PAHS student Leah DePiper took second at the state cross-country meet.
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PORT ARANSAS
SOUTH JETTY

$1.50 USPS 946-020 | Thursday, November 12, 2026 ©2026 | Vol. 55 No. 46

Amidst blue wave ...

Port A voted Republican

Dan Parker
Editor and co-publisher

Port Aransas bucked the trend of the blue wave that engulfed much of the United States on Election Day, Nov. 3.

Folks casting ballots in Precinct 19 – which is composed almost entirely of Port Aransas and areas of Mustang Island south of the Port Aransas city limits – overwhelmingly voted Republican, according to unofficial precinct results posted on the website of the Nueces County Elections Department.

In statewide voting, Republican Ken Paxton lost the U.S. Senate race to Democrat James Talarico, 4,249,763 to 5,445,156. But, in Precinct 19, Paxton won, 1,264 to 671.

In statewide voting, Republican Greg Abbott, the incumbent, lost to Democrat Gina Hinojosa in the race for governor, 4,524,955to 5,230,929. In Precinct 19, Abbott won, 1,319 to 646.

In countywide balloting in the race for Nueces County Judge, Democratic challenger Aidee Hernandez garnered 49,195 votes, beating incumbent Connie Scott, a Republican who got 48,822

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Staff photo by Alex Berksan

Playing in the park

Four-year-old William Mahaffey, left, and his brother, Hudson, 2, enjoy the basket swing at Turtle Cove playground at Roberts Point Park on a recent day. They were visiting with their family from Austin.

Christensen set for transplant Tuesday



South Jetty photo

Julie and Dale

Julie Brandon, left, plans to donate a kidney to Dale Christensen, right, who has end-stage kidney disease. Both are Port Aransas residents.

Dan Parker
Editor and co-publisher

Two pieces of good news here.

The first good news: Medical testing has confirmed that Julie Brandon can donate one of her kidneys to friend Dale Christensen, who has end-stage kidney disease. The two Port Aransas residents are scheduled to undergo the transplant at Medical City Fort Worth on Nov. 17.

The testing that Brandon went through to ensure she was a viable transplant candidate showed that she had precancerous cells on her cervix and, armed with that information, she underwent a procedure that removed them.

Prior to the testing, Brandon said, she wasn't getting regular medical checkups, so her condition likely would have gotten worse if transplant-related testing hadn't revealed the problem. Discovering the precancerous cells sooner rather than later may have saved her life, she said.

"She was doing something just out of the kindness of her heart to save me, and it also saved her," Christensen said.

"I'm grateful," Brandon said. "If I could just pick one word, I'm extremely grateful that this was found, because all I've been able to think about is extending Dale's life, and now I realize I may have extended mine. … Very good karma."

For the past two years, Christensen, 51, is on peritoneal dialysis – a seven-days-per-week medical procedure that filters waste, toxins and excess fluids from the blood when kidneys have failed.

He is leading a largely normal life, living at his Port Aransas home and operating Christensen Construction with his parents, Jon and Joyce Christensen. But end-stage kidney disease is a debilitating illness that can take years off a person's life. Getting a new kidney from a living donor gives him the best chance at a long life.

Christensen was diagnosed with chronic kidney disease about 20 years ago. It's an incurable hereditary disease, but he has done his best to keep it in check by exercising and reducing his salt intake.

Still, his kidney function has

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Real-life lessons

Middle school expands its CTE program

Jimmy Willden
Reporter

New classes offered this school year at Brundrett Middle School are giving students the unique opportunity to explore life after school.

For three years, Brundrett Middle School had offered a dual-credit program for eighth graders through the Port Aransas High School Career Lab, while participating in the Career and Technical Education (CTE) program – which provides hands-on training and technical skills tailored for high-demand industries.

For the first time in the school's history, the program is now being offered directly to BMS seventh and eighth graders.

According BMS Principal James Garrett, the new expansion of the CTE program this school year spotlights the importance of allowing students to explore career tracks early in their education.

"For many years, schools approached career preparation as something students started thinking about in 11th or 12th grade. Why wouldn't we start exposing them to different opportunities much earlier?" asked Garrett, adding that the program often teaches students things they might otherwise leave school without understanding.

"That could be something as simple as balancing a checkbook or knowing how to conduct an interview," Garret said. "I think building those soft skills and life skills is what makes these courses so valuable."

The courses are rotated each semester, giving students the ability to take as many CTE classes as their schedules allow – from Dollars and Sense and Money Matters courses to web communication and interpersonal studies.

"In Interpersonal Studies, for example, students learn about shaking hands, making eye contact, sitting properly and presenting themselves during an interview. Those are important skills," Garrett said. "Some of the technology courses are great, and

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Staff photo by Jimmy Willden

Pet 'bots

Brundrett Middle School eighth-graders Ethan Brown, left, and John Joyce work with their Spheros robots in teacher Tracy Cunningham's web communications Career and Technical Education class at Port Aransas High School on Tuesday, Nov. 10. As part of her lessons, Cunningham has each of her students treat their spherical robots like pets or their own children.

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Embracing the heart of Old Town

Jimmy Willden
Reporter

For the Fosters, building their home in the city's most historic area – Old Town – was always about embracing the heart of Port Aransas: The people, the community, the culture, the fishing and the beach.

"I feel like Old Town gives you a little bit of all of that," said Felicia Foster, homeowner and owner of Barron Custom Designs. "I feel like Port Aransas is everything wrapped up together, and being in Old Town allows you to experience that. It's a sense of place you don't get outside of Old Town."

Felicia and her husband, Will Foster, own a home on Oleander Street, within Mercer Village – a redeveloped neighborhood in Old Town.

According to Felicia, their approach to the design their 1,400-square-foot, three-bedroom house was always about ensuring it felt more like a home and less like a short-term rental.

"We focused on the layout, storage and flexibility, thinking about how people would actually live in the space, including furniture placement and bedroom arrangements," she said, adding that she and her husband wanted the home to look like it was always meant to be there.

'We pulled from coastal architectural traditions, using board-and-batten siding, exposed rafter tails and carefully-placed windows," she said. "Those details give the exterior more personality and articulation. It's not just a box on a box on stilts."

To do so, the family built their house on slab-on-grade foundations without parking underneath, so that it would sit lightly on the land, which was important to the couple.

Felicia, Will and their then-11-year-old daughter, Sarah, moved into the home in 2020, naming it El Mar Rancho – for a very historic reason.

"The site where the development sits was where the Mercer house stood," Felicia said.

The Mercer family is recognized as the first settlers of Mustang Island in the early 19th century, laying the foundation for what would later become Port Aransas.

"Our house is specifically called El Mar Rancho because that's what the Mercer family called their homestead here on the island, and we wanted to do something a little different with the name," Felicia said.

"We thought it was a nice way to connect the house to the history of the property," she said.

Paying respect to her Hawaiian grandmother, Felicia explained that the design and décor of the Foster home embraced surf culture as its theme.

"We wanted to bring more of a Hawaiian surf vibe into the house," she said. "That influenced our color selections, artwork, tile and other details. The house is pretty much a white blank slate, with a little coastal character on the outside and a lot of surf character on the inside."

That influenced the Fosters to turn their outdoor shower into a "surfboard shower," surrounded by birds of paradise plants, and a screened porch facing to the east – perfect to enjoy Port Aransas evenings.

The Fosters also worked to ensure that the home has no wasted space, including utilizing box-out windows to a create a more spacious, comfortable dining room.

With their high-energy Australian shepherd dog, Marley, the family is proud of their "El Mar Rancho" home.

"It's very cozy," Felicia said. "The four of us live in a relatively small space, but everything has its place."

Due to her architectural background and appreciation of history, Felicia expressed her and her family's love of their Old Town locale.

"We knew we wanted to be in Old Town, so when this opportunity came up, we knew we wanted to buy one," she said. "We're walking distance from restaurants, shops and everything Old Town has to offer."



Photo courtesy of Felicia Foster

No wasted space

The Fosters designed their house to ensure that there was no wasted space, including utilizing box-out windows to create a more spacious, comfortable dining room.



Photo courtesy of Felicia Foster

El Mar Rancho

The Fosters designed their home on Oleander Street, in the Mercer Village neighborhood in Old Town, to embrace the coastal environment, including turning their outdoor shower into a 'surf shower.' Mercer Village lies on the land where the original Mercer family homestead was located. To honor that history, the Fosters named their home 'El Mar Rancho.'

Home Bartender

A Thanksgiving drink: Royal cranberry cobbler



Bill **Furlow**

Ahead of the holiday rush, I wanted to share a cocktail that is simple to make (no, really, I mean it this time) and draws on ingredients most or you will be buying anyway.

This drink is a loose interpretation of the cobbler style of cocktails. Cobblers were all the rage in the late 1800s, when crushed ice was considered a decadent novelty. These low ABV (alcohol by volume) drinks were a combination of muddled fresh fruit, fortified wine (think sherry), sugar and a lot of crushed ice.

You'd garnish with mint, slices of fruit and maybe dust the whole thing with powdered sugar. It was a major production. Unfortunately, what you end up with is a sweetened glass of watered-down sherry. There's already enough disappointment built into the holiday season without adding that to the mix.

What I am presenting here is more akin to a sour-style cocktail with the "royal" treatment, as described in my Sept. 3 Hotel Nacional column. Normally, you would include lemon or lime juice to provide the sour element.



Staff photo by Michelle Parker

Cheers!

Here's a royal cranberry cobbler that Bill Furlow mixed on a recent evening.

Here, we get the sour notes from fresh cranberries. Clever, no?

Our base spirit is cognac. If you've never mixed cognac with champagne, welcome to the rest of your life. Cognacs come in a multitude of price points. For mixing, I prefer the Pierre Ferrand 1840, previously featured in my June 1 fish house punch column.

Unless you have a bottle of champagne already open, use inexpensive sparkling wine in this drink. The specification calls for a quarter ounce of simple syrup. Depending on how dry your wine is, you might up that to a half ounce.

When muddling the cranberries, press down just hard enough to hear them pop. There's a lot of pent-up anxiety this time of year. Don't take it out on the berries. If you don't have a muddler, use the back of a wooden spoon. And be sure to double strain this drink to filter out all those crushed berries.

I like to float a handful of cranberries in the drink and add a sprig of rosemary. Massage the rosemary first to release the oils. While you're at it, maybe squeeze a lemon peel over the top to add aromatics. It's a very forgiving format. Have fun mixing things up.

Royal cranberry cobbler

1.5 oz. cognac
.25 oz. simple syrup
10-12 cranberries
2 oz. sparkling wine

Muddle cranberries and simple syrup in your shaking tin. Add cognac, shake over ice. Double strain into a chilled rocks glass. Top with champagne. Garnish with cranberries and a sprig of rosemary.

Here's how you can find the columns mentioned above:

• Hotel nacional, Sept. 3: https://www.portasouthjetty.com/articles/check-into-hotel-nacional/

• Fish house punch, June 1: https://www.portasouthjetty.com/articles/a-drink-enjoyed-by-our-founding-fathers/

Bill Furlow doesn't work as a bartender, but he has been an ardent practitioner of mixology for many years. A North Padre Island resident who grew up in Port Aransas, he can be reached at agentfurlow@netscape.net.

This column is meant for folks who enjoy responsible drinking. If you think you might have a drinking problem, the South Jetty encourages you to ignore this column altogether and get help.



Staff photo by Jimmy Willden

The Fosters

The Foster family gathers in the living room of their Mercer Village home on Tuesday, Nov. 10. From left are Will Foster, Marley (the family's beloved Australian shepherd), Sarah Foster, 17, and Felicia Foster.



Photo courtesy of Felicia Foster

Coastal character

With a little 'coastal character on the outside and a lot of surf character on the inside,' the Fosters screened their porch, which faces east, to ensure the family can always enjoy many beautiful Port Aransas evenings.

Local Flavor

Pumpkin lasagna is a tasty fall dish



Nikki **Farese**

This cozy fall-inspired lasagna is a delicious way to use leftover Halloween pumpkin.

Rich in beta-carotene, fiber and potassium, pumpkin supports eye health and immune function, while spinach and zucchini provide folate, vitamin C, and additional nutrients.

Whole-milk ricotta and mozzarella add protein and calcium, making this a comforting, nutrient-dense meal the whole family can enjoy.

Ingredients

For the lasagna:
Lasagna noodles
1 Tbsp salt, for pasta water
½ Tbsp olive oil
3 cups shredded mozzarella cheese
Ricotta and vegetable Layer



Photo by Travis Farese

Yum!

Nikki Farese spoons up some pumpkin lasagna that she cooked up at her Port Aransas home on a recent day.

1 Tbsp olive oil
1 zucchini, diced
12 oz spinach
1 garlic clove, minced
1 large egg
15 oz whole-milk ricotta cheese
½ tsp salt
½ tsp ground black pepper
Pumpkin layer:
15 oz pumpkin puree (homemade or canned)
½ cup whole milk
¼ tsp allspice
¼ tsp cinnamon
¼ tsp ground ginger
¼ tsp ground nutmeg
½ tsp salt
Optional additions:
Cooked Italian sausage or ground chicken for additional protein
Grated parmesan mixed with the mozzarella for extra savory flavor
Fresh chopped sage for garnish

Instructions

Preheat the oven to 400°

Bring a large pot of water to a boil and add 1 tbsp salt. Cook the lasagna noodles for 5-6 minutes, or until done. Drain, lay flat on a baking sheet, and lightly drizzle with olive oil to prevent sticking.

Heat 1 tbsp olive oil in a skillet over medium heat. Add the zucchini, spinach, and garlic. Season with salt and pepper, then sauté until the zucchini softens and the spinach wilts. Remove from heat and allow to cool slightly.

Once the vegetables have cooled slightly, transfer them to a bowl. Add the egg and ricotta, season with salt and pepper, and mix until well combined.

In a separate bowl, combine the pumpkin purée, milk, allspice, cinnamon, ginger, nutmeg and salt. Stir until smooth.

Spread half of the pumpkin mixture across the bottom of a baking dish. Add a layer of noodles, followed by half of the ricotta and vegetable mixture and 1 cup of mozzarella. Repeat the layers with the remaining pumpkin, noodles, ricotta mixture and another cup of mozzarella. Finish with the remaining mozzarella on top. If using cooked sausage or ground chicken, incorporate it into the ricotta layer or distribute it between the layers.

Cover with foil and bake for 20-22 minutes. Remove the foil and bake for another 12-15 minutes, until the cheese is melted and lightly golden and the lasagna is heated through.

Let the lasagna rest for 10 minutes before slicing. Garnish with fresh sage or grated parmesan, if desired, and enjoy!

Nikki Farese is the founder of the Port Aransas Farmers Market and The Studio Port A, a yoga and wellness studio in Port Aransas. She is a Yoga Alliance-registered yoga instructor and a health coach who has been who has been certified by the Nutritional Therapy Association as a nutritional therapy practitioner. She can be reached at info@thestudioporta.com.