

Commonwealth Comments

A newsletter for the residents of The Commonwealth:
Bridgewater, Commonwealth Estates, Commonwealth Park, Oxford, Sutton Forest, Sutton Park and Sweetwater XII

July/August, 2008

www.commonwealthcivic.com



Fun for the entire family

18th Annual Parade and Picnic

10:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.
parade begins at 11
line up at 10:45

After the parade, join your neighbors for the best burgers in Sugar Land.

A successful event of this size depends on the assistance of 25 (plus) volunteers.

We need people to help with the parade, food preparation, entertainment and logistics!

Call Mark Thompson at (281) 630-9556 if you have 2 to 4 hours to help with the Commonwealth July 4th Parade.

We have had no takers to organize our Annual Commonwealth Garage Sale. If no one steps forward to organize the sale, the event will not take place.

Please note!!!!

Our contact at Crest Management is:
Karen Janczak
281-579-0761

If you have Commonwealth related questions or concerns, please give her a call.

Celebrate with
Friends and Neighbors at
The Commonwealth
Clubhouse!



Annual Meeting Recap

At 7 p.m. on Tuesday, May 20, 2008, The Commonwealth Civic Association Homeowner's Association convened its Annual Meeting at the Clubhouse.

Introductions were made by President Steve O'Hara. In attendance were Board of Directors members: Conrith Davis, Virginia Mack and Mark Thompson. Carolyn Bonds and Karen Janczak from Crest Management were also present.

The minutes of last year's Annual Meeting were unanimously approved by residents.

Steve O'Hara began the meeting with a Landscape Committee update. He announced that the Association had parted ways with Tru Green and is currently under contract with Native Plant Design. He announced that the Association is proceeding with the landscaping of Commonwealth Blvd. The next step is the section is from Knightsbridge to Pendleton, both sides of the boulevard.

-continued-

Commonwealth Civic Association Board of Directors

Steve O'Hara
President
281-265-4485

Mark Thompson
Vice President
281-313-4337

Virginia Mack
Secretary
281-207-5200

Tom Wooley
Director

OPEN
Director

Board Meetings are held on the fourth Thursday of each month at 6 p.m. in the Clubhouse.

Your Association Information



**Modifications & Deed
Restrictions Committee**
*meets the third Tuesday of each month
- 7:30 p.m. at the Clubhouse*

Applications must be received in the Crest Management office on or before the 2nd Tuesday of each month to be considered at the monthly meeting. For more information contact Crest Management Service at 281-579-0761.



Landscape Committee
*meets once a month.
Contact Steve O'Hara at 281-265-4485
for the next meeting date and time.*

Tennis Committee
Conrith Davis
832-326-6202



Welcome Committee
Gwen Dahlin
713-304-1048

Pool Rentals
Crest Management
281-579-0761



L.I.D. Representative
Ron Frerich
281-265-0137



Clubhouse Rentals
Cindy O'Hara
281-265-4485

COMMONWEALTH ALERT

Be sure to sign up for our Email Alert system. This is a service of The Commonwealth Civic Association in conjunction with residents Paula and Charles Stansell, who oversee the Association's web page:

www.commonwealthcivic.com

NOTE: The Association will NOT be sharing these email addresses with any commercial venture and NO ADVERTISING (or jokes!) will be forwarded to residents. This email network is STRICTLY for alerting/providing information regarding timely matters that the Association feels are important to our residents.

You may sign up by sending an email to: commonwealth@stansellweb.com- please include your name and contact information.

IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS

Crest Management	281-579-0761
Police (Non-Emergency)	281-275-2500
Animal Control	281-275-2596
Fire Department	281-491-0852
Water & Street	281-275-2750
Trash Collection	281-275-2772
Recycling Coordinator	281-275-2770
Street Lights (Centrepoint)	713-207-2222
Newsletter	281-265-4556
Police & Fire Emergency	9-1-1

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This newsletter is published in January, March, May, July, September and November. The deadline for each issue is the first day of the previous month. Ads and payment must be received by that date. Mail to: Commonwealth Comments, 3909 St. Michaels Ct., Sugar Land, Texas 77479 and include a check for full payment. Ad rates begin at \$65.00 per issue.

If you have any questions, call Sue Hauenstein at 281-265-4556.

Newsletter email address: newsletter@commonwealthcivic.com



borhood love our flowers! The committee is trying to find something they don't like, and will not eat. They are also trying to keep the wild hogs (located mainly in the undeveloped areas of Riverstone) out of our neighborhood.

Mark Thompson gave a report on Special Projects. He noted that we have replaced pool furniture this year and were in the process of replacing the wrought iron fences around the Briarwood and Knightsbridge pools. (note: both projects should be completed by the time this newsletter is printed.)

Mark also reported that the decorative brick on some of the

-continued-

Steve reminded those in attendance that maintaining and repairing fences are the responsibility of the homeowner. The Association is not attempting to hide the fences along Commonwealth, merely trying to give the eye something to look at instead of fences that may be in disrepair. The Association is continuing to trim trees on public property - the cost of trimming the trees last year was \$100,000. We do not replace trees unless they are dead. Dead trees are replaced by oaks and/or pecans.

He also noted that the deer still roaming around our neigh-

Susan M. Delclos, DMD, MDS, PA	
ORTHODONTIST	
281-261-2504	
2869 Dulles Avenue	281-265-4177
(at Cartwright)	
Henry Delclos, D.D.S.	
PEDIATRIC DENTIST	
2225 Williams Trace Blvd. Ste. 106	

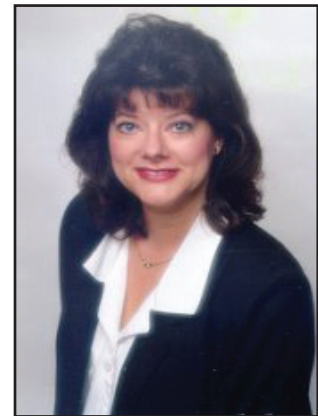


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Call Virginia today! Virginia knows how to sell Commonwealth.

*Summer has definitely arrived in Texas! If you are planning a move this summer, call me at 281-207-5200 to get things started. I will help you sell your home for top dollar and quickly! Homes are moving well in The Commonwealth and we have buyers currently looking for a home.
Have a safe and enjoyable summer!*

Virginia Mack, ABR, CBR, CRS, GRI

bridge facades is in need of repair and that will be addressed. He mentioned that the July 4th Parade and Picnic was being organized and that the need for volunteers still exists. He noted that the Association supports family oriented events aimed specifically at our youth, but an event of this size requires a large number of volunteers.

Vice President Conrith Davis reported on the Tennis Courts, Swimming Pools and Signage. He stated that the Association is planning to place signs around the lake areas. He noted that the tennis courts had just been re-keyed and that 6 lights were being added to the park area to help with vandalism. They were expected to be installed in May. Conrith also announced that we have a new pool company, Greater Houston Pool Company. (See related article elsewhere in this newsletter.)

Virginia Mack reported on her attempts to get the City of Sugar Land to partner with us financially on replacement of our irrigation system. The system has aged and the Board feels that monitors are needed to save money on watering. Additionally the timers have begun to malfunction. The Directors are looking at all options. The estimated cost of replacing the system is approximately \$50,000.

A request was made that residents, upon seeing a problem with the sprinkler system, call Crest Management and report the location of the problem. (We don't want to waste money watering the streets!)

The election of two Directors was held and Steve O'Hara and Virginia Mack were re-elected by acclamation.

Commonwealth is aging and the Board is spending time researching the most cost effective ways to upgrade and update. We will keep you posted.



Vice President Conrith Davis (right)

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At our Annual Meeting in May, interest was expressed in a water aerobics class for Commonwealth "seasoned citizens". While it is too late in the season to begin a class at this time, the Association has indicated that if there is enough interest, they will support the effort during next year's swim season.

If you are interested in participating in a water aerobics class next season, please leave your name and number with Karen at Crest Management (281-579-0761).



What Buyers are Looking for in Commonwealth- Update your Kitchen and Bath

If you are planning on selling, it's becoming more and more important to make sure your home is appealing. If you do not plan to sell, you should still consider updating these areas, not only for your own enjoyment, but also knowing that the average return on investment is 85%! High end homes drive the remodeling market. Most trends are started in this market and percolate down to the middle market. The two areas you can almost go overboard on are the kitchen and master bath. On average a kitchen will cost 15K – 26K all in. Bathrooms average 6.5K – 12K when you're replacing everything. Cabinets account for half the total cost.

You will want to hire a professional remodeling contractor. I recently updated my Commonwealth home and made the huge mistake of trying to do it all myself. I had subcontractors upset about working on top of one another. I will stick to real estate and would advise you to have a professional handle the scheduling.

The basis for a good flow in the kitchen is the "work triangle"; it is the kitchen area from the refrigerator to the cooking area to the sink. Connecting the three is the key to a balanced kitchen. A new trend in the kitchen is concrete counters, although granite is still the mainstay for buyers at this time.

An open floor plan is still in and should remain. Cooks don't want to be isolated in the kitchen alone. Most kitchen islands are longer and wider than ever with corner post with open shelving. Most islands are now a different color than the rest of the cabinetry to set it aside and give it the look of furniture. It is the focal point.

Some home additions are bad ideas because they don't flow

well and create poor usable space. Enlarging a master bathroom is a fantastic way you add more square footage and more value to your home. Think SPA when remodeling the master bath. Use large tubs, multiple shower heads, hand held sprays, vessel sinks. Closet space is very desirable. Use warm finishes for the hardware, satin, nickel, brushed chrome, and

bronze. Try to match all the bath accessories. Pull down that wall sized mirror and replace it with framed hanging mirrors instead. Oversized showers with custom benches are now common in new homes. No more glass block or frosted showers. Everyone now prefers clear glass frame showers. Keep the granite here as well.

Flooring is neutral: natural stone, slate, or travertine topping the

list. Use larger square tiles laid diagonally to make rooms appear to be larger. Stainless appliances, under mount sinks, and gas cook tops will pay for themselves at closing.

Enjoy your home and keep its value high. Invest in the area you tend to spend the most time in, the kitchen and baths. It will help you sell your home quicker and at a higher price when you decide to move.

*This month's Realty Check provided by
Nancy Benevides
Re/Max Southwest*

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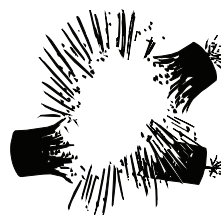
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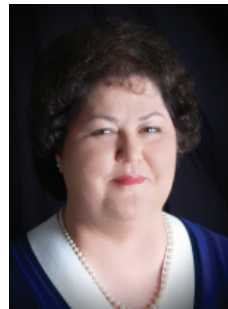
Houses don't sell themselves. That's why you need a professional to help you, someone who knows the neighborhood, someone to help you determine the right pricing strategy for your house. As **Commonwealth Homeowners** ourselves, we can offer you that kind of expertise.

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Be sure to stop in and see the new pool furniture at our Commonwealth Pools - The furniture is well used during pool season and must be replaced every couple of years.

While you're there, be sure to note the new security fences that were installed at each location.

If you are spending time at our pools this summer, you have probably met Elizabeth and Colin, the head lifeguards at the Briarwood and Knightsbridge pools.

If you haven't met them, please take a moment to introduce yourself (especially if your children are spending time at the pools!)

Briarwood Pool



Manager is Colin
Lives in Avalon
Colin is a senior at Clements high school. He has been a lifeguard for 3 years and is considering studying psychology at possibly Baylor, Texas State or Stephen F Austin.
Hobbies include soccer, skateboarding and guitar.

Colin is American Red Cross Certified in: Lifeguard basics/CPR/AED (automated external defibrillation)/ Blood born pathogens.

Knightsbridge Pool



Manager is Elizabeth
Lives in Commonwealth
Elizabeth is a senior at Clements high school and has been a lifeguard for 3 years.
Elizabeth is considering studying history or psychology at possibly Texas A&M, Texas, St. Edwards or Illinois. Her hobbies include basketball, swim team and working with Habitat for Humanity.

Elizabeth is American Red Cross Certified in: Lifeguard basics/CPR/AED (automated external defibrillation)

Home Security Tips For Summer

Summer is here and with it comes crime. The Commonwealth area currently has a low crime rate which is great, but don't relax too much and let your guard down.

Being **PREVENTIVE** with your home safety is important. Sutton Park residents are taking the initiative to start a Crime Watch Program. I have included in this article a few tips received from Officer Ron Foster, with the Sugar Land Police Department, when he recently led the first Sutton Park Neighborhood Crime Watch Program meeting.

It's okay to call the police!

The Police don't know something is happening - Unless YOU tell them!"

If you see something unusual, something wrong, or just doesn't feel right, CALL the police! The Sugar Land Police Department can be reached at 281-275-2500.

Your call is confidential. Once you place a call with the Police Department, they will likely follow up with you and let you know how their investigation went. If you don't want the Police to follow up with you personally after they investigate the issue, let them know.

For example: Your neighbors are out of town. You notice a strange car in the driveway with the trunk open and two strangers loading up items from the house. CALL THE POLICE IMMEDIATELY. Give details, and talk clearly. Make sure you give the car license number, house address, and

identify the people in detail, starting from the head down. If they are driving away, let the police know what street driving on, and what street they are heading towards.

Did you know that Ice Cream trucks may not legally cruise through our neighborhoods? Yes! According to Officer Foster, there are no legal permits for ice cream trucks. He says, some vendors have also been known to be child predators or even drug dealers.

We all love Ice Cream, but they are providing unsolicited business.

We all see people passing out flyers door to door. Did you know they are illegal too? In order to pass out flyers, you need a permit. If they have a permit, they must carry it with them at all times, and it must be visible. They usually were identification and the permit around there neck. What's the bid deal? It's common that these people handing out flyers usually check the front door to see if it's unlocked at the same time. Another reason to keep your doors locked.

Going out of town?

Get to know your neighbors! Let them know when you are leaving to go on vacation or out of town so they can watch your house. Make sure you have there phone numbers too! Your neighbors usually know the daily activity of **your** house and will be able to identify anything unusual.

Cancel newspapers while you are gone. Ask neighbors to

The Mattson Team Leigh Mattson

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Summer Hints

Eliminate wasted energy: Turn off electricity when not in use. Make sure your AC is serviced.
Fuel Economy: Limit trips! Also keep car tuned & keep tires properly inflated. Stay in the shade!
Safety: Let your neighbors know when you are going on vacation, so they can watch your house. Get involved with your area Crime Watch Program.
Health: Drink lot's of water!! Exercise early in the morning, or early evening-still wear sun block!

Real Estate: Call Leigh with THE MATTSON TEAM for all Real Estate needs!



Contact Leigh Direct: 713-823-6843

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VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

My family has lived in The Commonwealth for almost 18 years. When we moved in, part of the development didn't even exist. We were a young community with lots and lots of children. (Our short block had 27 school age kids!)

Many of us jumped in with both feet and got involved in the Homeowner's Association. We formed committees, started this newsletter, organized a women's club and encouraged our neighbors to participate in improving/maintaining the neighborhood. We didn't want to live in houses, we wanted to live in homes.

As our children have grown, naturally, some of us have changed our focus, but the one thing that remains constant is that we want to live in a safe, secure neighborhood. The major way to achieve this is to get to know our neighbors. We **must** be able to recognize interlopers when the need arises.

There are many ways to contribute to a safe, secure Commonwealth. If your children are young, you can volunteer on their campuses, lead a scout group, judge swim meets, coach athletic or academic teams. We need to keep our youth active and involved. Not only will you bond with your children, you will get to know the parents of your children's friends. Communication is one way to stay on top of what's going on in the neighborhood.

Social activities are the best way to get to know your neighbors and enjoy the neighborhood. Take the initiative and organize a community social event. The Association is VERY accommodating and willing to support these efforts.

In the past we have offered Back To School Parties, Teen Band Nights, Egg Hunts, End of School Year Parties, etc.

There are various other ways to contribute to the success of our neighborhood. Once your children no longer require your TOTAL energy and attention, please consider joining one of our existing committees/groups, or start a new one. Civic Association committees are crucial to maintaining our quality of life and the value of our homes.

Currently, the Association is attempting to beef up our Neighborhood Watch Program. The job of **Block Captain** requires almost no effort on your part. **Area co-ordinators** assist in organizing the block captains to ensure that our program is effective. This is a very valuable security tool.

If you are interested in learning more about any of these opportunities, or have a great idea of your own, please contact me and let's talk -- I'll try to guide you to the people who can best help you make it happen.

Sue Hauenstein - newsletter@commonwealthcivic.com
281-265-4556

pick up the local papers in your yard. A yard with many newspapers in it is a huge indication that the owners are out of town.

Summer is one reason for the increase in crime, the other being the economy. Can you believe people are starting to steal gas from parked cars?

Other tips:

Lock front and back doors, and don't forget the garage door too!

Park your car in the garage at night time. Lock your car doors and the garage door too! If your garage is full, then park in the driveway. If need to park on the street, then park directly in front of your house. Again, lock your car. Make sure nothing valuable is left inside the vehicle.

Again, the advice Officer Foster gave "Be aware, not scared" should be used even when you are not at home. When you are shopping, or traveling, be aware of your surroundings. Before you walk out of your house to your car, look around the area first to make sure everything seems okay. Same goes when leaving the grocery store.

Watch for new Neighborhood Crime Watch signs in the Sutton Park area! As soon as Sutton Park has 50% or more of homeowners registered to participate, we'll officially be part of Sugar Land's Neighborhood Crime Watch Community! It's free to participate. Homeowners will only need to be neighborly and watch out for each other. If you would like to register in Sutton Park, or start your area Crime Watch program, contact Leigh Mattson at leigh@MattsonRealtor.com or Sugar Land Officer Ron Foster at (281) 275-2579.

Have a safe summer and thank you for keeping Commonwealth safe!

This article was provided by Leigh Mattson, Commonwealth Resident - Sutton Park Crime Watch Coordinator



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MORE GOOD NEWS!

Not only did Sugar Land make the national news recently, Commonwealth was actually mentioned in the well respected Kiplinger Letter.

The article cited referenced the 10 Best Cities To Live, Work and Play (in the U.S.). The story lists Houston as #1. The article talks about how Houston has reclaimed its title as Energy Capital of the nation, adding aerospace, technology and medical companies to the mix - generating more than 100,000 jobs in 2007. The Houston metropolitan area leads the nation in job growth and has a below national average cost of living.

The piece mentions Sugar Land as a “fast-growing, family friendly” suburb. Also noted were the “solid schools, a strong local economy and an affluent population”.

Buried in the article is the following reference to our very own community!

“.....Houses are affordable: \$350,000 will buy you a four-bedroom, two-bath home in the attractive **Commonwealth** development. Socializing revolves around each community's tennis courts, golf course, pool and clubhouse.....”

Let's all work together to keep it that way!

Citizens' Fire Academy #6

Have you ever wondered what the Sugar Land Fire Department is all about or what services they provide in addition to emergency response? Are you sure your smoke alarms are in the right location? Do you know how to safely and effectively use a portable fire extinguisher to put out a small fire? Learn the answers to these questions and much more by enrolling in SLFD's sixth Citizens' Fire Academy, scheduled from Aug. 21 to Oct. 9.

Enrollment will begin July 16 through Aug. 10.

Ideal candidates include citizens who will go back to their schools, organizations and neighborhoods and share the information they've learned. The only requirements to participate are a commitment to attend all ten sessions of the program, be at least 18-years-old and either live or work in Sugar Land.

The areas covered are:

- Fire Department Organization and History
- Fire Communications
- Fire Science
- Protective Equipment
- Apparatus & Equipment
- EMS/First Aid/Rescue
- CPR
- Firefighter Requirements and Recruitment:
- Fire Prevention:
- Fire Extinguisher Training
- Disaster Preparedness
- Incident Command

- Fire Ground Strategies and Tactics:
- Graduation: Celebration of applicants who successfully complete the Academy will include a presentation of certificates, as well as time for photos, food and fun.

Applications for the Citizens' Fire Academy will be accepted online at www.sugarlandtx.gov or in person at the Fire Administration offices, 10405 Corporate Drive, between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, July 16 to Aug. 10. For more information, contact Capt. Michael McLemore at (281) 275-2859.

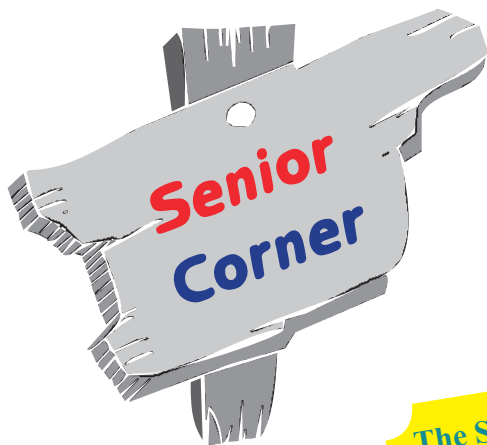
For more in-depth information about the areas covered, and the course itself, visit www.sugarlandtx.gov and click on Departments/Fire Department/Citizens' Fire Academy.

The Commonwealth Men's Golf Group held an organizational meeting in June. The meeting was well attended and the gentlemen are looking forward to occasional lazy afternoons on various golf courses in the area.

If you are interested in joining this group to play golf periodically, contact Greg Mack at 713-412-0535 or email: greg.mack@tic.toshiba.com



National Night Out has been replaced by **Texans Against Crime**
SAVE THE DATE - Tuesday, October 14, 2008 - more information to follow!



**The Senior Center
 Now Has WII**

Senior Ambassadors - Wanted!

The Parks and Recreation Department is seeking Senior Ambassadors to volunteer at the newly renovated Senior Center. We are looking for enthusiastic people to meet and greet visitors, teach classes, maintain the library and the information center - just to name a few things. Seniors interested can pick up an application at the Senior Center reception desk.

Weekly Classes Currently Offered At The Center

Yoga	Mondays at 9 a.m.
Mah Jong	Mondays-Wednesday 1-5 p.m.
Line dancing	Mondays at 9 a.m. & 10 a. m. Wednesdays & Thursdays at 10 a.m.
Jazzercise	Tuesdays at 9 am Thursdays at 8:30 a.m. \$25 for residents
Walking Club	Tuesdays/Fridays at 8:30 a.m. (at the Mall)
Tai Chi	Wednesdays at 9 a. m.

Galveston Island Musicals

Thursday, July 10 depart 9 a.m.
Country Roads
 \$50 for residents includes transportation, tickets, lunch

Thursday, July 31
The Music Man
 \$50 for residents includes transportation, tickets, lunch

Thursday, August 14 depart 9 a.m.
All Shook Up
 \$50 for residents includes transportation, tickets, lunch



Batter Up - Astros Game

Wednesday, July 23
 depart 11 a.m. \$45 for residents

For more information, email seniors@sugarlandtx.gov
 or call the City of Sugar Land Parks and Recreation Department at (281) 275-2885.

Crest Management Service
P.O. Box 219320
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Carolyn Bonds, Senior Mgr.
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When you considered buying a home in the Houston area, you chose to purchase in Sugar Land. Living here in The Commonwealth, we have always felt we chose wisely. More than likely, the factors that helped you select this area were: the school district and the well run, secure, city.

In recent years, Sugar Land has received accolades that include: America's third "Best Place to Live", the nation's fifth "Safest City" and one of the "100 Best Places for Young People". Then, along comes Forbes Magazine and reinforces that decision. Forbes recently included Sugar Land in their list of Nation's Top Suburbs! This latest recognition came from Forbes.com's compilation of the best standard of living suburbs for the country's 15 largest cities.

An analysis of data compared school quality, crime rates, income and education levels and homeownership rates for every incorporated and unincorporated town, city and village within 25 miles of the major city. Cities on the list were found to "boast good schools, plenty of parks and safe streets where the local kids gather and most of the police's attention goes to errant skateboarders." In addition, the property values and income levels of Sugar Land and the other top suburbs were among the top 10 percent of the comparison group.

Joining Sugar Land on the list are communities like Beverly Hills, Brentwood and Piedmont, Calif.; University Park and Highland Park, Texas; Paradise Valley and Tempe, Ariz.; Coral Gables, Fla.; and Bethesda, Md. To select what Forbes.com called America's "finest suburbs," the following factors were considered:

- School rankings were from Department of Education data on graduation rates, per-pupil spending and student-to-teacher ratio.
- Crime data from the Federal Bureau of Investigation included only per capita violent crimes and property crimes.
- Income, education level and homeownership came from Census Bureau data.

More good news inside - see page 10!