



THE NAVIGATOR

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A-I Fire Equipment Co., Inc.—A 50 Year Success Story by Margie Buentello, IOM & Charles Grant, Ph.D

The Small Business Administration's National Small Business Week is May 1 - May 7, 2017. This year's theme is, "Dream Big, Start Small." This is truly what Ward Cooper did in 1967. Cooper was tired of moving his family all over the United States while working in the oilfield industry. He decided to settle his family down in the North Channel Area and purchased a home on Westmont Street. He borrowed \$10,000 and bought into his brother's fire equipment company. After a short period of time, Cooper realized this

was not going to work out. He sold his interest back to his brother, but decided to stay in the fire equipment business. He bought a van, used the shed in his backyard and started A-I Fire Equipment from his home. Cooper would spend each week "cold calling" on companies until he built up a clientele. Starting with himself and one van, A-I Fire Equipment has now grown to over 40 employees and 25 company vehicles.

Cooper knew that if he was going to grow his new business, he would have to build in a good location. He was offered a

parcel of land on Federal Road. However, he had the foresight to realize that frontage property on I-10 East would be a better location. Even though the freeway was still under construction, Cooper purchased land and built at 12711 I-10 East Freeway.

Cooper is 91 years old and still going strong. His step-son, Kevin Coggins, has been with the company for 38 years and is the President. They are distributors for suppression systems, fire alarms and fire extinguishers. According to Coggins, last year, A-I Fire sold more Amerex fire suppression systems than

any other company in the United States. The company values their employee and offers excellent benefits. The mission of A-I Fire Equipment Co., Inc is to provide the highest quality fire equipment from leading manufacturers to protect property and life. For additional information, contact A-I Fire Equipment at 713-455-0296.

Note: Dr. Grant is a former president of the Chamber and Mr. Cooper's son-in-law.

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UPCOMING EVENTS



Friday, May 5
 Monthly Luncheon @ 11:30 AM
 San Jacinto College North – Monument Room in the Student Center
 RSVP: blanca@ncachamber.com
 Sponsored by: La Quinta Channelview

Tuesday, May 9
 Ambassadors Meeting @ 11:30 AM
 Hosted by Woodforest National Bank
 I-10 location

Thursday, May 11
 Chamber Golf Tournament @ 8:00 AM—
 Tour 18

Thursday, May 18
 Business After Hours @ 5—7 –m
 Bates Collision Center, 15532 I-10 East Freeway, 77530

See complete list at:
www.northchannelarea.com

2017 Board of Directors

Adam Lund— Chairman
Capital Bank

Shalonda Dawkins— Chairman Elect
United Community Credit Union

John Moore— 1st Vice Chair
Galena Park ISD

Christie Gates— Treasurer
Sheldon ISD

Lucia Bates – Immediate Past Chair,
LB Marketing Solutions

Marcile Barnett, Bates Collison Centers
Brandan Baird, Woodforest National Bank
Angela Broussard, Broussard's Real Estate
Inv. Rick Brown, Arkema, Inc.
Marlene Clowers, Congressman Gene Green
Ronny Dwairy, Bestway Oilfield
Pedro Garcia, Port Houston
Dr. Allatia Harris, San Jacinto College
June Harris, Halo Branded Solutions
Gretchen Knowles, Harris County Pct. 2
Erika Koehler, Wendel D. Ley YMCA
Greg Ollis, Channelview ISD
Bill Palko, Amegy Bank
Dr. Bill Raffetto, San Jacinto College North
Garland Rutherford, LyondellBasell
Lon Squyres, City of Jacinto City
Jim Wadzinski, Community Toyota/Kia/
Honda
Mike Williams, Edward Jones

Staff

Margie Buentello, President & CEO
Margie@ncachamber.com

**Blanca Beltran, Member Relations Coordi-
nator**
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Joselin Escobar, Administrative Assistant
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Chamber of Commerce
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Houston, TX 77015 (713) 450-3600
www.northchannelarea.com



NEW MEMBERS

Advanced Turbine Solutions, LLC

Jay Cordero, E-mail: cordero@atshouston.com
Daniel R. Vergel de Dios danielv@athouston.com
15653 N. Brentwood Street
Channelview, Texas 77530
(281) 452-2441
Turbines & Manufacturing

Everest Valve Company

David Taylor, david@everestvalveusa.com
PO Box 24295
Houston, TX 77229
(713) 923-8696
www.everestvalveusa.com
Pipe, Valves & Fittings

Holiday Inn Express Houston – E. Sam Houston Pkwy

Rianna Martinez, sales@hiehoustoneast.com
Linda Smith, lsmith@sunwayhospitality.com
Kim Zotz, kzotz@hiehoustoneast.com
6175 East Sam Houston Pkwy. N.
Houston, TX 77049
(346) 410-5050
Hotel

The Honorable Joe Stephens

Judge Joe Stephens
14350 Wallisville
Houston, TX 77049
(713)451-8074
www.jp.hctx.net

**The North Channel Area Chamber of Com-
merce's mission is to promote economic
development and provide real solutions
for business and community prosperity.**

RENEWALS

A special thank you to the following members who have shown their dedicated support of the Chamber and the community by renewing their membership investment.



20-40 Years

East Houston Regional Medical Center	36 Years
Mc’s Electric Service, Inc.	32 Years
Fred M. Saunders	29 Years
LyondellBasell	29 Years
Atrium 10 Tower, L.P.	28 Years
Sellers Bros. Mkts.	26 Years
Dependable Diesel Truck Service	25 Years
Texas Bay Area Credit Union	24 Years
Uvalde ACE Hardware	23 Years
Start, Garcia & Stanley LLC	22 Years
Channelview ISD	20 Years
Kwik Kopy	20 Years
Lawton Publication	20 Years

10-19

Porter Truck Sales	18 Years
Magnolia Creek Apartments	17 Years
Broussard’s Real Estate Inv. Inc	16 Years
Flex Oil Services	16 Years
Stolt-Nielsen USA Inc.	16 Years
Market Street Used Auto Parts	16 Years
Ardent Mills	14 Years

1-9 Years

Bill Palko	8 Years
Christian Tabernacle	8 Years
The Honorable Don Coffey	8 Years
Chick-fil-A	7 Years
Edward Jones	7 Years
Height Builders	7 Years
Commissioner Jack Morman	6 Years
Gulf Coast Waste Disposal Authority	5 Years
Landscape & Design	5 Years
Patricia Janki, M.D.	5 Years
North Channel Star	4 Years
Northeast Houston American Federation of Teachers	4 Years
Infinite Numbers	3 Years
KNCA Services, LLC	3 Years
East Houston Cancer Center	2 Years
Garrett Trucking	2 Years
Shafaii	2 Years
Fairfield Inn & Suites Channelview	1 Year
North American Cargo Solutions	1 Year
RE/ MAX Generation – Homes for Heroes Affiliate	1 Year

PORT BRIEFS

Port Cargo Volume Off to Solid Start in 2017



PORT HOUSTON™
THE INTERNATIONAL PORT OF TEXAS

“Cargo moving through Port Houston facilities is off to a solid start,” Executive Director Roger Guenther announced at the March meeting of the Port Commission of the Port of Houston Authority. Terminals owned and operated by Port Houston handled a cumulative total of 5.7 million tons of cargo, reflecting a three percent increase compared to the same time last year.

Year-to-date, Port Houston has handled 385,801 TEUs (the “twenty-foot equivalent” measurement of container cargo). This figure represents an increase of 17 percent in total TEUs through the first two months of 2017. To put that increase into perspective, “57,000 more TEUs have been handled than at this same time last year.”

Guenther shared that he found it “extremely encouraging” that during this period, loaded container volume had increased by 21 percent and “remains very balanced” between import and export trades, “at nearly ‘fifty-fifty’...a very good position.” Guenther added that steel volumes continue to lag from record-breaking highs in 2015 and are down 4 percent for the year.

While it is “early into the year,” Guenther reiterated that 2017 is off to an “extremely positive start.”

Taken from: *porthouston.com*

CHAMBER APRIL LUNCHEON

A BIG THANK YOU to our sponsor—Woodforest National Bank. Pictured with Woodforest employees is the April speaker, Robert Boudwin (in blue shirt).



APRIL STUDENTS AND EDUCATOR OF THE MONTH



Pictured left to right: Joshua Early, C. E. King High School; Maya Clark, Michael R. Null Middle School; Luis Medina, C. E. King Middle School; and Julie Roeder, Carroll Elementary.