



BUSINESS — to — BUSINESS

BAY AREA HOUSTON
Economic Partnership

www.bayareahouston.com

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BAHEP extends its sincere appreciation for the continued support of THE DAILY NEWS through this monthly supplement.

The Bay Area Houston Economic Partnership Hosts 2026 Annual Quasar Award Banquet

The Bay Area Houston Economic Partnership, a member-driven organization dedicated to stimulating regional economic development and employment in Southeast Texas, hosted its 33rd Annual Quasar Award Banquet on January 23 at the South Shore Harbour Resort and Conference Center.

City of Houston Mayor John Whitmire was selected by the or-

ganization as this year's Quasar Award recipient. The award is presented annually to an elected official, academic leader, or business executive who has demonstrated exceptional commitment to advancing the economic foundations of the Bay Area Houston community. Mayor Whitmire was recognized for his bold leadership, transformative initiatives, fiscal responsibility, and infrastructure improvement projects. The

banquet also kicked off BAHEP's 50th anniversary year.

Nearly 600 members, partners, and community leaders attended the event, which featured vibrant decor inspired by Houston's diverse culture and the upcoming soccer festivities in the region. The program opened with a video highlighting iconic landmarks and events across Houston and the surrounding areas, produced by Space City Films.

BAHEP President Brian Freedman welcomed guests and reflected on the organization's accomplishments in 2025, while recognizing the elected officials, educators, and regional leaders in attendance. Dr. Bruce Wesley, Lead and Founding Pastor of Clear Creek Community Church, delivered the

invocation before dinner was served.

Following dinner, 2025 Board Chair Kelly Page, President of Barrios Technology, shared remarks reflecting on her year of service and BAHEP's recent successes. Houston City Councilmember Fred Flickinger introduced Mayor Whitmire, who was presented the Quasar Award by Page, Freedman, and Flickinger on behalf of BAHEP.

Mayor Whitmire accepted the award and addressed attendees. The evening concluded with remarks from Nellie Chappell-White, CEO of JES Tech and BAHEP's 2026 Board Chair, who emphasized unity, resilience, and continued growth as BAHEP enters its 50th anniversary year.



John Wilkins, Todd Caliva, Dr. Bruce Wesley, Susan Wesley, Shari Wilkins at the 2026 Quasar Banquet.



Stephen Koerner, Catherine Koerner, Vanessa Wyche, and George Wyche Jr. Esq. at the cocktail reception before the 2026 Quasar Banquet.



Kelly Page, Mayor John Whitmire, Brian Freedman, and Councilmember Fred Flickinger presenting the 2026 Quasar Award.

Aerospace Advisory Committee Kicks Off New Year

The BAHEP Aerospace Advisory Committee (AAC) works on behalf of the aerospace industry in support of human space exploration and the commercialization of space. The committee is back in full force from the holiday break ready to tackle the key issues, innovations and topics in aerospace for 2026 and beyond.

The February AAC meeting featured a presentation from Jim Baker, President and Founder of Arrow Science and Technology. Leveraging expertise gained from NASA spaceflight programs, Arrow Science and Tech-

nology provides technical support and precision hardware manufacturing services to the space and defense industries. Baker provided meeting attendees with an overview and history of the company as well as a peek into a few of the aerospace and defense pro-

jects Arrow is currently working on.

Richard Larson with Cimarron Inc. presented ideas to the group for the reuse of NASA JSC's Building 49 aiming to preserve its history and serve the local commercial aerospace in-

dustry.

The attendees also listened to presentations about ASCENDxTexas, a two-day conference held on February 25 and 26 at the South Shore Harbour Resort and Conference Center focused on the innovation and adaption necessary to navigate the evolving space economy — from policy discussions to commercial challenges and changing timelines.

Lastly, Joyce Abbey with SAIC presented updates on Team NASA and the exciting upcoming events for volunteers and other aerospace industry professionals.



Jim Baker giving a presentation on Arrow Science and Technology.



Richard Larson presenting ideas for NASA JSC's Building 49.



AAC Members enjoying lunch and networking time ahead of the meeting.

BUSINESS to BUSINESS is a monthly Bay Area Houston Economic Partnership publication in partnership with THE DAILY NEWS. BAHEP is a member-driven organization that provides the leadership to stimulate regional economic development and employment in southeastern Texas. Its members include more than 360 business partners encompassing 18 cities, Galveston and Harris counties, the Houston Airport System, and Port Houston.

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Smart Manufacturing Roundtable and Luncheon Held at BAHEP

BAHEP is partnering with the Texas A&M Engineering Experiment Station (TEES) through their Texas Defense Aerospace Manufacturing Community (TDAMC) Consortium to lead a new Smart Manufacturing initiative in the Houston and Galveston regions. Smart Manufacturing integrates advanced digital technologies into manufacturing operations to improve quality, effi-

ciency, and productivity. This is incredibly important for the Bay Area Houston region as we work to remain competitive, strengthen supply chain resilience, and meet the expanding needs of the U.S. Department of War and commercial aerospace sector.

Recently, BAHEP hosted a roundtable luncheon at the BAHEP offices in partner-

ship with TEES to bring together industry, education, and government leaders to discuss advancing smart manufacturing in the region. Participants shared insights on workforce development, training, and technology adoption, helping us identify concrete ways to strengthen pipelines, upskill employees, and modernize manufacturing operations.



BAHEP Vice President Mark Mitchell leads the discussion at the Smart Manufacturing Roundtable.

Education Committee Brings Together Public Education Leaders

BAHEP's Education and Workforce Development Committee enhances Bay Area Houston's overall economic development and quality of life by collaborating to create a world-class education and training community. The committee advocates for high quality education and workforce development, shares best practices, and

helps create innovative and effective partnerships.

The committee's first meeting of the year featured an overview from public education leaders on what the landscape looks like to them and their leadership team following the 2025 session of the Texas Legislature. They also discussed what the current

challenges are, and what the path forward looks like.

The panel consisted of leaders from regional K-12 Independent School Districts including - Dr. Karen Engle, Superintendent, Clear Creek ISD, Dr. Rebecca Brown, Superintendent, Dickinson ISD, Mr. Thad Roher, Superinten-

dent, Friendswood ISD, Dr. Toni Lopez, Superintendent, Pasadena ISD, and Dr. Melissa Duarte, Superintendent, Texas City ISD. The panel also featured leaders from community colleges and universities that included - Dr. Brenda Hellyer, Chancellor, San Jacinto College, Dr. Robert Exley, President, Alvin College, Dr. Helen Brewer,

President, College of the Mainland, Dr. Richard Walker, President, University of Houston-Clear Lake and Col. Mike Fossum, USAF Ret., Chief Operating Officer, Texas A&M University at Galveston.