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Dear Client:

**It's probably not accurate to describe it this way, but it seems fitting: Travis County is, in effect, a laboratory for UT Austin's Dell Medical School. Many activities at DellMed are focused on the health needs of Travis County. To determine which avenues to pursue, DellMed is relying on recent research about the more than 1.2 million people who live in the county. The findings of this research are instructive.**

For instance, did you know the leading cause of death in Travis County? Or the second leading cause? And, according to the 2017 Critical Health Indicators Report, compiled by Austin Public Health, **these two causes of death account for a whopping 40% of all deaths in Travis County.**

**Cancer is the leading cause of death** in Travis County, killing 1,131 people in 2014 (the most recent year for which data is available). Not surprisingly, **the #2 cause is heart disease.** So DellMed, partnering with several entities, is "working to position primary care physicians to lead the fight against these and other debilitating illnesses."

The research also disclosed interesting facts about you and your neighbors. Can you guess the percentage of the 1.2 million Travis County residents who have a weight problem? **More than half of all residents -- 58% -- are overweight or obese.** What other factors impact the personal health of county residents? **Well, 14% smoke and 8% have diabetes.**

On the positive side, the study found **fewer high-schoolers are using tobacco, and vaccines have reduced the number of Travis County residents with hepatitis and mumps.** Also, **lung cancer mortality rates are declining.**

DellMed is not only focusing on curing and treating illnesses and disease, but is "developing a model that **shifts the focus from treating sickness to helping patients stay healthy.**" It talks about delivering "robust preventive care." How is it planning to do this?

**It hopes to increase access to vaccines and screenings.** DellMed leaders are focusing on the social, economic and environmental causes of health problems. As a result, one of its goals is to "**reduce the onset of chronic illnesses, helping people to get and stay healthy.**" Travis County is the "laboratory" for these and other initiatives that will ultimately have wider impact.

**Despite the contentious atmosphere in Washington these days, one thing both Democrats and Republicans speak favorably about is investing in the nation's infrastructure. No action has yet been taken, but big fed spending could be on the horizon. When you say "infrastructure," most folks think highways, bridges, etc. But Texas is making a push for about \$15 billion infrastructure federal dollars to lessen hurricane damage. That's right, hurricanes.**

An effort has been underway for about two years to generate support for building a coastal barrier system. It is spearheaded by Texas Land Commissioner **George P. Bush**. This week Bush sent a letter, co-signed by more than 60 Texas leaders, urging President **Donald Trump** to **include a coastal barrier system for the Houston/Galveston bay area in the president's national infrastructure plans.**

The co-signers include some members of the Texas Legislature, 21 mayors along the Texas coastal area, six county judges and more than two dozen members of the business and education communities. **And, the letter makes a persuasive argument to protect six counties** from devastation that could be caused by hurricanes and storm surges – from Freeport to the eastern border of the state.

Consider: our national interest is also at play. This vast complex area is home to: 1) the **nation's second busiest port, Houston**; 2) the **country's fourth largest port, Beaumont** (handling more military cargo than any other US port); and **Freeport** (home to the nation's largest Strategic Petroleum Reserve).

This isn't all. The area is responsible for **more than half of the country's jet fuel**, is home to **29% of the country's oil refining capacity** and is the **number one supplier of energy products to the US military** (aviation fuel, gas, etc.)

The Houston/Galveston bay area remains largely unprotected from storm surge nearly a decade after Hurricane Ike that devastated the upper coast of Texas, **killing 74 people and causing \$29.5 billion in damages.** It was the third most devastating hurricane in US history. It missed the Port of Houston, but if Ike had made a direct hit there, **more than \$100 billion in damages would have resulted.** Bush wrote that if a similar or larger storm hit the area, **"the economic damages to the state and country would be catastrophic."**

The proposed Texas coastal barrier system would be built to a 100-year event standard, and Bush said "modeling has concluded that it **would have prevented 87% of the damages incurred by Hurricane Ike.**"

Bush is working with the Texas Legislature to provide **financial support for operations and maintenance of the coastal barrier system once it is built.** The Army Corps of Engineers is involved with the development of this barrier system, along with other large-scale projects across the Texas coast. By the way, this year's Hurricane Season starts in about a month. Check the next item to see what is being predicted.

**It's been almost ten years since a major hurricane slammed Texas, with its effects felt all the way to the Austin area and the Hill Country. Does this mean we're living on borrowed time or that we're in the midst of a run of good luck? Don't know. But the hurricane prognosticators are suggesting the upcoming season will be less active than a year ago, with a caveat.**

The 2017 official Atlantic hurricane season begins June 1st and runs through November 30th. Occasionally storms can form outside those months. In fact, last year Hurricane Alex popped up as early as January and it was followed by Tropical Storm Bonnie in late May. **By the way, the first named storm this year will be Arlene.** Next, in order: Bret, Cindy, Don, Emily, Franklin, Gert, Harvey, Irma, Jose, Katia, Lee, Maria, Nate and on through the alphabet.

So, what is predicted for this year? The Weather Company, an IBM business, predicts there will be **12 named storms, six of those will rise to hurricane status and two will be major.** This matches the 30-year average (1981-2010).

However, if the weather event known as El Niño *fails to develop* later this summer, **these numbers may be too low.** El Niño is a series of complex climatic changes characterized by unusually warm water in the Pacific Ocean that tends to hold down the number of hurricanes in any given year.

**New Austin homes are being built at a fast pace. And, this fall there could be a new City of Austin requirement that new homes must be designed so their roofs will be ready to add solar panels. As currently planned, the regs would also apply to commercial construction.**

Nothing is set in stone yet. And Austin Energy (AE) is not talking about requiring owners to actually install solar panels (as many have proposed). **The discussion seems to center on designing roofs with a portion set aside for solar panel installation at a later date.** This would mean keeping a roof area clear of obstructions such as vents.

The logic behind this move goes something like this. Long ago, new homes didn't include air conditioning. **So, when new-fangled a/c came along, owners spent money on window units or retrofitted their homes.** By planning ahead now, the homeowner may be able to add solar later without incurring major costs.

But, there would be costs added to the new homes *now*. For instance, electric panel space would need to be included in the design. And, **the solar panel portion of the roof would need to be oriented properly to make maximum use of sunlight,** possibly resulting in a major design change for many homes.

**This is another indication of Austin Energy's full-speed-ahead pace to move toward renewable energy sources.** In fact, just this week, AE announced it is requesting new proposals to sell the city 150 megawatts of solar capacity for terms of ten years up to 25 years.

**Just about everyone who pays attention is aware Austin is promoted as the “Live Music Capital of the World.” In fact, the City of Austin officially adopted the slogan back in the early 1990s. So how did the slogan come to be a staple of Austin’s advertising? Were thousands of dollars paid to a branding/marketing company to research and come up with the slogan? Nope, it only cost about \$30 worth of beer. Here’s a bit of insight.**

About five years before the City officially adopted the slogan, a handful of Austinites gathered at an East Sixth Street bar to drink beer and discuss the upcoming New Music Seminar in New York City in mid-July 1986. The topic: how could Austin promote its noted music community at this gathering? Through the Austin Convention and Visitors Council (“Council” was later changed to “Bureau”), they decided to place an **ad in the national “bible” of music, *Billboard* magazine, that would be read by the attendees at NYC’s New Music Seminar.**

Scribbling on beer-stained napkins, they listed some local acts to mention in the ad – **Eric Johnson, Fabulous T-Birds, Stevie Ray Vaughan, Jerry Jeff Walker, Willie Nelson, Joe Ely, Charlie Sexton**, to name a few. The ad concept claimed Austin was Texas’ biggest music exporter, saying **“We grow ’em. We ship ’em. Next crop ready for you from Austin, Texas.”**

And, down at the bottom of the *Billboard* ad, appeared the words “The Live Music Capital of the World.” **The date of the publication: July 5, 1986.** As far as we know this is the earliest recorded ad for Austin’s current slogan.

The beer joint where this creativity emerged is an Austin story in itself. Taking a not-so-subtle slap at Austin’s famous *private* club, it was named **Headliners East and posted a medallion at its 6th Street entry that read “On this date in history, nothing important happened here.”** It was a hangout for many of Austin’s witty, creative, media types. Appropriate location.

Speaking of imbibing a bit, a growing-older patient proclaimed to **Dr. Louis Overholster** that, after all these years, he no longer drank or used drugs. As he explained it: “I get the same effect just by quickly standing up!”

Sincerely,



Editor/Publisher