

OFFICERS REPORTS

2025-2026 Unit Chair Report Submitted by Angela Roth, HSA-STU Chair

It has been a full and exciting year at the South Texas Unit. A few highlights from the year:

I organized and led four (4) Board Meetings during my first year as Unit Chair.

Members from our unit, as well as many others from around the country, successfully helped host our annual EdCon 2026 which took place in San Antonio in April 2026. I was not in attendance but helped prepare a raffle basket and helped finish the lavender sachets that were gifted to each attendee.

I hosted a fermentation workshop for STU members at my house.

My husband, Chris Roth, gave an Evening Program on Aphrodisiacs which was well received.

Our group has continued our relationship with Westbury Community Garden, harvesting herbs from our beds to use in items for Herb Fair and Herb Day.

None of this would have been accomplished without our STU members!

2025- 2026 EVENING PROGRAMS AND LAGNIAPPES Submitted by Karen Cottingham, HSA-STU Co-Vice Chair

July 2025 Lagniappe: *“Street Food From Around the World - A Sunday Summer Brunch at the Traveler’s Cart”*

August 2025 Evening Meeting (Members Only): *“Herb Fair 2025 Kickoff Night”* presented by Stephanie Calloway, Herb Fair 2025 Chair

September 2025 Evening Meeting: *“Tisane, Anyone? What Did the Colonists Drink After the Tea Party?”* presented by member Catherine O’Brien

October 2025 Lagniappe: *"Weave Your Own Mini-Basket with Molly Koehn - A HANDS-ON HOUSTON Activity"*

October 2025 Evening Meeting: *"In a Ferment – Preserving the Garden Harvest for Year-round Enjoyment"* presented by Scotty Sheridan

November 2025 Lagniappe: *"Ferment Your Fall Garden with Scotty Sheridan"*

November 2025 Lagniappe: "HTX Ukraine 2025 Borscht Cook-Off"

November 2025 Evening Meeting: *"Tulsi – The Holy Basil"* by member Julie Fordes and Karuna Diedericks, Ayurvedic Practitioner and Chef

December 2025 Holiday Potluck Gathering

January 2026 Evening Meeting: *"Aphrodisiacs throughout History"* presented by Chris Roth

January 2026 Lagniappe: *"The Vibrant Flavors of Indian Cuisine - A Shopping and Dining Experience with Chef Karuna"*

February 2026 Evening Meeting: *"The Culinary Artistry of Frida Kahlo"* presented by Chris Smith, Houston restaurateur and member Karen Cottingham

March 2026 Evening Meeting: *"Agave Plants and the Spirits Obtained from Them"* presented by Liliana Kracraft, member Cactus & Succulent Society

April 2026 Evening Meeting: *"Patterns in Nature"* presented by Diana Wilson, Landscape Architect and Urban Planner, and member Karen Cottingham

April Lagniappe: Ceramist Judy Adams hosted a guided tour of *"Contained & Arranged"*, the Annual Floral/Ceramics show at Foelber Pottery Gallery

April Lagniappe: Group outing to *"Love, Land, Language: Healing Our Relationship with the Natural World"* presented by Robin Wall Kimmerer at Rice University

April Lagniappe: Group outing to *"A Sensory Garden Tour & Talk - The Pleasure Gardens of al-Andalus"* presented by Dr. Sara Ann Knutsen

May 2026 Evening Meeting: *“Bringing Butterflies Home - Gardening with Native Plants to Heal Our Yards and Ourselves”* presented by Elizabeth White Olsen, Landscape Designer and Author

June 2026 Evening Meeting (Members Only): *Member’s Annual Business Meeting*

2025–2026 HSA-STU CO-VICE CHAIR REPORT

Submitted by Ro Jones, Co-Vice Chair

Highlights from the year:

- Collaborated with fellow board members to coordinate logistics and promote educational programming throughout the year.
- Supported preparations for presentations (*Saffron: The Gold of Spices & Herbal Electuaries*).
- Assisted with hospitality and member engagement efforts during meetings and special events.
- Participated in the planning and implementation of Herb Fair 2025 activities, including fragrances, sales, creations and workshops.
- Contributed to communications and outreach efforts including Herb Fair, Fall Festival at Nature Discovery Center, etc.
- Created an evaluation to receive feedback from members.

2025-2026 HSA-STU Secretary Report

Submitted by Stephanie Calloway, Secretary

I attended and recorded minutes at four board meetings in my first year as Secretary. I have also helped Unit Chair prepare the agendas and share information ahead of each meeting.

No other significant tasks have been assigned to me as Secretary to date. With Angela’s move in November, I anticipate supporting additional Board activities into 2027.

2025-2026 HSA-STU Financial Report Submitted by Maria Treviño, Treasurer

STU has one operating (checking) account through Chase Bank and one investment account with Vanguard. The investment account consists of the general account and the scholarship account combined.

INCOME COMMENTS:

Herb Fair November, 2025 - gross income \$17,920 and net profit \$10,137. This was a little more than the prior year. Expenses increased for plants as well as in the other categories.

Herb Day was not held in 2026 due to EdCon being held in San Antonio in April.

Vanguard investment account has done very well, yielding an annual rate of return of 4.7%. The two expenses paid from this account were \$1,500 to Houston Botanical Garden and \$2,500 for the speaker sponsorship at EdCon.

MAJOR EXPENSE COMMENTS:

Cherie Flores meeting reservations - being arranged for the 2026-2027 year

STU insurance renewal - due in July. The cost for 2026 will be the same as for 2025 (\$969)

Newsletter expenses - pending

Storage unit - paid through the end of the year

Advertisements - The Houston Federation ad of \$100 is reflected in "expenses". The Herbarist full-page ad (\$350) was submitted and paid on June 1, 2026. This payment will be reflected in the Final Recap.

Scholarships - Scholarships covering the 2026 EdCon registration fee of \$425 were awarded to three members. Total: \$1,275

Donations: Gardens and EdCon Sponsorship

The following donations totaling \$6,000 were given in 2025-2026:

From Chase Account:

Nature Discovery Center, Bellaire, TX \$1,000.

Festival Hill, Round Top TX \$1,000

From Vanguard Account:

Houston Botanical Garden \$1,500 (Cultivar level)

EdCon Speaker Sponsorship \$2,500

SUMMARY OF CURRENT TOTAL ASSETS:

Chase Bank 5/31/2026 \$ 22,980

Vanguard 5/31/2026 \$134,796

Total \$157,776

Vanguard Account:

Beginning Balance 7/1/25 \$133,785

Closing Balance 5/31/26 \$134,796

Vanguard Dividends 5,011

Houston Botanical Garden <1,500>

EdCon Speaker Sponsorship <2,500>

Chase Account:

Beginning Balance 7/1/25 \$25,405

Closing Balance 5/31/26 \$22,980

STANDING COMMITTEE REPORTS

Day Group 2025-2026 Programming Submitted by Benée Curtis, Day Group Chair

**** September 9 – *Double, Double, Toil and Trouble: What Were the Herbs in Macbeth's Witches' Cauldron?* (Presenter - Catherine O'Brien)**

Book Group following program to discuss *Assault and Pepper* by Leslie Budewitz

October 14 – Field trip to Arbor Gate Nurseries in Tomball with a picnic lunch on-site afterward

*** November 11 – *Pumpkins and Spice: Global Cuisine with a Fall Favorite* (Presenter - Benée Curtis)**

December 9 – *The History of Mulled Spices and a Make-and-Take Workshop* (Presenter – Donna Wheeler) Program and potluck luncheon at the home of Cynthia Card

January 13 – Adventure Luncheon at ChòpnBlòk North African cuisine in Montrose

* February 10 – *Making Yogurt, Mozzarella and Ricotta* (Presenter - Catherine O'Brien)

Book Group following program to discuss *Endangered Eating* by Sarah Lohman

March 10 – *Celebrating Nowruz, the Persian New Year* (Presenter – guest Asal Shokati) Program at the McGovern-Stella Link Library

April 7 – Picnic and Plant Swap at the Memorial Park Land Bridge

* May 12 – *Shrubs: The Beverage, not Boscase and Bushes* (Presenter - Benée Curtis)

Book Group following program to discuss *Miss Benson's Beetle* by Rachel Joyce

June 9 – Adventure Luncheon at Arpi's Phoenicia Deli (<https://arpisdeli.com/>) and tour of Phoenicia Market

July 14 – Planning Meeting for 2026-2027 Programming at the home of Benée Curtis

* Meeting at Cherie Flores Pavilion

** Meeting at Lott Hall

2025 STU Herb Fair Report

Submitted by Stephanie Calloway, Herb Fair Chair

Our 52nd Annual Herb Fair, held on Saturday, November 1, 2025 at the Southside Place Clubhouse, attracted a record-breaking turnout, and was a great success! Our main challenge was that our usual plant sale area was unavailable because of delayed and ongoing patio construction at the Clubhouse. We had been told the work would be completed ahead of the event. Our always creative team pivoted the day before the event and decided to place the plant sale in the front of the venue. This pivot attracted attention from the street, but caused a significant back-up as folks tried to navigate the crowded plant tables with little room. The benefit, however, was that our membership table received extra attention and over 50 guests signed up for the newsletter!

Key highlights:

- Total Income: With a gross income of \$17,340, we brought in a net profit of \$9,485.65 (as of last recorded numbers). This is just slightly higher than 2024 income/profit.
- Highest profit area: The largest profit came from crafts (over \$3,400) which

also had the highest profit margin of nearly 85% - thank you to the volunteers who made that happen! Ro and Julie also worked on educational signage for new products which helped us sell out of almost everything!

- Plant Sale: Largest gross sales category was the Plant sale, although our margin was just 31% here, so we ended up with a net profit of \$2180 for plants. We made a last minute decision to offer a bulk discount on three plants, but this quickly became confusing for the cashiers. For the future, we will set and finalize all prices on Friday so we can adequately train the cashiers Saturday at 8am. The small number of leftover plants were offered for free to STU members and community garden projects.
- Volunteers: National League of Young Men volunteers were helpful with set up and clean up. Offering tea samples to shoppers during the event really helped to sell the teas. This is something to keep/expand for next year. STU members stepped up to ROCK all areas – thank you so much!!
- Remaining Inventory: We sold out of most items, including teas, vinegars, herbal blends, jellies, and ‘fragrance’ (bath/body/home goods products). The leftover items were brought to the November evening for a “Pay-what-you-can Sale”. Any remaining items were raffled as door prizes at the STU member holiday party in December.

Looking ahead to next year:

- Participant Engagement: Plan to have a ‘How did you hear about us?’ dot sticker voting option at the entrance/cashier to track marketing reach. We are also planning a ‘What would you like to know about herbs?’ poster page/suggestion box where visitors can suggest topics for future programs.
- Onsite Security: Stephanie has communicated with our Southside Place contact, requesting a different security officer who will be more attentive to our event and have a stronger presence/vigilance at the entrance.
- Promotion: Stephanie is requesting a ‘live’ visit on Friday afternoon from Houston Life (instead of – or in addition to – our in-studio spot) so we can showcase the tables and give everyone a sneak peek at what they can pick up on Saturday. Will also work to better promote the Presale vouchers for the early access.
- Product Plans: All culinary blends continue to sell well (although Za’atar didn’t move as well). A lot of wellness products (bath salts, Queen of Hungary Water, hand scrubs, salves, spritzes, etc) did well again but glycerite

tinctures may need more education. Herbal vinegars and cleaning vinegars sold well as did the DIY kits – will continue to expand on these. Overall, looking to schedule more crafting/prep workshops before September so we can manage the production pipeline, especially for dried items and DIY kits.

- Tea: We made 10% less tea this year compared to last year mostly due to a reduced amount of dried herbs collected by members. We plan to increase frequency/method of outreach and reminders so we can ensure adequate stock of needed ingredients.

- Plant Sale: We are exploring additional signage to highlight companion plants, native plants, and pollinator-friendly plants. We will also work to gather a better inventory of how many plants are remaining at the 'end' of the day, when we consider offering free/discounted plants. This will help us better capture true sales and understand the value of what we are donating to the community.

2025 - 2026 HSA-STU GRANTS & SCHOLARSHIPS REPORT

**Submitted by Lucinda Kontos,
HSA-STU Grants & Scholarships Chair**

Three STU members were granted \$425 scholarships for the 2026 HSA EdCon in San Antonio. These active and engaged members were asked to help at the conference and afterwards by sharing knowledge gleaned from the conference with our unit in return for the funding.

As we still have some educational funding budgeted, I have been in contact with organizations that have herb gardening adjacent activities like Zero Waste and the Nature Discovery Center to identify candidates or find internships that can be funded. It would be ideal to identify students studying horticulture and help defray their costs.

2025 - 2026 SPEAKERS BUREAU REPORT

**Submitted by Virginia Camerlo,
Speakers Bureau Chair**

Summary: The STU Speaker's Bureau presented 18 talks to 16 different organizations. Catherine O'Brien was our champion speaker who gave 17

presentations including two new titles, “*Double, Double, Toil & Trouble*” and “*Tisane, Anyone?*” in commemoration of our nation’s 250th year of independence.

A new Speaker’s Bureau webpage is currently underway. The page will contain presentation titles that can be given to groups within the Greater Houston Area. One continuing hiccup that is causing delay in communication is the limited access to the current southtexasunit@gmail.com account.

PRESENTATIONS:

Virginia Camerlo:

May 21, 2026 International Connections of Houston (ICH). *Houston Hardy Herbs for a Hot and Humid Summer*

Catherine O’Brien:

Sep 9, 2025 STU Day Group *Double, Double, Toil & Trouble*

Sep 13, 2025 Urban Harvest *Mediterranean Herbs*

Sep 17, 2025 HSA-STU Evening Meeting *Tisane, Anyone?*

Sept 25, 2025 Bella Vita *Mediterranean Herbs*

Sep 27, 2025 Enchanted Forest *Mediterranean Herbs*

Oct 15, 2025 Hill Country Unit *Tisane, Anyone?*

Oct 29, 2025 River Oaks Garden Club *Tisane, Anyone?*

Jan 7, 2026 Royal Oaks Garden Club *Mediterranean Herbs*

Jan 10, 2026 DAR, Jane Long Chapter *Tisane, Anyone?*

Jan 13, 2026 Atascocita Garden Club *Tisane, Anyone?*

Jan 20, 2026 Hearthstone Garden Club *Mediterranean Herbs*

Feb 20, 2026 Lake Olympia Garden Club *Tisane, Anyone?*

Feb 25, 2026 St Luke’s Sunshiners *Tisane, Anyone?*

Mar 14, 2026 Enchanted Forest *Mediterranean Herbs*

Mar 19-20, 2026 SATX Unit *Mediterranean Herbs*

Apr 25, 2026 Urban Harvest *Tisane, Anyone?*

May 2, 2026 Antique Rose Emporium *Mediterranean Herbs*

2025 - 2026 HSA-STU MEMBERSHIP REPORT

Submitted by Janice Freeman, HSA-STU Membership Chair

STU membership enrollment is 76, based upon the on-line directory as of 6/05/2026. The total voting membership is 69. There are 7 non-voting

members: (1) honorary, (3) affiliated and (3)sustaining. Enrollment includes 7 Life members and 4 new members.

The Membership Chair collects the annual membership volunteer hours on or before July 31. Totals are submitted to The Herb Society of America by Aug 1.

A member task force led by Angela Roth designed a STU Membership Brochure

2025 - 2026 New Members:

E. Abraham

G. Frisk

S. Miller

D. Wheeler

Quorum: 20% of the 69 active members = 14 members

2025-2026 HSA-STU MEMBER CONCERNS REPORT **Submitted by Donna Wheeler**

I have mailed 20-25 cards on behalf of our unit to members regarding member concerns. I have followed up with email and text messages with a few members and made a home visit to one of our members after her hospitalization.

At Christmas time, I send holiday cards to 5 members that are no longer able to attend meetings. I want them to know we miss them at the unit events and our meetings.

I recommend that we place my email and the process of sending cards in the August newsletter and again in January to encourage communication and support.

There are a few members that consistently inform me of member concerns, I appreciate their help!

2025 - 2026 HSA-STU PUBLICATIONS - NEWSLETTER REPORT **Submitted by Janice Freeman and Linda Alderman,** **Co-Editors of Monthly Newsletter**

The South Texas Unit newsletter, Herbs Make Scents, is a monthly publication distributed to 1212 subscribers (member + non-member subscribers) using MailChimp *.

Two members act as co-editors and alternate responsibilities constructing the

monthly newsletter. Our newsletter includes Unit Chair communications, herb-related information, field trip activities, announcements, meetings and events. All content is submitted by members.

Additional messages to members may be distributed via e-mail or MailChimp. Contributors include Janice Freeman, Karen Cottingham and Stephanie Calloway.

*MailChimp is a computer communication platform utilized by the South Texas Unit to distribute the monthly newsletter and other communications. This communication platform is utilized by the editors and managed by our web page manager, Benée Curtis.

7/2025 – 6/2026 MailChimp Distribution Summary:

44 Publications were distributed, consisting of:
12 Newsletters
12 Lagniappes
3 HSA Educational Conference Announcements
9 Garden Workdays Updates (Prepared by Julie Fordes)
4 STU Herb Fair Marketing Announcements
4 misc Announcements

2025-2026 PUBLICATIONS – WEBSITE REPORT

Submitted by Benée Curtis

Over a period of two weeks in late March 2026, the HSA-STU website was completely rebuilt on an updated platform. GoDaddy no longer supported the web builder used to maintain the website for the past 12 years. The site was rebuilt using Word Press. The website went live on 4/6/2026.

The content should be 100% the same. Each page was recreated and moved over. The look is a little different. It's a little bit simpler than before. This wasn't a difficult process, but it was a time consuming one (several hours a day for two weeks - whew!).

For me personally, it was a good challenge - keeping my brain active as I learned a completely new tool!

The really good thing about this is that the new web builder has more security built into it and our site will now show as a secure website, where the old one did not. Now instead of seeing "http" , you should see "https" indicating that we're now a secure website.

<https://www.herbsociety-stu.org>

The cost of hosting the website has been paid for the next 3 years. Hosting this WordPress site is less expensive than hosting with the obsolete/unsupported WebBuilder.

The following is the renewal schedule of our paid products with GoDaddy:

Domain URL registry for www.herbsociety-stu.org – 2 years from 5/11/25 to 5/11/27 - \$46.34

Deluxe Managed Hosting for WordPress – 3 years from 3/20/2026 to 3/20/2029 - \$323.64

Microsoft 365 E-mail Essentials with Security – 2 years from 3/6/2026 to 3/6/2028 - \$191.76

This secure email allows us to send MailChimp messages to more members on our distribution list.

2025 - 2026 HSA-STU PUBLICATIONS - SOCIAL MEDIA REPORT

Submitted by Virginia Camerlo and Cynthia Card, Co-Chairs of Social Media

Our social media presence is largely through Facebook (2.3K followers), with a much smaller presence on Instagram (389 followers). We routinely share and create posts for upcoming monthly meetings and special events (Herb Fair Nov 2025).

Utilizing Facebook ads has proven very successful in reaching a wide audience for these special events. 5,488 impressions (likes, shares, clicks) logged for Herb Day advertising campaign. Recommend increasing Facebook advertising budget to \$100 from \$50 to allow campaign to begin 2 months out.