QUICK HITS
• Arlington Conservation Council monthly Zoomer (recorded), “Volunteering with Arlington Parks and Rec,” with Montana Williams — 7 p.m. Wednesday, Aug. 3. Info.
• GFW PRSA professional development program, “Mindfulness and Messaging: Mental Health, Youth and the Content We Create,” with Laura Van Hoosier and Kim Brown, Cook Children’s; Cynthia Powell, UNT HSC; Kristi Wiley, Jordan Elizabeth Harris Foundation — 11:30 a.m. Wednesday, Aug. 3, Ridglea Country Club. Info.
• FWBG | BRIT — Lunchtime Lecture: An Overview of Botanical and Ecological Work to Guide Conservation, Aug. 2; Drawing the Garden, Aug. 6; Gardens for Peace (G4P), Aug. 6; Heirloom Plants, Aug. 10; Dog Days, Aug. 20-21. Info.
• Meetups: hosting an online event Trinity Arts Writers Workshop... Fort Worth Area Journalists Meetup...

IN THE WORKPLACE: GET A JOB
Listings in journalismjobs.com and dfw communicators.com and texaspress.com/job-board appear in this report.
• Sports editors are in high demand at The Daily Sentinel in Nacogdoches and the Fort Bend Herald. ... The Kinder Institute for Urban Research at Rice University seeks a full-time staff writer to help it improve lives through data, research, engagement and action. Info. ... DebtHammer, a company that helps people escape predatory loans, has an opening for a deputy managing editor with a background in personal finance or news. Info. ... UTHealth Houston seeks a PR media specialist to turn scientific/medical research and news into easy-to-understand stories on deadline. Info. ...
Fifty years of Texas Gridiron landed at UTA Special Collections, as the Fort Worth chapter show memorabilia have been cataloged and made available for journalism historians to make a fuss over. Donna Darovich, Verla Edwards, Eddy Gallagher, Cathy O’Neal, Linda Pavlik, Kay Porter, Carolyn Poinsett, Susan Waring and SPJ national president Rebecca Aguilar, almost all of whom performed in the stage show, presented the material in June. UTA’s Sara Pozzeni coordinated the exchange. To contribute additional keepsakes (the add-in window never really closed), contact Edwards or Pozzeni.

Edwards, the Fort Worth chapter president for the final Gridiron performance in 1996, called the show a “must attend” for politicians and civic leaders. Everything — the pointed song parodies and biting stage lines, the choreography, the snappy patter — was done in fun and for a cause. In five decades spoofing current events and them, the Gridiron raised an estimated $400,000 in scholarships.

There was one rule. According to the final Yellow Jaundice, the Gridiron’s irreverent newspaper (on yellow newsprint!), scriptwriters were “never to kick a person when he or she was down because this would be cruel.” Besides, noted the late Gridiron star Irv Farman, “If you really want to hurt a guy, you ignore him.”

The all-male Sigma Delta Chi (now SPJ) put on the first shows, on the Friday evening closest to April Fool’s Day. For 20-plus years, the Gridiron stayed all-male, even attendees. Women could see the dress rehearsal if they were family of member-actors or by invitation. In 1969 SPJ opened its membership to women, and women joined the Gridiron cast in 1972. The next year they were allowed to attend the performance.

Prior to women joining the audience, two or three skits were selected each year to perform the following morning at Women in Communications’ annual Celebrity Breakfast. Performers were selected based on who could best remember their songs following an evening of cast parties.

Occasionally, newsmakers were asked to join the cast. The first non-SPJ actor was Tarrant County Commissioner Ann Richards or Pezzoni, almost all of whom took the stage, as did CBS News anchor Bob Schieffer and Texas Gov. Ann Richards and — you get the idea.

At intermission newsmakers were brought on stage to read scripts handed to them as they stepped before the audience. The stars here were always the good-natured duo of political opposites, U.S. House Speaker Jim Wright and U.S. Sen. John Tower. One year they nodded the top hat, grabbed a cane and performed a soft shoe routine.

UTA Special Collections represents a happy ending for the boxes of invitations, programs, scripts, photos, news clippings, video tapes and costumes, rescued from the cobwebby corners of someone’s garage. Seventy-five years after its debut, the Gridiron still can make a little news.

PEOPLE & PLACES

Kathryn Jones on the upcoming SPJ elections: "Want to make a difference in SPJ? Consider running for a national or regional position. Up for grabs this year are vice president, secretary/treasurer, two at-large directors and Region 8 coordinator.” After two terms, Jones is stepping down as RC. More at SPJ Election Central.