



HPI/HPE Retiree Club of Houston

**Spring Edition Newsletter
April/May 2026**

LEADER: CARLOS FERNANDEZ

Planning Committee



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How to stay connected and informed of group activities

Website

<http://www.hprchou.com/>



Facebook Group

[HPI/HPE Houston Retiree
Alumni Group](#)



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Message from Carlos

Dear Houston HPI/HPE Club Members



As we rapidly transition into Houston's hot and humid Spring, your retiree club coordinating committee continues to work diligently evaluating activities and events for 2026. As mentioned in last newsletter we started the year with a strong member showing at our annual Tax Seminar in January; we followed with a capacity limited tour of the Houston Forensic Science Center in downtown and a lunch

stop at the POST; and just a few days ago we had a full day trip to Huntsville visiting the Texas Prison Memorial, the H. E. A. R. T. S. Veterans Museum, and the Sam Houston Visitor Center. Now, we are getting ready for our upcoming Spring Social at El Palenque.

This year, as you can see in our 2026 calendar, [here](#), we have some old standing day trips as well as new ones. Mark your calendars for those with dates we have through June. In mid-April we will pin down dates for the rest.

Through the grapevine I have been hearing that there is an upcoming wave of new retirees from HPI; if you have friends that are part of that wave please invite them to the social or bring them along to one of the upcoming outings or seminars. Remember that word of mouth is our best recruiting tool.

As in prior newsletters, I want to extend my appreciation to the coordinating committee members for their contributions to the club with their talent, their time, creativity, and their passion to serve.

Give us feedback on what you want to see in future newsletters and if you want to be part of the organizing committee, drop me a line and I will get back to you.

In the meantime, stay cool and see you at El Palenque for our Spring Social.

SAVE THE DATE...

UPCOMING CLUB EVENTS

APRIL 23

Spring Social at El Palenque's (SH249)

MAY 14*

Bernhardt Winery (Plantersville, Texas)

JUNE 18*

Hemi Hideout (Brookshire, Texas)

**FREE PRECINCT 3 BUS TRANSPORTATION PROVIDED
PICK UP AT TRUSTMARK BANK, VINTAGE PARK
10711 LOUETTA RD, HOUSTON, TX 77070*



RECENT GROUP TRIPS & EVENTS...

Houston Forensic Science Center & Lunch at POST Houston



Our group enjoyed a fascinating visit to the **Houston Forensic Science Center (HFSC)**, located in downtown Houston at **500 Jefferson Street**. HFSC is an independent organization created to provide objective, science-based forensic services for the City of Houston, operating separately from the police department to ensure transparency and impartiality.

The day started with a wonderful welcome by HFSC staff and CEO Dr. Peter Stout, who offered an engaging overview of the center's mission and the vital role it plays in supporting thousands of criminal cases each year. We learned how evidence is received, documented, and analyzed, and how HFSC's scientists work across several key forensic disciplines, including DNA, fingerprints, digital forensics, and crime-scene response. The tour highlighted HFSC's commitment to accuracy, independence, and public accountability—an eye-opening look at the science behind Houston's justice system.

After the tour, our group headed a few blocks north to POST Houston, one of downtown's most creative redevelopment projects. Once the city's massive Barbara Jordan Post Office, the building originally opened in 1961 as a major U.S. mail-sorting facility designed to

Cold War-era security standards, complete with reinforced construction and even nuclear-era protective features.

Today, POST Houston has been transformed into a vibrant mixed-use destination featuring global food halls, art installations, event spaces, and a dramatic rooftop park overlooking the skyline. We enjoyed a relaxed lunch while exploring the diverse dining options—an ideal contrast to the morning's deep dive into forensic science. A quick rooftop tour had us taking fun photos amongst the Houston Rodeo light displays with downtown Houston as the backdrop.

Thank you Debbie Thompson for organizing such a fun and fascinating day.



Texas Prison Memorial, the H. E. A. R. T. S. Veterans Museum, and the Sam Houston Visitor Center



The HPI/HPE Retiree Club enjoyed a memorable day in Huntsville, exploring three of the city's most meaningful landmarks.

The first stop was the Texas Prison Museum, located at 491 TX-75 North. The museum offers an intriguing look into the history of the Texas prison system, from early incarceration practices to modern reforms. Exhibits include inmate-made crafts, confiscated weapons,

and the museum's most famous artifact, "Old Sparky," the state's retired electric chair used from 1924 to 1964. The displays gave the group a thoughtful perspective on a part of Texas history that is often unseen yet deeply woven into the state's past.



Just up the road, our group visited the H.E.A.R.T.S. Veterans Museum of Texas, located at 463 State Highway 75 North. Dedicated to honoring the service and sacrifices of American veterans, the museum preserves military memorabilia, personal stories, and artifacts from multiple eras of U.S. military history.

The final stop of the day brought us to one of Huntsville's most iconic sights: the Sam Houston Statue & Visitor Center. Towering 67 feet tall, the statue is the world's tallest statue of an American hero, created by artist David Adickes. The Visitor Center provided maps, exhibits, and background on General Sam Houston's life and legacy, giving our group a deeper appreciation for the statesman whose leadership helped shape both Texas and the nation.



NEWS FEATURES

Get Ready for Upcoming Bus Trips!!!

May 14th

A Relaxing Afternoon of Great Food, Texas Wine, and Hill Country Charm



Our upcoming outing begins with lunch at **Cork This Tap That**, a welcoming local favorite known for its relaxed atmosphere, creative menu, and impressive selection of Texas wines and craft beers. The restaurant offers a comfortable, modern setting perfect for gathering as a group, with hearty sandwiches, fresh

salads, shareable appetizers, and rotating chef specials. It's an easygoing place to enjoy good food and conversation before we head into the countryside.

After lunch, we'll make our way to **Bernhardt Winery** in Plantersville, a Tuscan-inspired estate set among rolling hills and shaded pecan trees. Known for its handcrafted wines and warm hospitality, Bernhardt produces a mix of Texas-grown varietals, American classics, and unique blends. Our group will participate in a guided wine-tasting experience, learning about the winery's signature styles and the stories behind their winemaking approach. The peaceful hilltop setting and knowledgeable staff make Bernhardt a standout destination for both new and seasoned wine lovers.

Together, these two stops offer a perfect blend of great food, local flavor, and Texas wine country charm—an ideal way to spend an afternoon with friends.

June 18th

A One of a Kind Texas Treasure

Our group will soon set out for one of the most unique destinations in the Houston region—the **Hemi Hideout**, a spectacular private museum tucked away in Brookshire. From the moment we arrive, we'll step into a world where Texas hospitality meets pure Americana, all housed inside a massive timber frame lodge that feels more like a grand Hill Country retreat than a car museum.

Inside, the Hemi Hideout showcases an extraordinary collection of classic Mopar muscle cars, each one restored to perfection and gleaming under the glow of vintage neon signs. The space is filled with nostalgic touches—gas pumps, retro memorabilia, and rare



automotive treasures that tell the story of American car culture in its prime. Even those who aren't car enthusiasts will appreciate the craftsmanship, history, and sheer visual spectacle of the collection.

Our visit promises to be both fun and memorable, offering plenty of time to explore the displays, enjoy the atmosphere, and take in the remarkable attention to detail that makes the Hemi Hideout such a beloved Texas gem. It's the kind of place that sparks stories, laughter, and a sense of wonder—an ideal outing for our group.

NEW FEATURES

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT: CARLOS FERNANDEZ

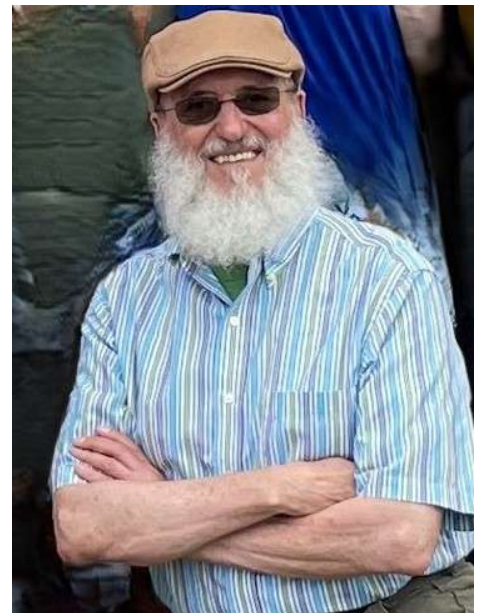
A Legacy of Service, Leadership, and Community Impact

Long before retirement, Carlos Fernandez discovered something that would shape the next chapter of his life: a deep commitment to service. When he and his wife became empty nesters, he began volunteering with a handful of organizations. After retiring from HP, he expanded that commitment even further, turning volunteerism into a defining part of his life. Fourteen years into retirement, that spark has grown into a remarkable legacy of community involvement that touches neighborhoods, nonprofits, major sporting events, and thousands of Houston residents.

Today, Carlos remains actively engaged in a wide range of organizations, including his neighborhood civic association, homeowners' association, a non-profit arts organization, the United Way, the HP/Compaq Retiree Club, and the AARP Tax-Aide Program. His volunteer work is not only broad—it is sustained, meaningful, and deeply rooted in improving the lives of others.

Over the years, Carlos has also been a familiar presence at major Houston sporting events through the Harris County Sports Authority. His volunteer roles have supported everything from golf tournaments and the Junior Olympics to the Super Bowl, Final Four, Special Olympics, Senior Olympics, and large-scale swimming and volleyball events. This summer, he will once again step forward to serve—this time as a volunteer for the FIFA World Cup in Houston. If you attend a match, you may spot him near the stadium, helping visitors navigate one of the largest sporting events in the world.

But among all his commitments, one stands above the rest: AARP Tax-Aide, where Carlos has volunteered for 25 years and counting. His journey began in tax year 2000 at the Montrose Library, back when returns were prepared with pencils, calculators, and a lot of patience. What started as a simple Saturday volunteer shift has grown into a leadership role that has shaped tax assistance for thousands of Houstonians.



After retiring from HP, Carlos took on greater responsibility—running the operation at the Central Library downtown and launching two additional sites in underserved neighborhoods north of downtown. Although the pandemic forced those locations to close, he helped reopen and consolidate services at a YMCA on Cavalcade, where his team now operates five days a week with 44 volunteers. It is one of the largest and most active AARP Tax-Aide sites in the region.

Nationwide, AARP Tax-Aide is the largest volunteer-run free tax preparation service in the United States, assisting 1.7 million people annually at 3,600 sites with the help of 28,000 IRS-certified volunteers. Carlos is proud to be part of that mission—and our club is proud to have him.

His story is a reminder that retirement is not an ending but an opening: a chance to give back, to lead, and to make a lasting difference. Carlos's dedication reflects the very best of our community, and we celebrate his ongoing commitment to service, learning, and helping others.

Earth Day

April 22, 2026



Every year on April 22, communities around the world pause to honor Earth Day, a tradition that began in 1970 when Wisconsin Senator Gaylord Nelson called for a national “teach-in” on the environment. What started as a grassroots movement—sparked by growing concern over pollution, oil spills, and the loss of natural landscapes—quickly grew into a cultural turning point. That first Earth Day brought 20 million Americans into the streets, inspiring the creation of the Environmental Protection Agency and landmark legislation such as the Clean Air Act and Clean Water Act. Today, Earth Day is observed in more than 190 countries, reminding us that caring for the planet is both a global responsibility and a local opportunity.

Here in the Houston metropolitan area, Earth Day has evolved into a lively, community-driven celebration. From downtown festivals to hands-on volunteer projects and family-friendly farm events, Houstonians embrace the month of April as a time to reconnect with nature, support sustainability, and strengthen their neighborhoods.

Green Mountain Energy Earth Day at Discovery Green

April 25, 2026 • 12–5 p.m. • Free

Houston’s signature Earth Day festival transforms Discovery Green into a vibrant, zero-waste celebration featuring community art projects, recycled-materials workshops, a Magpies & Peacocks fashion showcase, and a whimsical procession of 12-foot puppets. Visitors are encouraged to bring refillable bottles and reusable utensils to support the event’s sustainability mission.

Earth-Themed Programs at the Houston Museum of Natural Science

Throughout April 2026

HMNS hosts a month-long celebration featuring the GAIA sculpture installation, the City Nature Challenge, and nature-focused workshops such as Plant Bingo, hummingbird feeder sessions, and bookmark-planting activities.

Texas Roses

Varieties That Thrive in the Houston Zone 9 Area & How to Grow Them

Article and Photos by: Jacqueline Dillemath



Roses have a long and beloved history in Texas gardens, from the antique “found roses” that survived century-old homesteads to the modern, heat-tolerant varieties bred specifically for the Gulf Coast. While Houston’s humidity can challenge even experienced gardeners, the right rose—paired with the right care—can bloom beautifully from spring through fall.

Below is a curated guide to the best-performing roses for the Houston metropolitan area, along with simple, reliable growing tips tailored to our climate.

Best Rose Varieties for Houston’s Climate

(Based on heat tolerance, disease resistance, and consistent bloom performance; reference sources include Texas A&M, Antique Rose Emporium, Houston Rose Society, and “Earth-Kind” research)

Belinda’s Dream

A Texas superstar with large, pink, fragrant blooms. Exceptionally hardy and reliable in heat.

Mutabilis (Butterfly Rose)

A favorite antique rose whose blooms shift from yellow to pink to copper. Thrives in heat and humidity.

Old Blush

One of the oldest and most dependable antique roses in Texas—nearly everblooming and extremely heat-tolerant.



Carefree Beauty

A vigorous, disease-resistant shrub rose that handles Texas summers with ease.

Marie Daly

Compact, fragrant, and tough as nails—perfect for smaller spaces or container gardens.

Knock Out Roses

Low-maintenance and widely available, though increasingly vulnerable to Rose Rosette Disease. Best used with caution.

Mrs. Dudley Cross

A historic Texas rose with creamy yellow blooms that blush pink—romantic, hardy, and sun-loving.

How to Grow Roses Successfully in the Houston Area



1. Choose the Right Location

- Roses need **6–8 hours of direct sun** daily.
- Morning sun is especially important to dry dew and reduce fungal issues.
- Good air circulation helps prevent black spot and mildew.

2. Plant in Well-Drained Soil

Houston's clay soil can be challenging. Improve drainage by:

- Planting in **raised beds**
- Adding compost and expanded shale
- Using **bottomless pots** or large containers for easier soil control

3. Water Wisely

- Water deeply at the base—**never overhead**—to avoid wet foliage.
- Keep soil consistently moist in summer but not soggy.
- Mulch 2–3 inches to protect roots from heat.

4. Feed Regularly

Roses are heavy feeders. Use:

- A balanced granular fertilizer in early spring
- Supplemental liquid feedings during peak bloom cycles
- Organic options (compost, alfalfa meal) for steady growth

5. Prune at the Right Time

- Major pruning: **mid-February** (around Valentine's Day)
- Light pruning and deadheading: throughout the growing season to encourage more blooms

6. Watch for Pests & Disease

- Houston's humidity can trigger black spot, but many varieties listed above are naturally resistant.
- Avoid overhead watering and ensure good spacing.
- Remove any suspicious "witch's broom" growth—this may indicate **Rose Rosette Disease**, which is not curable.



How to Use AI Tools to Create a Travel Itinerary

Smarter Planning, Less Stress, and More Time to Enjoy the Journey

Article by Jacqueline Dillemath

Since retiring in 2024 (and my husband in 2025), travel has become one of our top priorities. We may not have an unlimited budget—or endless hours to plan every detail—but we still want each trip to feel thoughtful and unique. We do work with a travel agent, and that's helpful, but our travel goals focus on discovering the lesser-known places: the small museums, local restaurants, quirky events, and hidden gems that don't always make it into travel magazines or standard tour itineraries.

That's where AI has become an invaluable planning partner. It helps us explore options we might never have found on our own and gives us deeper insight into the places we want to visit. AI tools like Microsoft Copilot, ChatGPT or Google Gemini make the process faster, easier, and surprisingly fun for those who like to manage their own travel adventures (or augment a travel agent booked fixed tour). Here's how to use AI to streamline your travel planning—step by step.

Step 1: Start With Your Destination and Dates

AI works best when you give it a clear starting point. Begin with the basics:

- Where you want to go
- When you plan to travel
- How long you'll stay

A simple prompt like:

“Create a 3-day itinerary for Fredericksburg in early May, focusing on wineries, easy walking, and scenic drives.” gives AI enough direction to start building a structured plan.

Step 2: Add Your Interests and Preferences

This is where AI shines. You can tailor your itinerary to match your personal style:

- Easy walking or mobility-friendly stops
- Gardens, museums, or historic sites
- Food preferences (local restaurants, bakeries, seafood, etc.)
- Shopping, scenic drives, or hands-on experiences
- Senior-friendly pacing

The more detail you provide, the more personalized the itinerary becomes.

Step 3: Ask AI to Sequence the Day

AI can organize your stops in a logical order—minimizing backtracking and maximizing enjoyment.

For example:

“Arrange these stops in a logical route with approximate timing and lunch suggestions.”

AI can also adjust for:

- Opening hours
- Driving distances
- Time needed at each stop
- Group-friendly pacing

This is especially helpful for day trips or multi-stop outings.

Step 4: Let AI Recommend Restaurants and Local Favorites

AI can suggest:

- Highly rated local restaurants
- Coffee shops and bakeries
- Senior-friendly dining options
- Spots with easy parking or group seating

You can refine the results by saying:

“Give me lunch options within 10 minutes of the museum, with outdoor seating.”

Step 5: Build in Flexibility

AI can help you create optional add-ons, backup plans, or weather-friendly alternatives.

For example:

- Indoor options for rainy days
- Shorter versions of the itinerary
- Add-on stops if the group has extra time

This makes your itinerary feel polished and thoughtful.

Step 6: Ask AI to Format the Final Itinerary

Once you're happy with the plan, Microsoft Copilot, for example, can format it into a clean, easy-to-share document:

- A one-page summary
- A detailed schedule
- A newsletter-ready narrative
- A printable checklist
- A map-based version

Why AI Makes Travel Planning Easier

Using AI doesn't replace your judgment (or travel agent)—it enhances your decisions. You still choose the destinations, the pace, and the experiences. AI simply handles the heavy lifting:

- Researching options
- Organizing details
- Finding discounts
- Advice on advanced ticket purchase requirements
- Sequencing stops
- Checking hours
- Suggesting alternatives
- Formatting the final plan

The result is a smoother, more enjoyable planning process—and more time to look forward to the trip itself.



Traveling with Mike....Bar Montenegro

Have you ever heard of Bar Montenegro? Me either, at least until it became one of the stops on our Barcelona to Rome cruise.

Bar doesn't try to impress you with postcard perfection.

Instead, it rewards curiosity. It's a place where: Ancient ruins aren't fenced off, they are part of the landscape...

A single olive tree can outlast empires.

History isn't linear, it's stacked, overlapping, and alive.



A City Shaped by Earthquakes and Exile

Bar's history isn't just about conquest—it's also about survival. A devastating earthquake in 1979 heavily damaged Old Bar, accelerating the shift of life toward the modern coastal area "New Bar". Instead of abandoning the ruins, Montenegro preserved them as an open-air museum. Surprisingly, the Aqueduct built by

the Ottoman empire still carries water to the city from the mountains. Streets near the ruins are lined with authentic restaurants and bars, many untainted by tourism.

Founded over 2,000 years ago, the settlement has been ruled by the Roman Empire, Byzantine Empire, Republic of Venice, and the Ottoman Empire—each leaving architectural and cultural fingerprints. You'll see Roman aqueducts, Venetian fortifications, and Ottoman bathhouses all within a short walk.

The Olive Tree That Outlived Empires and Earthquakes

Just outside town stands one of Bar's most remarkable living witnesses: the Old Olive Tree of Mirovica. Estimated to be over 2,000 years old, it's among the oldest olive trees in the world.

Think about it—this tree was already growing when the Romans arrived. Locals say it has long symbolized peace and reconciliation, with families historically settling disputes beneath its branches.

The Port That Connected Worlds

Modern Bar is home to Montenegro's main seaport, linking the Balkans to Italy across the Adriatic. During the era of Yugoslavia, it became a key maritime hub, especially with the famous railway connecting Bar to Belgrade. This engineering feat—cutting through mountains and canyons—was one of the most ambitious infrastructure projects in the region.



I am Mike the Travel Guy. If you have questions about Bar Montenegro or any other location, feel free to contact me at 713.927.4285. I love talking travel!



A Story of Two Companies Still Shaping the Future



More than ten years after their historic split in November 2015, **HP Inc. (HPI)** and **Hewlett Packard Enterprise (HPE)** continue to move through the world like two branches of the same family tree—distinct in purpose, yet unmistakably shaped by the same roots. Those roots reach back not only to the famed HP Garage in Palo Alto, where **Bill Hewlett and Dave Packard** launched in 1939 a culture of engineering excellence, but also to Houston's own Compaq Computer Corporation founded in 1982 by **Rod Canion, Jim Harris and Bill Murto**. Compaq's bold spirit—its pioneering work in portable computing, open architecture servers, and its belief that technology should be accessible and empowering—became deeply woven into the DNA of the modern HPI and HPE. Together, these legacies form the foundation on which both companies continue to build.

At **HP Inc. (HPI)**, the story begins with a bold leap into the age of AI powered personal computing. The company introduced what it calls the world's largest portfolio of AI PCs, debuting new EliteBooks, OmniBooks, and Z series workstations built around next generation neural processing units capable of running AI directly on the device. These systems promise faster performance, smarter workflows, and a more intuitive relationship between people and their technology. HPI followed this momentum with a sweeping set of launches at its 2025 Amplify Conference—more than 80 new products, including the world's first printers designed to defend against quantum based cyberattacks, new OMEN gaming systems, and the latest HyperX audio innovations. Even in printing and peripherals, HPI is leaning into a future where intelligence, security, and personalization are built in from the start.

Across the enterprise landscape, **Hewlett Packard Enterprise (HPE)** has been telling a parallel story—one centered on the massive infrastructure required to power the world's AI ambitions. At Discover 2025, the company introduced GreenLake Intelligence, a major evolution of its hybrid cloud platform that uses agentic AI to learn from and optimize the systems it manages. HPE also unveiled new AI factories built on NVIDIA's Blackwell architecture, next generation ProLiant Gen12 servers with quantum resistant security, and modular AI data center pods that can be deployed almost anywhere in the world. In networking, HPE Aruba expanded its portfolio with Wi-Fi 7, private 5G, and edge ready solutions designed for high traffic retail and enterprise environments. These aren't just product launches—they're the foundations of national research labs, scientific institutions, and global enterprises preparing for the next wave of digital transformation.

Together, the two companies continue to make contributions that ripple far beyond their product lines. HPI's energy efficient devices and AI-enhanced collaboration tools support a more sustainable and connected workforce. HPE's breakthroughs in supercomputing, hybrid cloud, and sovereign AI infrastructure accelerate scientific discovery, strengthen cybersecurity, and help nations build the digital foundations of the future.

More than a decade after going their separate ways, **HP Inc. and Hewlett Packard Enterprise** are still writing the next chapter of the Hewlett Packard and Compaq Computer story—one innovation at a time, one breakthrough at a time, and always with an eye toward what the world will need next. As retirees, we are proud to be part of this phenomenal journey.

HP/HPI/HPE

RETIREE RESOURCES

HP Inc. Retiree Benefits & Enrollment

- **[MyHPBenefits.com](https://myhpbenefits.com)**
 - Enroll in HP retiree coverage
 - Access plan documents and provider directories
 - Get help via the “Need Help?” button for live support
- **HP Benefits Center:**
1-800-890-3100
Hours: Mon.–Fri., 6 a.m.–6 p.m. PT

HPE Retiree Benefits & Enrollment

- **Annual Enrollment Guide:** Covers healthcare options, Medicare eligibility, and how to enroll.
- **Toolkit Access:** Visit [MyHPERewards.com/retiree](https://myhperewards.com/retiree) for benefits, discounts, and virtual healthcare.
- **Contact Info:**
HPE Benefits Center: 1-844-537-5304
Hours: 8 a.m.–8 p.m. CT, Monday–Friday

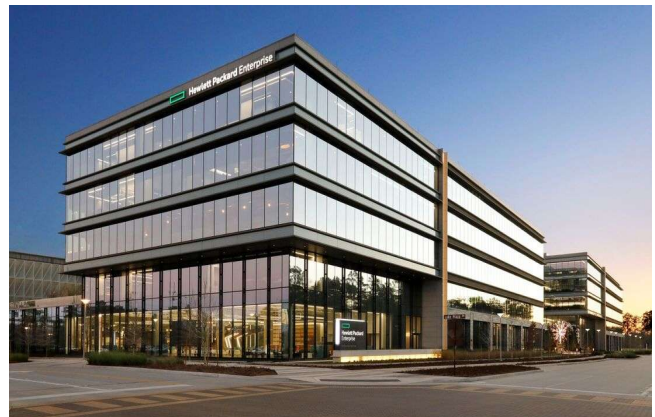
Clubs / Alumni Groups / Discounts

Clubs/Alumni Groups

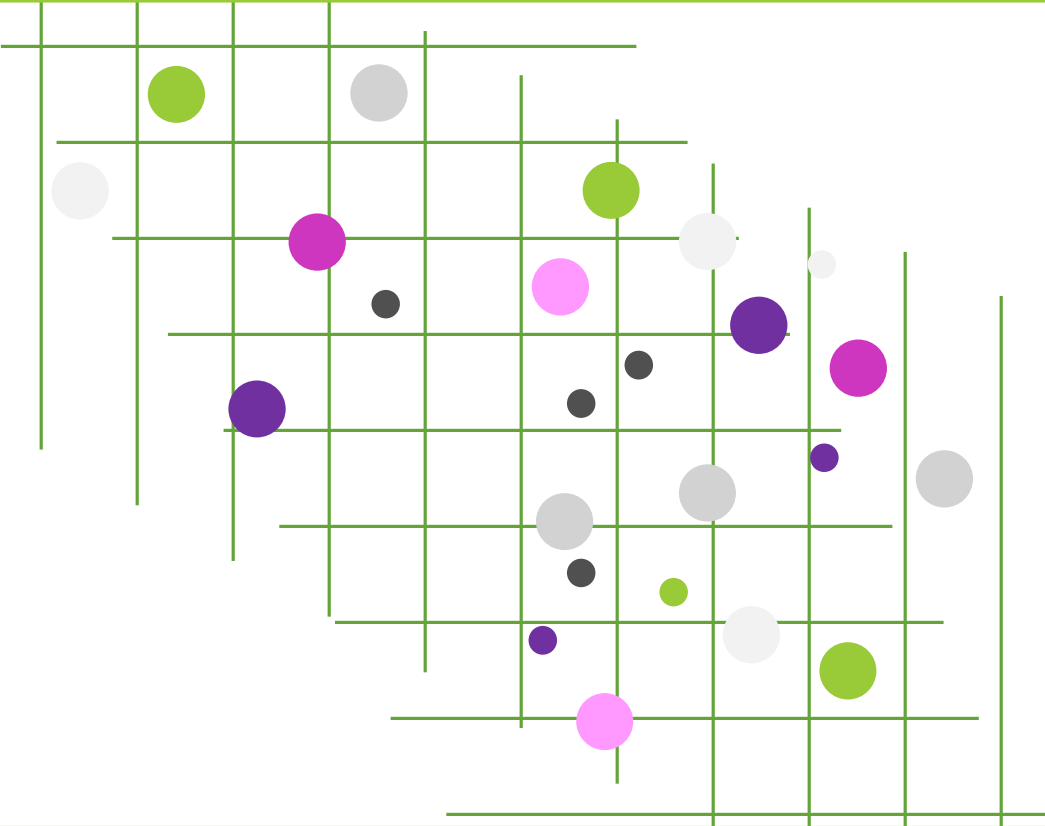
- **HP Continuum:** Central hub for benefits, discounts, and retiree news
[HP Retirees Official Site](https://www.hp.com/retirees)
- **Alumni Group:** [HP and HPE Alumni.](https://www.hp.com/alumni)

HP Discounts

- www.beneplace.com/hp_employee/



**Thank you from the
HPI/HPE Retiree Club of Houston
Planning Committee**



**Next newsletter publication
June 2026**