

THE VILLAGE

Gazette™ *"It takes a Village..."*

NEWS FOR THE RESIDENTS OF THE VILLAGES AT WESTERN OAKS AND LEGEND OAKS I

Signed, Sealed, And Delivered: Travis County Tax Bills For 2008 Should Be In Your Hands!

If you own property in Travis County, chances are you already received a 2008 property tax bill. And if you are among the 114,497 homeowners who escrow through a mortgage company or lending institution, don't worry the mortgage company probably received the bill and will pay your property taxes. But you might want to check to be sure.

"All taxpayers or their mortgage companies should have received their bills," said Travis County Tax Collector Nelda Wells Spears. "Especially for owners of multiple properties, this is the time of year to make sure you have received all bills."

Spears said many taxpayers want the advantage of federal tax deductions that require paid taxes by the end of the year. Any payment postmarked by December 31 will be recorded as a December payment and the receipt issued will show the same.

"Some taxpayers believe that if they do not receive a bill, they are not liable for tax payment," Spears said. "Taxpayers are responsible for requesting a tax bill if they do not receive one."

Spears said anyone who needs a tax bill can download a copy at www.traviscountytax.org or call (512)-854-9473 to request a mailed copy.

Over the past several weeks, 258,543 bills hit mailboxes, Spears said. Seniors and disabled taxpayers may take advantage of a special provision in the law that allows for installment payments. Last year 2,427 persons participated in the program. She urged taxpayers to call (512)-854-9473 for details on what the law allows for seniors and disabled persons.

"If you can't pay all of your tax bill, please call or come in and make arrangements,"

Spears recommended. "Taxpayers will find it much cheaper to contact us than to wait for our office to contact them."

The deadline to pay 2008 property taxes is February 2, 2009. Those who want a tax receipt showing payment in calendar year 2008 must make payment on or before the last day of the current calendar year.

The Travis County Tax Office main location is 5501 Airport Boulevard, between Koenig Lane and 53½ Street. The office opens at 7:30 a.m. and closes at 5:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. Drive-through service and two deposit boxes for non-cash payment are available.

Satellite offices offer convenience to those in East Austin, Oak Hill, Pflugerville and near Austin-Bergstrom International Airport. All satellite offices open at 8:00 am and close at 5:00 pm.

East Austin –

4705 Heflin Lane at Springdale and MLK Blvd (drive through service)

Oak Hill Office –

8656 Highway 71W Building B, second floor

Pflugerville Office –

15822 Foothill Farms Loop (drive through service)

Southeast Office –

4011 McKinney Falls Parkway (drive through service)

Call (512) 854-9473 for assistance at all locations.

See Graphic of Average Tax Amount -

<http://www.traviscountytax.org/pdfs/081204.pdf>

See Tax Office Vital Statistics -

<http://www.traviscountytax.org/pdfs/081204.pdf>

Morgen Academy Wins Grand Prize In Anti-smoking Video Contest



Two Morgen Academy students tied for first place in the Great American Smokeout video contest sponsored by the American Cancer Society. Fifth graders Casey Gaughn and Madelyn Jackson, both age 10, shared how they imagined taking up smoking as adults would negatively impact their lives.

Casey spoke about how she wanted to have a farm with pot-bellied pigs and chickens. "I want to climb Mount Everest and travel the world," Casey added. "If I smoked, I wouldn't have enough energy to climb Mount Everest. It would stink!"

Madelyn said that when she grows up she'd like to be a Marine Biologist. "If I smoked," she said, "I won't be able to afford to travel around the world because I'd be too busy paying for cigarettes and medical bills."

The videos were filmed and submitted by parent volunteer Jennifer Barnette. Each of the top winning schools won a Flip video camera which Morgen Academy will use to post videos to the school website, www.morgenacademy.org.

(Continued on page 3)

IMPORTANT NUMBERS

EMERGENCY NUMBERS

EMERGENCY	911
Fire	911
Ambulance	911
Sheriff – Non-Emergency	512-974-0845

SCHOOLS

Elementary	
Clayton	512-841-9200
Kiker	512-414-2584
Mills	512-841-2400
Patton	512-414-1780
Middle	
Bailey	512-414-4990
Small	512-841-6700
High School	
Austin	512-414-2505
Bowie	512-414-5247

UTILITIES

Water/Wastewater	
City of Austin	512-972-0101
City of Austin (billing)	512-494-9400
Emergency	512-972-1000
Texas State Gas	
Customer Service	1-800-700-2443
Gas related emergency	1-800-959-5325
Pedernales Electric Cooperative	
New service, billing	512-219-2602
Problems	512-219-2628
ATT/SBC Telephone	
New Service	1-800-288-2020
Repair	1-800-246-8464
Billing	1-800-288-2020
Allied Waste	512-247-5647
Time Warner Cable	512-485-5555

OTHER NUMBERS

Oak Hill Postal Station	1-800-275-8777
City of Austin	
Dead Animal Collection	512-494-9000
Abandoned/Disabled Vehicles	512-974-8119
Stop Sign Missing/Damaged	512-974-2000
Street Light Outage (report pole#)	512-505-7617

NEWSLETTER PUBLISHER

Peel, Inc.	512-263-9181
Article Submissions	villagegazette@peelinc.com
Advertising	advertising@peelinc.com

Newsletter Article Submissions

Interested in submitting an article? You can do so by emailing VillageGazette@PEELinc.com or by going to <http://www.peelinc.com/articleSubmit.php>. All news must be received by the 9th of the month prior to the issue. So if you are involved with a school group, scouts, sports etc – please submit your articles for The Village Gazette. Personal news for the Stork Report, Teenage Job Seekers, special celebrations and military service are also welcome.



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Morgen Academy - (Continued from Cover Page)

View the winning videos at the American Cancer Society site <http://sharinghopeblog.org>.

The Great American Smokeout was inaugurated in 1976 to inspire and encourage smokers to quit for one day. In the past year, 39.8 percent of the 43.4 million Americans who smoke have attempted to quit for at least one day. The Great American Smokeout remains an opportunity to encourage people to commit to making a long-term plan to quit for good.

Do You Have Reason to Celebrate?

We want to hear from you! Email VillageGazette@PEELinc.com to let the community know!

Advertising Information

Please support the businesses that advertise in The Village Gazette. Their advertising dollars make it possible for all residents to receive the monthly newsletter at no charge. If you would like to support the newsletter by advertising, please contact our sales office at 512-263-9181 or advertising@PEELinc.com. The advertising deadline is the 10th of each month for the following month's newsletter.

Business Classifieds

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Classified Ads

Personal classifieds (one time sell items, such as a used bike...) run at no charge to Village at Western Oak and Legend Oak residents, limit 30 words, please e-mail VillageGazette@PEELinc.com.

Business classifieds (offering a service or product line for profit) are \$50, limit 40 words, please contact Peel, Inc. Sales Office @ 512-263-9181 or advertising@PEELinc.com.

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Austin Newcomers Club Luncheon

Submitted by Pauline Stockbauer

Mr. David Denney, Director of Public Programming for the Texas State History Museum, will speak at the January 21, 2009, Austin Newcomers Club monthly luncheon. The topic is, Forgotten Gateway: Coming to American through Galveston Island, the newest exhibit coming to Texas State History Museum and to us.

Please see our website for registration details and detailed program information:

www.AustinNewcomers.com

Bowl for Kids' Sake

Submitted by Connie Anderson

It's almost time to lace up your bowling shoes, don your Mardi Gras attire, and roll a strike to benefit Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Texas (BBBS). For more than 25 years, Bowl For Kids' Sake (BFKS) has been Big Brothers Big Sisters' largest annual fundraiser. To thank participants for their contributions, BBBS hosts a free, fun-filled bowling party with team prizes! The 2009 Mardi Gras themed celebration (PG rated) will be held at Highland Lanes on February 27th, 28th, and March 1st.

Big Brothers Big Sisters mission is "to help children reach their potential through professionally supported, one-to-one relationships." This year BBBS of Central Texas has served more than 1,500 children and has been "ranked among the top five [agencies] in the country!" This success wouldn't be possible without community support, especially that of BFKS participants. "One hundred percent of the proceeds support the recruitment and screening

of volunteers, and the professional support staff that check in with each child, parent, and volunteer on a regular basis."

Come learn more about BFKS at the official Kick-Off Party Monday, January 19th at Trudy's North Star, 8820 Burnet Rd, from 6:30 to 8:30 pm. There will be door prizes, games, trivia, fundraising tips, and team registration. Be sure to brush up on your bowling and Mardi Gras knowledge!

If you're unable to attend the kick-off party, there are several ways to be a part of Bowl For Kids' Sake. Gather your friends, family, neighbors, and coworkers to form a team of five (maximum) or register individually at <http://austinbown.kintera.org>. The registration deadline is February 19th. There are also corporate sponsorship opportunities and group/industry bowling sessions listed on the website. For more information about BFKS or the Kick-Off Party, contact Meghan Jones by phone at 512-472-5437 or email at meghan@bbbscentraltx.org.

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5. Strong local businesses help maintain property values and contribute to the character of our community by offering a diverse selection of goods and services.
6. Local businesses are most often the first job for our children and also the first introduction into the "real world" of economics.
7. Small businesses often innovate quicker and thus grow faster and can have a greater impact on our community.

Support the businesses in your community and "Think Local Business First."

Healthy Eating:

Not Just Another Resolution

Submitted by Tracy Lee

As the year comes to a close, many people make a resolution to eat better and exercise more. Fitness and nutrition don't start on January first. It is good to focus on proper eating habits and staying active all year long.

Eating organic is a great start. A few reasons to eat organic are.

1. Fresh organic produce contains on average 50% more vitamins, minerals, enzymes and other micronutrients than intensively farmed produce.
2. Organic produce simply tastes better. Fruit and vegetables are much more full of flavor. Experiment with an organic carrot and a conventionally grown carrot. Which is sweeter?
3. Organic food is not really more expensive than intensively farmed foods and supports many local businesses.



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Nature Watch

by Jim and Lynne Weber

The Cunning Coyote

Although the coyote has been (and continues to be) one of the most persecuted mammals in human history, this is largely due to the common misconceptions and myths that surround the species. Add the fact that they are a highly intelligent animal with keen senses of hearing, sight, and smell, and you can easily see why they are the subject of such scrutiny.

About the size of a small German shepherd, the coyote weighs an average of 25 to 40 pounds, with long, slender legs, a bushy tail with a black tip, and large ears that are held erect. While its coat can vary, it is usually grey or buff-colored and its snout is long and slender. A strong swimmer, the coyote characteristically runs with its tail down, instead of horizontally like foxes or up like wolves and dogs. Primarily



nocturnal and very opportunistic, coyotes will eat almost anything, but in Texas they prefer rabbits, rodents, and insects. Because coyotes can utilize many different food sources and humans have all but exterminated its main predator, the wolf, coyotes have rapidly spread to all parts of the country, including urban and suburban areas.

Considered monogamous with pairs living together for several years, coyotes are usually shy and elusive, but are frequently seen individually, in pairs, or in small groups, especially when near food. A family group, more commonly known as a pack, consists of the parents, their pups, and, occasionally, the previous year's pups. Male and female coyotes pair up, establish a territory, and breed from mid-January to early March. Normally

(Continued on Page 8)

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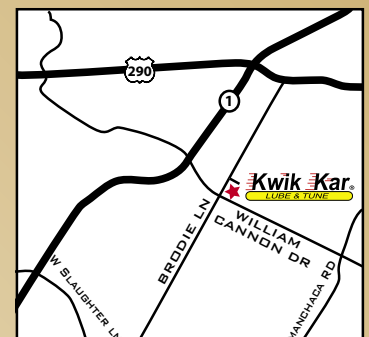
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THE VILLAGE GAZETTE

Nature Watch - (Continued from Page 6)

utilizing a natural cavity or a den dug by another mammal, they will make the necessary renovations by excavating multiple escape tunnels linked to the surface. After a gestation period of 63 to 65 days, a litter of five to seven pups is born. During the weeks following the birth, the male will bring food to the family, but the female will not allow him inside the den. Coyotes normally may live from 10 to 12 years.

It is easy to get the impression that an area is overflowing with coyotes when one hears a family's howls. In reality, there are probably only 2-6 individuals in a pack! While some people may find it a bit unnerving, coyotes use howling as a means of communication to tell non-family members to stay out of their territory, to locate one another within their territory, to distract other coyotes away from young pups, and as a means for older pups to practice mimicking their parents.

Due to misconceptions and fears about coyotes, many people don't recognize the beneficial aspects that coyotes contribute to our ecosystem. Predators, such as the coyote, serve a valuable function in keeping prey species in balance with their habitat. Populations of small animals, such as rodents and insects, could increase out of control without predators. Coyotes can reduce the number of small animals that homeowners and gardeners consider as pests. While coyotes may change ecological balances of predator and prey species somewhat, they will not eliminate other species from the environment. Many scavenger animals, such as foxes and vultures, benefit from

coyote predation on other animals through increased food availability from leftover carcasses.

Coyotes are naturally afraid of people and their presence alone is not a cause for concern, though they can become habituated to rely on human-related sources of food. Simple steps you can take to peacefully coexist with them include keeping your garbage and recycling inside and secure until the morning of pickup, closing off crawlspaces under porches and decks, feeding your pets indoors, keeping your pets indoors at night (especially cats and small dogs), and educating your neighbors to do the same.

Like all wild animals, coyotes have a right to inhabit our wild places, including the preserves that border our suburban homes. If you do your part to help strike a proactive balance between humans and these wild creatures and respect their right to exist, you may well be rewarded with a familial chorus of howls on a moonlit night!

Send your nature-related questions to naturewatch@austin.rr.com and we'll do our best to answer them.

Stork Report

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A New Year's Resolution for your PC

Submitted by Laurie Scott

The holidays are now behind us and we are all brimming with New Year's resolutions that are probably destined to fail, but I have a resolution you can actually keep.

I preach and preach to backup your computer's data to everyone I encounter, yet invariably someone will have a system failure and when I ask if their data was backed up, I'll get a great story about how they meant to purchase an external drive, or that have the drive, but never got around to setting it up. Well, it's a new year and time to commit to safeguarding your data. Stop and think for a minute about all you have on your computer. Maybe you have priceless photos from a vacation, or a birthday, or even wedding and honeymoon pictures. How would you feel if the hard drive suffered a catastrophic failure, or you were the victim of a break-in and your computer was stolen. You can never get those pictures back. Maybe you have important business or financial data, how would you get that back?

So here are a couple of inexpensive ways to protect your precious data. One way is to use an external hard drive that connects to your computer's USB port. You can find them for under \$100 and most of them come with some kind of backup software. A favorite backup software of mine is the free version of SyncBack, which can be downloaded at www.2brightsparks.com/freeware. It is easy to use, and

you can schedule it to run daily so you don't have to remember.

An even better choice is an online, off-site backup. This gives you access to your data from anywhere, and even in the event of fire your data is safe. If you have less than 2 Gigabytes of data, you can backup your information for free at mozy.com. My favorite is using a \$20 software package called JungleDisk. You download it from jungledisk.com. You use the software to easily upload your data to Amazon's secure servers designed just for storage. Your data is encrypted during transmission and while being stored – only you have access to the data because only you have your encryption code. The cost is only \$.15 per Gigabyte for storage and \$.10 per Gigabyte for transfer. You don't have to upload everything you have, just your most valuable files. Even if you have lots and lots of photos, you'll probably only pay 25 cents a month or less. The software lets you easily schedule what files and folders to backup, so you again can set it and forget it.

So this year, make a New Year's resolution to protect your computer's data and do daily or weekly backups. Once you set it up, your computer will keep your resolution for you and a year from now, you can look back and know that you kept at least one of your 2009 resolutions.

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Texas Tuition Promise Fund

Submitted by Anna Mallett

The state of Texas has exciting news for families wanting to save for their children's college education. You can lay the foundation for your child's education in an easy and affordable way with the Texas Tuition Promise Fund — a new prepaid college tuition program that lets families start paying for college tuition now, based on prices determined by today's tuition rates.

Some families may think college is unattainable because of the costs involved. But with the Texas Tuition Promise Fund, families from all economic backgrounds can choose from a variety of options to save for their children's college education. The Texas Tuition Promise Fund lets you decide how much you can afford, while sheltering you from rising tuition costs.

You can purchase just a few hours or a semester at a community college or as much as six years of resident tuition and required fees at the most expensive public university in Texas. You can spread your payments out until your child graduates from high school, pay for your purchase all at once or buy additional hours as your budget allows.

Best of all, the program offers a wide range of flexibility. Your child can use prepaid tuition benefits at more than 100 Texas public universities

and community colleges. Payments into the plan can also be used if your child goes to an out-of-state or private university, with students and their families making up the difference in cost.

Also, If your child receives a scholarship, you can roll over your Texas Tuition Promise Fund account to a 529 college savings plan, such as the Texas College Savings Plan; that money can then be used for graduate school, books or room and board. You can also transfer any unused tuition benefits to another child or receive a refund. It's that flexible.

The most important benefit of the Texas Tuition Promise Fund is that your child will have the opportunity to get the education and skills needed for the best jobs in our changing Texas economy.

Prepaying tuition will help pave the way for your child's success.

You may enroll in the Texas Tuition Promise Fund any time between Sept. 1 and Feb. 28 (Feb. 29 in leap years). The enrollment period extends through July 31 for children under one year of age.

To get started with the Texas Tuition Promise Fund, visit www.everychanceeverytexas.org for all the details on paying and saving for college.



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Locks of Love Submitted by Sandi Bennett



The city of Austin and its people are known for their generous, giving nature. Pigtailed and Crewcuts stepped things up a bit on Sunday December 8, with the finale to a seven month long "Locks of Love" campaign. The campaign started back in May. "We didn't know what to expect," said owner Sandi Bennett. "We were hoping for 25 or 30 girls and ended up with 87!!! "It was amazing. We are very happy with the turn-out. For our first year, we more than exceeded our own expectations."

Through-out the seven months the girls were treated to fun get-togethers hosted by local businesses; ice-cream at Cups-and-Cones, Karate at Vallari's Martial Arts, and Girls Night Out at JW Tumbles. "We wanted to really show the girls what a special thing they were doing. All of these businesses were gracious enough to open their doors and show these girls a great time!"

Stylists Alexis DeBose, Linda Coulombe,

Jennifer Ballesteros, and Michelle Lasher donated hours of time to cut miles of "locks" on Sunday, December 8th. A total of 38 girls and mothers were treated to FREE haircuts and styles by donating their hair to this worthy charity. These "locks" will be turned into hairpieces by Locks of Love Charity for kids who are in need.

Locks of Love is a charity dedicated to helping children, who have been stricken by disease that causes them to lose their hair, get new "hair" and a fraction of the cost. "It is a fabulous charity that children of all ages can be directly involved with," says Sandi Bennett. "The girls all looked so proud of their accomplishment, when they saw those long ponytails getting bagged. This year was a huge success and next year will be even bigger."

Signups for next years event will begin on May 1st 2009. Call Sandi Bennett at 512-372-3500 for more information.

"We didn't know what to expect. We were hoping for 25 or 30 girls and ended up with 87!!!"

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Austin Real Estate Partners' Market Report								
SW Austin by Neighborhood	6 Months Sold History (Jun '08 - Nov '08)						CURRENT MARKET	
	TOTAL	AVERAGE					TOTAL	
	Homes Sold	Square Feet	Price / Sq. Foot	Price \$K	Year Built	Days On Market	Available	Pending Sale
Belterra	39	3,135	\$ 108	\$ 339	2006	109	59	9
Circle C Ranch	133	2,775	\$ 121	\$ 337	1999	46	92	9
Heights at Loma Vista	5	3,157	\$ 130	\$ 412	2005	59	3	1
Highpointe	20	3,392	\$ 99	\$ 335	2007	15	13	7
Legend Oaks	37	2,410	\$ 108	\$ 261	1994	45	2	1
Maple Run	48	1,638	\$ 113	\$ 185	1986	36	17	5
Meridian	31	3,094	\$ 115	\$ 355	2007	87	19	3
Sendera	29	1,980	\$ 116	\$ 230	1999	32	14	7
Shady Hollow	18	2,695	\$ 122	\$ 330	1989	39	12	1
Villages at Western Oaks	83	2,087	\$ 120	\$ 250	1994	45	32	9
Western Oaks	7	2,324	\$ 120	\$ 279	1985	74	0	0
Grand Total	450	2,520	\$ 116	\$ 293	1997	51	263	52
% Change Mo/Mo	-5%	-1%	0%	-1%	0%	7%	-12%	-5%

Market Report data was obtained from the Austin-Multiple Listing Service (MLS) on 12/10/2008. In some cases new construction and FSBO homes are not included in the MLS data and therefore are not represented. Data is deemed accurate but not guaranteed.

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