

Mercer Street Festival

Submitted by DeNae Lee

Enjoy carolers, crafts, a broad selection of holiday gifts, live entertainment, children's activities, and a spectacular display of lighting as the 8th Annual Christmas on Mercer Street festival returns Saturday, December 1. A traditional holiday family experience that has grown every year, Christmas on Mercer Street offers something for all ages and all interests. Admission is free to the public.

For those who like to ring in the holiday season in a healthy way, YMCA will coordinate their Fit for Change 5K Run with the Christmas on Mercer Street celebration. The run begins at the Springs Family Branch YMCA at 8 am. Awards, prizes, and trophies will be presented at 10 am at the Christmas on Mercer Street festival.

Following the award presentation, downtown festivities will kick off with daylong activities including free music and live performances, arts and crafts booths, trackless train and pony rides for kids, photos with Santa, and tasty food and drinks. Mercer Street will be closed off to traffic and allow much room for you to stroll with your friends and loved ones. An authentic small town Christmas celebration, the entire area will sparkle with decorations and bustle with music, shopping, and holiday cheer.

Dripping Springs area merchants will once again welcome visitors with a Hill Country Holiday Gift Tour and Open House. For only \$25, you can purchase a festive holiday treasure box with a map to each participating store. At the end of the tour, your box will be filled to the brim with holiday gifts to keep or give away. With limited supplies available, please pre-register with the Dripping Springs Area Chamber of Commerce. Last year, the demand for participation was so high in the Gift Tour that all treasure boxes were completely sold out before the festival even began! Call 512-858-7000 for more information.

Austin Newcomers Club

Austin Newcomers is dedicated to introducing new residents to Austin while extending a hand to make new acquaintances and join fun Interest Groups.

Our program this month is Malcolm Nelson directing the choir First Edition. Mr. Nelson is currently in his seventh year as choir director at McCallum Fine Arts Academy.

First Edition is the premier mixed choir at the McCallum Fine Arts Academy. Its members are auditioned each year and chosen because of their singing ability and commitment to excellence. The group performs all types of music but is best known for its seasonal offerings and pop Broadway style. Members of First Edition have performed at Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center in New York City Each year First Edition sings at numerous private parties, celebrations and luncheon meetings. This promises to be a lively and popular program.

The monthly luncheon will be held on Wednesday, December 5 at Green Pastures Restaurant, 811 Live Oak St, Austin TX 78704. The luncheon is \$20 per person; reservations are required, and payment must be received by Thursday, November 29.

The club website is www.AustinNewcomers.com and the telephone number is (512) 314-5100.



WELCOME

A Newsletter for Meridian residents

The Monitor is a monthly newsletter mailed to all Meridian residents. Each newsletter is filled with valuable information about the community, local area activities, school information and more.

If you are involved with a school group, play group, scouts, sports activity, social group, etc. and would like to submit an article for the newsletter you can do so online at www. PEELinc.com or you can email it meridian@peelinc.com. Personal news for the Stork Report, Teenage Job Seekers, special celebrations, birthday announcements and military service are also welcome.

Our goal is to keep you informed!

ADVERTISING INFO

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NEWSLETTER INFO

PUBLISHER

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Traveling with your pet over the holidays?

HERE ARE SOME TIPS THAT WILL HELP MAKEYOUR DRIVE SMOOTH SAILING.

Submitted by Kristen West

- 1. Take your pet on short trips prior to the big day to let him get used to traveling by car.
- 2. Keep your pet safe in a secured, well-ventilated crate or carrier. It should be large enough for your pet to stand, sit, lie down and turn around. Letting him have free range in the car not only puts him at risk, but it also poses a risk to your family if you were to stop suddenly.
- 3. Never let your dog travel in the bed of a truck. Even if he is secured on a short line to prevent him falling or jumping out, your pet can experience discomfort from the weather and wind or sustain injury from debris.
- 4. Feed your pet three or four hours prior to departure and avoid giving him any food or treats in the car.
- 5. Never leave your pet in a parked vehicle, which can quickly become a furnace and cause heatstroke, even with open windows. In cold weather, the car holds the temperature like a refrigerator.
- 6. Your pet's microchip should be up-to-date and he should be wearing a flat collar and ID at all times.
- 7. Bring a bowl and extra water in case you get stuck in the inevitable holiday traffic jam!
- 8. Take lots of breaks to let your pet stretch his legs and relieve himself. It's a great excuse to do some sight-seeing or pick up a fun treat for yourself!



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Think Adoption

by Sarah Bremer

As I walked through the Dog Adoption Center at Austin Pets Alive for the first time a month ago, I admit that I was nervous about what I would find when I entered the external hallways housing the organizations adoptable dogs. Nervous because the last time I visited the animal center at Town Lake Austin was still a kill city and the experience left me worried and anxious about whether or not the animals I came into contact with would still be alive the next day. I took a deep breath and walked through the bright red door.

On the other side I found a large open courtyard with several fenced in play areas, each occupied with potential adopters getting to know one of the organization's adoptable dogs. Encouraging staff and volunteers hustled from one part of the courtyard to the next tending to the needs and nourishment of the 150 (give or take) dogs housed at APA's Town Lake Center. I took my time and walked through each part of the dog adoption area- observing the color coded signage (green for walkable and red for adoption counselor assistance) and short vignettes describing each dog. I paused at the pen holding "Barbie" and read her story carefully. She is a nine year old pit mix whose family of seven years had recently moved on without her; she had spent her first few nights in the shelter trembling. My heart broke. I put my hand to the chain linked gate fence, a small effort to ease her anxiousness. It was greeted by a cold nose that timidly sniffed at the flesh of my overturned palm. Gradually that shy initial contact gave

way to tongue licks and tail wags. There are so many stories and so many animals looking for homes. I breathed a sigh of relief – Barbie would still be alive tomorrow. So much hope. But, hope that needs constant tending by the community – a hope sprung from donations, volunteers, foster families and, perhaps most importantly, adopters.

Adoptions are the bread and butter of animal rescue organizations like Austin Pets Alive. The best possible outcome is to see animals find good, loving forever homes so that more animals can be rescued - and in APA's case, particularly from shelters where adoptable pets are at risk of euthanasia. In putting together the photos for this essay, I was privileged to speak with several individuals and families considering adoption from Austin Pets Alive. I met one family who had recently lost their young boxer. They weren't sure they were ready for a new pet, but they were at least ready to start looking. I talked with one couple who were excitedly adopting an 8 week old puppy - a sibling for their 14 month old dog and their second adoption from Austin Pets Alive. I had the pleasure of photographing them as they met their puppy for the first time. I met a single mom looking for a dog that would be able to keep up with her nine year old son. I made the acquaintance of Max, Sasha and Katie who were excitedly waiting with APA foster parents, Monica Delgado and Chelsea Ruiz, for their

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mom to complete the adoption paperwork for Butterfly. The people I spoke with had any number of reasons for adopting a pet, but the two (perhaps the obvious two) that stood out were to save a life and to be a part of something larger than one person or one animal.

With cold weather moving in, the holidays fast approaching and recent funding and inspection issues for Austin Pets Alive (for more information, visit http://www.austinpetsalive.org) the organization hopes that you'll be interested in adoption as a way to grow your family. The adoption process is informative and thorough and any one of the organization's adoption counselors will enthusiastically and empathetically guide you through the process. For APA, one adoption is one more life that can be saved and one more step to maintaining Austin's No Kill Status. If you're looking for a new pet, consider stopping by APA's Town Lake Animal Center or any one of their off-site adoption locations. Counselors will work with you to find a pet that matches your needs and personality, advise you on everything from veterinary care to potty training, work with you to address any behavioral concerns that may be facing your potential companion and provide you with phone numbers to offer you assistance of all kinds.

If you're contemplating a new pet for your family, consider adoption and consider Austin Pets Alive. Save a life. Be a part of something BIG.









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By Sugandha Jain | Master Registered Texas Trainer and Director of Accreditation at a local preschool -

WHAT ARE ALPHA GIRLS?

The term comes from a 2006 book of the same name by Dr. Dan Kindlon, a child psychologist at Harvard University. Dr. Kindlon interviewed nearly 1,000 girls, in 6th through 12th grades, before writing the book. In it, he describes Alpha Girls on the cusp of incredible achievement.

Statistics released by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), from studies conducted by the U.S. Department of Education, seem to bear this out in terms of academics. Girls consistently outperform boys in reading and writing: the 2004 NAEP reading scale results show that girls' outscore boys by five points at age nine, 10 points at age 13, and 13 points by age 17. Young women also head to college in larger numbers: they currently encompass 58% of students enrolled in two- and four-year colleges.

"Young women are achieving more than young men," says Dr. Linn Goldberg, a professor of medicine at Oregon Health and Science University. Dr. Goldberg has conducted extensive studies on drug and alcohol use among adolescents. He says girls simply aren't falling prey to the same pitfalls as boys. "They are less likely to be deviant and be engaged in many harmful behaviors, such as substance use and abuse," he says. "[Or] be involved in altercations, be arrested, among other maladaptive actions."

What's more, says Dr. Kindlon, is that girls aren't just succeeding, they're doing so in a psychologically healthy manner.

"Today, we have a generation of girls who have more psychological skills to play both the feminine roles and the roles that men played in the past," says Dr. Kindlon. "They are poised to do great things."

HOW CAN PARENTS RESPOND?

Parents of Alpha Girls likely are proud when their daughters exhibit high achieving traits; some may think their girls aren't prone to any particular problems. Either way, it's important for parents to convey the message that girls don't have to be "perfect" to be successful and happy in life.

Teaching girls media literacy—how to evaluate the information they receive through television, magazines and other media—is one way to help them combat potentially harmful messages. Several organizations offer parents tools to do this, including the Center for Media Literacy (www.medialit.org) and Commercial Alert (www.commercialalert.com).

Parents also have to be vigilant about being models of appropriate body image. This means mothers, in particular, have to mean what they say when they talk with their daughters about their bodies. A mother shouldn't in one breath tell her daughter she is perfect and beautiful, then in the next make disparaging comments about her own body, says Ms. Martin.

Most important: parents should focus on their daughter's well being as well as her achievements—and consistently convey the message that there are myriad ways to be successful in life.

"Help your daughter develop her potential," says Dr. Diane Halpern, a psychology professor at Claremont McKenna College in California and the author of Sex Differences in Cognitive Abilities. "The only way parents can do that is to make sure that their daughters have a wide range of opportunities and know what their choices are."

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NatureWatch

by Jim and Lynne Weber

MERRY MISTLETOE

From the earliest times mistletoe has been considered one of the most magical, mysterious, and sacred plants found in European folklore. Originally used to bestow life and fertility, as a protection from poison, and as an aphrodisiac, in medieval times branches of mistletoe were hung from the ceiling to ward off evil spirits. With the process of immigration and settlement of North America, traditions associated with the European plant were transferred to the New World and evolved into a folklore all its own.

In Central Texas, two species of mistletoe are native, the Christmas Mistletoe (Phoradendron tomentosum) and Oak Mistletoe (Phoradendron leucarpum). The genus comes from the Greek 'phor' which means thief and 'dendron' which means tree, as both species are semiparasites that steal water and nutrients from their host trees. Christmas mistletoe has small, elliptical evergreen leaves and smooth green stems covered by short hairs, with tiny green flowers on the male plant and shiny white berries on the female plant. It is widely used in the United States as a Christmas decoration, and is especially common growing on Sugar Hackberry, Cedar Elm, and Honey Mesquite trees in Texas, Louisiana, and Oklahoma.

Native north to New York State, south to Florida, and west to New Mexico, Oak Mistletoe is another common mistletoe hung at Christmastime. It is a larval host plant for the Great Purple Hairstreak butterfly, and while similar in appearance to Christmas Mistletoe, its berries are covered with a sticky substance poisonous to humans but relished by winter resident birds such as Cedar Waxwings, Eastern Bluebirds, and American Robins. These birds eat the berries and spread the seeds through their droppings and by wiping their beaks on tree branches, both of which may cause a new plant to take hold and become established.

While ancient folklore has attributed a wide range of mystical abilities to mistletoe, none is more fascinating than the myth of Frigga, the Norse Mother Goddess worshiped by pre-Christian people of northern Europe, and how mistletoe became her sacred plant. She was believed to be the mother of Balder, the God of the Summer Sun, who had a dream of death. Alarmed by this dream, Frigga went to all the elements, plants, and animals to seek a promise that no harm would come to her son. Balder was thought to be safe from harm by anything on or under the Earth.

But Balder's enemy, Loki, was the God of Evil, and he knew of the one plant that Frigga overlooked. It was the lowly mistletoe, which grew neither on nor under the Earth itself, but on the branches of oaks and other trees. Loki made an arrow tip with the mistletoe, and gave it to the Hoder, the blind God of Winter, who used it to strike Balder dead. The sky paled and everything wept for the Sun God,

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who was restored by Frigga after working with the elements for three days. The tears she shed for her son were said to be the pearly white berries of the mistletoe, and in her joy at his resurrection she kissed everyone who passed beneath the tree on which it grew.

Thus began the custom that whomever should stand beneath the humble mistletoe will come to no harm, but receive only a kiss as a token of love. Merry mistletoe to you and yours!

Send your nature-related questions to naturewatch@austin.rr.com and we'll do our best to answer them. If you enjoy reading these articles, look for our book, Nature Watch Austin, published by Texas A&M University Press.







The goal is to fill in the grid so that every row, every column, and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 through 9. Each digit may appear only once in each row, each column, and each 3x3 box.



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By the Four Point Foodie | www.fourpointsfoodie.com

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 C butter, softened
- 1/2 C powdered sugar
- 1 t vanilla
- 2 1/4 C all-purpose flour Powdered Sugar to roll in
- 3/4 C finely chopped pecans
- 1/4 t salt

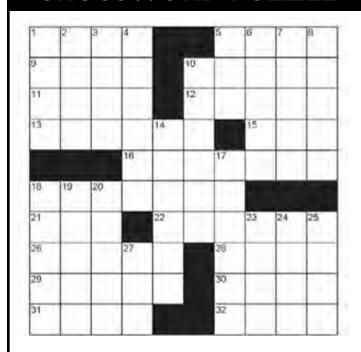
DIRECTIONS:

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees. Cream butter with 1/2 C powdered sugar and vanilla in a large bowl. Stir in flour, nuts and salt until the dough holds together. With clean hands, roll dough into 1 inch balls and place about 1 inch apart on an ungreased cookie sheet. Bake 10 - 12 minutes or until set but not brown. Remove from cookie sheet, cool slightly, then roll the warm cookies in powdered sugar. This makes about 40 cookies.

Whether you call them Mexican Wedding Cookies or Russian Tea Cakes, these treasures will melt in your mouth! Always on our Christmas Cookie making list, there are so many variations of the recipe. What I am sharing with you today is the best of my best - tweaked here and there but with amazing results.



CROSSWORD PUZZLE



ACROSS

- 1. Syllables used in songs (2 wds.) 1. Soft white cheese
- 5. Dress
- 9. Time periods
- 10. Satan
- 11. Tap in lightly
- 12. Adult insect
- 13. Prioress
- 15. Today
- 16. Chapel
- 18. 10,000 squared meters
- 21. Cutting tool
- 22. Scents
- 26. Small herring
- 28. Two
- 29. Fish tank dweller
- 30. Volcano
- 31. Otherwise
- 32. Hold

DOWN

- 2. Arabian
- 3. Mutton
- 4. Facet
- 5. Jewel
- 6. __ -garde
- 7. Severity
- 8. Wispy
- 10. Render harmless
- 14. Soft drink brand
- 17. Lacked
- 18. Hurry
- 19. Deport
- 20. Tic tac's competitor
- 23. Pear shaped instrument
- 24. Alley
- 25. Close the door hard
- 27. Be

View answers online at www.peelinc.com

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Each year, neglected and abused children in the Austin area must be removed from their homes by Child Protective Services caseworkers. Separations occur all year, but it is especially difficult during the holidays. Partnerships for Children is making a difference in the lives of these children and we invite you to join us by participating in our Holiday Wishes program.

With your help, how many children can we impact this year? **Please contact us at:**

512.834.4756

holidaywishes@partnershipsforchildren.org

GET INVOLVED:

- ✓ SPONSOR a child by purchasing items from their wish list
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<2500	2	2,418	\$	123	\$	297	2007	9	.3	1.
2500-2999	5	2,813	\$	122	\$	343	2008	25	2	0
3000-3499	5	3,250	\$	124	\$	403	2007	119	3	1.
3500-3999	9	3,725	\$	122	\$	454	2009	39	3	4
4000-4500	6	4,388	\$	138	\$	608	2011	91	2	1.
>4500	2	5,182	\$	164	\$	851	2010	57	0	0
Meridian Total	29	3,633	\$	129	\$	468	2009	60	13	7
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