

# THE VILLAGE

## Gazette™

"It takes a Village..."

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

## 8 Year Old Austin Boy Goes to National Contest



Eight-year-old Austin boy will represent Texas photography in the National contest. Max Whitney, second grader diagnosed with autism, was awarded the Overall Award of Excellence in Photography for Special Artists by the Texas Parent Teacher Association on Saturday. He will represent all Texas Special artists in photography in grades K through 12 in the National PTA Reflections Program.

Max's photograph, titled *Lizard InspEyer*, was selected from thousands of entries submitted to the 2013-2014 theme: *Believe, Dream, Inspire*. Each year the contests begin in each grade on school campuses across the state. The school campus winners go to their school district contests. This year 1005 entries in 6 categories (photography, dance choreography, film production, literature, musical composition, and visual arts) advanced to Texas PTA. Only 30 of these were awarded Overall Award of Excellence and will advance to the National

contest. Max, son of Traci and Cameron Whitney, is the only Austin Area winner in all 6 categories in the entire Reflections Program.

Over 100 outstanding student entries are recognized with Honorable Mention, Award of Merit, Award of Excellence, and the Overall Award of Excellence winners. They will be on display for public viewing at the Texas Education Agency, the Legislative Budget Board, and the Texas Commission on the Arts March 10 through April 30, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.

This year's theme, *Believe, Dream, Inspire*, was submitted from an elementary school student in East Rockway, New York. Next year's theme, *Let Your Imagination Fly*, was submitted by a student in Northwood, North Dakota. Each year a new theme is selected in the National PTA Reflections Theme Search Contest.

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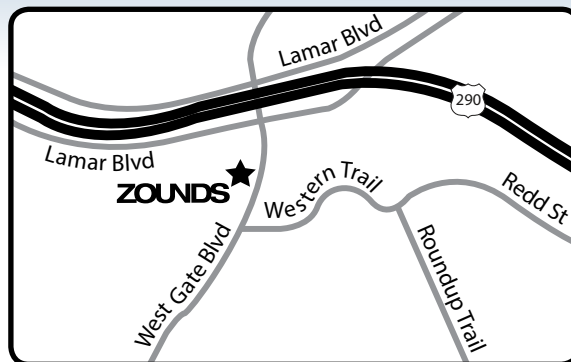
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# Together, we save forests.

Together, we are saving forests from Austin, Texas. This Earth Day, we want to share with you how we are doing this right here in Austin.

Rainforest Partnership, an Austin-based international nonprofit organization, has expanded the environmental passion of this city to a globally focused, locally relevant issue just as our city started its transition to its current global significance and attention.

Founded in December 2007, Rainforest Partnership (RP) was formed with the idea that the way to protect the “lungs” of the planet is to help the people who live in those “lungs” make a living that allows them to protect their forests. Forest communities know that sometimes the easiest option to earn an income is to cut down their trees. By selling the timber, planting a cash crop, or having cattle, they can eke out an income to pay for health care or education for their children. But, more than anyone else, the people who live in the forests know the damage this does. They know it takes generations for a forest to come back after it's cut down. They know that destroying the forest will destroy their way of life. They're looking for an alternative.

That's where Rainforest Partnership comes in. Using a bottom-up approach, we work with local communities to find their needs and desires and adapt it to their culture, knowledge, and skills. These are then matched to the business opportunities created by each individual rainforest to create a sustainable, workable alternative to slash

and burn. It all begins when a community asks for our help.

Although they seem far away, tropical rainforests are an important part of our lives and our community. What was once over 12 percent of the landmass of our planet in just a hundred years is now less than 5 percent. These forests play a crucial role in storing carbon, regulating water cycles and temperature, and providing biodiversity. We all directly benefit from the many rainforest plants used in modern medicines and for food. Currently deforestation—the cutting and burning of forests—is responsible for more than 17% of carbon dioxide emissions worldwide. What happens to these forests affects us all everywhere.

Besides directly partnering and working with indigenous rainforest communities, we partner with local governments, local nonprofit organizations, and businesses. Our work is based on a replicable model that is collaborative and results-driven, and facilitated by these partnerships – international, U.S., and Austin-based. From brooms made from sustainably and legally sourced palm fibers from the rainforest, to artisan products made from forest plants, to an ecolodge for

birdwatchers eager to catch a glimpse of the elusive Andean Cock-of-the-rock – we have helped our partner communities create sustainable livelihoods, while saving their forests and their way of life.

We are very proud of all our partner communities, but we are especially inspired by the women of Sani Isla, Ecuador. When we first met them in 2009, they were too shy to speak or even meet

*(Continued on Page 6)*





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## *Forests (Continued from Page 4)*

anyone's eyes. In Summer of 2010, during their first workshop as part of our project working with them, they barely spoke. That is, until they did. When they started talking, they told us why they had been silent all morning: Nobody had ever asked them what they thought, what their vision was. But they had a vision: To recover the lost arts of making artisan products like jewelry and bags and baskets from seeds, vines and fibers from forest plants. We helped them set up relationship with nearby ecolodges to sell their goods to visiting guests in their Amazon community, and established connections with hotels in Quito for selling their goods. The older women began training the younger women. We helped them work out a plan for sustainably harvesting the raw materials they would need. They used them to create goods of startling beauty. And the goods sold, beyond anyone's expectations.

In four years, the women of Sani Isla went from never having made an income to making a steady and growing income. And today the same women who were too shy to talk to any outsiders have become the strongest voices in their

communities against the oil drilling that threatens to destroy their forest. For the first time, these women are at the forefront of protecting their forests – and their future.

Today, communities all over Ecuador and Peru are rejecting the old model of forest destruction. They're asking for Rainforest Partnership's help in coming up with a new way, and we want to help because it's always a joint effort. Not one community has asked for a handout.

Rainforest Partnership's projects represent the real-life execution of its working model. By working with forest communities to help them bring their skills, traditions, and values to the marketplace, we have begun to overcome the most powerful driving forces of deforestation. Go to [www.RainforestPartnership.org](http://www.RainforestPartnership.org) to learn more.

This Earth Day, learn more about how you can change a habit and save a forest. Tell your kids about what we do. Every child learns about rainforest ecosystem. Together, we save forests. From Austin, Texas. And, so can you.

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# A Dynamic Duo That Can Help Your Lawn Weather The Drought

by Brett Briant | LCRA Water Conservation Coordinator

Some things just go together, and mulch and compost are two of them. When used together, this formidable pair not only improves your garden and lawn, but they also use water more efficiently.

The combo is important as many of us move to maximum once-a-week watering during this time of severe drought. The pair can help your landscaping survive the drought because plants will be more disease tolerant and water efficient, thereby better able to defend themselves against the drought.

Using a hardwood mulch/compost blend is the best choice for retaining water and improving your soil. The mix will hold its color longer, and the compost will help break down the mulch, which will become a beneficial nutrient for your soil.

However, if you choose to go with one or the other, keep in mind that you can use compost as mulch, but you can't do the opposite. You can't use straight mulch as compost – it's too hard on its own and takes too long to break down and become a beneficial micro-organism to your soil. Mulch should smell like a fresh forest floor. A mulch/compost blend should have a carbon-to-nitrogen ratio of about 20-to-1. That's 20 percent carbon to 1 percent nitrogen. When applying this to your existing soil, a soil depth of at least six inches is highly recommended. You can build your soil with the mulch and compost through either

core aeration, where you remove approximately 1 inch by 2 inch cores of soil from the ground to improve the infiltration of water/nutrients, or through light scarifying with a rototiller to remove any debris from the lawn.

A good layer of mulch of about two to four inches in your garden will help suppress weeds. It will also hold in moisture in the heat, and help keep the soil warmer in the winter and cooler in the summer. If you are using it as a top dressing to improve the soil on your lawn, you will want to apply a layer of compost that is one-fourth of an inch to one-half of an inch deep.

Another benefit of adding compost to most types of soil, including clay, sandy, alkaline or acidic, is that compost has natural pH buffers. That's the microbiology or bacteria in the soil that creates a healthy environment for your plants. The pH level should be close to neutral, which is a pH of 7. If you add compost to your lawn and compost/mulch to your beds, you will build the soil profile to be much more water efficient and increase its capacity to hold water. The soil will be able to drain and breathe.

Using mulch and compost together is a cost-efficient way to build your soil. They're relatively inexpensive and will help cut down on your water bill. It's a pair you want on your team.



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## Get Ready for **SUMMER** with a New Austin **WATER REBATE**

Protect your landscape and your wallet with Austin Water's Drought Survival Tools Rebate. This rebate is available to residential Austin Water customers and customers of qualifying water providers.

### So how does the rebate work?

First, purchase the minimum amount of compost, mulch, and/or core aeration services for your landscape.

Compost: 1.5 cubic yards or 40 cubic feet

Mulch: 3 cubic yards or 80 cubic feet

Aeration: Core aeration services for your entire front and/or back lawn area. (Equipment rental is acceptable.)

Second, install the drought survival tool(s) on your landscape.

Third, fill out the Drought Survival Tools Rebate application found at [www.waterwiseaustin.org](http://www.waterwiseaustin.org) and submit this along with receipts/invoices and photos of your completed work. A rebate check will be mailed to the mailing address within 4-6 weeks.

*(Continued on Page 10)*



# Enrollment season has begun!



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## *Water Rebate (Continued from Page 8)*

### How much is the rebate?

You can choose to do any combination of the three; if you choose to do all three, you'll get a \$60 bonus!

Compost: \$30

Mulch: \$40

Lawn aeration: \$50

Complete all three and get a total of \$180!

### Why are these things good for my landscape?

*Compost* is great to work into the soil before planting or even around existing plants. But one of the best and often overlooked uses of compost involves your lawn. Compost is an organic material that hangs onto moisture and acts as a slow release fertilizer. Spread ¼" to ½" of compost over your lawn sometime this spring and you'll increase soil health and make the most of water on your landscape while avoiding toxic fertilizers. A simple equation to estimate how many cubic yards of compost (or mulch) you'll need is located below. Or you can turn cubic

yards into cubic feet by dividing the cubic yards by 27.

$(\text{Length} \times \text{Width} \times \text{Depth of Compost}) / 324 = \# \text{ of cubic yards needed}$

Spreading *mulch* around trees and in bedded areas helps to retain moisture and keeps the soil insulated from the intense Texas heat. The above equation can help you estimate the amount of mulch you'll need and remember to mulch properly; see [www.growgreen.org](http://www.growgreen.org) for tips.

*Aeration* (specifically core aeration) removes plugs of soil to allow oxygen, water, and nutrients to make their way into the ground and create a better growing environment for your grass. Don't use "spike" aerators which can actually cause more compaction.

Take a proactive approach with your landscape this spring and you won't find yourself using water as a Band-Aid later this summer! For program rules and more information, go to [www.waterwiseaustin.org](http://www.waterwiseaustin.org) or call Austin Water's conservation division at 512-974-2199.

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Dripping Springs

# Choosing a Summer Camp

By David Ettenberg, co-owner of Camp Shane

Summer camps come in a wide variety of interests and themes -- from music and sports camps to weight-loss and peace corps camps -- there is a camp for every child who has ever said, "I'm bored." How do parents sort through them all to find the right one for their child? Dave Ettenberg, co-owner of Camp Shane (a weight-loss camp for kids), recommends that parents consider these six guidelines before registering your child.

**1. The Staff** What are the camp's hiring procedures? Do they check references and run complete background checks? Also - many camps hire teens as junior counselors, which can be a wonderful experience for all, but it can cause problems if the camp relies too heavily on this cheaper workforce. It is important that a number of experienced adult staff members are on hand to deal with any problems that may arise. Also, ask to speak to the camp's director, he or she sets the tone for absolutely everything and will be able to give you an immediate sense of the camp's culture.

**2. Referrals** Get them, but get meaningful ones. Don't make the common mistake of relying solely on the names offered to you by the camp—these are typically hand-selected and will undoubtedly be positive. Instead, try to get five names of families that live within 20 minutes from you to ensure a more random sampling. It's ideal if you can ask someone you know whose child has attended the camp. If you don't know anyone personally, ask around in your community, chances are you'll find people.

**3. Healthy Atmosphere** If possible, try to visit the camp during the summer while in session to ensure there is an active, "happy" atmosphere, with a non-cliquey and non-threatening environment. It should be a place where your child can find strong support and make lifelong friends. Also, ask about the kind of food that is served at the camp—make sure they provide healthy, balanced meal options. You would be shocked to see what's on the menus at some "reputable" camps.

**4. Marketing Materials** Read all marketing materials carefully. If they are sloppy and unimpressive it may reflect how they run the camp. On the flipside, beware of materials that appear super-slick; a surprising

number of camps are now owned by corporations or investors who produce the marketing materials but have zero contact with your child. Look for realistic reflections of the camp and specific information that will give you insight to determine if the camp's philosophy, people and procedures will create the best experience for your child. Also, make sure to read the fine print; some weight-loss camps in particular advertise insurance reimbursements -- but check with your particular carrier, as this is often times not the case.

**5. The Facilities** Are the buildings in good repair? Has everything been freshly painted? Has the grass been cut? Chances are if they don't take care the facility, they won't do such a good job with your child.

**6. Kid's Choice** Make sure to keep your child involved with the decision-making process. He or she needs to be comfortable with the camp, or the experience won't be optimal. Also, does your child want to focus in on a special skill or sport? Be sure to consider his or her specific interests and needs. State-of-the-art athletic fields are great but they won't do anything for a kid who loves music.

Taking time to research summer camps is key to ensuring a fun, safe, and enriching environment for your children - but it doesn't have to be overwhelming," said David. "By focusing your search based on a few key factors and by asking the right questions, you can easily find a great match that suits your child's particular needs."

## ABOUT CAMP SHANE.

For more than 45 years, David Ettenberg's family has owned and operated Camp Shane, successfully helping children shed pounds and establish a healthy, confident lifestyle at Camp Shane ([www.campshane.com](http://www.campshane.com)). Currently Camp Shane operates in Georgia, New York, California and Arizona; Camp Shane Texas will open this summer in San Antonio. Kids shed unwanted pounds, gain self-esteem and learn how to live a healthy lifestyle while having a blast. An average weight loss for campers is 10-15 pounds in three weeks; 20-25 pounds in six weeks; and 30-35 pounds in nine weeks. For more overweight campers, it is not unusual to lose more than 50 pounds over the summer. Camp Shane has been featured in all national media, including NBC Nightly News with Brian Williams, 20/20, Oprah, Dr. Phil, MTV and Family Circle.





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| 22. Prejudice               | 18. Embarrass                         |
| 26. Living                  | 19. Crippling disease                 |
| 28. National capital        | 20. Dens                              |
| 29. Fathers                 | 23. Island                            |
| 30. Margarine               | 24. Killed                            |
| 31. Entertainer             | 25. Cow noises                        |
| 32. Nightly tv show         | 27. Animal doctor                     |



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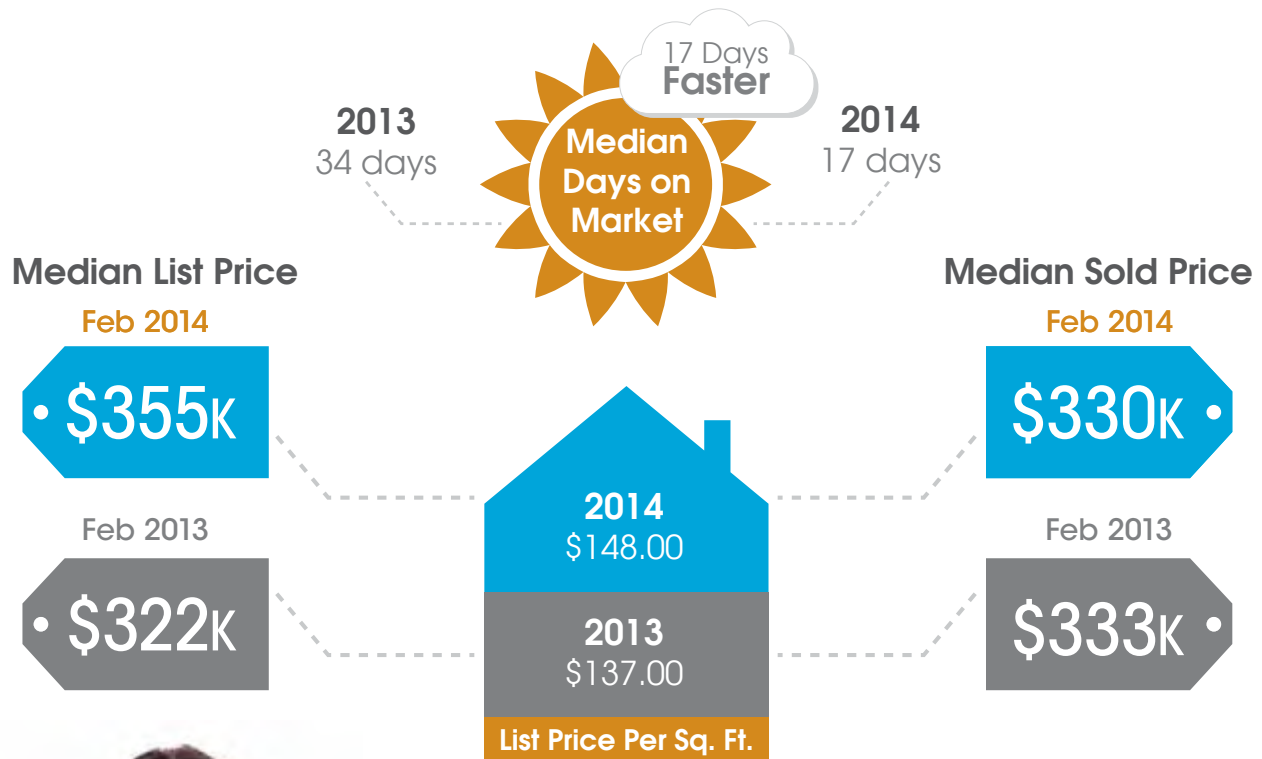


APRIL 2014

# REALTY AUSTIN MARKET UPDATE

## SOUTHWEST MARKET UPDATE

### FEBRUARY 2013 VS 2014



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