



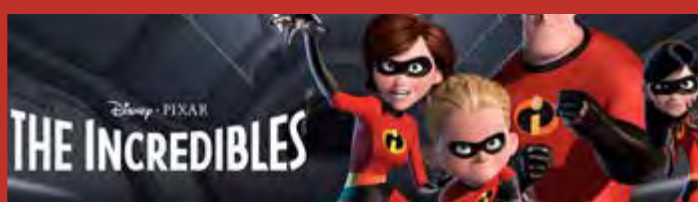
HIGHLAND PARK WEST BALCONES  
AREA NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

# THE HPWBANA NEWS

Volume 11, Number 5

May 2015

[www.hpwbana.org](http://www.hpwbana.org)



## HPWBANA ANNUAL *Movie in the Park!*

It's time for the annual HPWBANA Movie in the Park! Please mark your calendars and join in the family fun.

### **WHAT'S SHOWING?**

The Incredibles, the 2004 animated classic about a family of retired superheroes drawn back into crime-fighting.

### **WHEN IS IT?**

Saturday, May 9. The movie starts at dusk.

### **WHAT SHOULD WE BRING?**

We recommend lawn chairs or blankets to sit on, bug spray and a flashlight. You may wish to bring money for the concessions which will be available, including pizza drinks, and candy. You should also feel free to bring a picnic, and don't forget your family, friends and neighbors!

Our Movie Sponsors will be on hand for you to thank personally. Many will be handing out special goodies for you to enjoy! See you there!

The HPWBANA Board would like to thank this year's Movie in the Park sponsors:

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## Reducing Speeding and Cut-Through Traffic

*by Pieter Sybesma*

Speeding on our major neighborhood streets—Perry Lane, Hancock Drive, and Balcones Drive—has been an issue for HPWBANA for over 10 years. In 2004-2005, the HPWBANA Neighborhood Plan ([http://hpwbana.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/HPWBANA\\_NeighborhoodPlan.pdf](http://hpwbana.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/HPWBANA_NeighborhoodPlan.pdf)) states that the HPWBANA should work to:

- Reduce cut-through traffic in the neighborhood and
- Reduce speeding on neighborhood streets.

To address the speeding issues on our streets and around the school, several residents funded a trial run of supplemental enforcement of speed limits and patrolling of the neighborhood by a Constable. Emphasis is placed on traffic enforcement on Perry Lane, Hancock Drive (from Bull Creek Road to Balcones), Balcones Drive (from 35th Street to RM 2222), around Highland Park Elementary School at the beginning and ending of the school day, and on neighborhood patrolling. The cost of this effort is \$60/hour for Constable patrol/enforcement time and \$1,440 has been spent for 24 hours of patrol over the past month. Now is the time for other residents who support an increased law enforcement presence in the neighborhood to join in funding this effort. Please consider making a donation for 1, 2, or 3+ hours of patrol time. The goal is to raise \$6,000 for 100 hours of patrol for the remainder of the calendar year. To contribute to this effort, please contact me at [psybesma@austin.rr.com](mailto:psybesma@austin.rr.com).

A report on the supplemental enforcement effort was presented at the most recent HPWBANA Board Meeting. The report reflects that of the 85 total traffic stops, 52 (61%) were of residents within HPWBANA. Unfortunately, the geographic area of responsibility of our APD District Representative has been expanded, further stretching APD resources so that now little neighborhood patrolling can be accomplished by APD since officers are generally going from call to call. Increased law enforcement presence should also help deter vandalism, burglaries, and auto break-ins. Several years ago, HPWBANA joined with interested residents and cost shared for a Constable to help enforce speed limits and patrol the neighborhood. The current HPWBANA Board supports this initiative and will consider some funding in next year's budget.

An effort to inform and educate neighbors about Traffic and Safety issues started at the beginning of the 2014-2015 school year with safety

*(Continued on Page 2)*

# Highland Park West Balcones Area

## IMPORTANT NUMBERS

Austin Citywide Information Center. 974-2000 or 311  
Emergency Police..... 911  
Non-emergency Police (coyote sighting, etc.)..... 311  
Social Services (during work hours)..... 211  
Wildlife Rescue 24 Hour Hot Line ..... 210-698-1709  
APD REP. - Officer Darrell Grayson ..... 512-974-5242

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The HPWBANA Board meets on the first Monday of each month except December. Please go to [HPWBANA.org](http://HPWBANA.org) for our current meeting location or contact [president@HPWBANA.org](mailto:president@HPWBANA.org).

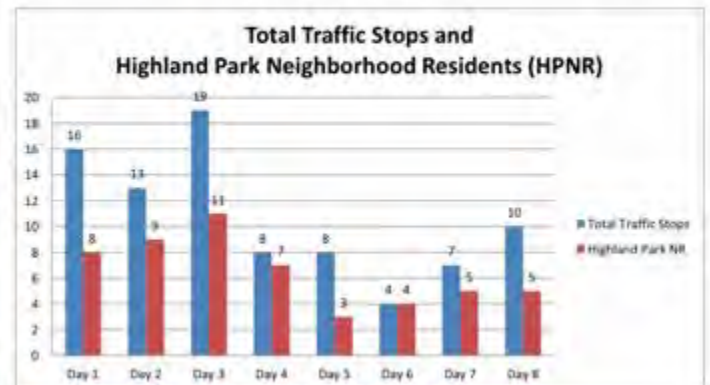
HWPBANA is bordered on the north by 2222, on the south by 35th St., on the west by Mt. Bonnell Rd., and on the east by MoPac and by Bull Creek Rd. between Hancock Dr. and 45th St. Mail your membership dues to HPWBANA, P.O. Box 26101, Austin, Texas 78755

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## Speeding (Continued from Cover Page)

Supplemental Traffic Enforcement Efforts for Highland Park West Balcones Area  
February 9 - March 6, 2015



e-mails to list-serve members and the Highland Park Elementary PTA Scottie Informer e-newsletter. "Drive Like Your Kids Live Here" yard signs were purchased by HPWBANA and placed on streets leading into the neighborhood and around the school. APD has deployed a speed radar trailer within the neighborhood and has patrolled around the school as time permits.

### What else can you do?

1. Be aware of the speed limits and observe them.
2. Help with funding patrols by the Constable. The cost of the patrol effort is \$60/hour. To continue the patrol efforts through the end of this year will cost around \$6,000 and donations are needed to meet this goal. To contribute to this effort, please contact me at: [psybesma@austin.rr.com](mailto:psybesma@austin.rr.com)
3. Purchase a "Drive Like Your Kids Live Here" yard sign for your yard. The yard signs are available online for \$9.99 each (plus shipping) at [http://drivelikeyourkidslivehere.com/our\\_store/17/yard-sign](http://drivelikeyourkidslivehere.com/our_store/17/yard-sign)
4. Attend the next APD Commander's Forum scheduled for Tuesday, April 7, 2015 - 6:30 - 8 p.m. at McCallum High School, 5600 Sunshine Drive, to learn about your police department and express neighborhood concerns.
5. Let your Council Member know you support increased funding for police patrolling of neighborhoods (District 10 Council Member Sheri Gallo; Mailing Address: 301 W. 2nd Street, Austin, Texas 78701; Phone: 512-978-2110; Email: [District10@austintexas.gov](mailto:District10@austintexas.gov))
6. Mark your calendar for May 11, 2015 for a Traffic and Safety HPWBANA Meeting.
7. And, become a member of HPWBANA, your Neighborhood Association at <http://hpwbana.org/>.

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# Greetings from the Easter Bunny

Hello, HPWBANA residents! It was great to see you and hug so many of you at the recent Perry Park Spring Egg Hunt. The egg hunt was fun and there was a wonderful crowd to enjoy the morning.

Thanks to everyone who helped organize the event. My sources in the neighborhood tell me that the following adults volunteered to make the morning so successful: Chereen Fisher, Carl Fisher, Becca Cody, Carolyn Robinson, Rhett Robinson, Jason Lindenschmidt, Noel Stout, and Susan Rauch.

The middle school volunteers were particularly helpful and involved this year. In fact, it surprises me to learn that anyone even managed to find the Golden Eggs as they were so well hidden by

the middle-schoolers! Those who helped were Riley Pennell, Cash Robinson, Ben Fern, Sarah Mines, Allison Rauch and Samantha Rauch. I apologize if I left anyone out, my ears are BIG, but I still do not hear everything and I may have missed hearing that you were a volunteer.

The HPWBANA is looking for a person to chair the egg hunt event next year! Hop on over to your computer and send an email now to [carrob99@hotmail.com](mailto:carrob99@hotmail.com). If you volunteer to be in charge of the egg hunt next year, you will receive an unlimited supply of carrots from ME, The Easter Bunny.

I love you all and will see you next year in Perry Park!

P.S. Take good care of the park!

Here are some fabulous photos of some of the lucky ones who found the Golden Eggs and the winner of the Jelly Bean Guessing Game!

### 0-2 YEARS:

Blaze Barbier (not actually 0-2 years old)

### 3-4 YEARS

Olivia Tilghman

### 5-7 YEARS

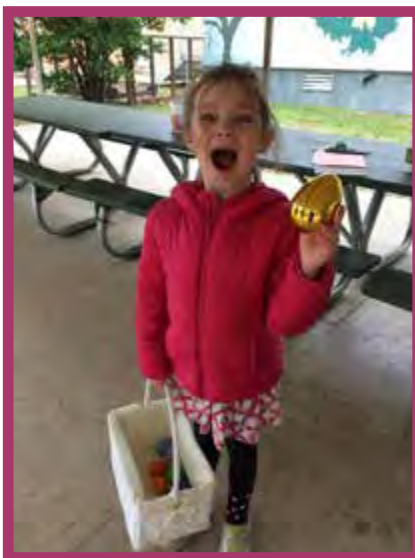
Lauren Brewer

### 8+ YEARS

Cody Hogge

### JELLY BEAN COUNT:

Preston Miles





## BEING A BUYER IN A SELLERS' MARKET

By Rebecca Wolfe Spratlin

In previous articles we have established that Highland Park, Balcones Park and the surrounding neighborhoods are definitely experiencing a sellers' market. There is still low inventory and a lot of competition when purchasing a home, and often multiple offer situations. That's all fine and good for sellers, but how do buyers make their way through this maze? There are many ways buyers can make their offers more attractive to sellers...and it isn't all about the price. While the price is important to any seller, there are other terms that need to be negotiated that can make your offer stand out. Here are a few ways to strengthen your offer that are either minimal cost or no cost to you:

**Present a Comprehensive Offer:** Be sure that when your Realtor submits an offer to a seller, the offer is done professionally and completely. Ask your Realtor to be sure to ask if the seller has a preferred title company, ask if the Addenda are all attached (for things like lead-based paint in homes built before 1978; Finance Conditions for your loan approval time; Non-Real Property for personal property you're requesting to convey with the house and others). Be sure the Seller's Disclosure Notice is initialed and signed by you.

**Submit a Mortgage Pre-Approval Letter or Proof-of-Funds:** When submitting an offer, be sure to attach a letter from your lender stating that you are pre-approved for at least the amount of the offer. If you are paying cash, attach a document that proves you have the cash available in a liquid form to pay for the home. Sellers never want to get into a contract with buyers who will not be able to close the deal.

**Make the Closing Date Convenient for the Sellers:** Being flexible on the closing date can really help out sellers who are trying to juggle job demands, kids' schedules and the timing of getting into their new homes. Any time you can help sellers avoid double moves or inconveniences, you are offering a very strong incentive for them to take your offer. Have your Realtor call the sellers' agent to find out the closing preference of the sellers.

**Providing Substantial Earnest Money:** This can make a strong statement about your interest in the property. Traditionally Earnest Money is about 1% of the offer price. Offering 1.5% or 2% shows you are serious about the property. As long as you are careful to keep track of your option period and finance condition dates, this really should not pose any great additional risk to you.

**Make the Option Period as short as possible:** The option period is an agreed upon number of days after the contract is executed for the buyers to have inspections done and to negotiate any repairs. This is also the time that the buyers can get out of the contract for any or no reason without losing their earnest money. By lining up inspectors in advance, you can reduce the option period from the typical ten days to as few as five days. Sellers want to secure the buyers as soon as possible, so they like short option periods. They also know that while a home is under contract, there are very few showings. If the contract is going to be terminated by the buyers, sellers want that to happen sooner rather than later so they resume showing their home.

**Pay Cash or have a Short Financing Condition Period:** All sellers love to get cash...primarily because it removes the risk of the buyers getting out of the contract due to failed financing. If it's not possible to pay cash, you can strengthen your offer by limiting the number of days on your Financing Condition. The Financing Condition is a contractual condition that essentially states that if you do not get approved for your mortgage loan in a certain number of days, usually around 21, you, the buyer, can get out of the contract and get all of your Earnest Money back. So if you can work with your lender to get approval in 15 days, that would strengthen your offer from the sellers' perspectives.

These are just a few ways buyers can gain an advantage when they are buying homes in this competitive market. Nothing. Nothing. Nothing can take the place of an experienced Realtor who really knows what she's doing, knows the market and knows how to advise you on the best way to navigate through these competitive times. Making a strong offer takes strategic thinking and no small amount of business savvy to lead to a successful outcome. All the best to all you buyers out there!



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## MARKET REPORT

*April 2015*

by **Trey McWhorter**

There is a regulatory change coming up that you should be aware of for its impact on the real estate industry, specifically on the closing process and potential impact on timing of sales. **On August 1, 2015, new regulations will go into effect that will change the closing process in the following ways:**

### TWO MAJOR CHANGES:

**1** The Good Faith Estimate (GFE) and Truth in Lending disclosures will be replaced by a Loan Estimate (LE), which lenders will have to provide within 3 days after receiving 6 pieces of information (basic applicant info and property info). While referred to as an “estimate”, in practice lenders will be held accountable to the exact charges listed. Therefore it is likely that lenders will collect less information up front rather than issue a Loan Estimate early in the process.

**2** The HUD-1 Settlement Statement will be replaced by the “Closing Disclosure” (CD), which will largely be a re-statement of the LE so that consumers can compare. The biggest change here is that the CD must be provided three days prior to closing. Any changes during that time could result in a delay to closing.

### WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

Most importantly, such a major change creates uncertainty for lenders, real estate professionals and consumers alike. As a result, it is likely that there will be an effort to pull transactions into the first part of the summer to beat this deadline and avoid the uncertainty of adapting to the new process and requirements and potential delays it could bring.

For transactions after August 1, you should expect that a 30-day close is unlikely to be realistic. 45-60 days may be more realistic in the short term as everyone figures out how to navigate the new process and satisfy the requirements.

If you have questions or would like to know more, feel free to contact me for more information (my contact information is in the ad on the back cover of this newsletter).





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# May Nature Notes

## Juveniles, Locals, and Migrants

*by Peter English*

May is a crazy time for birds in Central Texas. The birds that come here to breed have pretty much all finished with their first clutch and are moving around their territories in family groups teaching the juveniles to find food. Meanwhile, there are still birds passing through on their grueling journeys up North. In general, the later a migrant passes through Texas, the farther north it is headed. Knowing which are local and which are passing through makes watching birds more fun - if it is an Golden-cheeked Warbler staying here vs. a Black-throated Green Warbler passing through lets your imagination follow them on their journeys.

So how would one tell an adult from a juvenile or a resident from a migrant? Let's look at a few common birds for starters: Northern Cardinal is a well known bird, and found in almost every backyard with bushes. The male is bright red with a crest on the head that can be up and pointy or down and relatively flat. The call is a loud, rollicking "cedar-bird, cedar-bird, cedar-bird, cedar-bird" repeated four of five times. Adult female Cardinals are a washed-out, buffy brown with a little bit of red on the wings and tails, and always have a bright red-orange bill. This time of year there are juveniles around, typically learning to forage from the parents. Juvenile cardinals have the coloration of females, but can be told from the adults because they have black bills. This seemingly minor detail really changes the character of the bird and makes it look like it has big black eyes (maybe the bird equivalent of repainting the trim in your house?).

Sometimes it is not how a bird looks, but how it acts that tips you off to its age. Some parents out there may recognize that just because you want your offspring to be independent doesn't mean that the offspring wants to find its own food! Same goes for birds. I notice this most often in the Carolina Chickadees and Black-crested Titmouse that often travel around our neighborhoods together. Both are small 5-6" birds that flit about in the branches and make quick darts to a feeder to pull out a seed and fly back to safety. Chickadees have black on the top of the head and also on the chin/neck, which makes the white cheek between pretty noticeable. Titmice are similarly grayish-looking with a crest much like a cardinal, but with the front of the crest colored black.

For both of these species, there are very tiny differences in color between the adults and the juveniles, but huge behavior differences. Juveniles act like toddlers in mid-tantrum. The juveniles arch their backs, shake their wings, put themselves right in the face of the adult, and beg for food. Back in the nest the parents would feed the babies beak-to-beak, but no longer. The parents try to run away, but are still staying on task looking for food. Every once in a while you see an exasperated parent hand over a piece of food, but mostly they are good role models for us all. Eventually the kids start picking up their own food, and once they start feeding themselves the parents send them out into the world.

Telling a migrant from a local is typically a little more difficult, because there are often small differences between species. A Golden-cheeked

**GOLDEN-CHEEKED WARBLER.**



**BLACK-THROATED GREEN WARBLER.**



Warbler is unlikely to show up in your yard, but if you take one of the fantastic tours of Brightleaf this time of year, you have a decent chance of seeing one. What differentiates this locally-breeding migrant from other species is the black back, extending from the top of the head all the way to the tail. All the rest of it is very similar to several other species, including one that passes through Austin called the Black-throated Green Warbler. You guessed it – the one passing through has a greenish back. Both have yellow cheeks, black on the throat, and whitish below. So greenish back is on its way north and blackish back has probably already hatched its young. Kind of cool.

All this action with the birds is not hard to find - it is right out your door. Why not take a moment to sit on your back porch and see what you can see? Even better if you can take a kid with you. Noticing nature makes people notice other things too, and UT students have told me watching birds makes them more attentive and observant in all parts of their lives. Go out and give it a try and let me know how it goes - you can drop me a note at [hpwbana.birds@gmail.com](mailto:hpwbana.birds@gmail.com)



# PASSING THE SHOVEL

*by Bergan Casey (Mom, Troop 1510)*



*Thanks to Girl Scout Troop 1510 for their hard work on the Perry Park Learning Circle!*

On March 29, fifth grade Girl Scout Troop 1510 at Highland Park Elementary officially handed off the Perry Park Learning Circle to 3rd grade Troop 1529 to serve as caretakers into the future (along with Friends of Perry Park). Both troops and their parents spent time clearing weeds and invasive plants from the trails leading into the Learning Circle and laid decomposed granite to better define the trails.

The girls were rewarded with refreshments and a surprise guest. Gold Star Girl Scout, Maddie Ebest, from Troop 2178, explained to the girls about all the wonderful trips and adventures that are open to teen Girls Scouts. She excited the girls with tales of coastal California, Costa Rican jungle and the Great Wall of China. She encouraged them to stay with scouting, which allows girls to make smart choices, see the world and make new friends.

Last year, Troop 1510 earned their Bronze Award (top award for 4th & 5th graders/or Juniors) by designing and developing the Learning Circle. The beautiful open space serves as an outdoor learning, nature, recreation, exercise and social space. Be sure and visit the Learning Circle on your next trip to Perry Park!

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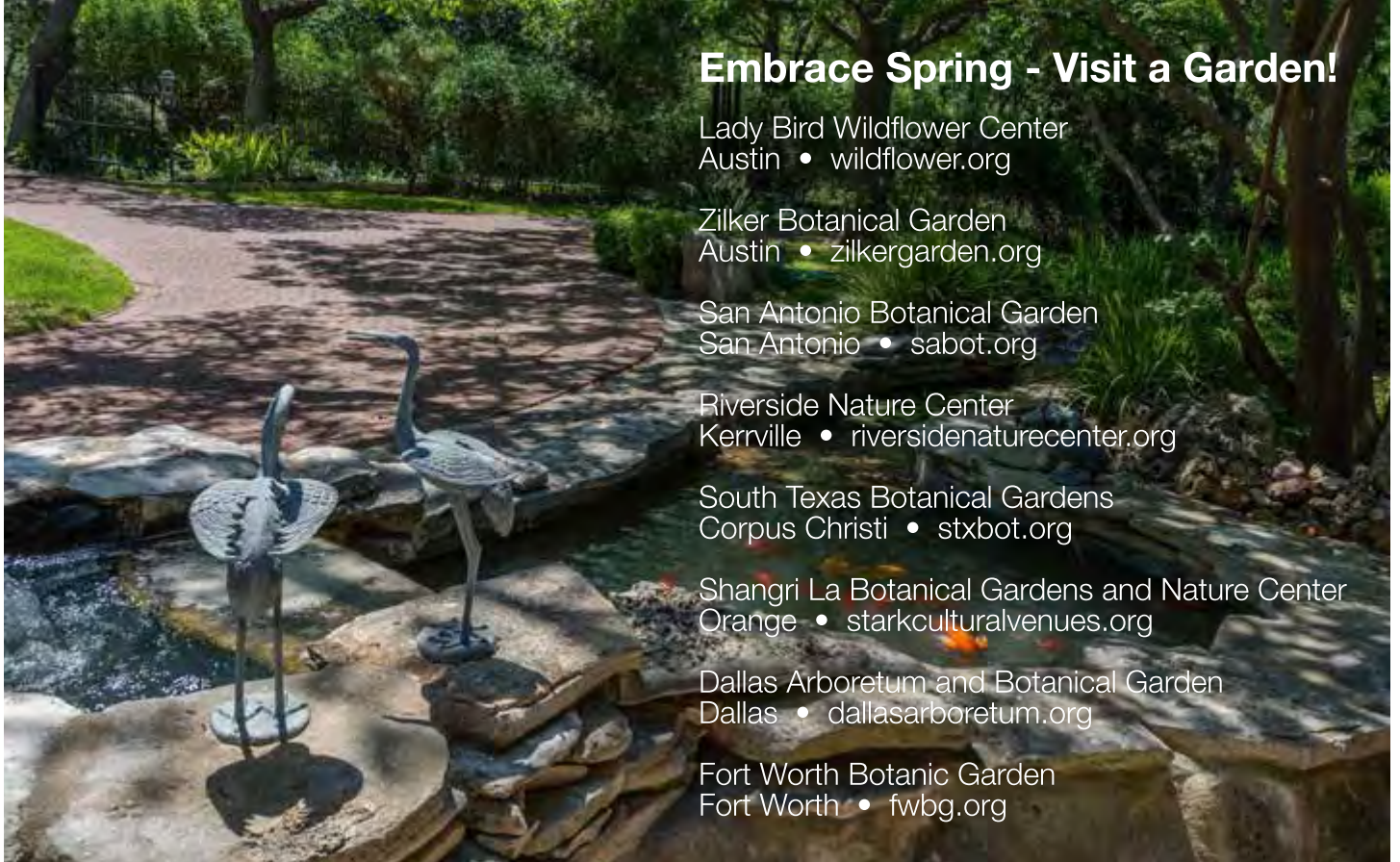


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Palmetto State Park • Gonzales, TX  
Cibolo Wilderness Trail • Boerne, TX  
Lost Maples • Vanderpool, TX  
Wolf Mountain Trail/Pedernales Falls State Park • Johnson City, TX

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