

## LOCAL 8<sup>TH</sup> GRADER EARNS SPOT IN STATEWIDE GEOGRAPHY BEE

The Maldives are located off the southwest coast of what country on the mainland of Asia? A. Myanmar B. Iran or C. India?

If you answered India, you might have what it takes to compete in the National Geographic Bee. But you might have to best local 8th grader, Gregory Garcia James, first.

Greg, who attends O. Henry Middle School in Central Austin, competed this year in the state finals for the National Geography Bee in late March, where he was a finalist with 100 participants from across Texas. Greg won the school-wide Geo Bee at O. Henry then, based on a written test, was entered into the statewide competition in March.

Greg was the first student from O. Henry to pass the written test and advance to the statewide competition since 1999.

"I like to be a good citizen of the world and enjoy learning about the world," Greg said.

Other winners at the school-wide level at O. Henry included: Henry Davis (runner-up), William Brackmeyer, Gabby Eastwood, Jesus Flores, Robert Gossard, Ty Hutchens, Declan McGinnis, Isidra Powell, and George Terrill.

Each year thousands of schools in the United States participate in the Geo Bee using materials prepared by the National Geographic Society. The contest is designed to inspire students to be curious about the world. The national competition of the Geo Bee will be held May 11-13, 2015, at the National Geographic Society's headquarters in Washington, D.C. It will be televised on May 15, 2015, at 8 p.m. on the National Geographic Channel and NG Wild. Scholarships



*Greg James, an 8th grader at O. Henry Middle School, competed in the state finals for the National Geography Bee, where he was a finalist with 100 participants from across Texas.*

are awarded to the 1st, 2nd and 3rd place winners.

Students interested in testing their geography knowledge can download a free app – GeoBee Challenge --- from National Geographic Society.

The Geo Bee is one of the innovative enrichment offerings at O. Henry Middle School. As the name implies, the Geo Bee puts a geography slant on the traditional spelling bee and O. Henry is one of the few schools in the Austin Independent School District that participates in

the national program.

This year, the social studies team offered the Geo Bee as well as several new and exciting options for growth and enrichment to students including programs and electives engaging them in philanthropy, world events, a model-United Nations and national history.

"With exciting enrichment offerings, we want to make our world come alive for our students and find the project, the information, the hands-on-learning that will capture their imagination and spark their love of learning," said Patrick McNally, OHMS 6th grade World Cultures teacher and social studies enrichment teacher (Model U.N., Geo Bee and Philanthropy). "The Geo Bee, the model UN, National History Day – all of these are such fabulous tools to help our students become engaged and active citizens of the world and all right here at their local school."

O. Henry Middle School is in the heart of Austin on Exposition Blvd. It currently serves 900 students in grades 6, 7, and 8. For more information about O. Henry Middle School visit [www.ohenrypta.org](http://www.ohenrypta.org).

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# ARTICLE INFO

The Tarrytown News is mailed monthly to all Tarrytown residents. Residents, community groups, churches, etc. are welcome to include information about their organizations in the newsletter. Personal news for the Stork Report, Teenage Job Seekers, recipes, special celebrations, and birthday announcements are also welcome.

To submit an article for The Tarrytown News please email it to [tarrytown@peelinc.com](mailto:tarrytown@peelinc.com). The deadline is the 15th of the month prior to the issue.

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# Junior Cotillion

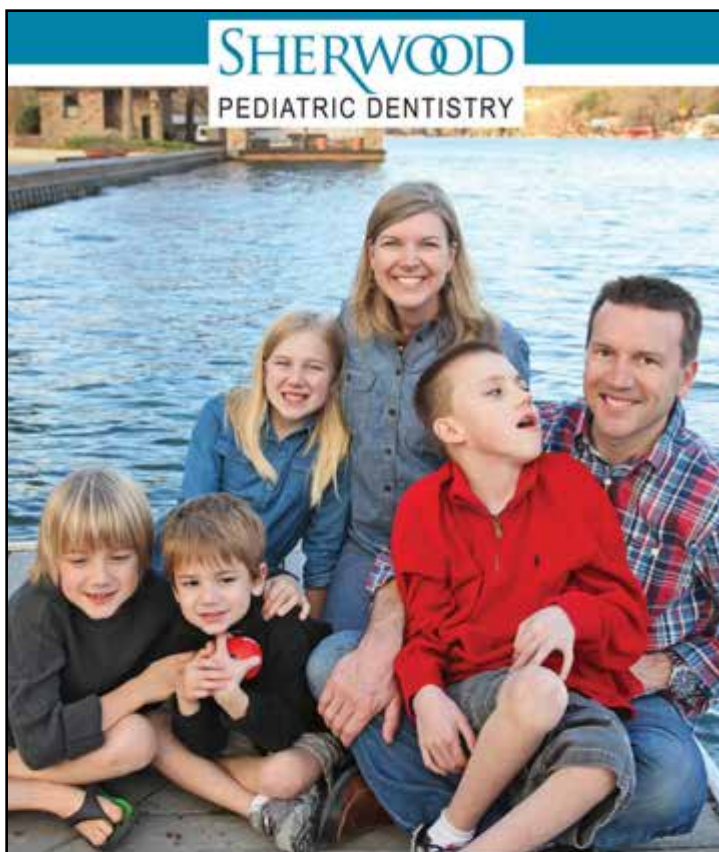


Austin resident Alexandra Gandara, and a former Dallas Cowboys Cheerleader, has been appointed director of the National League of Junior Cotillions chapters for Travis County, the program's national office announced. Gandara is a graduate of Texas State University and McNeil High School.

The Junior Cotillion program, which features etiquette, social dance, and life skills training for middle school students, holds classes starting in the fall and concludes with a black and white ball. "I believe the program has the ability to guide students into becoming well-mannered, savvy young adults who will positively impact their communities for years to come" she said.

Headquartered in Charlotte, N.C., the National League of Junior Cotillions was established in 1979 and has more than 350 chapters nationwide.

Registration is now open for the 2015-2016 cotillion season. Please visit [www.nljc.com](http://www.nljc.com) or call 512-785-7068 to register.



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## COLIN'S HOPE

*by Dorian de Wind*

When I was six or seven years old, I witnessed the ocean drowning of a dear aunt. Although too young for the full scope of the tragedy to sink in, the thoughts and the images of that event have remained with me for almost 70 years.

No wonder that, when our young grandson started splashing in our swimming pool a dozen or so years ago, the thought of such an unfathomable occurrence never left our mind. We took every precaution possible, as I am sure the vast majority of parents, grandparents, relatives, caretakers and friends of so many young children do when they let their young ones swim in pools, lakes, rivers, water parks and more.

But the unimaginable does occur -- more often than we think.

Now that another swimming season approaches it may be the time to give "the unimaginable" some thought because if statistics tell the truth, drowning is all too imaginable.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention publishes the following grim statistic: From 1999 through 2010, a total of 46,419 deaths from unintentional drowning (including boating) occurred in the United States, an average of 3,868 deaths per year. That is an average of more than 10 drowning deaths each and every day of the year.

But what is even more disturbing, unintentional drowning has become the leading cause of death from unintentional injury among children aged 1-4 years. It replaces deaths resulting from motor vehicle accidents as the leading cause of death from unintentional injury for boys aged 1-4 years. These child-drowning deaths occurred most often in a bathtub for children under one year of age and, in a swimming pool, for children aged 1-4 years. The latter location -- swimming pools -- accounts for more than 50% of all unintentional drowning deaths in that age group, according to the CDC.

At this point, the reader may ask, why the focus on younger children and swimming pools? While, of course, every drowning is an immeasurable tragedy, the loss of a toddler under such horrific circumstances in one's neighborhood pool, is bound to leave an indelible impression. That is what happened on a beautiful June day almost seven years ago at a nearby swimming pool. To be precise, on June 13, 2008, Colin Holst, a proud and happy four-and-a-half-year-old little boy went to "the big" pool -- a swimming pool close to Circle C Ranch -- just one day after graduating from swimming

lessons and receiving his medal. Little Colin, age 4, enjoying a family weekend by the water. Colin was having a ball playing in the fountains and sprinklers with his friends, all moving around the pool together in a clump, playing and splashing and ducking in and out of the water.

Suddenly, in an instant, Colin wasn't with them. Time stood still as all eyes swept the pool looking for him, and then, only moments later, Colin was pulled from the shallow water unconscious and not breathing. Efforts to revive him at the pool were unsuccessful. Colin, the baby boy born "with a mop of dark hair that looked just like his mother," died at the hospital the next day, having never opened his

eyes again after his swim.

Out of this unimaginable tragedy, sprang a glimmer of hope -- even of good. Grief-stricken by their loss and shocked to learn the cruel toll drowning takes on children of Colin's age, Colin's family founded an organization dedicated to preventing such tragedies from befalling other families: Colin's Hope. Simply, "Colin's Hope envisions a world where children do not drown. Colin's Hope raises water safety awareness to prevent children from



drowning."

As our weather warms up, as families once again head for our pools, lakes and beaches, please take time to familiarize yourself with water safety rules -- they might make the difference between a happy summer and the unimaginable. An excellent place to do such is [ColinsHope.org](http://ColinsHope.org). At Colin's Hope, learn about this wonderful organization's many water safety awareness programs, events, campaigns and resources. They all have one vision in mind: "A world where children do not drown. While at Colin's Hope, take a look at their on-line Water Safety Resources Hub," take the "Water Safety Quiz" and please consider volunteering for one of their many activities and programs and making a contribution so that the "glimmer of hope" may become a bright light -- a reality, as much as possible -- for our children and grandchildren.

Acknowledgement: Some of the information and wording in this article comes -- with permission -- from "Colin's Story," at Colin's Hope. Colin's photo and lead image, courtesy Colin's Hope.

Colin's Hope has a mission to raise water safety awareness to prevent children from drowning. They envision a world where children do not drown. To learn more, please visit [www.colinshope.org](http://www.colinshope.org)



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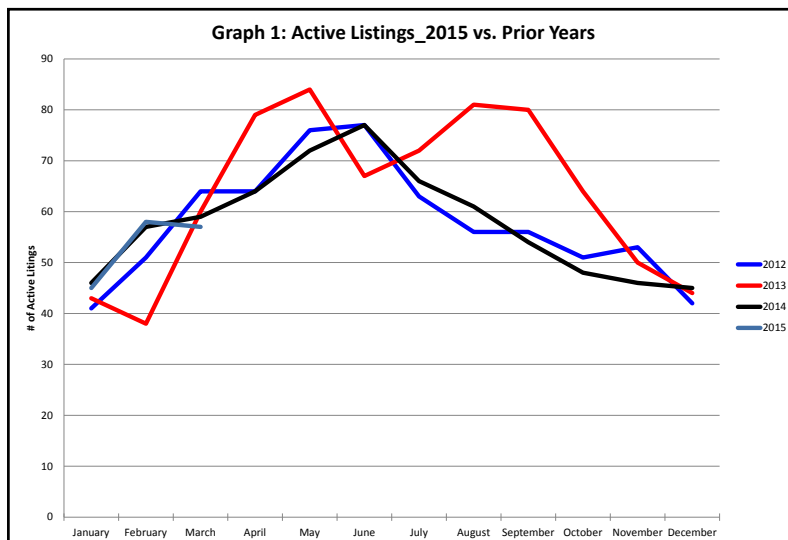
# TARRYTOWN REAL ESTATE MARKET REPORT

*May 2015*  
by **Trey McWhorter**

In this month's article, I'll compare the first quarter of 2015 with the first quarter of each of the previous 3 years, and highlight some observations based on that data.

- The number of transactions continues to trend downward. With 22 MLS-recorded transactions in the first three months of 2015, this is down more than 20% from the same period in 2014.
- While list and sold prices have increased substantially, median price per square foot is fairly consistent with Q1 2014.
- The higher list and sold prices may best be explained by a shift toward newer and larger homes, as evidenced by the 73% increase in square footage, and 28-year increase in median age, of homes sold.
- Potentially due to the higher price points, homes appear to be spending more time on the market, with the median number of days on market increasing from 7 days in Q1 2014 to 35 days in Q1 2015.

Single Family Homes	Year-to-Date Stats for Tarrytown	Q1 2015	Q1 2014	Q1 2013	Q1 2012
SOLD	Single Family Homes Sold	22	28	32	33
List Price	Avg. List Price	\$1,236,893.18	\$889,839.29	\$917,948.41	\$877,887.88
	Median List Price	\$1,195,000.00	\$677,000.00	\$799,000.00	\$765,000.00
Sold Price	Avg. Net Sold Price	\$1,171,268.18	\$869,199.82	\$887,813.28	\$837,259.24
	Median Net Sold Price	\$1,108,250.00	\$663,820.00	\$787,750.00	\$735,000.00
List Price \$ / Sq Ft	Avg. List Price / Sq Ft	\$383.64	\$394.42	\$299.73	\$311.57
	Median List Price / Sq Ft	\$389.05	\$389.52	\$297.99	\$316.32
Sold Price \$ / Sq Ft	Avg. Net Sold Price / Sq Ft	\$365.92	\$389.90	\$291.89	\$298.71
	Median Net Sold Price / Sq Ft	\$369.66	\$373.27	\$287.42	\$305.69
Days on Market	Avg. Days on Market	58	28	62	62
	Median Days on Market	35	7	17	21
Size of House	Sq/Ft (Total)	3212	1860	2791	2715
Age of House	Year of Construction	1976	1948	1955	1950



The number of active listings in Q1 2015 (see Graph 1) is fairly consistent with previous years' first quarters, and the next couple of months will be telling as they are traditionally the months we see a big increase in the number of active listings.

Not pictured, but an interesting data point... in March, 65% of active listings in Tarrytown had a list price over \$1M. The previous high was in 2014, at 56% (May, 2014).

Note: All data comes from the Austin Board of Realtors' MLS report, reflecting activity through March 31, 2015.





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## Fight Back Against Property Taxes in 2015

*By John Paul Krueger, Senior Property Tax Consultant*

It's no secret that people are moving to Central Texas every single day. Austin is known nationwide as one of the most desirable places to live, and we're all paying for it. Skyrocketing property taxes are arguably one of the largest expenses that moved to town with this influx of new Travis and Williamson County residents.

The name of the game is supply and demand. This is great news if you are looking to sell your home in the near future. However, if you are in the vast majority of people that would like to continue to be able to afford to live here, rising property values pose a very real financial threat.

Property owners in Travis County will soon receive a letter in the mail titled "Notice of Appraised Value". State law requires that the Travis Central Appraisal District provide you with this letter communicating what the district felt your property's market value was as of January 1, 2015. You are likely about to experience some sticker shock based on the "hot" nature of our real estate market.

Whether your property's value has jumped 1% or 50%, every landowner should strongly consider the option of appealing their valuation. Why?

The Travis Central Appraisal District's mass appraisal techniques are anything but perfect. They do not incorporate important information specific to your property.

Texas allows landowners the ability to lower their taxes if they are being taxed unfairly compared to other properties in the area.

Last year, market values in Travis County jumped an average of 12.6%, per the appraisal district. Our real estate market has not slowed since that time. We will likely see significant increases again this year.

In short, there are many potential ways to argue for lower property taxes in 2015.

If you are not the type of person that has real estate expertise or enjoys rigorous negotiation, it is in your best interest to enlist a property tax representation firm to handle every aspect of lowering the property tax on your Central Texas property. This can save you significant money with as little as five minutes of your time, and the good news is most property tax consultants operate on a contingency fee structure—no savings, no fees.



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### *Event Pictures!!*

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# Hope4Minds Expands its Mission

## to Support More Texas Children With Severe Brain Injuries

Less than four years after it was founded, a Southwest Austin nonprofit organization has decided that it's got more than enough hope to go around.

That's the thinking behind a new mission and a name change for the Southwest Austin nonprofit organization known as HOPE4JD, which was founded in 2011 to support families whose children suffered brain injuries due to nonfatal drownings. As of April, the organization will be known as Hope4Minds whose mission is to foster hope and enrich the lives of children with an acquired brain injury by providing support and education.

With a new name and more families to serve, Hope4Minds also will expand its community outreach services to include parent support groups and concussion baseline screenings, in addition to the services it already offers such as CPR/First Aid training and family care packages.

"Our board of directors and supporters see the opportunity to do

more and help more Texas families," says Ronda Johnson, executive director, Hope4Minds. "Our community rose to the challenge over the last few years, helping us make a difference in the lives of families in Austin, San Antonio and Dallas. Our work has showed us the needs of more children who are living with an acquired brain injury and whose families need our support."

According to the Texas Brain Injury Alliance, fewer than 1 in 20 children with acquired brain injury will get the rehabilitation they need for recovery. Injury may occur during events such as non-fatal drownings, choking, car accidents, sports and recreational activities, falls, lightning strikes and even abuse.

Since 2012, the organization has provided more than \$211,248 in services to families, 841 hours of recovery therapy services, nearly 100 family care packages to Texas hospitals and rehab centers, and free CPR training for 216 adults.

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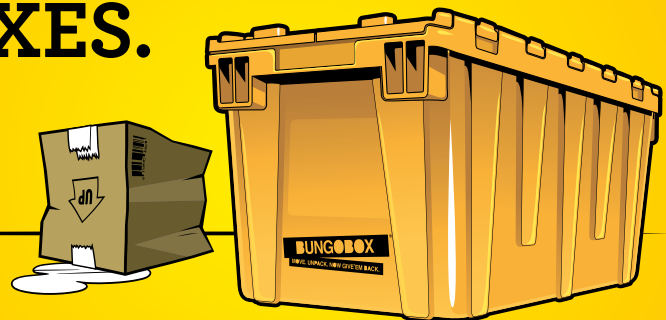
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