

West Lake Hills ECHO

Volume 5, Issue 12

December 2016

Instead of Toys This Holiday Season, Some Kids Just Want Their Basic Needs Met

by Dr. Beverly Hamilton

One in four children in the Austin area live in poverty. The tiniest members of our community don't care yet about toys but they might know what it's like to not have enough diapers. Diapers are not covered under assistance programs and cost \$800-\$1,000 per year. This price tag means some families have to decide between paying their rent or paying for diapers. A national study showed that 1 in 12 mothers reported leaving their baby in a soiled diaper longer than necessary due to limited resources.

The founder of Austin Diaper Bank, Beverly Hamilton, started the diaper bank out of her spare bedroom after learning this sad fact. Now the organization has grown exponentially and occupies a modest warehouse on Burnet Road in north Austin. Austin Diaper Bank helps make sure that Central Texas families have the diapers they need to keep babies healthy. By working with a network of over 40 partner agencies, the diaper bank serves thousands of people from Georgetown to San Marcos.

The diaper bank is a grassroots community effort, largely

donation driven and volunteer run. To directly help babies in Central Texas this holiday season, you can host a diaper drive, donate much needed funds, provide diapers (larger sizes are especially in demand) or volunteer. Individuals and groups can spend time in the warehouse sorting, counting and bundling diapers for distribution to the community. The littlest Central Texans thank you.



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ARTICLE INFO

The West Lake Hills Echo is mailed monthly to all West Lake Hills 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 West Lake Hills Echo please email it to westlakehills@peelinc.com. The deadline is the 15th of the month prior to the issue.

Neighborhood Compassion Watch!

Compassion is action.

Let's each of us make it our mission to bring positive change and solutions to our own lives, our communities, and our world. Let's sustain our hope for a better world through personal action.

Try this in December. Start a compassion jar or box in your home. Challenge yourself and your family members to seek out and discover compassion in your home, neighborhood, school, and workplace (acts of kindness, service, respect, love, acceptance, generosity, hope, peace, gratitude, forgiveness, and caretaking of the Earth). Pay close attention and discover these acts in yourself and others. Recognize these acts by dropping a note or a marble or pebble into the jar or box. See how full it gets. Find a time to share with each other what you discover.

Share your stories here and we'll publish them www.peelinc.com/residentsArticleSubmit.php. Also, share via social media with the hashtag #compassionup.



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HITTING THE SLOPES THIS SKI SEASON?

Keep in mind these tips to prevent injuries on the slopes.

Written by Kelly Cunningham, MD Sports Medicine specialist Founder. Austin OrthoBiologics.



As a former US Olympic Men's Ski Team physician and orthopedist, every year during the winter months I treat many ski & snowboard injuries. As traveling doctor for the team, I accompanied the athletes throughout the US, Canada and Europe on the World Cup tour and was responsible for the triage, stabilization, and treatment of these world-class skiers.

One of the most frequent questions I get this time of year from my patients who ski is "How can I avoid hurting myself on the ski slopes?" So what do I

tell recreational skiers about staying healthy while on the slopes?

First and foremost, adjust to the altitude in your first few days. While there are medications that will improve your blood oxygen, they require a prescription and can have side effects. Perhaps the easiest to take along are low-dose aspirin or ginkgo biloba, as both are safe (unless allergic) and easy to take. Low-level exercise and lots of water (especially during the first night) are also key, as is abstinence from alcohol during the first 24 hours at altitude.

Modern skis, boots, and bindings are universally safe now, unlike in decades past. Multi-release bindings help you come out of your skis safely in a fall and with less stress on your knees, the most commonly injured joint in a skier. Make sure they are set correctly.

Speaking of knees, in most solid, intermediate skiers, unlike beginners (learning to stop) and racers (ACL injury from shear forces), serious knee injuries are actually quite rare.

The best way to protect yourself from ski injury is:

- get in good "ski-shape"
- ski within your limits
- stay relaxed but focused
- watch out for that last, fatigued run of the afternoon
- if you fall, fall forward and throw your hands in front of you

And always, always, wear a helmet!

Austin resident Kelly Cunningham, MD is board certified by the American College of Orthopedic Surgeons, and an active member of the Arthroscopy Association of North America and the International Cartilage Repair Society.

DEER & TREES & SUCH

Bambi is cute. His daddy and momma are majestic and elegant - and all of them are very very hungry! No doubt you have noticed that deer these days are becoming bolder and that deer-resistant plant lists are shrinking each year. Why? Populations in suburban-rural areas are increasing due to many factors all the while their native food sources are dwindling. Toxic and disagreeable landscape plants are becoming necessary for their forage as natural predators, hunting, and routes for migration become almost non-existent. Often corn is provided with good intentions, but it is well documented that it is of little nutritional value and can cause them to die as a result of acidosis. It has become a situation which is costly and undesirable for hill country communities and deer alike. One of the best sources of food for deer has always been the acorn. One of the less considered repercussions of the national tree epidemic we all call oak wilt, is the loss of this major deer diet staple in those more and more prevalent locals where this fungal pathogen has caused the death of oak trees. Property clearing has also affected them by the generic approach of remove everything but the Live Oaks and grass (deer don't have the capacity to digest mature grasses) from the lot and raising tree canopies above the height that deer can reach to browse. Also, not a minor issue of deer over-population is the genetic defects arising from in-breeding.

Though some may think it is "neat" to see deer so close to our back

porches, it is incredibly unnatural. The lack of fear and decline of self-preservation instincts can take a serious toll on our bodily safety on the roads that the deer constantly jay-walk across, our insurance premiums, and obviously and arguably the worst consequence is the painful injury and likely drawn-out death the deer experience after vehicular impact. Also a result of this lack of fear (along with hormonal craziness), bucks are during the rut choosing our landscape trees as their punching backs if you will - both letting out there aggression and leaving their scent behind, both culminating in the likely event of your tree dying. Cages or plastic protectors are absolutely critical for any planted tree to survive these days.

Humane, well-thought-out plans of action are absolutely necessary to bring deer populations to levels (and maintain them at those levels) advised by wildlife experts, who have both the knowledge and are motivated by compassion to seek the good of both the community and the deer. Trapping, relocating, more park space, food plots of nutritional forbs, mast, and browse as well as regular education of the public of informed care practices for these amazing animals are just a few of the many things which can help enrich our lives and theirs.

Questions or comments this article or previous articles have generated, may be directed to me at: kevin@arborcareandconsulting.com

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NATURE WATCH

Christmas Cactus
by Jim and Lynne Weber

While most people are familiar with the tropical, non-native species of Christmas Cactus (*Schlumbergera* sp.) often sold as houseplants, not all are aware that we have a native Christmas Cactus (*Cylindropuntia leptocaulis*) here in Texas. Our Christmas Cactus, also called Tasajillo, Pencil Cactus, Christmas Cholla, and Desert Christmas Cactus, is a true cactus much more adapted to our types of soils and climate. Common in the central and western parts of Texas, this plant's species name, *leptocaulis*, means 'slender-stemmed', and it is a very good descriptor of its form.

Upright, shrub-like, with many branches made up of slender, cylindrical jointed segments, this 2 to 5 foot tall plant is most often found growing in sandy or bottomland soils, having a trunk or main stem up to 4 inches in diameter with thicket-forming stems that exhibit various shades of green and feature a solid, woody internal core. While occasionally spineless, it typically has very slender, 1 to 2 inch grayish-white spines grouped with much tinier spines, along each stem. Botanists now think that two forms grow in Texas, a 'long-spine' form and a 'short-spine' form. Its leaves are very small, often not even noticed before they fall early in the growing season. Small, pale, yellow-green flowers appear at irregular intervals in April/May and July/August, opening in late afternoon or evening. But the true color display occurs in December, when its fruits turn conspicuously bright red and seemingly cover the plant like it has been festooned for the holiday season.

Christmas Cactus can grow from seed, but it is much more likely to spread by cloning. The jointed stems can easily detach without harming the rest of the plant, and they are dotted with areoles, a structural feature of cacti that contain buds. All a stem needs to do is come in contact with the right soil, and it can take root and grow a whole new plant.

While the Christmas Cactus can be a nuisance if it develops in the wrong areas, it can also provide desirable value to wildlife and to humans. Growing best under the protection of other vegetation, it

offers dense cover for a variety of nesting birds and provides a good food source for white-tailed deer, bobwhite, wild turkey, most bird species, and many small mammals. From a human perspective, Christmas Cactus has a good ornamental value in a mostly xeric landscape, as it stands out in the bleak winter landscape, adorned with red fruit when most other vegetation is bare.

Several sources describe the fruits of the Christmas Cactus as edible, even intoxicating. But they are so small, and the spines so troublesome, that the plant usually yields only a sporadic nibble to the curious human. Nevertheless, native tribes made it part of their traditional diet, noting that the fruits, also called tunas, are vaguely sweet with a taste similar to the fruit of a prickly pear cactus.

Take the time to get to know our native Christmas Cactus and consider adding it to your wildscape. You will easily learn to fall in love with its prickly nature, especially at Christmas time!

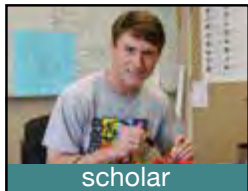
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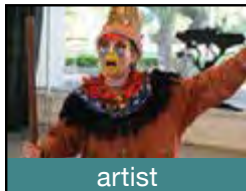
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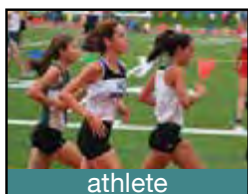
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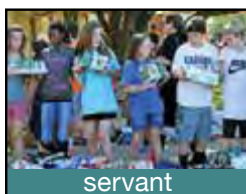
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Here are some things to reduce the number of pests in your home:

- Reduce food or water resources for insects:
 - o Encourage family to eat in one location. This makes it easier to clean since spills and crumbs are not spread around the house.
 - o Clean up any spilled food or drink as soon as possible.
 - o Sweep and vacuum regularly. This helps to remove food crumbs, pet hair and other things that insects may feed upon.,
 - o Do not leave dirty dishes in the sink overnight. Even small bits of food can be a meal for insects.
 - o Do not leave pet food out overnight. Again, it can be a free meal for insects.
 - o Remove old newspapers, magazines, and books that are unused. Silverfish love to feed on these.
 - o Repair plumbing leaks to get rid of water sources required by insects.
 - o Use a plastic bag to line garbage cans to make garbage easier to remove.

o Remove garbage on a weekly basis, possibly more during warmer times of the year.

- Reduce areas where insects may live:

o Clean the drains with a stiff brush and then flush with boiling water. There are small flies that can grow in the slime layer of drain pipes. The stiff brush will loosen the slime and the boiling water will flush it away.

o Remove tree stumps and any dead branches in the yard to avoid carpenter or acrobat ant populations living in these areas.

o Move debris (firewood, bricks, stones, etc.) away from the home. These areas can be inhabited by a variety of arthropods including spiders, scorpions, and cockroaches.

o Clean closets on a quarterly basis to reduce the chance of spiders moving in.

- Reduce moving insects into the house:

o Inspect all items for pests before bringing them into the house. Insect pests can be brought into the home with items such as potted plants, boxes full of things inherited from a family member, used clothing or furniture, among other things.

o Prune tree limbs that touch or overhang the home and prune back any shrubs that touch the home. When shrubs or trees touch

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The Echo

(Continued from Page 8)

or overhang the home, they can be used as bridges for insects to get onto the home and then move inside.

- o Seal entry points on the outside of the home with sealant, expanding foam, or copper mesh screening. Pipe penetrations, weep holes, or cracks can allow insects, spiders, or other animals move into the home.

- o Store food in sealed plastic or glass containers to keep pantry pests out.

- o Keep screens, weather stripping, and door thresholds in good repair. Many insect pests are very small, so even a small tear in a screen or crack under a door can allow them to come inside.

- o Use yellow bulbs in outside lights to reduce the number of insects coming near doorways.

For more information or help with identification, contact Wizzie Brown, Texas AgriLife Extension Service Program Specialist at 512.854.9600. Check out my blog at www.urban-ipm.blogspot.com

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TENNIS TIPS

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In previous newsletters, I offered tips on how to hit a forehand groundstroke, a two-handed backhand, one-handed backhand, forehand volley, the two-handed backhand volley, the serve, the forehand half-volley, the one-handed backhand volley, the overhead "smash", the forehand service return, the backhand service return, the forehand high volley approach shot, and the two-handed high volley approach shot.

In this issue, I will offer you instructions on how to execute the one-handed backhand high approach shot. This shot is used when a player is caught in "no-person's land" (around the service line area) and receives a high ball to volley. The important part of this

shot is to be able to hit a deep volley at the feet of the opponents and/or to hit a deep volley close to the baseline, so the opponent is put into a defensive mode. This will cause the player to hit a softer ball so the player can now move closer to the net for the "killer or placement volley". In the illustrations, Sondra Thornton, a player at the Polo Tennis and Fitness Club, shows the proper technique to execute this stroke.

Step 1: The Ready Position and Split Step: When Sondra realizes that she is caught in "no-person's land", she takes the split step by bending of the knees and staying on her toes. Her racket is in

(Continued on Page 12)

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the volley position and her feet are angled toward the path of the incoming ball. Notice that the left hand is on the throat of the racket.

Step 2: The Back Swing: Once Sondra realizes that the ball has been directed to her backhand, she will turn her upper body and will take the racket slightly back. Notice that the left hand is still on the throat of the racket. She has loaded her weight onto her left foot and will be ready to step forward to meet the ball. She will make a slight change toward the continental grip on the right hand.

Step 3: The Point of Contact: Sondra is now ready to step into the ball. She has kept her eye on the ball and her center of gravity now is shifted toward the point of contact. Notice the right toe pointing to the ball meeting the racket. The face of the racket is open to allow her to hit behind the ball and allow maximum net height and allow her to hit the ball deep. The control of the ball will be made with the right hand, which is holding the racket tighter. The right hand will keep the face of the racket at a 45-degree angle at the point of contact.

Step 4: The Follow Through: Once Sondra has contacted the ball, she finishes the follow through with her right wrist laid back and leading the stroke with her right knuckles. Her left arm is pulling back for better body balance and her eyes are still watching the racket where she contacted the ball.

Step 5: The Move for the Kill Volley: As the ball is headed toward

the opponent and Sondra realizes that her shot is deep, she now moves closer to the net for the put away volley. If her shot was not deep, Sondra will decide to stay close to the service line to protect the lob over her head. By the look in her eyes and her smile, she just did a "kill volley".

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INGREDIENTS

1 cup sugar
1/2 cup white Karo
1 dash salt
1 cup shelled raw peanuts (or pecans, walnuts, sunflower seed, etc.)
1 tablespoon butter or more. With peanut brittle, more is better.
1 1/2 teaspoons baking soda
1 teaspoon vanilla

DIRECTIONS

Line baking sheet with wax paper.
Spray wax paper, spoon, and anything else the brittle touches with Pam.
Combine sugar, salt and Karo in a 3 quart microwave safe glass bowl.
Stir in peanuts.
Microwave on high until light brown (8 to 10 minutes) stirring at least 2 times during cooking.

Remove from microwave and stir in remaining ingredient adding baking soda last (mix will be foamy).

Stir quickly and pour onto wax paper.

Spread thin for brittle candy.

Note: You can use any type nuts you prefer or even sunflower seeds (which is my favorite).



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