



nwacaNEWS

NORTHWEST AUSTIN CIVIC ASSOCIATION

SEPTEMBER 2017

VOLUME 8, ISSUE 9

President's Message

Chris Hajdu

I'd like to start by reminding everyone that just because you receive this newsletter, you're not necessarily a NWACA member. Everyone in our boundary area receives this newsletter because our board made a decision a few years ago to deliver the newsletter to all the single-family homes in our neighborhood as a community benefit. See our blurb on this page for how to check if your membership is current and consider joining if you are not already a member.

Previously, we announced that our Councilmember, Alison Alter, had asked the city for a pause on any new speed bump installation via the LATM (Local Area Traffic Management) program. This hold allowed the city to assess the situation, studying the complaints about implementation of the program on Far West, Mesa, and elsewhere in the city. City staff noted that the streets receiving the most complaints are not what are typically thought of as neighborhood streets, but are collector or minor arterial roads with significantly different traffic usage. Based on this, the city will continue to install devices on more typical neighborhood streets as before, but will put additional requirements on installations that affect collector and minor arterial roads (like Far West and Mesa.) In addition, the city will make adjustments to the devices on Far West and Mesa to see if they are more agreeable to all. For the full details on the program changes, read the memorandum from the Austin Transportation Department here: <http://nwaca.org/portfolio-view/81017-latm-update-coa/>

I'm proud to announce that the new Pedestrian Beacon is installed and in use at Northledge Drive at Far West. This beacon will help people cross the street, especially at times when a crossing guard is not present. Many thanks to all the parties who were involved in securing this benefit for our neighborhood. For more details on this project, see the full article in this newsletter.

We announced last month that the neighborhood secured the services of a Travis County constable for a 6-month trial program of part-time patrol duty in the neighborhood. We just concluded the first full month of the trial and are analyzing the data to assess the effectiveness of the program. Please see the article this month (and in subsequent months as well) for more details as we see this trial through to the end. Many thanks to Elizabeth Christian Public Relations for helping to underwrite the program, supplementing funds provided by the NWACA Project Reserve Fund.

If there is anything you feel might make an interesting article for this newsletter, please send it in. Several articles in this month's newsletter are just that... articles written by people from the neighborhood. We can't promise to publish everything, but we can't publish what we don't receive.... get creative and share with us!

Thanks, and I hope you are enjoying the beginning of fall... cooler temps are right around the corner... (I hope!)

Am I a Member?

You receive the newsletter every month, so you think you're a NWACA member, right? Not necessarily! Thanks to our advertisers, every single-family household in NWACA receives the monthly newsletter.

Members pay annual dues of only \$25 ensuring that NWACA special events such as the Fourth of July parade, fall garage sales, recycling events, and summer pool parties continue. NWACA committees such as Wildfire Prevention, Crime and Safety, and Tree and Environment depend on your donations to produce educational materials and programs. And, the Special Projects Fund helps to beautify and improve the quality of life in our neighborhood. Want to get more involved with NWACA? Members are also eligible to run for the NWACA board.

So, while, "Am I a member?" is a question we hear often, we're happy to answer! Email us at: nwacainfo@gmail.com with your name and home address, and we'll let you know. Thanks from all your neighbors!

New to the Neighborhood?



If this is the first time you're seeing our newsletter, welcome to the NWACA neighborhood! This map shows our boundaries – Mopac, RM 2222, Loop 360, and Spicewood Springs Road. There are about 4100 other households who are your neighbors and are happy you're here!

This newsletter is one way to keep up with what's happening here, but there's a lot more available, too. Check out the quick link For New Neighbors on our web site at www.nwaca.org Then, please join us as a dues-paying member; there's a form you can use at the end of the newsletter, or you can join online.

Welcome to NWACA!

NWACA EVENTS CALENDAR

Sept 3, 2 PM
Kneaded Pleasures
Parks Committee

Sept 12, 8 AM
Kneaded Pleasures
Communications Committee

Sept 13, 6:30 - 8:30 PM
Mangia Pizza
NWACA Board Meeting

Sept 16, 8AM - noon
Throughout NWACA
Annual NWACA Garage Sales

Sept 16, 9AM - noon
Bull Creek District Park
Monthly park beautification in the park
and on trails

Sept 26, 5 PM
Temple Beth Shalom, 7300 Hart Lane
NWACA Zoning and
Transportation Committee

Sept 27, 4:30 - 7:00
Murchison Middle School
50th Anniversary Celebration; tours
from 4:30-6:00; Ceremony starts at 6:15

Oct 1, 2 PM
Kneaded Pleasures
Parks Committee

Oct 3, 7-9 PM
Neighborhood areas
National Night Out

Oct 10, 8 AM
Kneaded Pleasures
Communications Committee

Oct 11, 6:30 - 8:30 PM
Mangia Pizza
NWACA Board Meeting

Oct 15, 2 PM
Kneaded Pleasures
Tree and Environmental Stewardship
Committee

Oct 21, 9AM - noon
Bull Creek District Park
Monthly park beautification in the park
and on trails

Oct 24, 5 PM
Temple Beth Shalom, 7300 Hart Lane
NWACA Zoning and
Transportation Committee


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District 10 Councilmember, Alison Alter.....512-978-2110
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Each of the Board members can be reached at:
nwacainfo@gmail.com

The NWACA Board meets on the 2nd Wednesday of each month, except December. Please visit our calendar at www.nwaca.org to see the specific time and location. If you wish to speak at a Board meeting, please send email a week before the meeting, so that we can get you on the agenda.

NWACA is bordered on the north by Spicewood Springs Road, on the west by Loop 360, on the south by RM 2222, and on the east by Mopac (Loop 1).

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PHB Comes to Doss

—Lauren Ward



Those of us with children at Doss Elementary, or who have had children at Doss, or who care about children at Doss, have noted the increase in traffic along Far West – and the lack of concern for pedestrian crossings. We have had multiple people struck while crossing at or near the intersection of Northledge Drive and Far West.

Now, after many years of work by past and current council members Sheri Gallo and Allison Alter, we are getting a Pedestrian Hybrid Beacon (PHB) for this crossing section.

What is a PHB? From the city: PHBs are pedestrian-activated warning devices which help pedestrians safely cross major roadways where there isn't a traffic signal. The beacon consists of two red lights above a single yellow light. The beacon head is "dark," or unlit, until a pedestrian activates the device. The pedestrian pushes a button that activates the beacon. After displaying brief flashing

and then steady yellow light intervals, the device displays a steady red indication to drivers and a "WALK" indication to pedestrians, allowing them to cross while traffic is stopped.

In layman's terms, this is a traffic light that will turn on only when there are pedestrians present. As a pedestrian, you will push a button, wait a few moments, and be able to cross with the safety of a red light at that intersection. You may have driven through the PHB on Burnet just south of Anderson.

As a driver, the solid red light on a PHB is the same as, and should be treated like, a traffic signal showing a red light. Once the red light starts flashing it should be treated like a stop sign, where the driver is to stop and make sure it is clear before proceeding. APD has confirmed that traffic tickets will be issued accordingly.

The foundations for the poles were poured on August 2nd. And, crews are hard at work to finish installation before school is back in session – August 21st.

Thanks to everyone for their hard work in making this traffic improvement that will help keep our neighborhood safe.

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Murchison Middle School Celebrates 50th Anniversary

—Pamela Armour

Murchison
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In September 1967, Murchison Junior High opened its doors to students in grades 7, 8, and 9, serving families living west of Shoal Creek between Camp Mabry to the south and Foster Lane/Spicewood Springs Road to the north. It was built to relieve overcrowding at Lamar Middle School from Gullett,

Highland Park, Lucy Read and Summitt Elementary Schools. Murchison's current feeder elementary schools include Doss, Hill, Summitt, and Davis Elementary Schools with students also from Brooke, Pillow, and Zavala Elementary Schools.

The initial school was built to last 50 years and to accommodate 800 students in 39 teaching stations. It included a library, cafeteria, two gymnasiums, administrative offices, a unit for industrial education, and another for homemaking. In the fall of 1973, ninth grade was moved to high school. During the 1983-84 school year, there were approximately 600 students. Sixth grade was added in 1987 and the name changed to Murchison Middle School. A two-story addition was added in 1999, which included 14 classrooms, and 16 portables have been added over the years to give Murchison a current capacity for 1,100 students. The portables are sometimes referred to as the 6th grade center as most of the core classes for the 6th graders are located there. In 2016, the cafeteria was expanded to provide more seating for the growing population. The 2017-18 student body is projected to be 1,440, and the student population is projected to be over 1,700 in the next 10 years!

The architecture firm of Brooks, Barr, Graeber, and White Architects began designing Murchison in the mid-1960s. J.C. Evans Construction Co. was the general Contractor. The original school cost \$1,423,466 to build. Although students began attending Murchison in the fall of 1967, the school district didn't officially accept Murchison from the builders until March 3, 1968 because of a number of construction issues. In particular, since the small gym is built four feet lower than the rest of the building, it was prone to flooding. The architects and contractor agreed to pay more than \$7000 to replace the gym floor and reapply waterproofing to the exterior walls.

Murchison is named after E.A. Murchison, an educational leader serving youth and a member of the Austin ISD School Board for 24 years, from 1919-1943. This is the longest tenure of school board service in the history of AISD. He taught Sunday school at First Methodist Church for 45 years, was a Scoutmaster at Austin's Boy Scout Troop 2 for 14 years, and was a Travis County Probation Officer for 13 years. Mr. Murchison was born on Nov. 11, 1873 on

(Continued on Page 6)

Sign up NOW for Neighborhood Garage Sales on September 16th!

—Joyce Statz



Everyone in the neighborhood is welcome to hold a garage sale! This year's sales will be on Saturday, September 16, from 8 AM until Noon. Participants hold sales in their own garage or front yard, or can join a

neighbor to host a sale. All proceeds stay with YOU, – nothing goes to NWACA.

NWACA will promote the sales by:

- Advertising in the Austin American Statesman (print and online) and on Craigslist

- Providing participants with directional signs indicating sale locations (first 50 homes in the NWACA area who sign up)

- Posting signs throughout the neighborhood, 3 days prior to the sale

- Posting a list and a map of locations on our website

- Posting notices about the sales in the weekly NWACA Notes email, on Facebook, and on NextDoor.

Sign up by September 9th on our web site: www.nwaca.org. Go to the Get Involved tab, then fill out Garage Sale Signup form.

This event and the others throughout the year are possible because neighbors join NWACA as members. If you haven't yet paid your \$25 annual dues, you can do that on our web site www.nwaca.org. Go to the Get Involved tab, then fill out the Join/Renew form. Or... you can send in your membership form by U.S. mail (see the second to last page of this newsletter for the form).



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NWACA News

(Continued from Page 5)

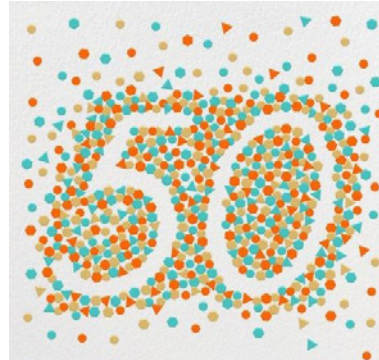
a farm in Bastrop County and attended schools in Cedar Creek and Bastrop where he also taught school from 1894-1898. He worked in a general merchandise store in Del Valle, served with the First Texas Voluntary Infantry in the Spanish-American War, and then moved to Austin in 1905 to become a partner in the grocery firm of Caldwell-Murchison-Lee Company, from which he retired in 1935. Mr. Murchison died on October 6, 1964 at the age of 90; he and his wife had 2 sons, Eugene A. and H.L. Murchison.

Murchison's 26 acre campus was built on a former limestone quarry. At first, students in PE classes spent time picking up rocks in order to clear land for an outdoor play area. In the late 1960s, Far West ended at Chimney Corners, and motorcycles were often seen on what is now the Murchison track. The Murchison Hill was originally a steep cliff with a severe drop off. Under the direction of the first PTA presidents, Betty and Glen Journeay, it was filled in to create a slope and grass was planted. In the first issue of the school newspaper, *La Mateleta* (The Cape), students were encouraged to come to school on a Saturday with a square of grass and a picnic lunch! Today, Murchison is surrounded by a greenhouse and native landscaping, including a certified Wildlife Habitat provided by funds from the Seedling Foundation and Murchison's PTA, all of which are maintained by the PTA. The Murchison athletic fields have recently been upgraded with donations from I9 Sports, Trojan Lacrosse, and Trojan Pop Warner, who also continue to maintain these fields with fertilizing, mowing, sprinkler systems, and a brand new scoreboard in 2016.

The first students selected the school colors: orange and gold. They also voted on the Matador as the official mascot, beating out Texans and Cowboys. The official motto of Murchison is "Inspiration Within, Excellence Throughout."

In 1967, female students and teachers could wear only dresses and skirts – no pants, jeans, or shorts! Male students and teachers were required to wear shirts tucked in, pants, and a belt. Boys' hair could not cover their ears. In P.E., boys wore orange shorts with white t-shirts; girls wore a one piece sleeveless orange and white shorts

jumpsuit. Currently, there are not enough lockers for all the P.E. students, so they do not have a required uniform. Originally, there were only boys' athletic teams, along with six cheerleaders and a pep squad. The Color Guard, a group of 37 boys, raised and lowered the flag each day and at monthly outdoor assemblies. Today, Murchison boasts many athletic teams which girls also participate in: football, basketball, volleyball, soccer, track, tennis, cross country, ultimate frisbee, and golf.



Since 2001 Murchison has been certified in the International Baccalaureate World School Middle Years Program which provides students with a rigorous, internationally-minded curriculum. In addition to Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies,

students take a language (Chinese, French, German, Latin, Spanish, or Vietnamese), a Fine Art, P.E., and a Technology course. Technology courses include Robotics, Keyboarding, Graphic Design, Web Design, Animation, Information Technology, CAD Design, Energy/Power, Photography, Journalism, and Professional Communication.

Murchison Middle School will celebrate its 50th Anniversary with a School Showcase and Celebration Ceremony on Wednesday, September 27th, 2017. Tours will be offered to the community from 4:30-6:00pm with the Ceremony beginning at 6:15pm. Preceding this celebration is the Homecoming Football Game on Tuesday, September 26th, 2017 at 7:30pm at House Park. Murchison hopes to see many alumnae at these events! Murchison is also asking alumnae for memorabilia to display at the School Showcase; please contact Jennifer Young for details at ryoung34@earthlink.net. For more information about these events, please visit the school website at www.murchisonmatadors.org



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NWACA Committees Have Opportunities for You!

—NWACA Committee Chairs

NWACA has a “baker’s dozen” committees, with many volunteers needed to keep our community vibrant and well served. Some of the committees have the volunteers they need, but the ones described here can really use your help. Please take a look and see where you’d like to play a role:

Communications Committee: help with moderation of our Facebook accounts, publication of weekly newsletter and occasional announcements, design of postcards and other media

Crime and Safety Committee: promote the Neighborhood Watch Program, help neighborhood groups to learn about Neighborhood Watch and become active in the program

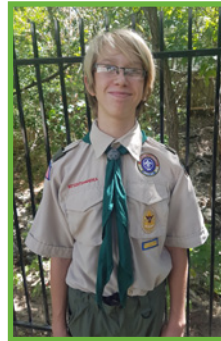
Events: identify and help organize family-friendly events throughout the year, help with logistics on family-friendly events, help publicize and put up signs for the annual neighborhood garage sales

Tree and Environmental Stewardship: help with recycling events where we collect items that can’t go into regular trash pickup, put up and monitor Oak Wilt prevention signs during the Feb-June campaign

When you find the spot you want to fill, let us know by sending email to nwacainfo@gmail.com or go online and fill out the Join a Committee form under the Get Involved tab at www.nwaca.org Thanks very much!

Zachary Domsch and the City of Austin to the Rescue!

—NWACA Board



Zachary Domsch, from Northwest Hills Boy Scout Troop # 410, under the leadership of Mr. Matt Domsch, recently spent one hot Saturday morning, single-handedly trimming and mowing the area on NWACA’s northern boundary along Dry Creek Road. And, the City of Austin came to trim the large bamboo area at the intersection of RR 2222 and Dry Creek Road. See the after picture below! Thank you, Zachary and thank you, City of Austin for keeping our neighborhood beautiful and safe!



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Maintaining the Neighborhood Entrances and Sidewalks

—Louri O’Leary and Vicki DeWeese

The entrance to any neighborhood defines the quality of life and is a visual welcome to all who visit. The roadway and sidewalks on NWACA’s northern boundary near RM 2222, Dry Creek, and Paseo del Toro, passing by Reid’s Cleaners, the Exxon Mobile gas station, Azul Tequila, and Northwest Veterinary Hospital have become overgrown with brush and grass during recent months.

A proposal was made to the NWACA Special Projects Fund for financial assistance to have an organization mow and maintain the plants and grass on the north side of Dry Creek from RM 2222 to Paseo Del Toro.

Members of the NWACA Board contacted Code Compliance with the City of Austin to see what part the City might take on and learned a lot! Did you know that property owners are responsible for maintaining their property to the curb, even if the City has installed sidewalks or the area is in an easement?

- Grass and weeds must be kept at a maximum height of 12 inches.
- Trees and shrubs must be trimmed back from the edge of the curb

line and trees that hang over sidewalks must be trimmed at least 8 feet above the sidewalk.

- Trees that overhang roadways, including alleys, must be trimmed at least 14 feet above the street.



- Special rules apply to corners and by fire hydrants. On corners, vegetation must be kept to a maximum of 2 feet high within a 10-foot setback from the street for a distance of 40 feet along the street to insure maximum visibility. And, no plants should be placed within 5 feet of fire hydrants.

If you have questions, City of Austin Code Compliance can be reached by calling 3-1-1, or online at: www.austintexas.gov/departments/

code. Anonymous reports are accepted. You may also leave a message at Austin 3-1-1 to speak with the Code Enforcement Officer for the NWACA area, Mr. Tom Horn. Mr. Horn can reach out to property owners in violation to educate them and offer assistance. Violators will be given 7 days to remedy violations for high grass and weeds, trash and debris, or unsanitary conditions, prior to the issuance of citations and enforcement actions through Austin Municipal Court.

Four-Way Stops

—Public Service Announcement



Perhaps it’s useful to remind everyone about strategies to use at a 4-way stop. Here’s advice from <http://www.texashighwayman.com/laws.shtml#4WayStops>

“A lot of people might be surprised, but there is no specific Texas state law regarding who goes first at a four-way or all-way stop. The only applicable law states that drivers must stop and may enter the intersection only when it is safe to do so (§545.151). So that leaves the

right-of-way assignment up to the drivers. To that end, there is a widely accepted convention that most drivers use to remove the guesswork. Basically, it’s first-come, first-served. Implementing it is easy: when you stop at an all-way stop, look around and see who’s already stopped. When they’ve all gone, it’s your turn! If two or more people get there at the same time, then the protocol is that the person on the right should go first, and it should follow clockwise from there.

Be aware, however, that some municipalities as well as other states do have laws that codify the order above.”



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How You Can Have Some Real Class

—Steve Eaton



What if you could take almost any course offered by the University of Texas at Austin - on history, literature,

science, and other disciplines - not as an online course, but sitting in a classroom with the other students, and at little or no cost to yourself? And on top of that, have someone else handle the drive to campus and back, also for a pittance?

My particular hobby is Italian language and literature, and a several years ago I found myself in a rut. I had gotten as far as I could with private group lessons and self-study. When I complained to an acquaintance of mine who taught Italian at UT that I wanted to learn more, she suggested I try auditing an Italian literature class at UT - which anyone can do for \$20 a semester.

At first, I wondered if I had understood her correctly (she had spoken to me in Italian); it sounded too good to be true. But I followed her advice and Googled UT's policy on auditing. She was right: In general, UT permits anyone to audit courses, with instructor permission, for \$20 a semester. And, if you're over 65, it's free.

There are caveats: An instructor can refuse an auditor due to class size or other reason. The official policy states that auditors are not permitted to engage in class discussion. (My experience is that instructors allow and even welcome class participation, as long as you're discreet about it and don't get in the way of teacher-student interaction.) And it can be a little tricky sometimes to get access to online course material readily available to registered students.

But my experience has been only positive. The instructors I've met have all been very welcoming to auditors. I felt a little out of place when I sat next to undergraduate students for the first time in thirty-five years, but that didn't last long - especially when I saw two other old duffers doing the same thing!

The steps for auditing a class at UT-Austin are:

- Register online for an "EID" (student ID) - one time, free.
- Log in to UT's "Canvas" system to search for the courses you are interested in, by title, department, keyword, etc.
- Download, print, and fill out the audit permission form with the course number(s).
- Attend the first day of class, and ask for the instructor's permission to audit. Have the instructor sign the audit form.
- Stop by the registrar's office in the main admin building (under the tower) and turn in the form and (if you're under 65) \$20.

One benefit of living in Northwest Hills is that it's ridiculously easy to get to campus. Cap Metro runs an express bus (#661) that makes several stops on Greystone, Wood Hollow, and Hart Lane before shooting down Mopac to campus. It costs non-students \$1.25 each way. During the school year it runs every few minutes, all day.

The ability to audit courses at one of the world's great universities has been a wonderful, intellectually fulfilling experience for me, and is a big reason I'm staying in Austin past retirement. Check it out!

Useful links:

- UT Canvas login (use to register for an EID): <https://canvas.utexas.edu/>
- UT's policy on auditing courses and link to permission form: <https://registrar.utexas.edu/students/registration/before/audit>
- To search for available courses: <https://registrar.utexas.edu/schedules>

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Constable Patrol Pilot is Underway

—Joyce Statz

On July 17, 2017, the Travis County Constable's office began providing patrol service to the NWACA area. An officer patrols the area six hours per week, in two-hour shifts. They've been asked to focus on times when we seem to have the most issues - rush hours and school drop-off and pick-up times. We provided the Constable with the summary of our recent traffic survey, so they know which streets and intersections were identified by the neighborhood as being most important to address. (For more detail on the logistics of the program, see the article in last month's newsletter. For example, it points out that the ticket fees go to the Travis County Justice of the Peace Court; no part of it goes to NWACA, the City of Austin, or anyone else.)

Initial data from the first 3 weeks of patrolling shows that in general, the constable makes about 8 traffic stops in a shift, with most violations being for running a stop sign and/or speeding. We are still working with the Constable's office on the format of reports they provide, including a request to break down the ticket data by zip code, so we know what percentage of the tickets are for cut-through traffic. As we get more specific data, we'll provide regular newsletter reports with informative graphics.

Elizabeth Christian Public Relations is proud to help underwrite the constable program for NWACA. The remainder of the pilot is funded by the NWACA Project Reserve fund.

Austin Announces Curbside Compost Collection Program Expansion

—Joanie Arrott

It's official! Beginning October 2, 2017, Austin Resource Recovery (ARR) will provide curbside composting collection for approximately 54,000 customers, and they plan to add all curbside customers to the service by 2020. Curbside composting service is currently available for some residents (involved in the city's pilot program), with expansion planned over the next year to meet the initial 54,000 customer goal. The current curbside compost service area and initial expansion service area here: http://www.austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/Resource_Recovery/curbside_composting_map_for_web_11x17.pdf. The expanded service area includes about a quarter of NWACA single-family homes.

The program collects food scraps, yard trimmings and food-soiled paper, and converts them into nutrient-rich compost. Composting will be collected weekly, on the same day as your trash collection. Austin City Council approved a \$1 monthly fee increase for the first year of the service expansion. ARR estimates that monthly fees will need to increase about \$4.00 by 2020 to fund the citywide program expansion. Future

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fee increases will be subject to City Council approval during the budget process. This program is part of the City of Austin's Zero Waste goal to divert 90 percent of materials from landfills by 2040.

A recent study showed that almost half of everything residential customers send to the landfill is compostable material. When buried in a landfill, compostable materials do not break down as they would in nature or in a compost pile. They decompose anaerobically, without oxygen, and in the process become the number one source of human-caused methane released into the atmosphere. Instead of going to a landfill, organic materials placed in the green carts are transported to a local composting facility, where they break down into compost. Compost helps soil retain water, and fertilizes lawns and gardens without using chemicals.

Just think of the savings on your utility bill after putting food scraps and food-soiled paper in your green cart. You will have less trash to throw away each week allowing you to downsize to a smaller, less expensive trash cart. Didn't know that ARR offers four trash cart sizes? Reducing the amount of landfill waste is another program developed to help meet the city's zero waste goal mentioned previously. The smaller the trash cart, the less it costs residents each month. Currently, many ARR customers have a 64-gallon trash cart and could save \$76 per year by downsizing to a 24-gallon cart or could save \$61 per year by downsizing to a 32-gallon cart. Questions and concerns can be sent to: nwacainfo@gmail.com.

Getting Ready for National Night Out

—Public Service Announcement

National Night Out is a great opportunity for citizens and law enforcement to partner up against crime. APD invites you to attend the event, meet your neighbors, and commit to helping law enforcement reduce crime in your community.

This year, National Night Out is Tuesday, Oct. 3, 2017, from 7 to 9 p.m. To get a visitor from APD or the Fire Department or EMS, neighborhoods must register by 5 p.m. on Friday, September 15, 2017. To register online, go to this link: <http://www.austintexas.gov/online-form/national-night-out-survey>

National Night Out is designed to:

1. Heighten crime and drug prevention awareness
2. Generate support and participation in crime efforts
3. Strengthen neighborhood spirit and police community relations
4. Let criminals know that neighborhoods are organized and fighting back

During the event, residents in neighborhoods throughout Austin and across the nation are asked to turn on their porch lights, lock their doors, and spend the evening outside with their neighbors, police officers, firefighters, and EMS paramedics. Events such as cookouts, block parties, and neighborhood walks will all occur simultaneously throughout the city and nationwide.

This year's National Night Out Kick-Off Event will take place at Reagan High School on Saturday, September 30, 2017 from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Those who register can get a packet of materials for their local National Night Out event, as well as gathering an array of materials from a variety of public service organizations.

What's Happening with Connections 2025?

—Ruven Brooks

Remember Connections 2025, Cap Metro's plan for the future which they approved last February? Well, they've started to implement it. The first small step actually was taken before the approval of the whole plan. In January, 2017 fares on the Metro Rapid service were dropped from \$1.75 to \$1.25, matching other MetroBus services. Small as this change was, it had a large effect on ridership that by June had soared to 37% over the previous year. Not only that, but the total ridership in the corridor increased, even though the other routes lost passengers to the Metro Rapid buses.

August 20 saw increases in the frequency of the 801 and 803 routes to 10 minutes on weekdays, and 15-minute service until 2:30 a.m. on weekends. For people in the NWACA area, this means that they can park in the Northcross mall area and take the bus to events like SXSW and ACL Live and stay until the events are over.

The biggest round of changes will take place in June 2018. More than half of the 82 Cap Metro routes will be changed to provide high frequency north/south routes connected together with more frequent east/west routes. More details will be announced mid-September.

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Monarchs and OE

—Wizzie Brown, Texas AgriLife Extension



The protozoan parasite *Ophryocystis elektroscirrha* (OE) infects monarch and queen butterflies. It is an obligate parasite and requires a host to live within and to grow and multiply. It was first discovered in the 1960's infecting monarchs in Florida. Since then, it's been found in monarch populations across the world. It is thought that the parasite has co-evolved with monarchs.

There are three major populations of monarchs in the United States- one east of the Rocky Mountains that winters in Central Mexico and migrates north into the US and Canada; another west of the Rocky mountains that overwinters on the coast of California; the third population is non-migratory and can breed year round in areas such as Florida, Texas, and Hawaii. All three populations are infected with OE.

Monarchs infected with OE will have spores wedged between the scales on their body, with the greatest concentration usually occurring on the abdomen. The spores are very small and require a microscope to see.

Female monarchs pass OE spores on to their offspring when they lay eggs. When caterpillars emerge from the egg, they eat the egg shell ingesting the spores. When spores reach the midgut of the insect, they break open and release protozoan parasites. The protozoans move through the gut lining to the epidermis where they reproduce asexually (divides multiple times increasing the number of protozoans). In the butterfly chrysalis stage, the protozoans go through sexual reproduction (again increasing the number of protozoans). Spores form so the emerging butterfly is covered in spores. Spores can also be scattered onto milkweed from butterflies laying eggs or feeding on nectar. Spores on the milkweed can be consumed by caterpillars as they eat foliage.

Once butterflies are infected, they do not recover. OE does not grow or reproduce on the adults; spores remain dormant until they are ingested by a caterpillar.

Infected pupae have dark blotches 2-3 days before emergence. Adults that are heavily infected often have problems emerging from the chrysalis and some may die before emerging. Others that do emerge may fall to the ground before their wings are expanded leading to them dying quickly. Many infected monarchs look healthy, so the only way to determine infection is by looking for spores.

What can you do? Check monarchs for spores and destroy any you find that are infected. I know this seems harsh, but infected monarchs further spread the protozoa and kill more butterflies in later generations. Cut down milkweed several times per year to get rid of any possible spores that may be on the plants and to encourage new, healthy growth.

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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The final series of changes won't take place until August, 2019, when the Mobility Innovation Zones will be introduced to provide services to riders along low ridership routes. Mobility Innovation Zones will try to find alternatives to running 40-foot-long buses with only five passengers on them. Options include on-demand services, flex routes, and partnerships with TNCs (rideshare apps). The particular option chosen will depend on the service being replaced, the options available in that area, and on community input. The part of route 19 which goes along Steck, Mesa, and Greystone will be in one of those Zones so the new option probably won't be introduced until 2019.

Although the Mobility Innovation Zones won't be widely implemented for another two years, Cap Metro is already laying the groundwork. According to Todd Hemingson, Vice President for Planning at CapMetro, the new Pickup service in the Windsor Park and Mueller area is intended to test a new smartphone app which could be used in the Innovation Zone areas. (A telephone number is also available.)

Cap Metro is also going ahead with changes to routes leading to the Mobility Innovation Zones when these changes would improve current service. For example, the 393 is being eliminated where it overlaps with other routes and the 383 route is being extended to cover part of the 393 route. Riders will get the same service as they had previously, although the bus will have a different number, but, unless ridership increases, a Mobility Innovation Zone will eventually will cover that part of the route.

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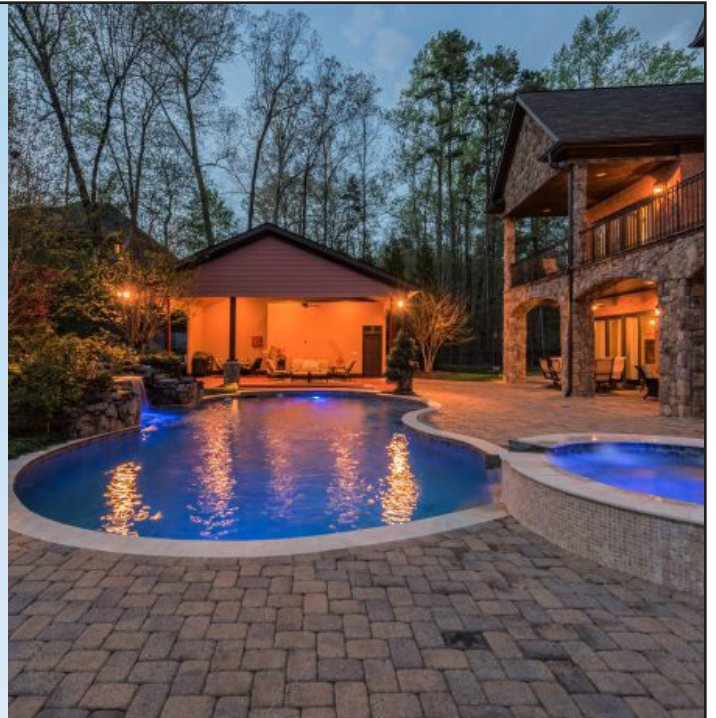
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