



BUTLER'S BRIDGE

WEST BEND COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION

VOLUME 3 | ISSUE 12

DECEMBER 2017

December 2017

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Observed as:

- Human Rights Month
- Safe Toys and Gifts Month

Birthstone:

Turquoise & Blue Topaz

Flower:

Narcissus & Holly

Astrological Signs:

Sagittarius (till 21st) & Capricorn (22nd-)

1st..... World AIDS Day
2nd..... Int'l. Day for Abolition of Slavery
3rd..... Advent Begins
7th..... Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day
8th..... Immaculate Conception
9th..... Int'l. Anti-Corruption Day
10th..... **Holiday Decorating Contest**
10th..... Human Rights Day
11th..... Green Monday
12th..... Hanukkah Begins
18th..... International Migrants Day
20th..... Hanukkah Ends
21st..... Winter Solstice (Northern)
23rd..... Super Saturday
25th..... **Christmas**
26th..... Kwanzaa Begins
27th..... St. John
31st..... New Year's Eve

Holiday Decorating Contest

The contest will be held on the Sunday the 10th of December in the evening between 6 - 9 pm.

Winners will be notified the same evening as the Judges will knock on your door to deliver your winning sign and to place a sign in your yard.

The contest is for exterior decoration only including decorations in windows visible from the exterior.

Judging will be based on "curb appeal" as viewed from the street. Judges will not enter the property to view back or side yards. Participants should ensure that all lights, animations and decorations are in place and activated for the judging period.

The top three winners will receive Gift Cards; 1st place \$100, 2nd place \$75 and 3rd place \$50.

Photos will be posted of the decorated residence, which will be posted on the West Bend website and in the Newsletter.

Contact WBCCIAnewsletter@yahoo.com if you are interested in being one of the Contest Judges.

Board members and Judges are not eligible for prizes.



IMPORTANT NUMBERS

EMERGENCY

Emergency Situation	911
Constable Precinct 5	281 463-6666
Sheriff Emergency & Non.....	713 221-6000
Harris County Sheriff (Store Front).....	281 564-5990
Harris County Sheriff (sub-station)	281 463-2648
Poison Control.....	800 764-7661
Crime Stoppers	713 222-TIPS

UTILITIES

AT&T (Repairs).....	800 246-8464
Center Point Energy (Electric).....	713-207-2222
Center Point Energy (Gas)	713 659-2111
Mud #120 (Water)	713 405-1750
Street Light Repairs -need Pole#.....	713 207-2222
Trash (Texas Pride Disposal)	281 342-8178

PUBLIC SERVICES

Local U.S. Post Office	281 920-9337
<i>12655 Whittington Dr, Houston, TX 77077</i>	
Toll Road EZ Tag.....	281-875-EASY (3279)
Volunteer Fire Dept.....	281 498-1310
Steve Radack (<i>County Commissioner</i>).....	713 755-6306
Animal Control.....	281 999-3191
Dead Animal Pick-up (Precinct 5).....	713 439-6000
Dead Bird Report.....	713 440-3036
Graffiti Clean-up.....	281 463-6300
Mosquito Control (Health Dept.)	713 440-4800
Mow the Bayou.....	713 684-4000

SCHOOLS

Alief Independent School Dist.	281 498-8110
Alief Transportation (to report Bus).....	281 983-8400

NEWSLETTER INFORMATION

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Alma Reyes.....	alma.reyes@ciaservices.com
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How to Observe Safe Toys and Gifts Month

For many cultures and beliefs, December is a time when gifts are given in abundance, to celebrate, to congratulate, and to show gratitude for people we spend time with. The safety and age appropriateness of gifts isn't always uppermost in the gift purchaser's mind though, mostly because we trust that the retailer is providing items that are already certified as safe and also because sometimes we're not totally clued into the needs or age specific particulars of the gift recipients.

In the United States, December is observed as "Safe Toys and Gifts Month" as a means for alerting us to the need to be careful when making our toy and gift choices, and to prompt us to keep in mind their safety and suitability. Knowing what to look out for can make a big difference in preventing possible injuries from well-intentioned gifts. This article provides an overview of the things to bear in mind when shopping for those toys and gifts.

1. Buy age appropriate toys. Children soon let you know if you've purchased them a toy that's below their age group and most shoppers take great care to avoid such a slip-up. Yet, strangely we're prone to thinking that purchasing toys that are meant for an older age group is fine, as if somehow it's suggesting that the child in question is smarter than their age group already, or they'll "grow into it". The problem is that toys are age graded for safety reasons as much as for avoiding frustration and undesirability. Many toys aimed at older children contain small pieces which could be swallowed by a younger child. Toys for older children can also contain items that require responsible handling. For example, the popular Beyblade Battle Tops would be appropriate for an 11-year-old but not for a six-year-old.

- Video games have age ratings for a reason. Observe them.
- Read How to choose age appropriate gifts for kids and how to give ideal age related gifts for more ideas.

2. Be aware of what's not considered safe this season. It's a really good idea to keep an eye on a consumer watchdog site to find out which toys have been recalled recently so that you can avoid buying them. Many consumer groups and government entities will send free email updates to your in-box alerting you to recalls and it only takes a few minutes to glance through them. If you're not sure, contact them for more information about specific product recalls before seeking to purchase the product.

3. Read the warnings and safety precautions accompanying the toy. These will give you a good idea of suitability and safety issues for the child in question. This requires some contextual thinking on your behalf, given your knowledge of the child; for example, the warning may indicate to you that a child who is quiet and still will use the toy sensibly, while a child who is restless, always taking things apart and is prone to throwing things might misuse the toy. Other things to bear in mind when reading the warnings and safety precautions include:

- *Small pieces.* Toys with small pieces are always unsuitable for children under 3. Even if you're purchasing the gift for an

older child, if there is a sibling under 3, can you be certain that the younger sibling won't have access to the toy?

- *Fire hazards.* If your home has hazards such as open fires, old and open radiator heaters, etc., think twice before purchasing flammable toys.
- *Adult supervision.* If a safety precaution suggests that the toy requires adult supervision, are you able to ensure that supervision in your household or do you know for sure it'll happen if giving the gift to another household? For example, a toy like the "Easy Bake Oven" needs adult supervision and assistance with the cooking. Is that something you're willing to do every time your child wants to play with it? And are you able to ensure that your child won't try to use it when you're not about (for example, by storing it away, etc.).
- *Sharp edges.* Not only young children can experience problems with sharp edges but so can older children if they have a marked history of hurting themselves. Avoid giving toys with sharp edges to young children under any circumstances and for older children, be alert to how they normally interact with their toys.
- *Fake food gifts.* For children, some fake food gifts are very dangerous because the children mistake them for food and try to consume them. For example, glass candies are enticing because they're pretty but they're dangerous if a child bites one. The only fake foods that are suitable for children are those marked clearly as made for children, using non-toxic materials and sized accurately for the age group.
- *Toxic items.* Avoid any toys that should be non-toxic but are not (check the labels). Items such as crayons, bath products, markers, paints, facepaint, etc. should be non-toxic.

4. Read the instructions accompanying any toys. Do they make sense? Are they clear? Are you left with any questions? If you cannot understand the instructions and the retailer isn't able to help you out, put the toy back on the shelf and let the retailer know that you don't consider the instructions adequately clear to ensure the toy's safe use. You might also write the manufacturer if you think this would help ensure clearer instructions for other purchasers.

- Read all tags that are attached to stuffed animals. Most stuffed toys are restricted to ages three and up because they usually contain small pieces that a child can choke on if removed (such as eyes, noses, embellishments, and so forth). If you're giving a stuffed toy to a child who is an infant or under two, please be sure that the animal is smaller in height and "mass" than the child and that it is specifically labeled as suitable for a small child.
- Examine the pictures of toys on boxes. The pictures can help provide you with an idea of the suitability of a toy along with the age group indicator. Knowing the child in question, use the pictures to discern the appropriateness of the toy and how safe

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it will be when given to the recipient. For example, a plastic brick building product might contain small pieces that a kid could place in his or her mouth and you might need to ask the retailer for a similar product that is more suitable for the younger age group.

5. Avoid getting anything that has excess string or cords, such as slingshots. Never consider BB guns as toys for kids – not only are these not kid's toys, they can take out an eye all too easily and leave the victim blinded. Equally, avoid buying toys that shoot off or send off pieces.

6. Buy for durability. With small children, durability is essential. Check that the item cannot be broken easily and ask what happens if the item is broken. You want to avoid any toy or product that breaks into shards, splinters, sharp pieces, or releases anything toxic.

- If purchasing sunglasses for a small child, be sure that the lenses are approved for children and can withstand the pressure of being twisted, chewed, and sat on.

7. Inspect all gifts as children open them. If the gift(s) are from someone outside the family, for example a neighbor or schoolmate, it's a good idea to inspect the gift quickly to ensure that it's safe to play with. If you discover that it isn't, distract your child with another gift and try to either remedy the unsafe aspect (such as removing small pieces) or quickly replacing it with something else more suitable. If there are tears, tell your child that the toy needs repair or safekeeping for later and return to distracting him or her with the many other toys he or she has no doubt received, or go and play somewhere else together.

8. Take allergies and food or chemical sensitivities into account when purchasing gifts for any age group. Both children and adults can be allergic or highly sensitive to a range of food gifts, especially such food as nuts, MSG infused food, chocolate, and so forth. Ask them if you don't already know, and avoid purchasing such food items as gifts. Other gift items that can cause allergies or sensitivities include perfumes, scented products, and essential oils.

- Avoid giving nuts, toffees, and other hard candies to young children as gifts. They can become choking hazards and are not good gifts for children under 5.
- If in doubt, don't purchase a gift that has potential allergy or sensitivity issues.

9. Take time to explain how to use the toy or gift to a child or to anyone who needs instruction. If your kid is aware how to use the toy properly and is aware of how easily it can be broken or ruined, then they are alerted to taking care of it in advance.

- Remove all broken toys and gifts immediately. If they cannot be fixed safely, dispose of them or recycle them where appropriate.

10. Ask all gift recipients to be conscious of where they've placed their gifts after opening them if it's a family event, such as Christmas. A lot of things happen when there is a family gathering and family members and friends might feel tempted to leave opened

gifts in places that are easily accessible to a child. If you don't want to ask them, at least do a sweep of the present-opening room before leaving it to attend to other activities, and put all small and child unsafe gifts out of reach. Be sure to let guests and family members know what you've done with their goodies!

- Keep this in mind also if there are pets that may have access to the gift-opening room while it is unattended. Don't leave anything laying around that could be dangerous to Fido or Fluffy in any way.

Tips

- While wrapping gifts, make sure any glass or valuable material is tightly wrapped in bubblewrap - not paper or plastic. Always use bubblewrap when sending gifts in the mail; it can also be helpful to indicate on the packaging that it is fragile and contains glass. This will help the recipient know to take extra care when opening, especially if they hear clinking sounds.
- In the USA, look out for the letters "ASTM", which stands for the American Society for Testing and Materials. Its presence alerts you to the fact that the product is considered to meet national safety standards set by the ASTM. In other countries, similar standards and testing bodies exist; do an online search or call your local consumer affairs office.
- Always supervise young children's play and remove objects that are unsafe for them. Have firmly observed family rules about toys meant for older children; ask older children to put away their toys and objects to ensure the safety of younger children in the household.
- On Christmas Day, have a trash bag handy before opening gifts. Have everyone open a gift in a circle and then gather all the rubbish afterwards. Repeating this cycle will keep the area clean of clutter and will prevent any mishaps of a child or pet playing with ribbon the wrong way, or having Great Aunt Martha trip over it when carrying the roast in.

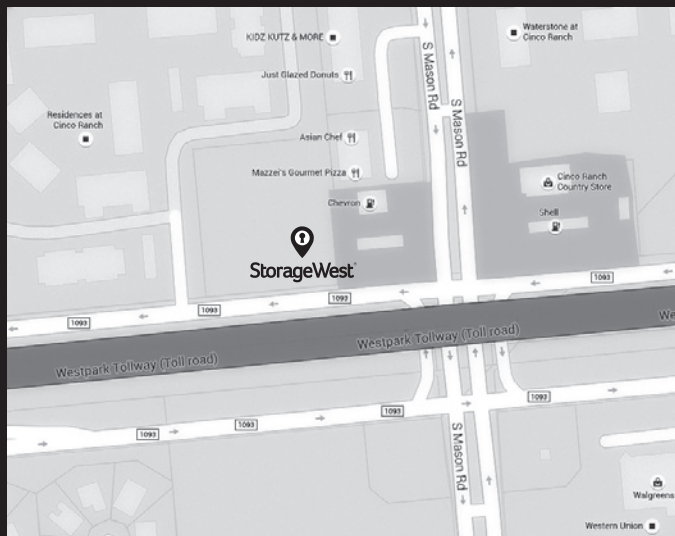
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CenterPoint Energy maintains street lights throughout our electric service area in and around Houston. You will first need the pole number and location then, See more at: <http://www.centerpointenergy.com/en-us/residential/customer-service/electric-outage-center/report-streetlight-outages?sa=HO#sthash.PUX7GXLf.dpuf>

THE ARCHITECTURAL CONTROL COMMITTEE

The (ACC) Architectural Control Committee must be informed if you are planning to change the exterior style, color, or have plans for additions or any removal to your property. A mandatory Architectural Review Form will need to be completed and signed. You may obtain this form on-line at www.ciaservices.com

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WBCIA Board Meetings

West Bend C.I.A. Board Meetings are held on the **3rd Wednesday of each month** excluding December.

The next Board meeting is scheduled on **Wednesday, January 17, 2018 at 7:30 p.m.** to be held at the West Bend Pool, 3915 Summit Valley Drive, Houston, TX 77082.

The Executive Session is held at 7:00 p.m.

The governing documents require the association to notify you in advance of all meetings, and you're welcome—in fact, encouraged—to attend and listen. **The only time you can't listen is when the board goes into executive session. Topics that the board can discuss in executive session are limited by law to a narrow range of sensitive topics.** Executive sessions keep only the discussion private; no votes can be taken. The board must adjourn the executive session and resume the open session before voting on the issue. In this way, members may hear the outcome, but not the private details.

Board Meeting is held at 7:30 p.m.

Most of the business of the association is conducted at regular board meetings. Board members set policy, oversee the manager's work, review operations, resolve disputes, talk to residents and plan for the future. Often the health and harmony of an entire community is directly linked to how constructive these meetings are.

Board Meetings are open to owners. If there is a specific topic you would like placed on the agenda, please contact your community manager, Alma.Reyes@ciaservices.com at least ten days in advance.

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Annual Assessments Due January 1st

Your payment must be received before January 31st to avoid late fees and finance charges. Any account not paid by February 1st will incur a late fee of \$40. Accounts not paid by March 1st will incur an additional late fee of \$60. All unpaid assessments after January 31st carry a finance charge of 6% per annum. Accounts not paid by April 1st will be turned over for legal pursuit, in which case, all costs are the responsibility of the delinquent owner and can range from \$190 to over \$2,000.

If you have any questions or would like to set up a payment plan, contact (713) 981-9000 or email: CustomerCare@ciaservices.com

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REMINDERS...

- Holiday Decorating Contest – Sunday, Dec. 10th, 6:00p - 9:00p
- Please Drive Safely!
- Assessments are Due Every Year on January 1st.
- Remove trash cans from public view on non-trash days.

NEXTDOOR.com

Nextdoor is the free and private social network just for West Bend neighbors. On Nextdoor, neighbors share crime and safety concerns, local events, recommendations, items for sale/free, ideas about how to make our neighborhood better, messages from the Harris County Sheriff's Dept., and the Houston Chronicle.

Our neighborhood is using a private online network called Nextdoor.
Please join us to build a better neighborhood!

www.nextdoor.com/join Code: MZXJX



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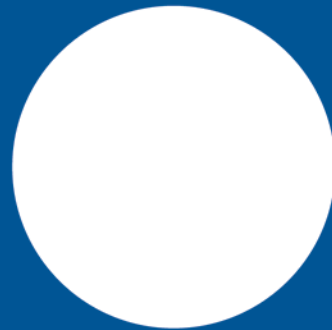
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