

LONG CANYON

Gazette

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A NEWSLETTER FOR THE RESIDENTS OF THE LONG CANYON

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MEET OUR STUDENTS

Hosting an international exchange student is a great way of opening the world to your children and teaching them about new cultures.

STS Foundation is currently looking for families for the 2018/2019 school year. What does it take to be a host family? STS accepts all types of families, be it single parents, young marrieds, empty nesters or same sex couples – we are looking for families that are willing to Share their America with a high school student for the year. All you need to provide is three meals a day and a room for them to sleep in. The student can share a room with a same sex sibling that is within five years of their age. Each student comes with their own spending money and health insurance. Most of all, they come with an excitement to learn all they can about our American way of life.

Here are just some of the many students that are available for placement:

Abby from Denmark – loves being active in sports, nature and at the beach. She is a competitive swimmer and enjoys horseback riding.

Dominik from Switzerland – an open minded, uncomplicated boy, with a real interest in American sports

Maria from Norway – she describes herself as an outgoing, adventurous, mature, compassionate person.

Saana from Finland – she is both sympathetic and empathetic. She enjoys music and sports, and according to her bio – she has a great laugh!

If you are ready for this amazing experience, please give me a call, I'd love to talk with you more about it. I am one of the Houston area STS Local Coordinators, I've worked with foreign exchange students for seven years and have also hosted 13 students on my own. I can tell you anything you need to know about hosting. Please contact Vicki Odom at 832-455-7881 or via email at vicki.stsfoundation@gmail.com.

STS Foundation is a 501(c)(3) not for profit organization who mission is to facilitate educational opportunities where all participants can break down cultural barriers, and gain respect and understanding of each other's way of life.

MAKE YOUR HEART HEALTH A TOP PRIORITY



Heart disease is the leading cause of death in the United States according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. February is Heart Month, and cardiologists hope

people will use this time to focus on their heart health.

The American Heart Association offers these tips for a heart healthy lifestyle.

1. **Eat Smart-** A heart healthy diet includes a variety of fruits and vegetables, whole grains, low-fat dairy products, and skinless poultry. For those looking for a specific diet, the AHA recommends the DASH eating plan.
2. **Move More-** It's recommended that people get at least 150 minutes of physical activity a week. That averages to 30 minutes a day, 5 times a week. Walking is a great place to start.
3. **Quit smoking-** Smokers have a higher risk of developing many chronic disorders that can lead to coronary heart disease and stroke. Talk with your primary care physician about ways to quit smoking and available resources.

It's also important that everyone know the signs of a heart attack. Major signs include pain or discomfort in the chest, one or both arms, back, neck or jaw. People having a heart attack can also experience shortness of breath, nausea, or light-headedness. If you think that you or someone you know is having a heart attack, you should call 911 immediately.

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Fun Valentine Facts

- In Victorian times it was considered bad luck to sign Valentine's Day cards.
- About 1 billion Valentine's Day cards are exchanged each year. This makes it the second most popular day of the year for sending cards.
- XOXO- Many believe the X symbol became synonymous with a kiss in medieval times. People who couldn't write their name signed in front of a witness with an X. The X was then kissed to show their sincerity.
- In the Middle Ages, young men and women drew names from a bowl to see who their valentine would be. They would wear the name pinned on their sleeve for 1 week for everyone to see. This was the origin of the expression, "to wear your heart on your sleeve".
- Richard Cadbury produced the first box of chocolates for this holiday in 1868.
- Roses are Red- The red rose is considered the flower of love because the color red stands for strong romantic feelings.

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NATURE WATCH

RASCALLY RACCOONS

by Jim and Lynne Weber

Although easily recognized by its bandit mask and ringed tail, the Northern Raccoon (*Procyon lotor*) is a widespread mammal but not often seen due to its nocturnal habits. It consumes a highly varied diet, is very intelligent and curious, and possesses a far greater manual dexterity and mental ability than cats and dogs, enough to defeat any but the most determined defense of garbage cans or home gardens. Much has been made of the intelligence of raccoons, with recent studies showing they are capable of remembering tasks for up to three years, possessing a mental acuity more closely approximating that of monkeys.

Denning above ground in tree cavities, chimneys and attics, underground in old burrows, storm sewers and crawl spaces, raccoons mate from February to August with 2 to 5 young (or kits) in each litter. Previously thought to be solitary, related females can share a common breeding territory, while unrelated males live together in small groups to guard their mating opportunities against potential rivals. Raccoons have a large array of over 50 vocalizations, including hissing, growling, purring, squealing, and chirping. They can run up to 15 mph, are efficient tree climbers, and can survive unharmed if dropped from heights of up to 40 feet. Raccoons are found throughout all regions in Texas, but they are seldom found far from water, which has an important influence on their distribution and breeding success.

Contrary to popular belief, raccoons do not wash everything they eat, but they do manipulate their food (appearing to wash it when water is available) in order to tactually experience the object rather than actually clean it. In fact, the word 'raccoon' was adopted into English from a now extinct language called Powhatan, which was spoken by the native peoples of Tidewater

Virginia, and translated to mean 'one who rubs, scrubs, and scratches with its hands.'

Raccoons exhibit rascally behavior by stealing food out of pet dishes, eating fish out of backyard ponds, and knocking over trash cans and scattering the contents. Additionally, they can carry and spread disease like rabies and parvovirus. However, since they are scavengers, they play an important role in keeping our ecosystems healthy by cleaning up carrion (keeping our surroundings sanitary), eating other species we humans consider pests (when numbers get out of control), and spreading the seeds of native

plants (by consuming berries and nuts).

You can do your part to keep their destructive behavior at bay by resolving conflicts compassionately. Contain available food sources by putting your trash out in the morning instead of the evening, feeding your pets indoors, and placing netting over ponds containing fish. Close all entry points to your home and other outdoor structures, so they are not used as dens to raise young. If a family of nesting raccoons is found in or around your home, they should not be removed until the end of nesting season in the fall. Separating the young from their mother will mean they will starve to death, and trapping and moving the family will

***Northern Raccoon***

likely result in death from resident raccoons, and is a Class C misdemeanor in Texas (this applies to transporting or selling live raccoons, coyotes, and foxes from, to, or within the state).

*Send your nature-related questions to naturewatch@austin.rr.com and we'll do our best to answer them. If you enjoy reading these articles, check out our books, [*Nature Watch Austin*](#) and [*Nature Watch Big Bend*](#) (published by Texas A&M University Press), and our blog at naturewatchaustin.blogspot.com.*



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