



nwacaNEWS

NORTHWEST AUSTIN CIVIC ASSOCIATION

MARCH 2020

VOLUME 11, ISSUE 3

It is almost Spring!

Time to bring in New Energy!

Board elections. Our Nominating Committee, chaired by Joanie Arrott and including Louri O'Leary, Connie Lundgren, and Ben Luckens is hard at work putting together a slate of candidates for the upcoming NWACA board election. It will soon be time to say goodbye to some longstanding, super hardworking NWACA Board Members. Chris Hajdu, current Vice President, past President, past Sponsorship Chair, History Committee member, etc. will be rolling off the board as per our by-laws which limit board membership to three consecutive two-year terms. Caroline Alexander, Parks Committee Chair, who with former NWACA Board Member, Stephannie Behrens, had the vision for the Murchison Pool Playground (among other things), will also be leaving the board. In addition, we will say goodbye to Tracey Fine, who has chaired the July 4th Freedom Festival, and to Roger Bolick, Parks Committee member and our go-to truck guy for NWACA events. Vicki DeWeese, who strongly believes in the term limits set forth in NWACA by-laws, will be stepping down as the Board's current President. NWACA members, when you receive your electronic ballot in April, please vote for new Board members. Election results will be announced at our annual meeting in May, the new board will begin work this summer and hold its first meeting in August.

NWACA Special Projects Grants. If you have ideas for neighborhood projects, send them to us before March 31st. For more information, see the article in this issue, consult our website, or email us at: nwacainfo@gmail.com. Past projects include contributing to development of Doss Soccer Fields, helping refurbish Anderson Gym, and providing recycling bins in all NWACA area parks. Eligible projects will be asked to present their ideas at our April board meeting; funding for accepted projects will be available in June.

Neighborhood Watch. We hope you were able to join us at our Crime Prevention meeting on February 19th. If you missed it, please contact our Neighborhood Watch Committee Chair, Connie Lundgren, at nwacainfo@gmail.com. She can set you up with all the necessary materials to be a block captain, so you can be part of the crime solution.

It's Spring and time to play outside! The Loewy Family Playground ribbon cutting will take place on Thursday, March 12th at 12:30 p.m. Please join us as we celebrate this great new addition to our neighborhood, adjacent to Murchison Pool. Thanks to many neighborhood donors including the Loewy Family who helped us across the finish line. Please come thank Caroline, Stephannie, our donors, and the Austin Parks Foundation for their commitment to our kids! (See a full list of donors

inside this issue.)

Time for Spring Cleaning? Members, please plan to attend the NWACA spring recycling event in April to recycle your electronics and Styrofoam; we'll have the date in our next newsletter. Not a member yet, you can join at the event! Our \$25 annual dues provide access to weekly NWACA communications, the NWACA Facebook page, two recycling events, and the annual neighborhood garage sale. Membership dues also help fund NWACA events open to the entire neighborhood such as the biggest and best Fourth of July parade in the city of Austin, our fabulous fall NWACA Neighborhood National Night Out that honors our first responders, and our fun, family-friendly spring party. Moreover, your dues also help fund important committee work dealing with wildfire prevention, zoning, transportation, trees, the environment, and wildlife.

Save the Date!

Please join us for our fun, family-friendly event on Sunday, April 26th from 4 to 6 p.m. in Austin Oaks. The party will be under the beautiful oak trees on the shore of the creek between the Whitney and Travis Buildings, with parking on the upper level near the Travis Building on Executive Center Drive (one block east of Wood Hollow, and one block south of Spicewood Springs Road). We'll have food, bands, and games, and we're working on including an art/jewelry show. If you'd like to participate, or know someone who would, please contact Vicki DeWeese at: nwacainfo@gmail.com.

NWACA Annual Meeting. Our annual meeting will take place May 6th at 6:30 p.m. in Huffman Hall at St. Matthew's Episcopal Church. We will have presentations from

- the City of Austin Forest Health Coordinator
- Austin Watershed Protection Department representatives who will educate us on new flood plain maps
- Austin Fire Department personnel who will present information on wildfire risks in our area (They'll bring their wildfire simulation table, too!)
- Austin Police Department personnel and the Precinct 2 Travis County Constable, who will discuss crime in our area
- Capital Metro representatives who will talk about Project Connect
- District 10 Council Member Alison Alter
- AISD District 4 Trustee Kristin Ashy
- Various NWACA committee chairs

In addition, we will introduce the incoming NWACA 2020-2022 Board of Directors.

Key Contacts

Austin Citywide Information Center.....512-974-2000 or 311
Emergency, Police..... 911
Non-emergency (coyote sightings, compliance issues) 311
To check status, go to: <http://www.austintexas.gov/department/myaustincodestatus>
APD District Representative,
Officer Darrell Grayson...512-974-5242
District 10 Councilmember, Alison Alter.....512-978-2110
Enroll in the District 10 monthly newsletter:
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Julie DePalma, Treasurer

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| • Ruven Brooks | • Mike Polston |
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| • Charlie Galvin | • Christopher Roddy |
| • Richard Grayum | • Teri Schock |
| • Bridget Keating | • Julie Waidelich |
| • Connie Lundgren | • Monique Wright |

Each of the Board members can be reached at:
nwacainfo@gmail.com

The NWACA Board meets on the 2nd Tuesday 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 put you on the agenda.

NWACA is bordered on the north by US Highway 183 (Research Boulevard), on the west by Loop 360, on the south by RM 2222, and on the east by Mopac (Loop 1)

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New to the Neighborhood?



If this is your first copy of our newsletter, welcome to the NWACA neighborhood! The map shows our boundaries – Mopac, RM 2222, Loop 360, and US Highway 183 (Research Boulevard). There are about 13,500 households who are your neighbors and are happy you're here!

This newsletter is one way to know what's happening in NWACA, but there's much more. Check out the quick link **For New Neighbors** on the home page at www.nwaca.org and visit our public Facebook page. Use the **Membership** button on the home page, or use the form at the end of this newsletter to become a member of NWACA. Members have access to the weekly **NWACA Notes** and the ability to join the NWACA closed Facebook group, to keep in touch with each other and with the latest news about NWACA.



ARE YOU A NWACA MEMBER?

Receiving the newsletter does not guarantee membership.
Not sure? Visit nwaca.org to confirm!

Here are 5 great reasons to join today!

GREAT NEIGHBORS = GREAT NEIGHBORHOOD
Together, we can continue to do great things for our neighborhood!

STAY INFORMED ABOUT ISSUES THAT AFFECT YOU
We are actively involved in our community and advocate for our residents.

GET TO KNOW YOUR NEIGHBORS

We encourage friendships among residents through our events - July 4th parade, National Night Out, Recycling Collection, Garage Sales, and more!

PROTECT AND IMPROVE OUR COMMUNITY

Learn about fire safety, crime prevention, oak wilt, environmental concerns, park development, wildlife management, zoning/planning, and more!

SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL BUSINESS COMMUNITY

We are deeply invested in building strong relationships within our business network to positively impact our neighborhood.

Together we can make a difference!
JOIN TODAY @ NWACA.ORG/MEMBERS



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NWACA Events CALENDAR

March 1, 2PM

Parks Committee
Biderman's

March 7, 9AM-Noon

It's My Park Day – Starting February 6, register at www.austinparks.org for a limited number of slots for a hike in Stillhouse Hollow Preserve. See article in this newsletter.

*Stillhouse Hollow Nature Preserve,
7810 Sterling Drive*

March 10, 6:30PM-8:30PM

NWACA Board Meeting
Galaxy Cafe

March 12, 12:30PM

Ribbon-cutting for the Loewy Playground
Next to Murchison Pool Park, Hart Lane

March 15, 2PM

Tree and Environment Committee
Epoch Cafe

March 23, 4:30PM

Communications Meeting
Galaxy Cafe

March 24, 5PM

NWACA Zoning and Transportation
Committees Joint Meeting
Temple Beth Shalom, 7300 Hart Lane, r.201

April 5, 2PM

Parks Committee
Biderman's

April 14, 6:30PM-8:30PM

NWACA Board Meeting
Galaxy Cafe

April 18, 12PM-7PM

Earth Day Events
Huston Tillotson University

April 18, 9AM

Earth Day Cleanup of Dry Creek
See Map in Article

April 26, 4PM-6PM

NWACA Concert in the Park
Austin Oaks, between Whitney Building and Travis Building

April 28, 5PM

NWACA Zoning and Transportation
Committees Joint Meeting
Temple Beth Shalom, 7300 Hart Lane, r.201

Inviting NWACA Business Members

— Julie Waidelich

Are you interested in becoming a NWACA Business Member? We are in the process of renewing our business members and encourage local businesses to get involved. As a business member, you will have an incredible opportunity to get involved and network within our community. Please learn more by going to <https://nwaca.org/businessmembers/> or click on the Business Members tab at www.nwaca.org For more information, please contact Julie Waidelich at julieswaidelich@gmail.com.

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100+

NEIGHBORS HELPED

57

NEIGHBORHOOD HEB GROCERY RUNS

112

LOCAL BUSINESSES SUPPORTED



107

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FAMILY BIKE RIDES

4

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Creek Cleanup

— Maura Powers

As we announced in last month's newsletter, NWACA and Keep Austin Beautiful (KAB) are joining forces to clean up a portion of Dry Creek. The cleanup will take place on Keep Austin Beautiful Day, Saturday, April 18, 2020, 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m., in celebration of Earth Day. Learn more about the event and the many organizations that participate citywide at keepaustinbeautiful.org.

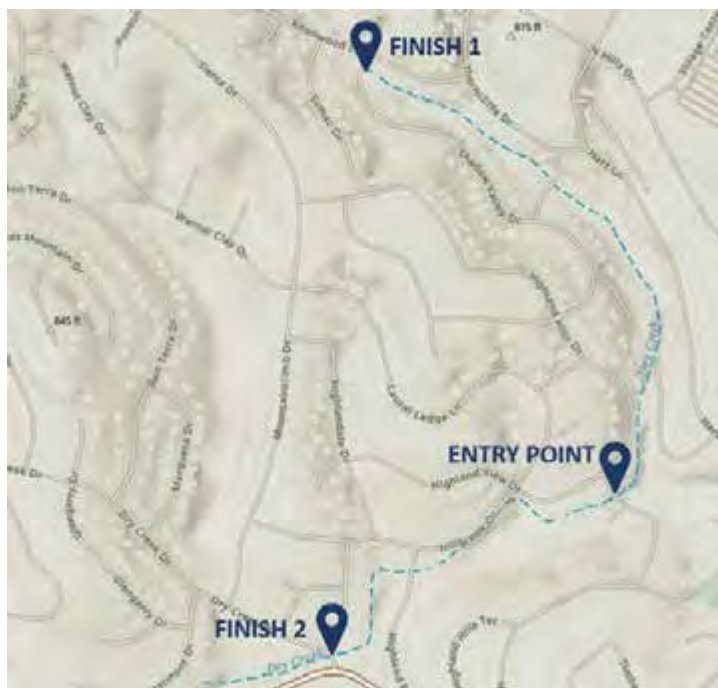
Thanks to those of you who have already indicated an interest in being part of this effort. Official volunteer registration opens March 2 on the KAB website, which will direct you to the GivePulse app for sign-up.

KAB provides the supplies we will need to conduct this creek cleaning, including T-shirts! All you need to do is wear waterproof shoes or boots and clothes that can get dirty.

The entire length of the Dry Creek project area is about one mile. It is anticipated that the area will be divided into two sections for volunteers to cover, with creek entry at Tumbling Circle and Highland Hills Drive. Some of the terrain is too difficult for young children or mobility impaired individuals to navigate.

The project area end points are near 6604 Shadow Valley Drive and near Reid's Cleaners at 3720 Ranch Road 2222. The properties bordering the creek are on the following streets: Knollwood Drive, Thorncliffe Drive, Laurel Valley Drive, Shadow Valley Drive and Cove, Highland Hills Drive, Tumbling Circle, Wendel Cove, Highland View Drive, Highland Pass, and Camino Seco.

We live in a scenic and highly sought-after neighborhood, but our creeks contain trash, limiting their capacity to serve as flood control drains and degrading local and migrating species habitat. As a community, we can do better. If you have questions, would like to help with this effort, or would prefer no creek cleaners come on your property, please contact Maura Powers at maura.powers2007@gmail.com.



Changes Coming to Our Area Schools — Teri Schock

Anderson High School recently announced several staff changes. Associate Principal Megan Tesano is the new Principal at Lamar Middle School. Drew Nichols and Robin Spencer will take on the role of Interim Associate Principal, while Robin Spencer is Interim Assistant Principal.

Murchison Middle School is no longer going to allow the 8th grade tradition of “kill the hill.” The tradition, which started many years ago, occurs during the last week of school in May or June. Students gather at the Murchison football field around the midnight hour. Last year, students and/or other attendees caused a significant amount of damage to the football field and its surroundings, which resulted in the decision to discontinue this informal tradition.

Also, at Murchison Middle School, Rian Evans has been named 7th Grade Assistant Principal Administrative Substitute. His first official day was February 17, 2020. Mr. Evans has been a long-term administrative substitute with AISD at the elementary and middle school levels. He previously served as the Interim Principal at Lamar Middle School.

Megan Tesano has been appointed by AISD's Board of Trustees as Principal of Lamar Middle School. Ms. Tesano is currently the Academy Director at Anderson High School.

This spring/summer, construction to complete improvements approved under the 2017 Bond Program will begin at Hill Elementary School. Hill has a budget of \$17,783,000 for these improvements.

An update on the construction at Doss Elementary can be seen in the accompanying diagram.

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Doss Elementary School (182014)
Weekly Progress Report, January 31st, 2020

PVC roof membrane installation in progress.

East billboard sheathing in progress.

Air cooled liquid chillers set in final location.

Window installation and waterproofing in progress.

This Week's Activities:

- Area C stair installation
- Level 1, 2, & 3 framing and sheathing
- Level 3 area B & C SOMD pour
- OH MEP rough-in on level 1, 2, & 3
- PVC roofing membrane
- Level 1 stone installation
- Basketball court concrete pour
- Exterior waterproofing
- Exterior window frame installation

Upcoming Activities:

- Curtainwall installation
- Framing and sheathing soffits
- Continue OH MEP rough-in on level 1, 2 & 3
- Spiral stair installation
- Kitchen equipment installation
- Kitchen sheetrock
- Form, reinforce, and pour sidewalks
- Form, reinforce, and pour stage slab
- Form, reinforce, and pour cistern pad

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NORTHWEST HILLS AND WESTOVER HILLS MARKET REPORT UPDATE

CLOSED SALES **11**



AVERAGE SALES PRICE
\$848,622

12

NEW LISTINGS

MONTHS OF
INVENTORY **1.2**

SALE PRICE
PER SQFT
\$349



ACTIVE LISTINGS **13**



SOLD PRICE TO
LIST PRICE RATIO
99.4%



DAYS ON MARKET **26**

SOURCE: ABOR MLS INCLUDING DATA FROM JANUARY 1-31, 2020 FOR SINGLE FAMILY HOMES. BASED ON NWACA BOUNDARIES: MOPAC/HWY 360/2222/SPICEWOODSPRINGS



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NWACA Project Reserve Fund Inviting Applications

— NWACA Finance Committee

The Project Reserve Fund was established by the NWACA Board to help fund special projects in our neighborhood. Projects must benefit our community and be publicly accessible.

During the past few years, NWACA funded the purchase of five recycling containers for use at our local parks, contributed funds for the development of a new soccer field behind Doss Elementary, helped refurbish the Anderson High School Gym, and provided funding for Constable patrol in our neighborhood.

Any group or individual can apply for Project Reserve funds; just download an application online at www.nwaca.org - use the Get Involved tab and look for *Project Reserve Fund*.

Submit applications, drawings, pictures, and estimated project costs to: nwacainfo@gmail.com or by mail to: NWACA, P.O. Box 26654, Austin, TX 78755. Project applications for spring/summer grants will be accepted until **March 31, 2020**; finalists will be asked to describe their projects at the April 14, 2020, NWACA Board meeting. Finalists will be notified regarding acceptance and funds distributed as early as the month following project acceptance. The number of projects funded is at the discretion of the Board. If you have questions about the program, email those to nwacainfo@gmail.com

Some applicants may choose to submit an idea in concert with the City of Austin Neighborhood Partnering Program (see details at: <http://www.austintexas.gov/neighborhoodpartnering>). Such applications must be submitted by October 1st or June 1st for their cost-sharing funding cycle. Other applicants may choose to team with the Austin Parks Foundation (see details at: <http://austinparks.org/tag/grants/>). Applications for different types of grants have different deadlines.

The Project Reserve Fund is just one of many ways that NWACA serves our community. These monies are available because of the careful management of NWACA funds over the past several years. Please help us to continue our work by joining NWACA or renewing your membership today.

Business Spotlight: Sonja A. Kever Fine Art

— Janice Green



She starts with the eyes then gradually moves toward the canvas edges. Faces fascinate her. She captures the subject's essence in oils painted in the detailed style of classical realism. Sonja Kever's Fine Art Studio in her Northwest Hills home is full of light and very functional, carrying the vague scent of linseed oil, with paintings and sketches

surrounding her.

Since Sonja was a child, always with sketchpad and pencils in tow, she has gravitated toward the figurative and portraiture. For Sonja, beauty lies in faces and she'd rather focus on noses than trees. She majored in art at the University of Kansas, but for "practical reasons" obtained her degree in fashion merchandising at the University of Missouri. She paused her artistic pursuits to marry and raise two daughters, but in the last fifteen years, she has returned to her creative roots with incredible energy, sparked by a pastel exhibit at a neighborhood church. She began again to study with renown artists and teachers, resulting in her own art being published and acknowledged with awards and accolades. Never did she stop "seeing paintings" as she strolled streets and other public forums, asking people for permission to photograph them.

Sonja is known for her 32 portraits of Austin's people experiencing homelessness. She wanted to make them visible. During one year of intense work, she cleared her studio of all paintings and surrounded herself with only their images and humanity. It was an "exhilarating" immersion. These "Street Stories" were auctioned with the substantial

(Continued on Page 10)



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(Continued from Page 8)

proceeds donated to organizations serving the homeless population.

Now Sonja Kever's passion is pet portraiture – understandable since we regard our pets as members of our families, each having a distinct personality and history. People commission Sonja to paint a pet portrait for a variety of reasons; for example, they want to memorialize a beloved pet or give a special gift. Her process begins by spending time with the owners and pets, which culminates in a photo shoot. She and the pet owner review the photos and decide the painting's size, pose, and whether it has a full-body or head image.

Sonja looks and listens carefully for the pet's expressions that have meaning to the owner. Is the dog a couch potato or vibrant and active? How do the owners want to remember their pet? Hurricane was depicted with the New York Times at his feet because he fetches his owners' newspaper daily. Wyatt was painted perched on his favorite outdoor bench. Watson was pictured with grass under her feet because she loved spending time in parks. While she paints, Sonja sends progress pictures for feedback. As with a person's portrait, Sonja wants to accurately portray how the pet is seen both visually and emotionally.

She is enthusiastic about describing her pet portraits: "A happy business ... nothing like it!" The exquisite details in Sonja's paintings are stunning and visible on her website where each picture speaks a thousand words.

Contact: sonjaakever.com; sonjaakever@gmail.com or 512.413.3863



Kate Winkler Dawson

Revisiting Kate Winkler Dawson, we find her still taking long walks in our neighborhood,

volunteering at her children's schools, and writing at our Epoch Coffee. Her New York Times bestseller, *Death in the Air: The True Story of a Serial Killer, London's Great Smog and the Strangling of a City*, (released in 2017, reviewed here last year) has now been optioned for television development and February 11 marked the release of her new book, *American Sherlock: Murder, Forensics and the Birth of American CSI*.

In Kate's own words: "My father was a criminal law professor at the University of Texas at Austin for almost two decades. We both started teaching at the age of 28—he at UT and I at Fordham University in New York. In 2003 he decided to start a clinic to investigate cases of innocence, aptly titled the Actual Innocence Clinic."

"After working as a writer and producer at WCBS and ABC News Radio in New York, I settled back home in Austin in 2005. When my father died, I became involved in the clinic and organized a sort of metaphorical bridge between UT's journalism school and the law school class."

"I co-taught the clinic for several years. My journalism students learned about investigating cases, and law students learned basic journalism skills. I escorted them into prison to interview prisoners. The students bristled at the sign that read: 'We will shoot all hostages past this point.' We went over case files, searched court records, and filed public information requests. It was one of my favorite classes."

American Sherlock takes place in Berkeley, California, 1933. "In a lab filled with curiosities—beakers, microscopes, Bunsen burners, and hundreds upon hundreds of books—sat an investigator who would go on to crack at least two thousand cases in his forty-year career. Known as the 'American Sherlock Holmes,' Edward Oscar Heinrich was one of America's greatest—and first—forensic scientists, with an uncanny knack for finding clues, establishing evidence, and deducing answers with a skill that seemed almost supernatural."

"Heinrich was one of the nation's first expert witnesses, working in a time when the turmoil of Prohibition led to sensationalized crime reporting and only a small, systematic study of evidence. However with his brilliance and commanding presence, in both the courtroom and at crime scenes, Heinrich spearheaded the invention of a myriad of new forensic tools that police still use today, including blood spatter analysis, ballistics, lie-detector tests, and the use of fingerprints as courtroom evidence. His work, though not without its serious (some would say fatal) flaws, changed the course of American criminal investigation."

A combination of biography and true crime, the book is both entertaining and erudite. Brilliant minds and clashing personalities launch us through a suspenseful detective story, a compelling character study, a fascinating slice of investigative history, 1910-1953.

Once again, Kate Winkler Dawson's unflagging diligence as a researcher, her poetic phrasing as a wordsmith, and her brilliance as a storyteller, make history sing with excitement.

American Sherlock: Murder, Forensics and the Birth of American CSI is available at Amazon, Barnes and Noble, and our favorite, local bookstore where Kate recently spoke: Book People.



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History Interview: Balcones Hills Women's Club

– Carol Jones

Multiple sources made this article happen. One person, Jessica Ray, first mentioned the club to me on one of the neighborhood Facebook pages. She led me to Beth Busse, who arranged an interview with Dorothy Springs. I met with Beth and Dorothy, and they gave me a typed history of the club that someone else had written. This history is what I drew from.

The Balcones Hills Women's Club (BHCW) will be celebrating its 50th anniversary this year! The club was formed in 1970 among the housewives who lived on Greenslope and Hillrise Drives and some of the other surrounding streets. At the beginning, dues were \$1 a year. Their bylaws state that "The purpose of the club is to promote sociability and friendliness in our neighborhood. The second purpose is to carry out a benevolent project."

In the mid-1960s, Bob Connolly developed Balcones Hills and built the first houses on Greenslope Drive. At that time, Spicewood Springs Road was a small narrow 2-lane country road. At the time, the new houses there were way out in the middle of the country, far from town.

Then in 1967, a momentous thing happened, changing the neighborhood forever. International Business Machines Corporation (IBM) opened a plant for manufacturing Selectric typewriters in Northwest Austin, near where Nordstrom is in the Domain. IBM brought many families to Austin from Kentucky, Massachusetts, and other areas. These newcomers were homesick for their far-away families, so the BHCW provided a new set of people with whom to form familial bonds.

The northerners and the native Texans had to get accustomed to each other's customs and sayings. One new tradition was Memorial Day picnics with grilled hot dogs and hamburgers, held on one family's front lawn. They used barricades to close off Greenslope Drive, and they held sack races and balloon stomps. Halloween became a huge production, with spook houses and costume parades. The kids were gathered into age groups and taken around the neighborhood for trick or treating.

When the BHCW began their benevolent projects, they would sponsor families for Christmas, buying clothes, toys, and a turkey for them. Eventually it evolved to donating money and items to SAFE Alliance, a merger of Austin Children's Center and SafePlace.

The club also became involved in development plans in the area. When Spicewood Springs Road was split to include two lanes in each direction, the Greenslope and Hillrise neighbors were very active in opposing developers' plans to create large multistory buildings in the center area. The current single story, unobtrusive office buildings in the middle of Spicewood Springs Road are a direct result of dedicated neighborhood activism.

As Northwest Hills grew, the BHCW Board thought about expanding the club. But a simple logistical problem prevented this. Most family living rooms were not large enough to handle bigger groups. In the early days, people had to sit on the floor at meetings, because so many people attended. So, the Board decided to keep the club limited in size.

The club members had monthly meetings at each other's houses, and sometimes had events at Villa Capri on East Ave (now IH-35). Over the years they took lots of pictures at their events. These have been gathered into a small mountain of scrapbooks. The current President of Balcones Hills Women's Club, Beth Busse, shared some of their marvelous scrapbooks with me. It is clear to see the fun and warmth among the neighbors in the photos, and in their handmade invitations. In one of the scrapbooks, I found this poem:

*What a special group of women we are
Our members are diverse, but geographically not far
Balcones Hills Women's Club meets monthly to share
What's happening around us with neighbors we care
Home projects, summer vacations we all want to know
Over food, dessert and good fellowship we sow
So please join us for another grand affair
Dresses, pants, or casual clothes are just fine to wear.*

It was delightful speaking with Beth Busse and Dorothy Springs about the Balcones Hills Women's Club! If you have memories to share, please contact nwacainfo@gmail.com



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Conversation with Officer Darrell Grayson – Connie Lundgren

I recently had an opportunity to sit down with Officer Darrell Grayson, who is the District Representative (DR) for the Baker Sector, which includes Central West Austin neighborhoods. He is our Northwest Hills liaison to the Austin Police Department (APD). District Representatives are officers who help the community solve neighborhood problems. They can assist with patrolling, attend neighborhood association meetings and school functions to educate residents about crime and safety, and have myriad other responsibilities. If you have attended any NWACA events, you have probably met Officer Grayson.

How long have been the DR for our area?

Around 11 years.

Have you noticed an increase in crime since beginning this assignment?

Yes.

To what do you attribute this increase?

Population growth and an increase in the homeless population in residential areas.

What is the most prevalent type of crime in our neighborhood?

Burglary of vehicles and theft from garages.

Is this organized gang-related crime or is it minors out having

fun?

After speaking to some of the patrol officers, I would say a little bit of both. I wouldn't call them a gang, but I would say they are organized in their efforts.

Is there an increase in crime when special events like SXSW occur in Austin? What kind of impact does it have?

Because visitors to Austin are not aware of traditional crime areas, they can be caught unaware. We also see criminals come into town from out of the area preying on visitors and residents alike.

What is the greatest concern you have for our area, and what can residents do to protect themselves and their property?

Any criminal activity in general is a concern. Vehicle burglaries and vehicle theft can lead to home burglaries, stolen guns, and theft of credit cards and personal information to be used later. Residents should get in the habit of being aware of what is going on around them, report suspicious activity (vehicles, persons), form neighborhood watch groups, and communicate with each other and with me.

Are burglaries and thefts taking place all over the city or just in our area?

(Continued on Page 14)



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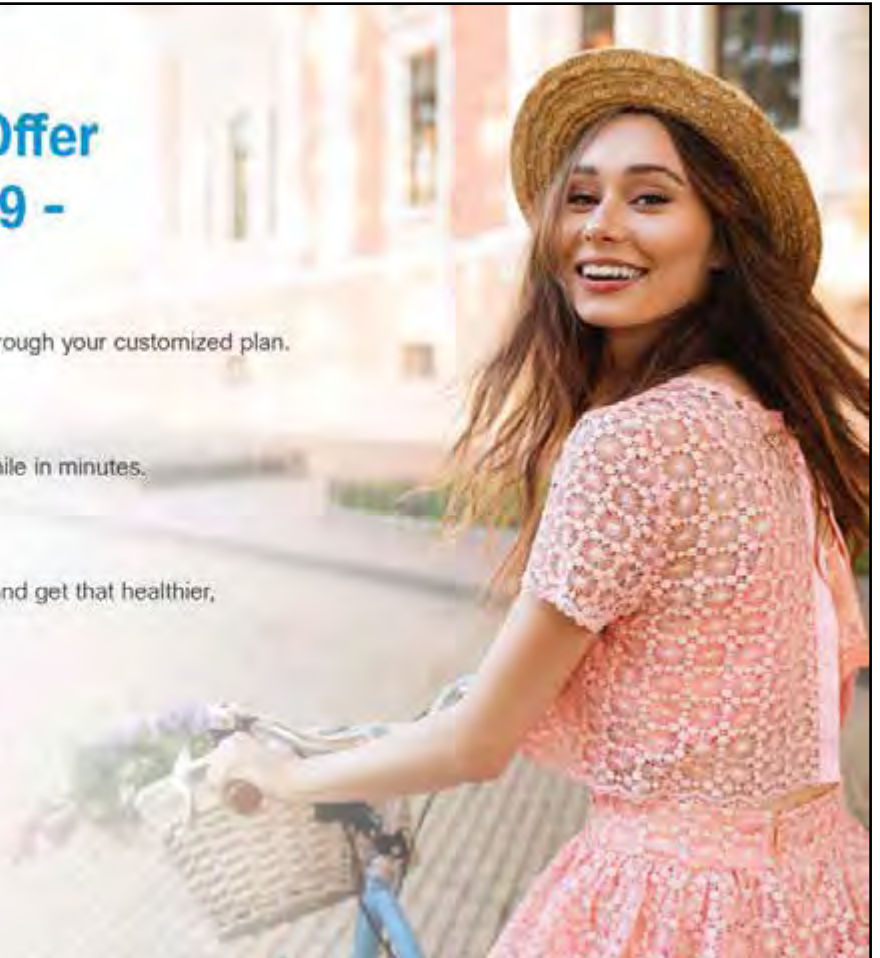
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(Continued from Page 13)

These problems are all over the city and in greater numbers than what you see in Northwest Hills.

What advice do you have for our residents?

Lock your doors, keep valuables hidden, close the garage door at night or when you are not using it, lock the door leading from the garage into the house, leave a few exterior lights on at night, and try to get to know the officers patrolling the area.

For a list of frequently asked questions of APD personnel, visit: austintexas.gov/departments/police/faq.

Recycling Right: Plastic Bags in Blue Bins

— Joanie Arrott



Over the several past months, we've observed plastic bags in curbside recycling bins. They're obviously being used to collect recyclables in the home and then taken out for recycling pickup. While you may think your recycling efforts are commendable, the truth is that you're causing more damage than helping. There are two likely outcomes for your bag of recyclables—it's discarded as trash or it jams up the sorting equipment at the processing facility.

Recycling right every time ensures your efforts result in the maximum impact. Plastic bags, plastic film, and other wrappers do not belong in your curbside recycling bin. Instead, empty your bag of collected recyclables directly into your blue bin, and throw that bag in the trash. (Note that clear plastic bags can be recycled at your local grocery store.) Better yet, consider using a plastic tub or wastebasket in your house to collect your recyclables instead. More information about proper recycling, reuse, and composting can be found on the city's website: <http://austintexas.gov/what-do-i-do>.





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Beware of Nandina: It has Cyanide!

— Maura Powers



Nandina domestica, also grandiosely known as Sacred (or Heavenly) Bamboo, is an invasive ornamental plant from East Asia. [1] It became popular here in the last century, before its toxic effects were well known. Some believed it would provide winter food for birds, but it turned out

that the entire plant contains cyanide, with a high concentration in the beautiful red berries.[2] These poisonous berries are practically indistinguishable from the nutritious berries of the native yaupon and possumhaw hollies. Now, nandina has spread prolifically throughout our entire neighborhood.

To their detriment, birds and other animals have not evolved enough to discriminate between invasive nandina and healthful native berries. The poison in ingested nandina berries attacks internal organs and is often lethal to birds, cats, and small dogs.[3] It can also make young children sick.

Native plant societies recommend removing all fruiting nandina from your property and if possible, replace them with a native holly or any other beneficial native plants. Go to <https://texasinvasives.org/> for advice on how to best remove the bushes. The next-best option is to cut the berry branches as they appear and dispose of them in your trash bin, to ensure they don't get spread further.

The City of Austin, along with Texas A&M AgriLife Extension, publishes a concise guide to Central Texas native and adapted landscape plants in which Bush Germander, Texas Sage and Barbados Cherry are recommended replacements for nandina.[4]



For those landscapers who still like the nandina look, nurseries now sell "fruitless" or sterile varieties that do not produce blossoms or berries. Unfortunately, it is still possible to buy the fruiting nandina from nurseries unconcerned about its toxic properties.

[1] "Nandina Berries Kill Birds Popular garden shrub berries are toxic to birds and other animals", by Jerry W. Davis, Audubon Arkansas, 28 January 2016. <https://ar.audubon.org/news/nandina-berries-kill-birds>. See also Wikipedia on nandina.

[2] Toxicity Due to nandina: <https://vet.uga.edu/toxicity-due-to-nandina-domestica-in-cedar-waxwings-bombycilla-cedroru/>

[3] Nandina Poisoning in Dogs: <https://wagwalking.com/condition/nandina-poisoning>

[4] <https://www.austintexas.gov/departments/grow-green/plant-guide>

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Understanding City Code: Detention Ponds

— Alan Carson

You may have seen what appear to be empty fishponds around Austin. There is one in front of Walgreen's at Mesa Drive and Spicewood Springs Road. Actually, they are part of Austin's stormwater management system, and there are over 3700 of them within the city and its extra territorial jurisdiction (ETJ). Their purpose is to detain stormwater for a short amount of time and then slowly release it downstream, thus reducing flooding of streets and creeks. Water collects in the ponds during a rainstorm in minutes, but then it is released downstream over a period of hours.

Runoff rates for developed property are much higher than undeveloped, comparing areas containing buildings, impervious concrete, and asphalt to areas of grass and forest. In 1986, Austin adopted a comprehensive watershed ordinance that applied to all new development, and it includes detention ponds.

Does your property require such a pond? The answer is no if it is zoned for single family (SF-1, SF-2, or SF-3), does not have impervious cover exceeding 45% of the area, is not over one acre in area, and does not receive significant off-site drainage. If a Texas licensed professional engineer certifies that stormwater flows will not cause any additional adverse flooding, you may also not require a pond, if the city concurs. Otherwise, you will require an engineer-designed pond.

For more information, search for Austin Drainage Criteria Manual using your web browser.

If you have a question or concern about a City code that we haven't yet covered, send us email at nwacainfo@gmail.com, and we'll have Mr. Carson check it out. It may become the topic of an upcoming article.

Learn More and Help Prevent Wildlife Damage

— Joyce Statz

As we've seen and heard in news reports the last several weeks, residents in our part of Austin must become serious about mitigating wildfire-prone conditions. Our dense housing in greenspaces with nearby steep slopes is at high risk. There are several things you can do:

- Read and learn more in the February issue of the AFD Wildfire Division newsletter: <https://mailchi.mp/609d5315c989/from-cedar-fever-to-shaded-fuel-breaks?e=998618a101>
- Sign up for future issues at <https://mailchi.mp/aa701d8ad452/afd-wildfire-division-newsletter>
- Attend the free annual public Wildfire Prevention Symposium on April 17. Get a registration link here: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/firewise-2020-and-beyond-wildfire-symposium-tickets-83050814221>
- Get in-depth training and, if you wish, become one of our wildfire risk evaluators. NWACA needs more people who can help with the free home wildfire risk evaluations in our neighborhood. If you are interested, email joyce.statz@gmail.com

The NWACA web site has a large amount of information about wildfire in urban areas, advice on how to harden your home, and pointers to other web sites for more information. Use the Firewise tab at www.nwaca.org to get started.

Sign up for your free home wildfire risk evaluation. A team of trained evaluators will walk around your home with you to identify where you have taken smart steps to be prepared as well as identify risks that still exist. Go to the Be Involved tab at www.nwaca.org to sign up.



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NWACA thanks members who generously contributed to the 4th of July Parade Fund, the Park Fund, and the Constable Fund, between January 15, 2020 and February 15, 2020.

Donations to the 4th of July Parade Fund help NWACA to host the best 4th of July parade in Austin! The Park Fund helps us do events in our parks and revitalize parks in the NWACA area. The Constable Fund helps us provide the patrol activities of the Travis County Constable.

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- Gail Sneden
- Sam and Nancy Sutherland
- Caroline Tang
- Elaine Thomson
- Henry Tippie
- Mary Uren
- Anne Wheeler
- (and apologies to anyone whose donation we might have missed!)

Help Keep Our Wildlife Wild!

NWACA advises residents to NOT feed wildlife. Many well-intentioned individuals do so out of concern for the wildlife they are feeding. However, intentional and unintentional feeding of wildlife attracts predators to the wildlife being fed. Additionally, an association with humans and food contributes directly to habituated behaviors of animals like coyotes and feral hogs, which then become aggressive in pursuit of a food or prey attractant. Please eliminate food attractants from your yards for the safe enjoyment of our streets, parks and playgrounds for neighbors and pets.



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PSA from Austin Transportation Department – Illegal Parking in Bike Lanes

Austin Transportation has begun assigning parking enforcement officers to ticket and tow vehicles illegally parked in designated bike-only lanes. The City plans to expand enforcement in the coming months to improve safety for all travelers.

“Parking in a bike-only lane compels cyclists to enter general travel lanes, which greatly increases the chances of a deadly or serious crash,” said Robert Spillar, P.E., Director for Austin Transportation. “Keeping our bike lanes clear makes our streets safer for both cyclists and motorists alike.”

Residents can call 3-1-1 or use the 3-1-1 mobile app to report cars parked in designated bike lanes. Austin Transportation's Parking Division will dispatch enforcement officers to locations of reported violations and officers will issue citations and tow illegally parked vehicles.

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