

# THE RIVER REVIEW



March 2020

Volume 14, Issue 3

*Photo by Mia Sanchez*



NEWS FOR THE RESIDENTS OF RIVER PLACE

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# IMPORTANT NUMBERS

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Hudson Bend Fire and EMS	
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Information .....	512-266-2533

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Cedar Park High School .....	512-570-1200
Vandegrift High School .....	512-570-2300
Four Points Middle School .....	512-570-3700
River Place Elementary .....	512-570-6900

## UTILITIES

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City of Austin Electric .....	512-494-9400
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Custom Service .....	1-800-700-2443
Emergencies .....	512-370-8609
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# ARTICLE INFO

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The River Review is mailed monthly to all River Place residents. Residents, community groups, churches, etc. are welcome to include information about their organizations in the newsletter. Personal news for the Stork Report, Teenage Job Seekers, recipes, special celebrations, and birthday announcements are also welcome.

To submit an article for the River Review please email it to [riverreview@peelinc.com](mailto:riverreview@peelinc.com). The deadline is the 15th of the month prior to the issue.

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# IN AND AROUND RIVER PLACE

**Officials Concerned That Four Points Area Ripe For Wildfires:** The Austin City Council is developing a new wildfire prevention code designed to help reduce the risk of wildfires. It is scheduled to be introduced sometime in March. According to a Leslee Bassman article in Four Points News, the program, costing \$1.65 million, may include “regulations governing hardening, or improving existing buildings and homes with ember-resistant materials on areas such as roofs, eaves, soffits and decks; choosing fire-resistant products for new construction; having a plan for escape; and modifying wildfire fuels to create a defensible space that includes the first 30’ of space around a structure.”

It seems that the basic concept is to create more fire resistant materials to build with while also allowing for space barriers around construction so that fires start and spread less easily. Officials note that our exposure bears some similarities to conditions in California.

Why are we at such risk? Officials point to our weather conditions like winds, droughts and high temperatures. We also have wildland fuels like grass, brush and juniper, which are explosive. And we have many homes built along ridges where the topography drops down into these fuel ridden areas. A community refuge area was one solution suggested-perhaps the River Place Country Club golf course, for example.

Let’s all stay aware and try to be cognizant of wildfire prevention and solutions for escaping should we experience such an event in our area.

**Fees for River Place Trail Access Still Being Charged:** For those of us concerned, yes, the non-resident cost to walk the trail is still \$10 and is still being charged. Along with covering trail maintenance and clean up, it serves to reduce the traffic and parking down by the pond and Woodlands Park.

Also, while it seems to be basically a break even proposition, the benefits of having a patrolling Constable in the neighborhood are significant, even if the HOA may have to pitch in a bit occasionally to cover the overall costs. Many of the guests are not from River Place so the presence of the constable provides a warning to any who might be up to trouble or mischief.

Despite the fee, the trail still attracts many hikers out for some good exercise and a fun weekend morning. Overall, the current arrangement seems to be working!

## HOMEOWNER'S CORNER

### 5 HIDDEN DANGERS THAT MIGHT BE LURKING IN YOUR HOME

#### 1. Mold

Though mold isn't a pathogen (a disease-causing agent), it's still an allergen that you don't want hanging around your house.

"When people say they have a mold allergy or they have a mold condition, it's an allergic reaction," says Peter Duncanson, director of business operations for disaster restoration specialists ServiceMaster Restore. "[Molds] generally considered toxic are ones like stachybotrys, which are black in color — but not all black molds cause the same reactions."

Molds, including black molds like stachybotrys, form if moisture concentrates in an area where a food source is present, such as skin cells or paper. You know you have mold growing in your home if you smell an earthy, musty scent. Though mold exposure won't severely harm the average person, repeated exposure is not advised for your health.

"The buildup [of mold] causes a more violent reaction, and those reactions are generally respiratory in nature and pulmonary, so you have trouble breathing," Duncanson explains. "A very severe reaction to mold can be anaphylactic — you can't breathe, and you go into an anaphylactic shock."

Luckily, you can prevent mold by keeping your home dry, running the exhaust fan when taking a shower, and purchasing a dehumidifier for the basement in the summer.

If you do find black mold (or what's commonly referred to as toxic mold) in your home, don't panic. Contact a professional who can safely remove the mold and eliminate the water source feeding it.

#### 2. Exposed asbestos

Asbestos was a commonly used building material up until the mid-20th century, when it was determined to be a very dangerous carcinogen that causes mesothelioma cancer. Though builders aren't legally allowed to use asbestos in building materials and other products anymore, traces of it are often found in older homes.

"Asbestos is not harmful to you if you don't disturb it," Duncanson says. "The problem arises when you start cutting or doing demolition and asbestos becomes airborne."

It may be tempting to DIY an open-concept living space in your vintage bungalow, but if your home was built before the 1980s, seek the advice of a professional before you start knocking down any walls. The latency period of mesothelioma cancer can be years, so problems may not arise until much later in your life.

Handling asbestos is a dangerous task, and professionals have the equipment to remove it safely without risking your health.

#### 3. Carbon monoxide poisoning

Carbon monoxide poisoning, which kills thousands of people each year, occurs when there's too much carbon monoxide in your

blood. This can result in tissue damage or death.

Improperly ventilated appliances like stoves, water heaters and gas appliances can release carbon monoxide. Improperly cleaned chimneys cause smoke to circulate throughout the home — this can also give you carbon monoxide poisoning, according to Andy Kerns, a home maintenance researcher.

To protect yourself from carbon monoxide poisoning, properly ventilate appliances and clean heat sources like wood-burning stoves every year before use. Call a professional if you have any doubts about the safety and security of your appliances or ventilation within your home.

#### 4. Fire

Seven people in the U.S. die each day from house fires, according to the National Fire Prevention Association. Most of these house fires are the result of normal, everyday use of appliances, candles and cooking equipment. The most surprising fire starter, however, lives in the laundry room.

"Dryer lint can collect in the dryer and become an electrical fire starter," says Kerns. "Dryers are the number one cause of house fires."

To prevent house fires, ensure that your appliances have the right rating before you plug them into outlets. Always extinguish candles after usage and carefully watch the stove when cooking.

#### 5. Slippery bathroom surfaces

The bathroom is often ranked as the most dangerous room in the home. Wet, slippery surfaces often lead to falls — and result in anything from embarrassment to a fractured hip.

"Bathtubs, especially, are an area where you can fall and hit your head," notes Kerns. "A lot of people get pretty severely injured in the bathroom, particularly when they're older."

As we get older, bathroom safety gets more pertinent, so it's a great idea to install things like grab bars or a walk-in tub for ease of use as you age. Be sure to wipe down any wet surfaces, and place bath mats by the sink and tub to prevent bathroom falls.

#### Keep tabs on your home

Taking the time to slow down and keep your home safe is essential for any homeowner. Give your home a monthly, semiannual and annual checkup to keep it in tip-top condition for years to come.

"Given how busy our lives are, and all the different things we have to keep track of in our digital environments, it's harder and harder to keep some of the physical maintenance issues top of mind. I think a lot of people tend to let things go until there's a problem," says Kerns. "Don't leave it up to your memory. Have a good, reliable organizational system that keeps you up to date." (From Zillow, Jamie Birdwell-Branson.)

# RIVER REVIEW

## RIVER PLACE (MAYBE NOT SO) CLEVER QUIPS OF THE MONTH

My therapist: "Do you feel dominated by your wife?" My wife: "No, he doesn't."

I am only one step away from being rich. All I need now is the money. What do you call someone who can't stick to a diet? A deserter.

I always find that the second day of a diet is the easiest because I've given up by then.

When people unfriend me, I always wonder which post was their last straw?

Cop: "Do you know how fast you were going?" Me: "I kinda feel like that's your job." Also me: "Where do you go to pay fines?"

Whoever said "all you need is love" has clearly never had warm peach cobbler with ice cream.

I don't know what the secret to happiness is but I'm pretty sure it's not laundry.

Manager: "I expect a lot more of you." Me: "You should lower your expectations."

I guess bringing a harmonica to a job interview was a bad idea.

As I was getting into bed she said, "You're drunk!" I said, "How do you know?" She said, "You live next door."

What do you call a pig who knows karate? Pork Chop.

During the day, I don't believe in ghosts. At night, I'm a little more open-minded.

What kind of a train eats too much? A chew chew train.

Follow your heart but always take your brain along, just in case.

You are never too old to set another goal or to dream a new dream.

*C. S. Lewis*

Nothing is really over until the moment you stop trying. *Brian Dyson*

A certain way to succeed is always to just try one more time. *Thomas Edison*

## Heads Up...From Around the City

### Emergency Management, City of Austin AGENCY Emergency Preparedness Calendar

Did you know Austin Emergency Management produces an annual Emergency Preparedness Calendar? Each month highlights different emergency preparedness and safety awareness tips from departments across the City of Austin. Pick up your FREE calendar today at any local Austin Library branch!

### Social Media Administrator, Travis County TX, Travis County AGENCY

#### Coyotes Activity in Area: Pet Safety and Hazing

During this time of the year, coyotes may be more active in search for mates. Coyotes are typically most active at dawn and dusk, though they may be seen hunting or traveling during daytime hours. We want to share space with coyotes, but not time.

Hazing is a process that helps shape coyote behavior and encourages them to avoid contact with people and pets. It reinforces coyotes'

natural wariness without harming them. You can haze by making loud noises and throwing things if needed. It is very important to haze, practice the best pet safety actions, and limit attractants that might draw coyotes and other wildlife in.

The best ways to practice pet safety actions is keep your pets on a leash at all times, be present with small pets while outside, and bring your small cats and dogs inside at night. Please report any concerning activity to 311 so the Wildlife Officer can monitor behavior.

With recent coyote activity in the neighborhood, please visit our website <https://austintexas.gov/departments/coyotes-central-texas> for considerations regarding pet safety, hazing, and attractants.

## St. Patrick's Day: A Brief History

Many of us might be wondering about this day and what happened that made it a day of annual celebration? Well, here's a short synopsis of the person and events that created this holiday.

St. Patrick's Day observes the death of St. Patrick, the patron saint of Ireland. The holiday has evolved into a celebration of Irish culture with parades, special foods, music, dancing, drinking and a whole lot of green.

St. Patrick's Day takes place each year on March 17, the traditional religious feast day of Saint Patrick.

St. Patrick was a fifth-century Romano-British Christian missionary and bishop in Ireland. Known as the "Apostle of Ireland," he is the primary patron saint of Ireland.

The dates of Patrick's life cannot be fixed with certainty but there is broad agreement that he was active as a missionary in Ireland during the fifth century.

Early medieval tradition credited him with being the first bishop of Armagh and Primate of Ireland, and referred to him as the founder of Christianity in Ireland, converting a society practicing a form of Celtic polytheism - and he has been generally so regarded ever since, despite evidence of possible earlier Christian presence in Ireland.

According to the autobiographical *Confessio* of Patrick, when he was about 16, he was captured by Irish pirates from his home in Britain (surprisingly, he wasn't originally Irish) and taken as a slave to Ireland, looking after animals; he lived there for six years before escaping and returning to his family. After becoming a cleric, he returned to northern and western Ireland. In later life, he served as a bishop, but little is known about the places where he worked. Stories must have circulated to make his persona bigger than life. By the seventh century, he had already come to be revered as the patron saint of Ireland.

Saint Patrick's Day is observed on 17 March, the supposed date of his death. It is celebrated inside and outside Ireland as a religious and cultural holiday. In the dioceses of Ireland, it is both a solemnity and a holy day of obligation; it is also a celebration of Ireland itself.

The first St. Patrick's Day parade took place in the United States on March 17, 1762, when Irish soldiers serving in the English military marched through New York City.

More than 100 St. Patrick's Day parades are held across the United States. New York City and Boston are home to the largest celebrations.

**Irish Fun Fact:** Did you know that the President of Ireland, Michael Higgins, has two Bernese Mountain Dogs and keeps one at his side at all times, even when he is speaking publicly?



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## TENNIS TIP OF THE MONTH

### Four Tips for Overall Game Improvement

Recreational players often become frustrated with their tennis games and wonder what they might do to improve. We know that groundstrokes are of utmost importance because they are critical in determining the outcome of most points. We also know that the serve is a stroke that everyone would like to be better.

We all want to hold serve more and be able to come up with a decent serve for critical points. Let's take a quick look and discuss how we might improve our overall tennis game by focusing a bit on these two strokes.

#### Tennis Tips:

**Love the Wall-It Will Help Your Groundstrokes:** Most clubs have a practice wall and most schools have a wall somewhere that you can practice on after hours. We know, it seems boring and monotonous but guess what? It really can improve your groundstrokes. Start up close by hitting a few volleys off the wall. Then, gradually back off, hitting some half volleys to improve your short game.

Lastly, rally against the wall from a half court distance, hitting backhands and forehands, topspin and slice. The ball coming back quickly will help your preparation and footwork. Work up to 50 or more consecutive strokes without interruption. You will find that both your conditioning and your groundstroke consistency will improve.

**Employ the Bounce-Hit to Help Accuracy and Depth:** This approach

was a favorite of one of the all time American professional warriors of the game, Pancho Gonzales, who won the U.S. professional championship in men's tennis eight times. Using a basket of balls and starting from the center of the court at the baseline, drop the ball in front of you and step forward, hitting the would be groundstroke high and deep, down the center of the court. Go for the baseline. Hit 5 forehands and 5 backhands. For more power and control, try to load up that outside leg as you hit, not transferring your weight to the front foot too soon.

This drill is where you improve your form and follow through. Drop the ball in different locations so you have to move, set up and drive through the ball, following through over your shoulder for topspin or across your body for flatter strokes. Take the racquet well back and drive through the ball aggressively.

Next, move over to the sideline corner (either) and do the same, hitting crosscourt to the opposite corner. Hit a couple down the line as well. Switch to the other side and hit 10 more, 5 forehands and 5 backhands. Now move forward and hit 10 from just behind the service line, starting from the middle of the court and then from each side. From these shorter positions you can practice hitting to all positions of the opponent's court. Practice your approach shots. Hit them deep. The short game is so important yet we often forget it or don't get the opportunity to practice it.

**The Next Shot After The Serve:** I think we all know by now that the serve is the one stroke that we have total control over. This is where practice truly does make perfect. Or better anyway. Your serve will improve proportionally to the number of your practice serves. However, when many club players step up to the line to serve, they're most likely going to try for the ace or unreturnable serve. But the ace is overrated!

Even on the pro tour, where the guys and gals are serving 120+ mph with incredible accuracy, 70% of the serves are returned. So, their serve only wins them the point outright about 30% of the time. What that means is, the pros need to be ready for the next shot so they can keep their foot on the gas. The same is true for you. Once you realize this and incorporate this concept into your game, you will find that you will hold serve much more easily. So be ready for that next shot!

**Serve From Different Starting Points:** So you ask, "OK, what can I try?" One suggestion would be to learn to serve from different positions along the baseline. Why might this help? The receiver will have to cope with serves from a variety of angles versus just one, which may cause more missed or weaker returns.

This can be particularly effective in doubles. Your net man can adjust his net position in a variety of ways, depending on where you are serving from, often frustrating the receiver so much that he or she pops up the return for an easy put away. Throw in the Australian serve once in awhile and just watch them scramble!

Improving your groundstrokes and your serve will build the foundational aspects of your game. Within a month you will be amazed at how solid your game has become! You'll wonder why you waited so long! Have fun, play hard!

If you have any questions on these techniques, feel free to call or text me.  
Walter: 512-497-9971

*"Hard work beats talent, when talent doesn't work."*



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