



THE MUELLER NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

# the FRONT PORCH FLYER

## Being Neighborly in the Mueller Neighborhood

*By Bart Jacob*

We are so fortunate to live in the Mueller neighborhood. It is great to be able to walk on our sidewalks and trails to get to friends, parks, shops, and facilities... or just to get out and walk, run, or ride our bicycles to exercise. As we walk, run, and ride around Mueller, it is rare to go more than a block without crossing paths with others.

When I'm out and about, I lament that many of us keep our eyes on the sidewalk or on our cell phones and do not look up to say hi or give a sign of acknowledgment. I understand some people are shy or may be in deep thought.

According to an article published by the BBC ("The surprising benefits of talking to strangers" <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-48459940>) many people may not initiate an interaction due to incorrect expectations:

*Our expectations can become self-fulfilling. If you think that talking to a stranger is likely to be unpleasant, you'll never try and so never discover that your expectations might be wrong. This can keep us mistakenly isolated and disconnected from others.*

*This may help to explain why cities seem so crowded with highly social people who are actively trying to ignore each other. Strangers sit next to each other on park benches staring at their phones, walk down city streets without smiling or saying "hello" to anyone.*

Here in the neighborhood, I walk with a group of mostly retired folks three mornings a week. We almost always run into a number of students heading to their bus stop. Some of these students live in Mueller and some live in surrounding areas. We used to pass the students without any interaction. Then we started making an effort to say hi or good morning to them. Although at first, they rarely responded, we now exchange greetings and smiles on a

regular basis, bridging generation gap and the neighborhood gap. I like to think this interaction improves their morning outlook and gives a friendly impression of Mueller residents of a different generation as we enjoy their smiles and this simple interaction each day.

I am not suggesting that we all stop and strike up a conversation with everyone we meet... but making eye contact, a brief word, a smile, or a nod could increase happiness and make our neighborhood even more welcoming... and neighborly!



## the FRONT PORCH FLYER

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## Letter from the Chair

Dear Neighbors,

I want you to know that we have been closely monitoring the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) situation as it relates to our organization's regular monthly meetings and events. Keeping in mind the safety of our neighbors and our members, the Steering Committee has decided to cancel the Egg Scramble scheduled for Saturday, April 11th.

We will update our Facebook page and website with any changes to meetings and events as needed. In the meantime, we ask everyone to stay vigilant and calm, and to be thoughtful in how you respond to this situation. Remember, we're in this together as a community.

Sincerely,  
John Wooding



Front Porch Flyer staff sharing an afternoon of fun at BD Riley's

## Calendar of Events

*NOTE: All events are subject to following CDC guidance provided to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and may be cancelled. Check social media channels for updated information.*

**Saturday, Apr. 11: 10 AM - 5 PM**

Puptopia, Mueller Lake Park

**Saturday, Apr. 18: 9:30 AM start**

March of Dimes, Browning Hangar

**Saturday, May 2: 9 AM start**

Fighting Blindness VisionWalk, Browning Hangar

**Saturday, May 9: 11 AM - 3 PM**

Austin Energy 125 Anniversary, Browning Hangar

**Friday, May 15: 6:15 - 8:30 PM**

Rock the Park #3, Lake Park Amphitheater

## Recycling: Tips and Tidbits

By Taylor Youngblood, Mueller Zero Waste Block Leader

There are so many items that can be recycled in Austin, but knowing where and how to recycle them can be a bit confusing. Below I share some tips and tidbits of information that may help.

### To Do:

- Check out the latest on what can be recycled
- Curbside customers: <http://www.austintexas.gov/department/residential-recycling-collection>
- Apartments: [http://austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/Resource\\_Recovery/ARR\\_Apt\\_Sorting\\_Guide\\_2018\\_FINAL.pdf](http://austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/Resource_Recovery/ARR_Apt_Sorting_Guide_2018_FINAL.pdf)
- Anyone can check What Do I Do With? at: <http://austintexas.gov/department/what-do-i-do-0>
- Or call 3-1-1 for assistance.
- Rinse and dry recyclables. Make sure recyclables are empty; pour out liquids.
- Put items in loose (not in a bag)
- Flatten boxes. Boxes laid out next to your carts are okay and will be picked up.
- Extra recyclables can be put in boxes out by your cart. A 2nd blue cart is free; call 3-1-1.
- Take items that are not allowed in the carts or apartments to the Recycle & Reuse Drop-off Center (RRDC): <http://www.austintexas.gov/department/recycle-reuse-drop-center>.
- Anything smaller than a credit card will fall through the single-stream sorting machines. These small items can be taken to the RRDC and put in the Hard Plastics or Scrap Metal stations.
- Take plastic bags and plastic film to store drop-off stations for recycling. See <https://how2recycle.info/sdo> to find a location near you.
- Separate lids from containers that are a different material, ex.: take the metal lid off a glass jar to recycle them separately in your carts.
- Take anything with a cord, plug, that used a battery, or has a computer chip to the Electronics station at the RRDC. This is also the station where you drop off tires (car and bike) to be recycled!
- Join the Mueller Recycling Group to find neighbors collecting items for you to drive to the RRDC or to mail in to a recycling program like TerraCycle: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/MuellerRecyclesMore>.

### Don't Do:

- Don't bag recycling. Bagged recycling is sent to the landfill.
- Don't crush cans or bottles. The latest information from the City's contractor says the full size helps the sorting machines be more accurate.
- Don't remove the stickers or labels from containers. It's not

necessary.

- Don't put milk cartons, juice cartons, egg replacement cartons, stock cartons, etc. in the recycling. They're plastic-coated paper (sometimes including metal too) and they're difficult to recycle.
- Don't put to-go coffee cups in recycling. As with cartons, they're plastic-coated paper.
- Don't put the top 5 recycling contaminants in your cart:
  - Plastic bags and plastic film (these go to a store drop-off)
  - Styrofoam (these go to the RRDC)
  - Water hoses (these go in the trash)
  - Wood (treated: donate or trash, untreated: compost)
  - Textiles (donate wearable, take unwearable to Goodwill)

More information is at <https://alittlemore.green/> and you can always message me (Taylor@alittlemore.green) with ideas and questions!



**Blue bags do not go in the recycle bin; put items in loose.**



**Do not recycle these containers, image provided by ARR.**

# My Introduction to Toastmasters

By Drew Harris

Like perhaps many of you, I started 2020 with bold resolutions to try new things to up my game—so I went to my first Toastmasters meeting. Toastmasters is a club of people working to improve their public speaking skills. They meet once a week for about an hour, where members practice giving short speeches. Toastmasters has dozens of local clubs meeting throughout Austin (but notably few are located east of I-35).

I decided to check out of the “Center of Gravity Toastmasters” club, which meets at noon on Wednesdays at the Capitol Factory offices in downtown Austin. Now, I am a trial attorney with plenty of public speaking experience, so I was a little skeptical as to whether this club would be that helpful. I ended up being very impressed and feeling like I had plenty to learn.

At my first meeting, there were about a dozen attendees, with a tightly organized schedule. In addition to the time scheduled for the two speakers, there was the time allotted for introductions, evaluator comments, and reports from the designated timekeeper and grammarian. There was even a person designated to keep track of all the “ums” and “you knows” that each person spoke.

The first scheduled speaker was clearly experienced, as he

recounted with plenty of humor and audience engagement some “Florida Man” stories from his time growing up in Florida. The second speaker was amazing, giving an informative presentation on “float spas” that made me want to try that experience (an article for another day). He even set up his phone on a gimbal that could track his face, so that he could video record himself speaking.

The two scheduled speeches (about 5-7 minutes long) were followed by “Tabletopic” speeches, where several people volunteered to speak for 1-2 minutes on a fun improvised topic. The first time I spoke at Toastmasters was giving one of these TableTopic speeches: I debated why Queen Elizabeth II was a better role model than the Notorious RBG (Ruth Bader Ginsburg). By interjecting humor from “The Crown” Netflix series, I managed to win the debate and was voted the best TableTopics speaker for the day.

It was a really fun experience, and it was exciting to be around other supportive people who are also working on being a better public speaker. If you are looking for a way to up your game in 2020, perhaps come to a Toastmasters meeting.

## 2020 Swim Season

Can you believe it’s swim season again? Ella Wooten and John Gaines pools may have opened on Wednesday, April 1 (for resident-only swimming). In preparation for a successful swim season, let’s review some important rules and responsibilities for our pools.

1. Residents must have a pool key to use the pool, even when lifeguards are on duty.

2. Each member may have up to four guests in the pool area at any one time, and the member must accompany these guests at all times.

3. Never prop open the pool gate.

4. No dogs, food, drink (except water), glass, or cigarettes are allowed inside the pool gate.

5. All children under the age of 13 must be actively supervised by someone who is 15 or older.

6. All children who are not yet toilet trained must wear a swim diaper and a plastic or rubber diaper cover along with their bathing suit when in the water.

Pools are open (six days a week) from 5 am to 10 pm. Ella Wooten is closed on Mondays (except Memorial and Labor Days), and John Gaines is closed on Wednesdays.



Lifeguards begin Memorial Day weekend when we will be welcoming the public for the season. Our pools are open to the public through Labor Day weekend. Help to build community in our pools through your good neighborliness.

If you have questions about the rules or their enforcement, call our management team at 512-347-2888. If you are concerned about someone’s safety, call 311.

Remember, our pools are community assets. Please use them responsibly.

For a complete list of pool rules, please refer to signs at each pool or go online at [muelleraustinonline.com](http://muelleraustinonline.com). To communicate with the pool committee, send an email to [poolcommittee@muelleraustinonline.com](mailto:poolcommittee@muelleraustinonline.com).

*NOTE: Although the CDC reports “there is no evidence that COVID-19 can be spread to humans through the use of pools and hot tubs,” given the proximity pool attendees could have with each other, Mueller’s pools at Ella Wooten and John Gaines parks will likely not open on April 1 as originally scheduled. More information about resuming pool operations will be shared when more is known. The waterscape at Branch Park opened March 13 and will remain open unless additional information warrants its closure.*

# Beyond Defensive Driving

*By Andrew Clements, Land Use & Transportation Committee*

Driving in Austin, and Central Texas is “aggravation on a stick,” right? Traffic congestion, and a lack of mobility in general are always towards the top of local quality of life polls. And by now it has been accepted as a fact that we are doubling in population every twenty years... which, of course, means more private cars on the road.

As I’ve gotten older, and perhaps wiser, I’ve taken to heart my father’s admonition to practice defensive driving – the safe driving strategy emphasized when I took defensive driving as a summer course my sophomore year in high school (nope, not revealing the year). I’ve taken a few defensive driving courses over the years since to get speeding tickets off my driving record (oh, you too?).

On Wikipedia, the standard Safe Practices for Motor Vehicle Operations defines defensive driving skills as “driving to save lives, time, and money, in spite of the conditions around you and the actions of others,” noting this definition is taken from the National Safety Council’s Defensive Driving Course, and that one aim “is to reduce the risk of collision by anticipating dangerous situations, despite adverse conditions or the mistakes of others.”

Likely good advice, right, to drive defensively? My father thought so. But the word “defensively” somehow strikes me as putting my safety first, and vaguely suggests violence. (I picture boxing, and being on defense or offense in that sport ) and, perhaps, even selfish?

I have a love/hate relationship with my car. I’m a big advocate of transit, the purpose of which is to get me out of my car, but growing up as a teenage boy in West Texas, a car (a learner’s permit at fifteen,

and a full-blown driver’s license at sixteen) was a powerful symbol of freedom. My heart sinks, now, when I come upon traffic congestion I think is unreasonable and that inconveniences me. Of course I’m contributing to it by driving my car. But in a more reflective state I’m often struck by how efficiently and effectively our roads and highways - even Interstate 35 - do operate – how many thousands upon thousands daily trips do occur. It is kind of staggering to think about.

As a wiser, older driver (nope, still not revealing my age), I now try to follow a driving strategy I call “cooperative driving” (darn, just Googled it and see I didn’t invent it). Definitions on drivewise.com state it “involves understanding that you are an active participant in your own and others’ safety on the road. It’s about sharing the road with other road users, being caring and empathetic, and leading by example in promoting safe driving.”

I like to distill it down to being kind to others when driving, and cooperating – because they need to get somewhere, too, safely, just like me. And, in practice, when driving – it means leaving space for necessary lane mergers ahead of me, and waving when others kindly do the same, not exceeding the posted speed limit - even when there isn’t much traffic - and going less than the speed limit in Mueller (and other neighborhood streets) because of Vision Zero (passionately supported by the efforts of our own Kathy Sokolic, Chair of Central Texas Families for Safe Streets). It means just cooperating with other drivers...being a team...being kind.

Happy Cooperative Driving.

## Robert Mueller Municipal Airport Plan Implementation Advisory Commission (RMMA PIAC) Update

*By Rick Krivoniak*

The Teacher Retirement System of Texas (TRS) has been in the news lately for questions about the costs of some downtown lease space for their investment offices, though they have been looking to relocate their 11th & Red River headquarters since sometime last year. They have chosen Mueller for the new location, where they will ultimately consolidate all 1,100 of their Austin employees. The proposed location is in the block bounded by E. 51st, Berkman Drive and Barbara Jordan Blvd. At the March 10th Mueller Commission meeting, much discussion about removing 3.5 more acres of Mueller from property tax rolls (Mueller is doing exceptionally well financially), ground-floor uses providing activity beyond 8-to-5 hours, and some questions about the seemingly rushed process, Commissioners - in a rare non-unanimous vote and two recusals - sent a resolution to the City Council in support of the project. Per the Master Developer Agreement, the Council must approve sales of Mueller land to other governmental authorities, like TRS. It was scheduled for the March 23rd Council meeting, but late word indicated that may be delayed. Though Catellus will buy the land from the City and construct the new building, it will be sold to TRS sometime after it’s occupied.

Ground has broken on the eleven Habitat for Humanity row-

houses in the 2600 block of Philomena, next door to the new Jordan affordable apartment complex. With hopes to be completed by year’s end, the nine 1350 sf, 3-bedroom units will sell for about \$180K, and the two 1480 sf, 4-bedroom units for about \$200K. These will be deed-restricted as affordable for 99 years, and require potential owners to perform 300 sweat-equity hours to qualify.

As of March 15th and with daily changes due to the evolving public health situation, Mueller Central is closed until further notice. Mueller’s pools at Ella Wooten and John Gaines parks may not open as originally scheduled. Mueller’s parks remain open for now, including the Branch Park waterscape unless additional information warrants its closure, though all public restrooms are locked. The Browning Hangar port-a-potties remain open and the Sunday Farmers’ Market will continue as planned - without chef demos or sampling - until they are advised otherwise.

The Robert Mueller Municipal Airport Plan Implementation Advisory Commission will next meet at 6:00 PM on Tuesday, April 14, 2020 at the Chestnut Community Center, 1183 Chestnut Avenue. For RMMAPIAC agendas, minutes, meeting recordings and other documents, visit [austintexas.gov/rmmapiac](http://austintexas.gov/rmmapiac)

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## Mueller Neighborhood Association Membership Form

To become a voting MNA member, a Mueller resident must complete this form and submit annual dues. New members must then wait 14 days before they may vote. Annual dues are \$5.00 per resident, 18 years or older. These funds are used to help pay for the Front Porch Flyer, MNA Grants, funding neighborhood events, and operating costs such as printing, record-keeping, and the MNA P.O. Box. You may give your dues to your Block Captain, bring it to an MNA meeting, or mail it to: MNA, PO Box 49123, Austin, TX 78765. Checks may be written to "Mueller Neighborhood Association."

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(Your email will only be used for official MNA communications)

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