

THE MUELLER NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER





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Stay Safe, Texas, provided by Jérémy Maugars







Celebrating Austin, provided by Jérémy Maugars

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Letter from the Chair

Dear Neighbors,

As I write this letter, there's a lot of uncertainty and debate over when it will be safe to fully reopen society as we enter another month of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Our neighborhood businesses have been hit hard and need our continued support. If you can, try buying from vendors and restaurants here in our community. Many of them offer to-go, curbside, and online ordering services. For those businesses that aren't able to offer their goods or services during the pandemic, make an effort to patronize them if and when they reopen.

Each business in Mueller is an investment in our community. In a lot of cases, those businesses quite literally invest in our community by sponsoring the Mueller Neighborhood Association (MNA), hosting public events, and supporting various efforts around the neighborhood. More importantly, there are countless folks who derive their income from working at various stores, restaurants, theatres, etc. in Mueller.

Together, let's support the vibrant businesses in our community and the folks that work for them. For a list of businesses that support our organization, check out the sponsor page on the MNA's website at muellerneighborhood.org/resources/sponsors.

Take care,
John Wooding

Speed Management:

Recommended Speed Limit Modifications for Urban Core, Residential, and Downtown Streets – Discussion and Possible Action

Written by Josh Rudow

Mueller is fortunate to have a robust pedestrian and cycling infrastructure. However, with speed limits across Mueller at 30 mph, traffic drives through at speeds that put pedestrians, cyclists, and other drivers at risk. On May 15th, the City of Austin's Urban Transportation Commission met and discussed speed limit modifications recommendations for urban core, residential, and downtown streets that include:

- 1) establishing a speed limit of 25 mph on streets less than 36 feet wide and on streets between 36 feet and 40 feet wide if deemed reasonable and prudent, and
- 2) lowering the speed limits on 18 specific residential streets that are similar to those in recommendation 1 (e.g. Manor Road 30 mph, Duval St. 30 mph).

The impact of slowing down streets is viewed as one of the most cost-effective and impactful ways to improve the safety of drivers and anyone in front of them. When stories come out about other locations that are getting close to zero traffic deaths, speed limit reductions have almost always preceded their current state. It is the primary input we need to change if we want to see different outcomes in our traffic-related injuries and deaths.

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Mateo Barnstone, a Mueller resident and Executive Director of the Congress for the New Urbanism Central Texas Chapter, wholeheartedly endorsed the recommendations, stating, "A couple of years ago, I was floating the idea of having Mueller be a test case neighborhood for adopting this kind of speed limit policy. To see a proposal go forward that would apply it to residential streets all over the city is too delicious for words."

Now more than ever, people are exploring the built environment around them and finding a walk or bike around the neighborhood as a primary form of entertainment, enjoyment, and stress release. Lowering speed limits creates safer pedestrian and cycling spaces and that will help Austinites of all ages get through this difficult time and for years to come.

These recommendations will be brought to the Mobility Committee for discussion on May 28 and then voted on as an ordinance posted for approval by the City Council on June 11. If you would like to voice your opinion, please reach out to Council Member Kathie Tovo's office at https://www.austintexas.gov/email/kathietovo.



The faster a vehicle travels, the higher risk of pedestrian fatality.

Mueller's Outdoor Spaces Were Designed for This Moment

By Dusty Harshman

Have you noticed something peculiar and even counterintuitive on your block? There are more people enjoying the outdoors in the Mueller neighborhood than at any time in recent memory.

Mueller neighbors of all ages are relaxing on their porches, talking to passers-by, playing on the sidewalks and alleys, picnicking in the parks, and running on the streets and greenway trails. Austinites from neighborhoods near and far are flocking to Mueller as well. Our mild spring has undoubtedly played a role, but the seclusive nature of social distancing during Austin's "Stay Home - Work Safe" order has unleashed Mueller's secret weapon.

What is that secret weapon, you ask? Sometimes dormant but always willing to serve, the design of Mueller streetscapes and outdoor spaces are enabling families and neighbors to grow together even while remaining respectfully distant. Now more than ever, both Muellerfolk and fellow Austinites benefit from our neighborhood's intentional design.

STREETSCAPES: What began with socially-distant dance parties and sidewalk trivia / scavenger hunts in March has grown organically. Now it's easy to go outside and see neighbors chatting on each corner, casual cycling and rollerskating on every street, kids playing on sidewalks and alleys with so much colorful chalk. As Antone neighbor Benjamin Kramer surmised, "The power of the front porch to encourage neighborly conversation has never been more apparent. It's like they were designed for social distancing with a smile."

The streetscape that promotes such activities was conceived in Mueller's Design Book: "Streets are the 'connective tissue' of our modern communities. At Mueller, they are conceived and designed not only as movement corridors but also as pedestrian-friendly public spaces that provide a strong sense of place and orientation and contribute to the social life of the community."

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GREEN SPACES: While much of the Austin metro area is hunkered down in their backyards during shelter-in-place, Muellerfolk have precious little private outdoor space. This was always considered a "feature" as residents were encouraged to venture into communal spaces for activity and entertainment. As conceived in Mueller's original Design Book, parks and greenways are "designed to contribute to the overall structure and identity of the new community, providing: a diversity of spatial experiences, including large parks and playfields; smaller parks that contribute to a sense of community and neighborliness."

Although many of our outdoor amenities, like playgrounds, courts, and pools are closed during shelter-in-place, Muellerfolk are not short of options to find little restorative peace. From the growing tree shade along our trails (in the established parts of the neighborhood) to the informal footpaths through the wildflowers being created around our greenway lakes, to the tranquil spaces of the Wildflower Center demonstration garden, community gardens, and orchard, we have just enough outdoor space to both keep our distance and relax.

Mattie neighbor Romy Parzick, "I am so thankful to live in Mueller, with its thoughtful design and beautiful outdoor spaces. I take a morning walk daily with my dog around the 3 different lakes, and that keeps me (borderline) sane. Our family enjoys bike riding within

the comfort of the protected bike lanes, socially-distant picnics in the park, family workouts led by my husband in the wide medians, and conversations with neighbors at a safe distance. While the density of the neighborhood makes it important we be extra mindful about the necessary precautions to keep us all safe, it also provides a sense that we are all in this together."

(Borderline) sanity through safe activity (wear your masks and keep your distance, y'all) in well-conceived outdoor spaces. It may be the best we can hope for a while.

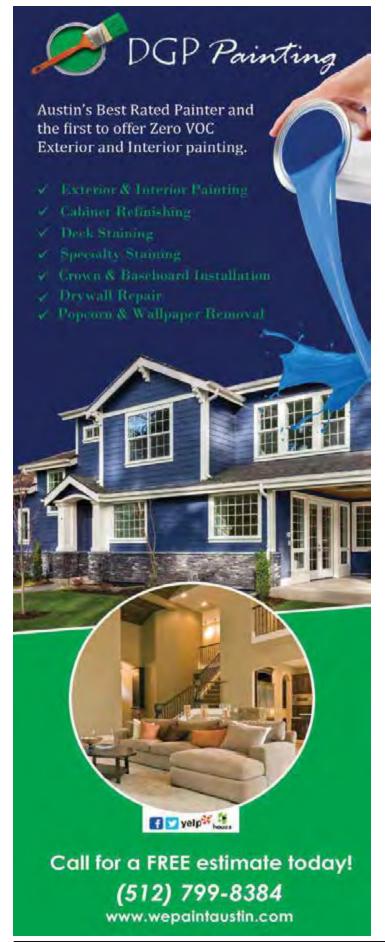








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Mueller Businesses in the Time of COVID-19

By Kathy Sokolic



The Aldrich Street District in Mueller, provided by Catellus

On May 4 and 11, 2020, Mueller small business panels were hosted via Zoom to talk about some of our businesses and the impact that COVID-19 has had on them.

The May 4th panel consisted of fitness and restaurant owners, along with Jane Ko, a noted food and travel blogger at A Taste of KoKo. Emily Ballenger with Barre3, Ryan Parzick with Fuerte Fitness, Ashely Fric from Colleen's Kitchen, and Adam Orman of L'Oca d'Oro participated.

The May 11th panel included service providers. Noelle Boyle with The Lash Lounge, Sita Chokkalingam with Centerpath Wellness, Becky Page Packard with Haute Salon, Michelle Paris with Whole Family Chiropractors and RejuvaWell Medical Spa, and Dimple Sawhney with Envision Eye Center all joined.

While there are a lot of challenges when opening a small business, the Mueller neighbors have been incredibly supportive to all of these. Ashley mentioned how tough it can be to open in Mueller, "because it's expensive to operate and the expectations are extremely high." It is important to note that most of the businesses started planning their establishments years in advance of opening. Waiting for the perfect spot in Mueller meant waiting for it to be built, and then jumping through all the hoops to complete the finish-out. Mueller has a lot of additional environmental regulations that add to the cost of finish-out, especially for restaurants.

Fuerte Fitness opened across I-35, in an area that was more affordable than Mueller, but Ryan said the community still showed up for their classes and joined their studio. As Barre3 ramped up to open on Aldrich Street, Emily hosted events throughout Mueller to introduce the neighbors to her classes, and many of those folks turned into members.

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As one of the first non-big box store businesses in Mueller in 2009, Whole Family Chiropractors took a huge chance on the Mueller community, and it paid off. They relocated from the Mosaic building to Overture in 2018, and were able to continue serving clients there, alongside those at the new RejuvaWell. Centerpath Wellness and Haute Salon both opened in the long-awaited shop homes located around Paggi Park, while the Lash Lounge opened on Aldrich St. Envision Eye Center joined the Market District in 2017.

With all these new businesses and Aldrich Street filling out, Mueller was growing into the urban mixed-use oasis residents had anticipated. Adam mentioned that his restaurant L'Oca d'Oro was becoming what they had hoped, a family restaurant that provided good food and wasn't necessarily treated like a "fancy restaurant." Sita was excited to be able to open her eastern medicine practice in such a walkable community. Businesses were thriving as more buildings continued to rise out of the dirt.

And then a world-wide pandemic broke out.

Most business owners present reported having to let go of at least some staff due to the COVID-19 shut-down, either on a permanent or temporary basis. The fitness community has the option to participate online, which has helped keep members engaged and enrolled. Emily was surprised and delighted by the demand for online classes led by the local Barre3 staff. Ryan noted that while Fuerte Fitness trainers were still being paid, it was at a reduced rate due to decreased revenue.

Restaurants in Mueller have had to re-evaluate safety procedures and research best practices to continue to serve food. While most have had success with a take-out format, it is generally with a skeleton crew. As government-suggested procedures have become more clear, restaurants have been able to gradually add staff. L'Oca d'Oro paused their take-out business for a time and then re-started with a more limited pre-order take-out menu to make sure they were doing everything they could to keep staff and customers safe while still serving food that met their standards.

Jane, with her blog, was overwhelmed with requests for support by restaurants when the city ordered the shut-down. She started a web-based app, app.atasteofkoko.com, that lists what restaurants are open for take-out (or starting dine-in options):, and also raised money to help feed out-of-work service industry workers.

Even though emergency work done by Envision was deemed essential, the business referred clients to other providers because they did not have the personal protective equipment (PPE) they needed. Whole Family Chiropractors was also deemed to provide essential services, but closed to re-evaluate procedures and make sure they had the best plan in place.

All the business owners stated that there was a lot of confusion over the government's Paycheck Protection Program (PPP), intended to assist small businesses, how and when funds were to be spent, and who qualified for the program. When the governor decided businesses such as salons could open, there was confusion over what safety guidelines to follow, for example, around notification of exposure to the virus, and supplies of needed PPE were hard to come by.

How do we continue to support these folks? Ashley tells us quite simply: frequent them. When the restaurants make more money, that allows them to offer better food, better training, and more food options.

For the fitness businesses, buy an online class and try it out, and consider getting a membership.

Salons will look different. You won't be able to bring a friend with you to chat with while you get your hair or lashes done. The salon won't be doing blowouts until more is known about the virus and how it can spread in air currents. Waiting rooms at the doctor's office will be less full, and face coverings will be required until further notice. Sita will continue to do telemedicine until face-to-face appointments are considered safe.

Each of these owners stressed that the health and well-being of clients is their top priority. Their decisions to operate will be based on what is determined to be best practice, which could change from week to week. Business owners ask for your grace and patience as they are all navigating the same unknowns that the rest of us are conducting business in new ways, and trying to keep everyone safe. We may be facing these challenges for some time to come. So while you're on social media, be kind to our businesses, and leave some good reviews for your favorite places. Share some gift cards to brighten someone's day. These businesses are part of the grand plan of Mueller, and we need them to have a complete community. Let's band with them and lift them up, together.

Walking and Running with Social Distancing

By Shawn Collins



I have loved running and walking the trails around Mueller ever since I moved into my house. But lately it's not a relaxing and pleasant experience some days with the imperfect social distancing practiced by some trail users.

The CDC has instructed us to stay six 6 feet away from others (aka social distancing), as well as to cover coughs and sneezes.

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The most common problems I see are families fanning out across the path and individuals walking straight down the middle, which makes it difficult to avoid them. And then there are those of us who have a tough time keeping enough distance but aren't wearing masks.

How about if we enter into an era of all-out courtesy on the trails? Not only is it a matter of life and death, but failure to do so could result in less freedom down the road. We've had a good amount of latitude with going outside for exercise and leisure, but many other countries haven't been as fortunate. Some walking and running paths in the US have been closed, too.

So, here are some ideas to make our own paths more neighborly and safe...

- Avoid walking down the middle of the paths. Think of the paths as a street and stay to the right unless you have to pass.
- If you are approaching somebody, move off a few feet to the side and the other person will perhaps do the same. When you are passing somebody, be the one who goes out of the way to avoid the other person.
- If you are on the path with one or more people, avoid blocking the whole path. Keep plenty of space available for people to safely pass in both directions. I know we really enjoy our families, but let's fall into a single line for a moment.
- Try to get out there during non-peak hours to avoid the hazards of crowds.
- Leave the path if you are using your phone, or avoid using it so you have an awareness of others around you.
- Keep your pets and children close to you.
- Don't spit and hold off on those snot rockets for now.
- Consider wearing a mask, a bandana, a gaiter, a scarf-something covering your mouth and nose so all feel safe using the trails. If you drop your face covering, pick it up and take it home to throw out.

And if you feel sick or have been in contact with a sick person, stay at home! We all benefit.

Let's all work together to keep our trails safe and keep our freedom to use them.



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How to Navigate Challenges to Mental Health During Shelter-In-Place

Story provided by Sarah Marshall



It is well-known and accepted that many face mental health and addiction issues. Whether this is our own journey, or if we are the family/close friends of one afflicted, it feels that you don't have to look far to come across someone attempting to shoulder such challenges.

The 2018 National Survey on Drug Use and Health found that 67.1 million (1 in 4) Americans 12 or older were binge drinkers, 53.2 million Americans (19.4% of the US) 12 or older were illicit drug users and that approximately 47.6 million adults (4.2 million adolescents) suffered from a mental illness.

With the recently mandated stay-at-home orders, mental health and addiction experts are unanimous in their concerns that these numbers will increase. This is because our world, our community, in essence, is experiencing a prolonged traumatic experience. A leading expert and researcher on trauma, Dr. Diana Fosha, explains trauma as being "the experience of unbearable emotional suffering in isolation." Dr. Fosha goes on to say that the healing of trauma essentially happens in one's undoing of their aloneness, which is to say isolation.

Sequestered in our respective homes, we are experiencing uncertainty, fear of the unknown, and social isolation from our normal routines and friends and family. We are all experiencing trauma at varying levels. The following are tips for how we can incorporate into our lives what the research proves effective to address challenges to our mental health.

5 Tips for Maintaining Sobriety and Mental Health

1. Have a community of support. Seek help from a professional. Mental health therapists and psychiatrists have gone digital. Make sure to have as much digital face-to-face contact as possible with friends and family. Additionally, 12-step recovery groups are easily accessible via Zoom.

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- 2. Have a spiritual practice. Reconnecting with your faith, a meditation practice, walking outside, journaling. Seeking a way to determine 'HOW' you are to navigate this uncertainty. Recognizing that panic and anger will not help this, and instead to feel empowered to get intentional with how you are showing up emotionally.
- 3. Keep to a daily schedule. Finding a new normal routine and adhering to that. Have this schedule to make room for alone-time and exercise alone or with your family. Fresh air and outdoor time is a must.
- 4. Reconnect with yourself, loved ones, and your values. This can be an opportunity to learn to reconnect with what is truly important to you. An opportunity to really identify or reconnect with your value system. Where there is crisis, those who really flourish are those who look for opportunities for transformation and resilience. Perhaps making and sharing a gratitude list with friends or within your family can be a practice.
- 5. Finding the courage to share honestly. For those of us who believe that our safety and security is in being ok and having it all together, this pandemic is challenging that defense in an unprecedented way. In mental health and the healing from addictions, it is known that healing ONLY happens by finding the courage to share one's vulnerabilities. It is in sharing our fears, our anxieties, our struggles that we can feel the most connected and supported by one another. And in this way, we also give others permission to share their vulnerabilities and fears.

Alana Smith, LCSW, LCDC is a licensed psychotherapist in Westlake.

Asian Giant Hornets



Paper wasps on paper nest.

What headline can draw people away from thoughts of the current state of the world and Coronavirus? That would be MURDER HORNETS! I cannot think of a more sensationalized headline, so kudos to whomever came up with that attention grabber. This headline is popping up everywhere from social media outlets, television, newspapers, and others. Quite frankly, it makes me cringe each time I see it. Asian giant hornets (AGH) are Vespa mandarinia NOT "murder" hornets. If

you want to use a common name instead of the scientific name, then call them by the correct common name of Asian giant hornet.

Asian giant hornets are large, around 2 inches in length, with an orangish head, brown antennae (the base of the antennae are yellow-orange), brown to black eyes and ocelli (simple, dot-like eyes located between the compound eyes). Their thorax is dark brown with greyish wings and the abdomen has alternating bands of brownish-black and yellow-orange.

Asian giant hornets are capable of inflicting a painful sting. Please note that while the sting can lead to death in some cases, it is not what typically happens. People are also capable of receiving painful stings from insects already here in Texas such as honey bees, paper wasps, yellowjackets, or even fire ants and some can die from being stung. Death by insect sting usually depends upon the number of stings

and how your body chemistry reacts to venom injected by the insect. Asian giant hornets are capable of killing other insects, including honey bees and other pollinators, but they are not doing this to be vicious or killing for sport. The hornets use insects they kill as food for their larvae....just like other wasps that we have here in Texas.

We do not currently have Asian giant hornets in Texas. If you think you have these wasps, then please send samples or images to me for identification as Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service are identifying any items of concern for our clientele.

Some insects that may be confused with AGH to the untrained eye: Paper wasps are reddish brown in color & sometimes have yellow markings on their bodies and are ½-1 inches in length. Paper wasps make paper-like nests out of chewed wood fiber that have open cells and hang from a single stalk.

Yellowjackets are yellow & black in color and are ½ in length. Bald-faced hornets are a type of yellowjacket. These wasps also make a paper-like nest, but it is enclosed with a single opening.



Cicada killer wasp on redbud.

Cicada killer wasps have a reddish head and thorax with an abdomen that alternates with yellow and black markings. These wasps reach 1 ½ inches in length. Cicada killers burrow into the ground, so you may see holes left behind from their digging.

FACTS about Asian giant hornets in North America

- 1. A colony was found late last year (September 2019) in Nanaimo, British Columbia on Vancouver Island. The colony was located and destroyed.
- 2. A sighting and dead specimen was found in Washington state in December 2019 in Blaine, WA. This was the first reported sighting of the Asian giant hornet in the U.S.
- 3. It is currently unknown how the hornets entered the U.S. and genetic testing leads to the conclusion that the hornets found in BC & WA are two separate introductions.
- 4. Agencies are currently monitoring & trapping with lures to discover any queens or workers. They are talking about attaching radio tracking devices to captured wasps to track them back to their nest.

For more information or help with identification, contact Wizzie Brown, Texas AgriLife Extension Service Program Specialist at 512.854.9600. Check out my blog at www.urban-ipm.blogspot.com

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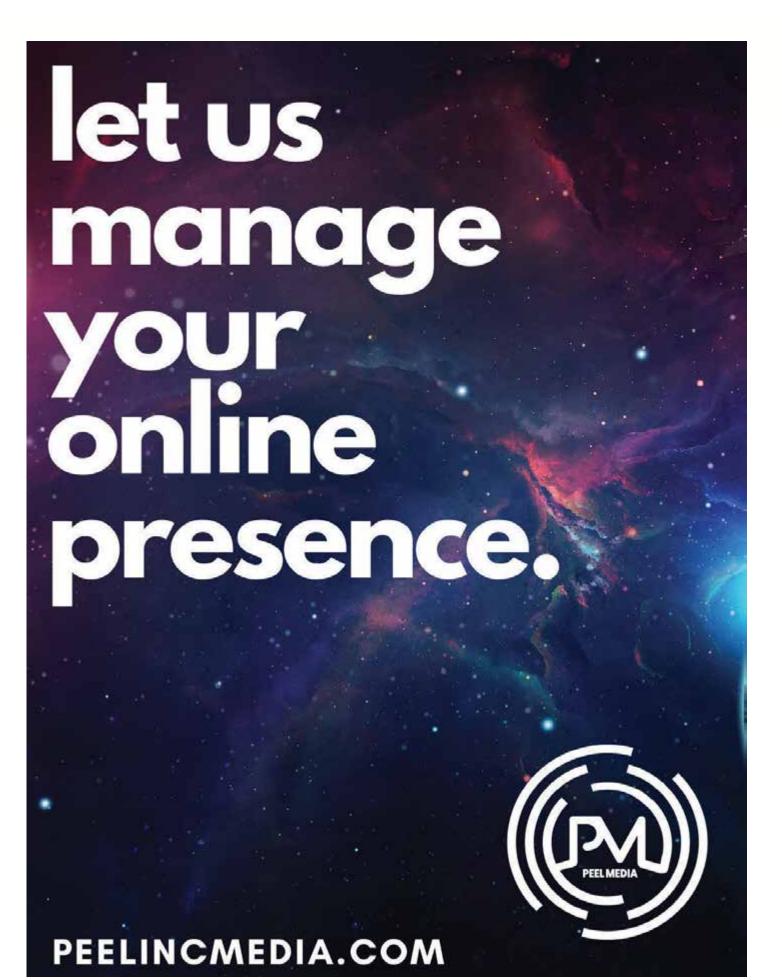


Mueller Neighborhood Association Membership Form

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

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