

THE MUELLER NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

the FRONT PORCH FLYER

Parenting During COVID

By Front Porch Flyer Staff



*Indoor Camping
by Lindsay Gray*

Keeping the kiddos occupied and engaged during a city-wide shutdown can be tough. Some of our neighborhood parents have had to be a little more creative. This included sometimes allowing themselves, the house, and the sidewalk be targeted for that creativity. One hard-working mama, Lindsay Gray, told us, "it's been an adventure that has required a lot of grace, choosing to laugh instead of cry, and frequent repetition of the phrase: It's just a house...It's just a house..."



*Painting Mom's Face
by Lindsay Gray*

Another neighborhood mama, Lisa Dreher, told us she had to go back to basics. "After wallowing in my own misery and crying on the floor of my office, I slowly hatched a plan involving a routine, time outdoors, and how they could help more around the house. The nature areas in Mueller have been a lifesaver. Chatting with friends and neighbors from a distance (while wearing masks!) has been a lifesaver. The kids came up with games of their own, such as Hose vs Umbrella in the alley, sliding mattresses down the stairs, and building doggie forts in my bed."



*Sidewalk Painting
by Lindsay Gray*



*Maplewood Graduation
by Leila Melhem.*

A lot of families had to celebrate graduations in new ways. One of Leila Melhem's daughters graduated from fifth grade at Maplewood. The school produced a photo op scene with a balloon

sculpture shaped in the form of "2020" providing students with a celebratory space to gather at safe distances and make memories of their graduation year. No doubt these photos will someday be part of the historical record of a unique time, and the focus of many family stories. At home, Leila has had the kids spend as much time outdoors as they can stand.

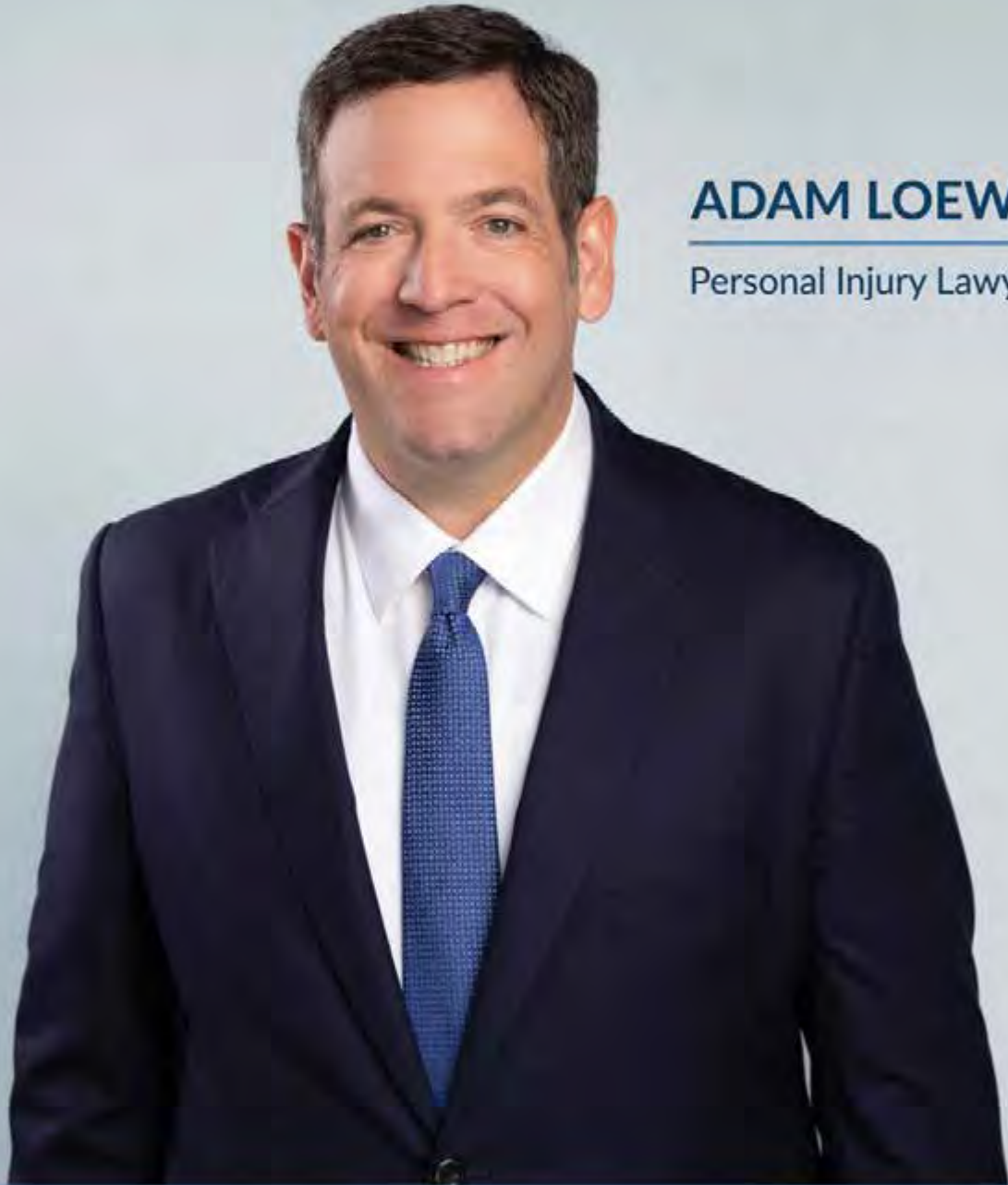
One family took advantage of the Getty Museum challenge to recreate famous works of art with items around the house. The Vlasits-Graber family spent quarantine time recreating beautiful works of art using what was in their garage, kitchen, and closets - and of course, family members themselves.



*Mueller Sunflowers
by Leila Melhem*

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Bicycle Accidents | Boating Accidents | Car Accidents | Dog Bites | Drunk Driving Accidents
Injuries to Children | Motorcycle Accidents | Slip and Falls | Truck Accidents | Wrongful Death



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"Parenting During Covid..." Continued from Cover



Vlasits-Graber Family Art Recreation



Vlasits-Graber Family Art Recreation 3



Enjoying the Mueller outdoors, provided by Christine Langa

Some families took outdoor time to a new level. Christine Langa told us about her new family passion. "Learning to skateboard has become our family hobby during our quarantine. My daughter took to it easily. I on the other hand have a long way to go. I'm grateful for Mueller's bike lanes, walkability, and quiet small neighborhood park sidewalks that allow me to practice my skateboarding skills in a safe way and have so many fun destinations to skate to - like Lick Ice Cream!" Besides developing coordination and concentration, activities like this discharge the pent-up energy kids and adults wrestled with during quarantine.



Vlasits-Graber Family Art Recreation 2



The Langa Family Skateboarding

Letter from the Chair

Dear Neighbors,

I hope you all are doing well. As businesses and venues begin to reopen, please remember to be diligent and follow the advice and guidelines provided by Austin Public Health and the CDC. There are plenty of ways to safely beat the heat of summer.

While the Mueller Neighborhood Association (MNA) won't be able to hold our usual 4th of July Parade and Festival due to COVID-19, I hope you are able to view the more limited parade/convoy that will make its way through the neighborhood. We will post the route on our website and social media pages.

To learn more about the MNA and to get involved, visit us online at muellerneighborhood.org. In the meantime, I hope everyone has a happy Fourth of July.

Sincerely,

John Wooding
Chair, Mueller Neighborhood Association

Vigil Walk Is Only The First Step

By Jennifer Keys Adair and Nai Regina Leite da Silva

On June 5th, 2020 many of us marched in a vigil walk on what would have been Breonna Taylor's birthday had she not been murdered by police in her home last month. Over 700 people walked 2.3 miles to honor and bring attention to Ahmaud Arbery's murder by a police officer while he was running in his neighborhood. After the walk, we listened to a speech about Black Lives Matter and the need to dramatically change policies including how the police are funded. We also listened to another speech aimed at white people who need to learn, do and rethink deeply their role in white supremacy. Then, we listened to Merlin sing an original song, "Black Boy White House" written for the Black Lives Matter movement and available soon on itunes and spotify. Their voice was personal and moving, "Please tell me that he'll be ok tonight, please tell me that he'll be ok tonight." Merlin also sang the Black National Anthem. We ended with an 8 minute, 46 second moment of silence to embody the length of time it took for a white police officer to keep his knee on George Floyd's neck and murder him.

The march is only a small part of changing who we are as people, a community and a nation. A march is one way to publicly commit and share in the responsibility for changing ourselves and the larger systems that are so easy for white people and so dangerous for the Black community. The next actions are harder and therefore require more dedication and commitment. We are starting to see this work in action. Some white women groups have started in Mueller to read the work of Black writers and activists. Mueller members of the deaf community have started gathering to learn and act for Black Lives Matter. There are signs, art, and resources all around Mueller.

We also need Mueller-specific changes. Our silence, passive-aggressive responses and/or negative assumptions create tremendous stress and burden for our Black neighbors. Too often, we put our Black neighbors in a situation where they have to deal with the problems that we, as white and non-Black POC, create for them by our actions or lack of action. Here are some ideas - gathered from current and former Black Mueller families, signs from the vigil walk and on online Mueller forums - that we can start and stop doing immediately to help make Mueller safer for the Black community who live, play, work and exercise here.

START engaging white and non-Black people of color in talking about and calling out white supremacy in mueller policies, conversations, posts, approaches and decision-making

START calling out and stopping white people who follow or harass Black community members who live, work, exercise, shop, eat and relax in Mueller.

START acknowledging Mueller's problematic relationship to gentrification and our role in ignoring the histories and contributions of Black and Latinx communities in Austin

START assuming Black families live in Mueller.

START listening and taking seriously the painful experiences of current and former Black mueller residents who have and continue to experience discrimination and racist micro-aggressions.

START forming groups to read and act upon Black writers and activists and then share what you are learning with your own communities.

STOP posting RING photos and videos on the Mueller facebook groups

STOP calling the police when you see Black men walking in Mueller or knocking on a door

STOP following, questioning or overly-politely asking to "help" Black people you see in Mueller or asking anyone of color, "Oh do you live around here?" Assume they do.

STOP letting racist jokes, sayings, conclusions or stereotypes be said in your presence without you calling it out

If you have additional ideas or would like to start a group to work against white supremacy and Mueller-specific changes, please email jenniferadair1@gmail.com.



Reusable Items vs Single-Use Items

By Taylor Youngblood, Mueller Zero Waste Block Leader

We can always look for ways to save resources and save money. While the upfront cost of reusables tends to be higher, over the long term they will save you money and will definitely save resources. Let's go over a few now.

1. Water bottles - "Austin's drinking water met all national and state water quality standards." <https://www.austintexas.gov/departments/water-quality-reports> Using your own reusable water bottle will prevent new plastic water bottles, reduce recycling collection and processing, and save you money.

a. A plain-water single-use bottle costs ~ \$0.50, \$182.50 a year for one bottle a day.

b. A free reusable bottle or one of your choosing ~ \$15.00+

c. You could add a water filter pitcher plus a filter for ~\$45.00

d. Reusable vs disposable: ~\$60.00 vs. \$182.50 (or more if more than one a day).

2. Bags - Use reusable bags instead of single-use/thick plastic bags. Canvas bags can be washed with your normal laundry, are sturdier, and can be found in more functional shapes. One billion plastic bags are produced a year and only 1% of those are recycled. <https://tinyurl.com/yaa7eg7w>

a. Free canvas bags from give-aways vs. \$0.05 each plus trash or recycling efforts

3. Utensils - Find or purchase your own set of reusable utensils to keep in your purse, bag, or car for when you eat out or at home. If you wrap them in a cloth napkin, you can use that napkin to store them until you get home.

a. 64 pieces: ~\$50.00+ metal that lasts forever vs \$8.00 plastic. 6 events x \$8 to break even.

b. Metal is infinitely recyclable whereas plastic utensils aren't recyclable in Austin. <https://tinyurl.com/rn7x9e6>

4. Linens - napkins, towels, handkerchiefs, and wipes can all be found in fabric and washed with normal laundry detergent. If you're concerned about the contents, you can get a little bag to put things in and launder the bag as well. There are even handkerchief books for when you have a cold!

a. Prices will vary widely depending on your needs and desires.

b. Ask family, friends, neighbors, and Buy Nothing or Marketplace for linens; many homes have extras they don't need.

c. Make your own out of old sheets, t-shirts, etc. Softer fabrics work better for handkerchiefs and wipes; sturdy fabric will work better for napkins.

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*Harpist Karen Zhang Plays
the Alley by Mateo Barnstone*



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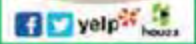
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My Backyard Garden

By Andrew Clements

First day...first planter, no plants



Backyard gardening, an activity that is comforting and even stress-relieving in these highly unusual, quarantine days, can take place in our front yards and alleys. And when that favorite vegetable, fruit, or seasoning can't be found at the neighborhood grocery store, perhaps it can be available by walking a few steps out

to our gardens? That's my fantasy anyway - the reality, as is almost always the case, is necessarily messier and more complex.

This is my first stab at backyard gardening, and I'm putting in two raised six-foot-long by two-and-a-half-foot wide planters (raised being important for my old back and old knees). The planters arrived six months ago

First day after transplants



and sat unopened in their shipping boxes, until I finally felt the impetus to assemble them in mid-April, missing the "prime" time to start summer planting in Austin by a month or so. After assembling them and filling with gardening soil and compost by the end of April (200 gallons!), I was then able to transplant tomato, cucumber, and bell pepper plants, in one planter, and sweet banana pepper, plus watermelon vines, a left-over tomato plant, basil, and both green bean and carrot seeds in the other planter.

The initial transplants looked so small and vulnerable that I called them "my babies" and did my best helicopter-parent hovering for the first two or three weeks, at least. I paid attention

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*First planter,
June 7th*



to local weather reports and my cell phone weather app constantly, like I never had before, and I grew concerned when heavy rainstorms and even hail (as happened twice in May) were forecasted. I grew enamored of rolls of plastic-coated mesh fencing because it was so easy to construct protective raised trusses that I

then draped with lightweight plant blankets - protecting “my babies” from storms, day or night. And, with daily care and attention, we made it through a stormy May.

June brought with it an explosion of growth! I needed to add growth cages for the tomato plants (turns out, making cages out of that plastic-coated fence mesh is so easy) because in just a couple of weeks they were 4-feet tall. I think they are happy with my soil mixture (including a great deal of Dillo Dirt, which is City of Austin-produced

compost, that both you and I (ahem) have contributed the “raw materials” to), watering schedule, fertilizing, and constant attention. And the first edible result has appeared – a six-inch-long sweet banana pepper that is larger than any I’ve ever had in a restaurant.

So, now when I do feel stress from my work-from-home, stay-safe job, I can walk out and commune with my plants, that I grew in my garden, and relax. And soon, I’ll be able to walk out and pick fresh tomatoes, bell peppers, and even green beans. I’m not so sure about the carrots, as they’re way behind and may not like the too-warm summer soil temperatures. And I’m just plain worried about the full-size watermelons – where are they going to fit?!



*Second planter,
June 7th*

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*6-inch Banana
Pepper - Yea!*



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