



Volume 18, Number 02

February 2021

[www.circlecranch.com](http://www.circlecranch.com)

## Circle C Newsletter: February 2021

### Monday, February 1, 2021

First ½ annual assessments are mailed.

### Tuesday, February 2, 2021

Groundhog Day

### Sunday, February 14, 2021

Valentine's Day

### Monday, February 15, 2021

Washington's Birthday/Presidents' Day

### Tuesday, February 16, 2021

Fat Tuesday

### Wednesday, February 24, 2021

6:30pm Circle C HOA Board Meeting

### Monday, March 1, 2021

First ½ annual assessment due March 1, 2020. Ballot and Proxy for the Annual Meeting & Election will be printed on back of assessment.

### Wednesday, March 10, 2021

6:30—9:30pm. Annual Meeting via Zoom

### CCHOA Board Meeting

The Circle C HOA Board of Directors will meet on **Wednesday, February 24, at 6:30pm** via ZOOM. Links to the ZOOM meetings and meeting agendas may be found on the website at [www.circlecranch.com](http://www.circlecranch.com) under the "Resource" tab. Homeowners must be logged onto the site to view agendas and find the link to the ZOOM meetings. Homeowners may sign up to speak at the meeting by calling the HOA manager at 512-288-8663 or emailing [info@circlecranch.info](mailto:info@circlecranch.info).

### HOA Board Member Election & Annual Meeting

The HOA Board Member election will be held via Zoom at the virtual Annual Meeting on **March 10th**, the link to the meeting is <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83917724044>. More information can be found on the website at [www.circlecranch.com](http://www.circlecranch.com) under the "Resource" tab. For any questions or concerns, please call our Circle C HOA manager, Karen, at 512-288-8663 or email her at [info@circlecranch.info](mailto:info@circlecranch.info).

### Electronic Voting

The Circle C HOA Board is pleased to offer electronic voting again this year. Those who have provided email addresses will receive an email invitation to vote. If you have not yet provided a valid email address, please visit the HOA website at [www.circlecranch.com](http://www.circlecranch.com) and click on the "Voter Registration" button. You will need a registration code which may be found on your Semi-Annual Billing Statement.

Voting by paper ballot is another option. Election ballots/proxies are located on the back of the semi-annual statements and are due by March 8, 2021. For a replacement absentee ballot/proxy, please email [info@circlecranch.info](mailto:info@circlecranch.info) or call 512-288-8663.

### Annual Report to the Membership

The 2020 Annual Report to the membership from the Board of Directors will be printed in the March 2021 newsletter. A copy will also be posted on our website and available at the HOA office during the month of March 2021.

### Annual Assessments and an Increase in Dues

Due to costs related to aging infrastructures throughout Circle C—including pool, pumps, pool filters, irrigation repairs and replacements (part of the Escarpment Loop project), building repairs, and signage replacements—the Circle C HOA dues will increase 4.8% for 2021. The annual cap will thus change from \$706 to \$740.

Annual assessments for 2021 **will be mailed on the 1st of February and are due on March 1st**. Ballots and proxies for the election of HOA Board Members will be printed on the back of the assessments, and the election will be held at the virtual Annual Meeting on March 10th. There are three available options to pay your assessments:

- Mail your check to PO Box 163541, Austin, TX 78716
- Make your payment using "Bill Pay" through your financial institution.
- Use the "On-line Payment" option through the Circle C HOA website. (There is a 2% convenience fee for this option.)

Payments will NOT be accepted at the HOA Office or in the drop box outside the office. Please do not postdate nor staple checks. For questions, please contact the financial office at 512-451-9901.

*Continued on Page 3*

# Reduced Fees. Not Reduced Service.

I'm now offering **reduced listing fees** exclusively for my neighbors in Circle C. Because every dollar counts, and my goal is to make you money *and* save you money.

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Continued from Cover Page

### Wastewater Averaging

The wastewater averaging period for Austin spans three consecutive billing periods beginning in mid-November and ending in mid-March.

Wastewater averaging is calculated during winter months when outdoor watering is not utilized, so most residential water goes directly into the sanitary sewer system. Water used during the averaging period will determine wastewater charges for most customers for the upcoming service year. All outside watering during this averaging period will be included in the wastewater average. It is best to turn off irrigation systems during these months to avoid extra costs. Visit [www.austintexas.gov/wastewateraveraging](http://www.austintexas.gov/wastewateraveraging) for more information.

#### Lower Your Wastewater Costs:

To help conserve water in the winter months and lower wastewater average, follow these basic water-saving tips:

- Check for leaks in irrigation systems and turn them off for fall and winter months.
- Inspect and repair all leaky faucets and toilets.
- Wait for full loads to utilize dishwashers or washing machines.
- Take shorter showers. Placing a timer in the bathroom helps.
- Look for the Watersense label in all new appliances that use water.
- Visit [WaterWiseAustin.org](http://WaterWiseAustin.org) to learn more water conservation tips and possible rebate programs.

## AQUATICS NEWS

Due to the continued increase in COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations and positivity rate, Austin Public Health has updated their guidelines and recommendations. Following these local health guidelines, the Swim Center will remain closed until the cases, hospitalizations and positivity rate come back down. We are continuously monitoring the ongoing public health situation and will adjust our operations as needed to ensure the safety of our patrons, families, and

team members. Please visit

[www.circlecranch.com](http://www.circlecranch.com)

for updates.

## CCHOA NUMBERS

HOA Mgmt Office .....info@circlecranch.info or 512-288-8663  
HOA Financial Office .....tgiles@mgilescpa.com or 512-451-9901  
Aquatics Director .....director@ccswim.net or 512-288-4239  
Newsletter Publisher  
Peel, Inc. ....advertising@PEELinc.com or 512-263-9181

### Circle C Amenities

Circle C Avaña Pool ..... 512-292-1518  
Circle C Café ..... 512-288-6058  
Circle C CDC..... 512-288-9792  
Circle C Swim Center ..... 512-288-6057  
Circle C Community Center Pool..... 512-301-8259  
Grey Rock Golf Course (*City Owned/Operated*)..... 512-288-4297  
Grey Rock Tennis Club ..... 512-301-8685  
Circle C Grey Rock Pool ..... 512-291-8398

### CIRCLE C GATED COMMUNITIES

*Enclave off Spruce Canyon (KB)*  
Spectrum Management ..... 512-834-3900  
*Enclave off La Crosse (Streetman)*  
Plateau Property Management..... Rosalyn Peterson, 512-441-1041  
*Fairways Estates*  
Spectrum Management ..... 512-834-3900  
*Park West*  
Goodwin Management..... Marilyn Childress 512-502-7509  
*Muirfield*  
Real Manage..... Tom Ramirez-Boldo, 866-473-2573  
*Avana Estates*  
Relevant Management..... Kim Todd, 512-580-4212

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Kim Ackermann, Alton (A.E.) Martin, Jason Bram,  
Board Members

Contact the Board at: [directors@circlecranch.info](mailto:directors@circlecranch.info)

## IMPORTANT NUMBERS

City of Austin Solid Waste ..... 512-974-1945  
Dead Animal Collection..... 512-974-2000  
Abandoned Vehicle..... 512-974-8119  
Pothole Complaints..... 512-974-8750  
Stop Signs ..... 512-457-4885  
Street Light Maintenance ..... 311

### Schools

Clayton Elementary ..... 512-841-9200  
Kiker Elementary ..... 512-414-2584  
Mills Elementary..... 512-841-2400  
Bear Creek Elementary..... 512-414-0040  
Cowan Elementary..... 512-841-2700  
Bailey Middle..... 512-414-4990  
Gorzycki Middle School..... 512-841-8600  
Bowie High School ..... 512-414-5247

### UTILITY PROVIDERS

Electric Pedernales Elec. .... 512-219-2602  
City of Austin. .... 512-494-9400  
Texas Gas Service ..... 800-700-2443  
Water City of Austin ..... 512-972-1000  
MidTex Water Company..... 866-654-7992  
Solid Waste City of Austin ..... 512-974-1945  
Post Office Oak Hill Station ..... 800-275-8777

# Announcements



## Meet Your HOA Board Candidates

Whoa! What happened? For years, we've had little interest in HOA Board candidates. This year, ten people stepped up to the plate, and they are all qualified, excellent candidates. Unfortunately, we only have two open positions this year, but next year we will have three board positions on the ballot. Hopefully those that are not elected this time will consider running next year as well. Good luck choosing between these candidates, homeowners. We wish we could vote for every single one.

### Trinh Kim Bartlett



Hello, my name is Trinh Kim Bartlett, formerly known as Trinh Kim Tran before I got married. I was born in Vietnam and lived in various parts of the United States. I attended undergraduate school at Northeastern University in Boston, moved to Fort Hood, enrolled in and completed my undergraduate studies from the University of Texas at Austin. I have my Graduate Degree in Public Administration (MPA) from Texas State University, and hold a PHR, PMP, and BRMP Certifications. I have worked for the City of Austin since 2007, in various departments and roles; my current position is a Business Consultant with Austin Energy. My current position involves Lean Six Sigma methodology usage to improve business processes, as well as managing

strategic projects across the utility, working with vendors, executives, and various stakeholders.

### Theresa Bastian



My name is Theresa Bastian and I have been a real estate broker for over 20 years. Prior to my career in real estate, I was a high school English teacher. I moved from WA State to Austin in 2010 and except for 2 years I have been lucky enough to have lived in Circle C this entire time. My 19-year-old son Lukas is a United States Marine and my daughter Sophia is a senior at Bowie. In the past, I have volunteered extensively in our local school (past PTA President at Gorzycki and Bowie) and I currently serve the community as Secretary/Treasurer of the Board of Directors for the Travis County Appraisal District and on the Grievance Committee for the State Bar of Texas. I want to make sure Circle C continues to be desirable as Austin continues to grow, and that the quality of our amenities keeps pace with those in neighboring communities. My primary goal in volunteering to be on the HOA board is to improve communication between the Board of Directors and our residents.

*Continued on Page 5*

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Ronda Johnson of Teamlukehopeforminds.org thanks Marcia for her generous donations with the sale of every home sold in Circle C Ranch!

### Marcia has worked in the Circle C Ranch

neighborhood since 1999 and has sold these homes:

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6809 Beatty Lane  
11000 Bexley Lane  
5711 Bexley Court  
10225 Broom Flower Drive  
7000 Colberg Court  
9109 Colberg Drive  
5201 Corrientes Cove  
7105 Doswell Lane  
10413 Foxglove Court  
5764 Gorham Glen Lane  
11420 Lafitte Lane  
11009 Maelin Drive

6508 Nusser Lane  
10620 Redmond Road  
10512 Redmond Cove  
10803 Redmond Cove  
5914 Rickerhill Lane  
6201 Skahan Lane  
11227 South Bay Lane  
6813 Tanaqua  
6407 Tasajillo  
6612 Toolwrith Lane  
10105 Wildflower Lane

**...and MANY more!!**

**CALL or TEXT Marcia TODAY to sell your home.**

**She may have already sold your floorplan!!**

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★★★★★ "As one of the original residents of Circle C Ranch, I hired Marcia to sell my large home on Skahan Lane. Marcia Pastrana worked hard to negotiate a contract in order to help us get into our new home. Marcia found our new home and did that deal too!" - Jennifer M.



*Continued from Page 4*



**Daniel Becka**

Daniel brings a career of nearly two decades working in public affairs, government and community relations, and non-profit and association management. He is passionate about staying involved in the local community and bringing his experience, insights, and network to serve Circle C and help keep it the best neighborhood in Austin.

Daniel is Principal at Integrated Advocacy Solutions, LLC and specializes in helping clients inform and engage their constituencies

in the decision-making process of policy changes at the local, state and federal levels. With a passion for politics, Daniel founded IAS on the premise of getting people involved in the decisions that directly affect their lives.

Previously, as Vice President of Constituent Relations at Texas Exes, the alumni association for The University of Texas at Austin, Daniel focused on educating, organizing and connecting the vast network of Longhorns to the political process, with a goal of advancing higher education on both the state and federal levels. He also managed donor relations and stewardship for the association, ensuring generous alumni and friends were presented with opportunities to support the organization through giving societies, scholarships, etc. and kept them current on the great work going on at Texas Exes and the university.

Prior to his work with Texas Exes, Daniel was the Director of Governmental Relations at Texans for Economic Development. This organization was established to increase the state's economic growth and revitalize the eroding Texas horse and greyhound racing industry. Daniel managed the development of the overall public relations strategy, oversaw the group's PAC, coordinated lobbying activities and implemented a grassroots action plan for the organization. Additionally, he has worked in the Texas political arena for Johnson and Johnson, Attorneys and Counselors at Law and Protecting You / Protecting Me, a program sponsored by Mothers Against Drunk Driving.

Daniel holds a BA in Government from The University of Texas at Austin, where he was active in student government and multiple community service organizations while on campus. He is a member of the Young Men's Business League, having served as president of the organization in 2017, and is an active supporter of the Austin



**Stephen Bega**

I grew up in the small town of Elgin, Texas – the sausage capital of Texas. I graduated from Elgin High School and attended Trinity University in San Antonio, Texas. I then graduated from the University of New Mexico School of Law in Albuquerque.

I have been a practicing attorney since 1999. My career brought me to Austin in 2002. I lived and served on the New Villages at Western Oaks HOA from 2004-2008. I served as the President of Oak Hill Youth

Sports Association and other Board positions from 2005-2015.

All of my kids were active in youth sports, orchestra, dance, cheer,

yearbook, and other school activities at Mills, Clayton, Gorzycki, and Bowie High School. All of my kids have graduated and are attending college.

I now live with my wife, Janine La Barbara, and focus on my legal career involving civil cases. On occasion, I enjoy walking or running through the neighborhood.



**Kimberly De La Garza**

Dear Circle C Community:

I am a native Texan, born in Dallas, Texas, and a graduate of Plano Senior High School, 1996. After graduating with a B.A. in English from the University of Texas at Austin in 2000, I returned to Dallas for law school and graduated with a J.D. from Southern Methodist University Dedman School of Law in 2003. I passed the Texas

Bar in the Summer of 2003 and have been a full-time practicing attorney in Texas for about 17 years.

I met my husband, Adrian, in college, and we have been married for over 16 years. Our 3 children, Aaron (9), Zoey (9) and Gabby (6), keep us happy, exhausted, crazy, thankful and open to new adventures. I also have a hound-mix sidekick, Bennie. We are Clayton Strong and enjoy the Circle C Community. My dream job is to successfully run a rescue dog non-profit. Maybe one day!

*Continued on Page 6*

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### David Green

Born 06/07/1945, raised in Fort Wayne, IN and attended public schools through high school.

Attended DePauw University graduating in 1967 with a BA in Chemistry. Attended U of Washington Graduate School in Chemistry and obtained a MA in 1969.

Joined US Army in 1969 and served at Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio. Returned to U of Washington Graduate School in 1971 and obtained a PhD in Chemistry in 1974.

Joined Chevron in technology development and served in a variety of management positions retiring in 1999.

Married to Barbara Green since 1967.

We have three children and 4 grandchildren, with our daughter and family also living in Austin.



### David LaChance

I have a Master's in Public Administration from Texas A&M University. For the first 14 years of my career

I worked in Semiconductor in Supply Chain Planning/Purchasing, IT, Training, and Project Management.

Most recently, I have been a project manager with the state for the statewide Enterprise Resource

Planning (ERP) implementation, business process improvement, numerous infrastructure projects, and

large scale tax application build and upgrades. I work with and get consensus from business, security,

and IT to schedule, budget, and execute multimillion dollar projects, on time, on budget and to spec.

I have lived in Circle C now for 2 years but have lived in Austin since the early 90s. I would like to serve

my neighborhood, neighbors, and Circle C with the experiences that have gotten me where I am in my career.

### Colleen Reidelbach

After living in Austin for most of my years since college, I moved with my family to Circle C Ranch in September 2019. I still can't believe I am fortunate enough to be part of this beautiful community.

Currently I serve as VP of Client Services and member of the Executive Team for a technology company, and my background includes a Master's in Public Policy from the LBJ School at UT. I also worked at an economic development consulting firm and a real estate investment fund, both located in Austin, as well as the Texas Legislature, and even taught for a year at Regents School of Austin. My ties to this city are strong, and joining the CCR community has helped my roots to grow even deeper.

I'm also the proud mom of two irrepressible kids under the age of 3, and wife to Adam, a professional drummer and music teacher (including at Bowie!) turned software developer.

### Marc Tucci

For the past 16 years, I have enjoyed a career as the founder & CEO of the Austin Sports and Social Club, bringing fun to the active adult community through organized co-ed sports leagues and events. We are starting youth leagues this fall, and look forward to being able to live our mission of being the best part of our customer's day for adults and children throughout our city and suburbs.

While Austin will always be home, I hold the same title and role for four other markets (San Antonio, Dallas, Fort Worth, and Minneapolis). I have a BS from Towson University in Baltimore, MD and have called Austin home since 2005. My wife Monica and I relocated to Circle C five years ago to raise our three children (7, 5, & 1)



### Darius Venclauskas

Business Development Manager at Blackbaud, Inc., a leading cloud software serving the social good community, which includes nonprofits, foundations, corporations, education institutions, healthcare institutions, and the individual change agents who support them.

Strong working knowledge and understanding of the nonprofit industry, complex payment and technical concepts within the Blackbaud product portfolio. Extensive experience with flexible giving models - including one-time, recurring, installment, honor/memorial, membership and designated gift options as well as premiums, matching gifts, credit card, EFT/ACH, PayPal and Amazon processing. Leadership responsibilities include recruitment and retention of development professionals, salary administration, supervision, career development, team building, resource and performance planning. Founder and business owner of Urban Hair LLC, a successful local hair salon established in 2015.



## STOP POLLUTION TO SAVE MARINE LIFE

By Mia Singletary

4th grader at Bear Creek Elementary School

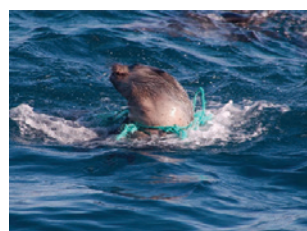
Sea animals are suffering from trash and pollution in the ocean. Sea turtles, sea lions, and seals are being killed by fishing nets, unhealthy water and plastic.

### Polluted Oceans

Sea turtles are endangered mostly from eating trash. Plastic bags floating on the surface look like jellyfish to the turtles. Eating the plastic bags can make the turtles get very sick and even die.

### Why Is Pollution Bad?

Pollution is dangerous to every single animal that lives in the whole ocean. Plastic releases chemicals into the water.



When marine life swallows' unhealthy water with chemicals in it, they become sick and can die. Plastic also breaks down into microplastics, which marine life eats. If fish eat microplastics, and we eat fish, we are eating microplastics too. If we don't fix this problem, there will be more trash than fish.

Continued on Page 8



# Hi, how are you?



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Chad@pgraustin.com  
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## WHAT'S THE DEAL WITH CIRCLE C REAL ESTATE?

This month, I thought I would share something with you that would be useful and interesting and explain what I am seeing in the real estate market here in Circle C and in Austin at large.

If you ask an average, traditional real estate agent how the market is, most likely they will say "It's HOT!", which it is, but why is it so hot? That is the question I want to answer today.

**#1 INVENTORY IS LOW.** I have been helping people buy and sell homes in Austin and Circle C for 25 years now and I have never seen the inventory this low. There were 2,447 properties listed in the Austin MLS last week, that is almost 40% below where we were last year at this time. There is currently 1 property listed for sale in Circle C and there are days we have zero homes available, that is not typical. On average I have seen between 30-50 homes on the market in the C. It is true what I see people commenting on our CC FB Page, put your home on the market and there will be 50 people through and at least 10 offers. I am seeing that and I am living proof of that, just sold my house.

**#2 DEMAND IS HIGH** - With the great migration to Austin going on and companies like Tesla, Oracle, BAE Systems, moving their headquarters here, we are experiencing a great demand for homes. Not only people from out of state, but also people that want to move up in Austin. I have people that want to sell and are just waiting to find the right

house, which causes a whole other challenge. High demand, low inventory.

**#3 INTEREST RATES ARE LOW.** I can remember when rates got down to the 6% range and I was blown away. Now 2-3% is the norm and that makes housing more affordable. If you bought a home 10 years ago, you can almost double your mortgage and barely see an increase in mortgage payment. This is the lowest we have seen rates in our history.

**#4 CIRCLE C IS THE BOMB.** We all know it because we live here, and many others are figuring it out as well. With one of the best HEB's in town, Starbucks, Torchy's, Alamo Drafthouse, Greyrock Golf Course, incredible amenities and of course Greg at the mail store :), we have the best neighborhood in town (I am biased!).

There are many other factors, but this is good for now. Hopefully it gives you a better sense of WHY the market is hot. If you are considering selling your home, do not just list it, find a great agent, with a clear and focused system designed to get you the best price for your home, it truly does matter whom you hire. I have been in the real estate business for 25 years, serving people at the highest level and i am a Circle C resident, I would be honored to speak with you if you are thinking about buying or selling.

As always, thank you for your support.

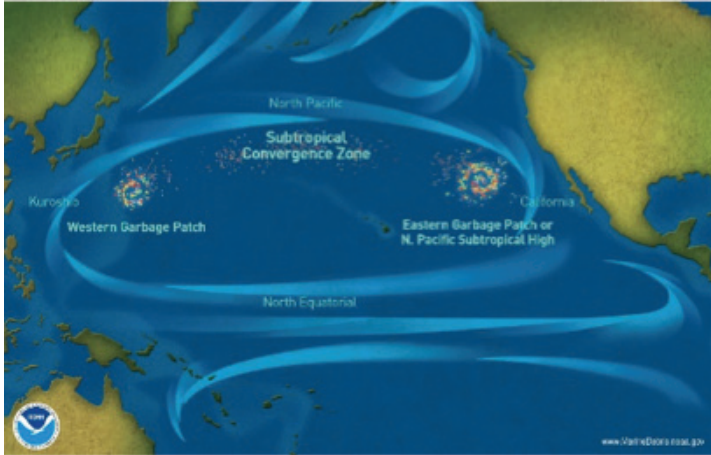


Our food source will suffer and we can be harmed too.

Some animals become tangled in nets or ropes. The animal that is tangled will suffer and they cannot catch food. The animal that is starving becomes sick, drowns then dies.

### Deadly Plastic Trash

The trash in the ocean is spreading and trash is dangerous for animals. Sea animals often mistake trash for food. Dolphins, sea birds, fish and other marine life sometimes eat plastic garbage. The animals can't digest the plastic so their stomach gets blocked. When animal's stomachs are blocked, they cannot eat normal food. The animals starve and sooner or later they die.



### How Trash Gets in The Ocean

Trash gets in the ocean through being washed through sewers, boats dumping trash and balloons being released. When balloons are let go in the sky, they usually end up in the oceans which is terrible for the sea animals.



*This sculpture is made out of trash washed up from the ocean.*

### The Great Pacific Garbage Patch

The Great Pacific Garbage patch is a large floating island of garbage that is twice the size of Texas. It's estimated to have 3.6 trillion pieces of plastic floating in it. It's dangerous to marine animal life and to us.

#### Ways We Can Help

People can help in many ways. We can start using multiple use items instead of single use plastic items.

We can try to stop this by using reusable water bottles, bags and straws! Choose to stop littering. Recycle! Put more in the blue bin than the brown bin.

Ten things to do to reduce plastic use (source: nat geo kids)

- Stop using plastic straws and use paper or a reusable metal straw instead
- Use reusable water bottles instead of the small plastic ones
- Use reusable bags instead of plastic bags
- Choose snacks with limited packaging (fruits have their own natural packaging!)
- Have your favorite ice cream in a cone instead of a cup with plastic spoon
- Buy in bulk to reduce packaging on things like rice, pasta, etc.
- Tiny microbeads in face washes and toothpastes made of polyethylene or polypropylene (plastics) go down the drain, enter our water supplies

and are mistaken for food by fish- choose products without microbeads

- Never litter

- Pick up what you can - organize a family/ friend day to clean up a local park, river, or any public area.

### What Happens to Plastic If We Recycle It?

If we recycle plastic it can be melted and crushed down, and then used to make something new. This will reduce the amount of new plastic produced. It can be molded into brand new things like a plastic egg carton, an H-E-B bag, or a plastic water bottle. Keep recycling and you can help create brand new things!

### Upcycle

We can upcycle and create valuable items out of trash. Take a look at the pictures below. I found these on the internet from a nonprofit organization called washedashore.org. They create and sell sculptures made out of washed up trash at the beach to raise money to help clean the ocean. These sculptures inspired me to make my own art piece out of plastic that I would have thrown away.

### Save Us and Marine Life

Did you know the ocean produces 70% of the air we breathe and provides 97% of the world's water supply? Every day as toxic chemicals enter our oceans; marine life is being exposed and we are being exposed. Not only is it killing our marine life, but human exposure can lead to dangerous health problems. Please, stop littering! Start to reuse! We have to keep the ocean healthy to keep marine life healthy and ourselves healthy. We can all practice the ten steps I talked about in my presentation to help reduce pollution to save us and marine life. If everyone helps, we can make a big difference. You will help save sea life and future generations; you will feel amazing just like them. What would you feel like if you were saved by another person?

Honor marine life.



### About the Author

My name is Mia Singletary and I am 9 years old. I am in fourth grade at Bear Creek Elementary School.

I really care about saving marine life not only for the animals but also for our future. I wrote this presentation because I wanted everyone to realize what trouble our world is in if we don't stop polluting the ocean.

## Upcoming Changes to FM 1826

At the northwest corner of FM 1826 and SH 45, just to the left of the now-defunct Black Sheep Ranch is a long, dirt road known as McMeans Trail. Along McMeans Trail lies an old, Civil War Era church, now renovated into a home, along with... oh, about 11 other homes. In one of the homes resides Louisa Thollander: a mother to three teenagers and President of the Bowie HS Band Boosters. In another home resides Meghan Browne: another mom who is also a children's book author.

These moms utilized AISD buses to take their children to school. Because McMeans is a dirt road with no turn-around space, finding an appropriate location where the kids could wait for their bus to arrive proved challenging for the school district. Eventually, they settled on a place along FM 1826. You know, that busy, windy road infamously known for an unusually high number of annual accidents and far too many fatalities. "Yes, and we all know how safe that is," quips Meghan.

Both Meghan and Louisa knew only too well the dangers of FM 1826. "We would hear the screeches and bangs of at least one fender-bender a week, sometimes up to three a week."

*Continued on Page 10*





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The frustration in Meghan's voice is recognizable to fellow parents that have run into roadblocks when trying to protect their children. "My kids got to the point where they would say, 'oh, there's another accident!' The traffic reports don't show the true number of accidents because many people often settle it themselves, so reports are never filed."

Both women, along with their neighbors, wrote countless letters or emails to TxDOT with requests for speed limit changes, the addition of needed traffic lights, dedicated left-hand turn lanes, and other safety concerns. Louisa sighs, "Our emails were usually returned with canned responses. She pauses for a second, chuckles, then adds, "and their emails always ended with, "please obey traffic laws."

"Yes, that ending," Meghan joins in. "TxDOT is more concerned with the illegal activity of motorists than with making the road safe! They told us, 'we can't help it if people break the laws,' but that intersection at JD's is so poorly engineered, it creates a need for people to maneuver their way around. TxDOT doesn't understand they need to make changes. The engineering does not provide people with what they need. A better design would help people to be less inclined to make illegal maneuvers."

Last year, on December 17, 2019, TxDOT held a public meeting regarding the complaints and some possible improvements to FM 1826. There were around 20 or so in attendance. In addition to State Representative Vikki Goodwin, Travis County Constable Stacy Suits, Bob Moore from former Commissioner Gerald Daugherty's office, TxDOT engineer Epi Gonzalez, and concerned neighbors, mostly from Lewis Mountain Ranch were present.

At the meeting, Lewis Mountain Ranch resident Dean Dzurilla begged the question, "How many more accidents and deaths need to happen on 1826 before some changes are made?" He and his daughter had recently experienced a near-miss when exiting their neighborhood onto FM 1826.

Less than 24 hours after that December 17, 2019 meeting, another collision on FM 1826 resulted in two more fatalities. Dean's third-grade daughter began a letter-writing campaign. She reached out to her classmates and their families, resulting in an estimated 250 letters sent to the offices of Vikki Goodwin and Gerald Daugherty. Dean decided to hold another public meeting a couple of months later, on February 7, 2020. "I held it at my house because I intentionally wanted a place where people could feel comfortable speaking up freely." He states that the parties present agreed to "explore changes needed to FM 1826, including reduced speed limit, increased signage, traffic enforcement via a police presence and dedicated turning lanes in and out of the LMR neighborhood. We even presented a 7-foot-long aerial map printout of what things could look like with the proposed changes."

"I don't think TxDOT provided the needed solutions at that meeting," states Meghan, "but the Lewis Mountain Ranch neighbors had the ear of some of the TxDOT engineers and Vikki Goodwin. That laid the groundwork for our work."

Last month, on December 1, 2020, an elderly man and his wife were leaving Meridian in a Kia sedan when they collided with an 18-wheeler traveling along FM 1826. The accident occurred at the 12000 block, not too far from JDs. Both the male driver and his wife died from injuries in the collision.

"To have that happen right outside our door was too much," Meghan lamented. "Emotions are already strong with many in our country right now, and this hit hard."

Louisa jumped into action. She wrote to TxDOT engineer, Epi Gonzalez, as well as to State Representative, Vikki Goodwin. Epi responded the same day. He eventually put them in touch with another mother that had also reached out to him asking to be involved: Heather Morgan. Heather lives in Meridian and was also moved to action when she heard about the recent accident. "I have been wanting changes to that intersection for years. I have called TxDOT many times," she tells

us. "After this latest accident that resulted in two fatalities, I was so bothered that I got Epi's number. He told me to contact Louisa and Meghan, who are also interested in making a change happen sooner rather than later."

Vikki Goodwin responded and met with the ladies, asking the meeting to be kept small. She listened to their requests, then told them to create and schedule a public meeting. The three ladies began to organize. All three women utilized social media and email groups to spread the word about an online meeting they were scheduling for Monday, January 11, 2021. Louisa created a Google form with space for comments, concerns, or questions about FM 1826. "Louisa did the greatest amount of legwork," states Meghan.

In less than a week, the ladies had 250 responses. "The online forms allowed for an easy way for people to express their views," states Meghan. "Many, including TxDOT did not realize how strongly people felt."

Louisa's sons set up a drone to capture the many illegal traffic violations within a 15-minute period. There were several. This proved to TxDOT that there is a true need for changes to be made. People will do what it takes to go in the direction they need to go. "The drone footage showed not only the illegal activity, but also an aerial view that revealed the complexity of the intersection with the multiple access points and directions of travel," explains Louisa.

Louisa, Meghan, and Heather expected that many residents would show up for the meeting, so they set up the Zoom meeting to accommodate up to 100. Many more showed. "I apologize to anyone who was trying to get in and was unable to," wrote Louisa to the email group she had formed. "We were hoping for 100 people, but honestly didn't think we'd get there, so thank you to the entire community for showing your support. If you were unable to attend, or couldn't join the meeting, and would like the recording, please contact me directly and I can send it to you."

Between the drone footage provided by Louisa's teenage sons, the strongly voiced responses to the Google forms, and the overage of people trying to join the meeting, these three ladies earned the attention and respect of TxDOT, Vikki Goodwin, Travis County Commissioner Ann Howard, and Travis County Constable Stacy Suits.

Travis County Constable Stacy Suits expressed some frustration at the meeting about the money that continues to be diverted from improvements to SH 45 and FM 1826. He was on the original planning committee for SH 45, as far back as the 1970's.

"The biggest news from the meeting came from Epi Gonzalez, the TxDOT engineer from our area who told us that the first work order for the second signal in front of JD's will be submitted within the next two weeks," Louisa wrote to the group, "The original timeline for the second signal was two years out, so we were very encouraged by this change."

Progress!

Why, after so years of letter writing and organized meetings, did TxDOT finally decide to make a change? "For some reason, this last fatality is what made them ready to listen," says Meghan. "There are now enough concerned people that want to get involved. The Google responses gave many a voice. The drone provided footage as proof of the problems. We were well organized. The Zoom meeting worked in our favor since it is a convenient way to attend. Folks present at the meeting were holding each other accountable. This was a community effort."

"These ladies are persistent and smart," says Heather, "I am honored to have been a part of this with them."

"I'm very happy to hear about the light going in and the expanded turning lanes and signage," says Dean Dzurilla. "Just as important, this puts the area on TxDOT's radar for other needed changes. And it also shows area residents that change can happen if they speak up."



# Spotlight on a Circle C Teen

Hunter Gensler is a Circle C teenager attending Bowie High School as a freshman. His first year of high school has been online. This has been tough for him as it's hard to make friends, and his friends from his previous school, ACE Academy, do not live in the Circle C neighborhood. At 14 years of age, he is the youngest person to take AP Computer Science classes at Bowie. He knows Python, JavaScript, C#, Basic, and Mcfunction, and he teaches Python to younger kids. He also plays the organ and the piano. In fact, he and his dad built his own organ. Read about it below.

**Q: How long have you lived in Circle C? What are some of your favorite experiences here?**

My parents moved to Circle C in 2002, so I've lived here for my entire life. I was always quite a different kid compared to all the other kids on my street. While I was spending my time with computers, music, and school stuff, they were playing nerf-war, tackle, and other games. I would occasionally hang out with them when I was much younger, but I just grew apart from them over time. I had no best friends that lived in Circle C. Most of my best friends were from my school, ACE Academy.

**Q: Do you have siblings?**

A: No, I am an only child.



**Q: What is your mom like? What kind of work does she do?**

A: My mom's an audiologist. She tends to people's hearing, does speech therapy with patients of all ages, and programs these little devices that are implanted in patients' heads called cochlear implants. Cochlear implants, from what I know, are like hearing aids, but much more complicated, and probably work in a different way that my mom certainly knows better than me.

**Q: What is your dad like? What kind of work does he do?**

A: My dad's a mechanical engineer. He works at a company called International Biomedical, and he designs medical devices that are used all over the country. The thing that he talks about the most is a baby incubator he designed that flies in helicopters.

**Q: What were your family's deciding factors when selecting ACE Academy for your school? What was the school like? Were there other kids from Circle C that attended?**

A: None of the public schools would accommodate my reading and math levels. ACE was recommended by a private psychologist.

ACE was very small, with only 1 or 2 hundred students and a ratio of 1 teacher to about 9 kids. It was a small world and a very different one compared to public school. Two boys from Circle C went there when I was there

(Christian and Jack), but Christian moved to Oregon and Jack left in 4th grade.

**Q: What were the hours of school there and what time did you have to leave the house in the mornings to get there? What time would you arrive home? Did you ever carpool with anyone?**

A: School started at 8:15 am and ended at 3:30 pm. Since ACE is north of the river, my mom and I had to wake up at 6:30 am and leave at 7:30 am. There was always a ridiculous amount of traffic in the mornings, so we got to school between 8:00 am and 8:10 am. My dad usually picked me up at 4:00 pm or 5:00 pm, and we got home between 6:00 pm and 6:30 pm.

**Q: What were the kids like in your classes? Who were some of the people at ACE that impressed you the most?**

A: We were all super friendly and smart kids in the same environment and were super engaged in class. We had amazing, interactive teachers guiding us too.

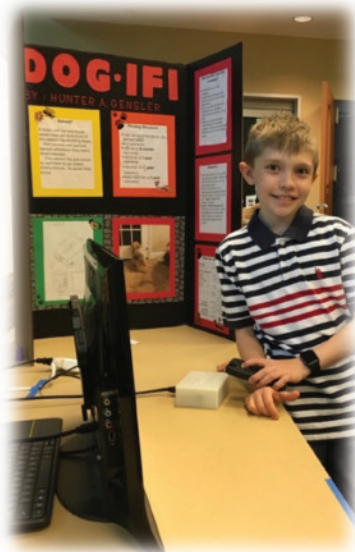
I looked up to someone named Ben who was 2 or 3 grades ahead of me. He made a lot of really cool programming projects. I would often find him sitting at his computer programming his next app. He left ACE when I was in 5th or 6th grade, and I didn't look up to anyone after that.

**Q: What is the best thing about attending ACE Academy?**

A: The environment, the teachers, and my peers. Everyone is super welcoming. The classes are taught by some of the best teachers you could ever find. They took the time to get to know me personally. I liked teaching my peers Computer Science as a teaching assistant. It was quite an amazing 10 years.

**Q: Why did you choose Bowie for your high school? How is it different from ACE Academy?**

A: I was accepted at LASA, but they would not allow me to study both music and computer science at the same time. The teaching style at Bowie is very different from ACE's. The majority of my classes are less interactive, and I don't like those classes as much.



*Continued on Page 12*

# Circle C Spotlight

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*Continued from Page 11*

**Q: What is it like being the youngest person ever allowed into the AP Computer Science class at Bowie? How does it feel to be in a class with kids much older than you? Is the material hard to keep up with?**

A: The age of the others in the class doesn't matter to me. The material's really easy to keep up with since I've spent a lot of time programming outside of school.

**Q: What is most difficult and what are the best parts about attending high school so far?**

A: I've chosen to take all my classes online because it's easier and I'm safe at home. I can get more done on my own, but it's difficult to make friends and socialize like I would in person. I like the independent projects in Computer Science, getting to know my teachers better, and I've made a few friends online.

The Organ:

**Q: How old were you when you first began organ lessons? What inspired you to learn to play the organ?**

A: I was first inspired to play the organ when I was around 6 years old and saw the organist at my local church playing on this grand instrument that was making the sanctuary rumble. I first started taking organ lessons in March of 2018 when I was 12.

**Q: Did you learn to play the piano first? Who were your first piano teachers and how old were you when you started taking lessons? Do you play other instruments?**

A: I only play the piano and the organ. I first started taking piano lessons at Armstrong Music School when I was 4. After a year, I switched to a teacher closer to Circle C. When she moved, I switched again to a private piano teacher, Don, who teaches at his house. I am still there today. I played the piano for about 8 years before I started playing the organ.

**Q: What is it like to play an organ? Who is your organ teacher? How many hours a day do you practice?**

A: It's essentially like playing 3 instruments at once: 2 with my hands and 1 with my feet. My organ teacher's name is Gregory. My mom was referred to him by two of her friends who play in the Austin Symphony. I've only had Gregory as an organ teacher. I practice 1 or 2 hours a day.

**Q: Is the organ your favorite instrument? Why or why not?**

A: I would say so, yes. It has a ridiculous amount of expressive capability. You can manually control the volume of whatever you play, you can play 3 or 4 different parts at once, and it's just super fun to play on. I am glad I learned the piano before I learned to play on the organ. The organ, while it looks similar to the piano with its keyboards, is actually very different. For example, the keys on a pipe organ have a very different texture and sensitivity compared to a piano.

**Q: What is the hardest thing about playing the organ?**

A: The hardest thing about playing the organ for me is probably deciding what registration I should use. Registration is the combination of stops pulled to make each keyboard play a sound or set of sounds. There are different registrations that sound better while playing different types of pieces, and it normally gets harder to come up with registrations as pieces get harder.



*Continued on Page 13*



## Continued from Page 12

Improvisation and writing your own songs for the organ are the hardest to create registrations for because there is no registration guideline provided with the piece. It is your piece that you improvised, transcribed, or wrote, and you have to come up with the registration yourself.

**Q: What are some of your favorite things about playing the organ?**

A: I get to express my creative freedom in a song with more than 2 voices. Also, it is fun to be able to make music by moving my legs all over the place while wiggling my fingers. Organ music is expressive, vivid, articulate, and bold. It isn't all loud and ground-rumbling. The organ is great at expressing whatever mood you want, whether it's delicate and



quiet, or loud and ominous. The diversity and uniqueness of organ music is what I like about organ music.

**Q: Organ music is best known for church music and horror music, would you agree? What other styles of organ music do you enjoy?**

A: Theater organ music was written for silent movies. I came across this at my time at Baylor University. Theater organs usually act similarly to regular pipe organs, but the mechanisms that the organ player can control are geared towards entertainment, and accompaniment. There are many more unique bells and whistles (literally) on a theater organ that make it sound much more like a one-man orchestra, rather than a pipe organ. It does this by taking multiple different types of unusual instruments and hooking them up to the organ keyboard. For example, a lot of theater organs have different types of drums hooked up to trigger when a key or button is pressed.

**Q: Do you know the history of organs? When was the first one invented? Who are your favorite organists and why are they your favorites?**

A: In the 3rd century BCE, a Greek engineer, Ctesibius, invented a rudimentary pipe organ that runs with water called a Hydraulis.

The music of French composers (Vierne, Gigout, Lanquetuit, Béliet, Boëllmann) is the most appealing to me.

**Q: There are three types of organs, correct? The pipe organ, the reed organ, and electronic organs? Are there other types that you know of?**

A: The pipe organ is the classic type of organ that everyone thinks of when the organ is mentioned. It has a bunch of pipes and mechanisms.

The reed organ is usually a very small organ. It is also called the pump organ since it has one or more pump pedals that allow the player to supply air to the reeds. It takes up less, if not the same amount of space, as an upright piano. Instead of pipes, the reed organ has thin floating strips of metal called reeds. When air from the pump pedals runs past a reed after its corresponding key is pressed, the reed will vibrate to create a tone.

The electronic/electric organ is somewhat of a vague term. A lot of electric organs will take one sample from a single note on a real organ and just change the pitch on the computer. Most sound designers will manually record each sample from every single note they include in their software-driven organ sample set. That means making thousands of recordings. It may seem like a waste of time at first to record each note manually, but doing so actually allows the software-driven organ to sound much fuller, more realistic, and more vibrant.

There are several different types of electric organs. One type is the Hammond (or jazz) organ. It creates the iconic computerized organ sound that is heard in jazz, rock, and other genres of music. Another

type of electric organ is the digital church organ. Instead of using organ pipes, it imitates an actual pipe organ by replaying recorded samples from actual organ pipes. Many churches have opted to buy digital church organs instead of real pipe organs, since they are usually more affordable. At home, I use a software-driven organ.

**Q: We understand that you and your father built an organ for you to practice on at home? What inspired you to do this? Could you share your experience with the building process?**

A: I wanted to have a home practice organ for a while, and my dad and I were up for the challenge. We heard about software-driven organs through other professional organists.

**Q: Did you use real pipes?**

A: No, they are simulated through software.

**Q: What software program do you use to simulate the sounds?**

A: I use a program on my computer called Hauptwerk which simulates the organ itself. Hauptwerk looks for external MIDI (Musical Instrument Digital Interface) devices to use as keyboards and that includes the chain of 3 keyboards that I have plugged into my computer's USB port.

My software-driven organ runs on my laptop (as opposed to other electronic organs that house their own computers to replay the organ samples or synthesize their own sounds). Software-driven organ samples are usually provided by third party sound designers, so the organ samples are usually of a higher quality compared to most electronic organs.

**Q: How are the pedalboards wired?**

A: To simplify the wiring, the pedalboard was added to the chain of keyboards. Since all the equipment (including the pedalboard) runs on MIDI messages, we just had to modify a wire coming out of the pedalboard and plug it into the back of my chain of keyboards.

**Q: Did you cut and install the pedalboard and pedals?**

A: The pedalboard was designed on the computer, and my dad cut out the wood on a CNC router machine he has at work. Everything was built from scratch.

**Q: How many keys are on your practice organ at home? How long did it take to build?**

A: 61 keys per keyboard, 32 keys on the pedalboard. It took 4-6 months to build.

**Q: What were the most frustrating and the most rewarding parts about building the organ?**

A: Programming the pedalboard and tuning the springs on the pedalboard was the most frustrating. The most rewarding was knowing that we did it ourselves and did a good job. We didn't have to pay a company 8-10 thousand dollars to do it. Also, I can practice whenever I want without my parents having to drive me to church.

**Q: What advice would you give to someone that wants to try to build their own organ?**

A: Join the Hauptwerk Facebook group for advice. You'll need the help of a professional organist or engineer who knows the American Guild of Organists building standards.

**Q: Do you have any advice for kids or adults that want to learn to play the organ?**

A: Make sure to be a very good piano player first.

**Q: Do you have any life goals that you hope to accomplish? If so, what are they?**

A: Yes, I'd like to get a graduate degree in computer science, work in cybersecurity and network penetration, have a family, and travel places.

**Q: Do you have any messages for the residents of Circle C?**

A: Follow me on my family's YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/user/algensler>

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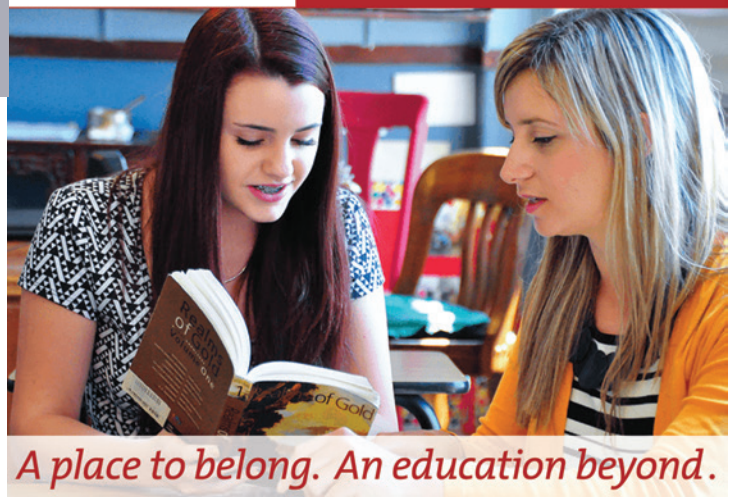
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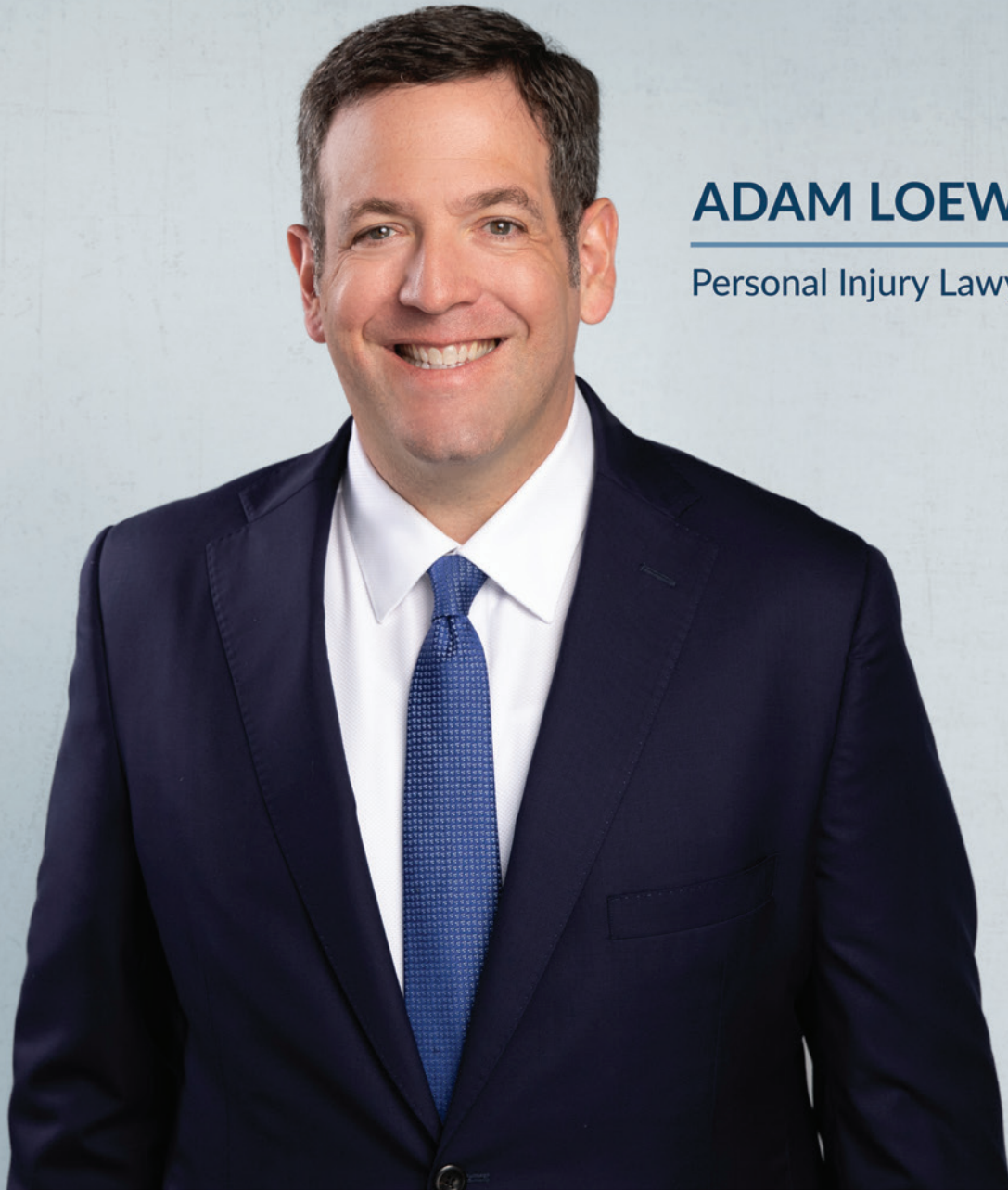
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# CIRCLE C SCHEDULE

## Details:

Idea Lab Kids will host full day camp options at the Circle C Community Center for 5 weeks this summer. If only interested in half day, please reach out to us to discuss your options. This will be our second summer utilizing the Community Center and we can't wait to get back to camps after taking 2020 off in Circle C!



August July June

### Full Day Camp (9-3pm) 5-7 years olds \$345/week

6/7	No Camp
6/14	AM: Age of the Dinosaur PM: Lego Robotics
6/21	Idea Building Company: Toy Engineering (Full Day)
6/28	AM: Stop Motion Animation PM: Lego Robotics
7/5	No Camp
7/12	No Camp
7/19	No Camp
7/26	No Camp
8/2	Gravity, Magnets, and the Forces of the World (Full Day)
8/9	Engineering: Tinker, Build, Explore (Full Day)

### Full Day Camp (9-3pm) 8-12 years old \$345/week

No Camp
AM: Coding and Game Dev. With Minecraft PM: How Stuff Works: Electrical Engineering
AM: Lego Mindstorm Robotics PM: 3D Printing and Design
AM: Engineering with Little Bits PM: Stop Motion Animation
No Camp
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No Camp
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AM: Roblox Game Development and Coding PM: World of Pokemon: Elemental Science
AM: Java Script 101: Video Game Designs PM: Kinetic Design: Where Art Meets Engineering



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