

nwacanews

NORTHWEST AUSTIN CIVIC ASSOCIATION

JANUARY 2021

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High Hopes for 2021

As this issue of our newsletter goes to press, on a cold grey morning, television news is abuzz with accounts of the first Covid-19 vaccines arriving by plane, truck, and train in communities across America, including right here in Austin. Perhaps more than at any time in recent memory, so many people are eager to move into the promise of a new year.

This issue of the NWACA newsletter, in part, contains stories of that promise in our own back yard. Teri Shock tells how, despite the pandemic, the Murchison Community Garden is beginning to thrive, bringing together residents, students, and school employees.

Janice Green writes that, even against the backdrop of so many local businesses facing unprecedented headwinds, local entrepreneurs Nathan and Lianne Straathof have opened a new restaurant featuring a southern-inspired breakfast menu. Another Broken Egg is located in a space near Randall's on Mesa Drive.

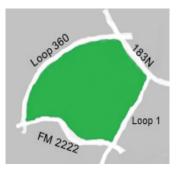
Sally Grayum shares ten constructive habits with which to start the New Year. Idee Kwak points us to ways to engage more

deeply with reading. And Joyce Statz shares tips on how we can clear brush now to ensure we breathe clean air later.

We'd like to thank all of the NWACA committee chairs and other volunteers who found creative ways to continue serving the community throughout 2020. Anyone interested in getting involved can do so by going to our web site at www.NWACA. org. We specifically would encourage anyone interested in Tree/ Environment/Wildlife or Civic Engagement to reach out and connect with us.

Also, we remind everyone that NWACA memberships should be renewed in January, so you likely will soon receive an email or snail mail renewal notice. We continue to keep our dues very low at only \$25 per year, and we very much hope to put some of those funds to work reviving some of our great traditions that were paused in 2020, including Austin's best neighborhood Fourth of July parade.

New to the Neighborhood? *Welcome to NWACA!*



If this is your first copy of our newsletter, welcome to the NWACA neighborhood! The map shows our boundaries – Mopac, RM 2222, Loop 360, and US Highway 183 (Research Boulevard). There are about 13,500 households who are your neighbors and are happy you're here!

This newsletter is one way to know what's happening in NWACA, but there's much more. Check out the

quick link *For New Neighbors* on the home page at www.nwaca.org and visit our public Facebook page. Use the *Membership* button on the home page, or use the form at the end of this newsletter to become a member of NWACA. Members have access to the weekly **NWACA Notes** and the ability to join the NWACA closed Facebook group, to keep in touch with each other and with the latest news about NWACA.



ARE YOU A NWACA MEMBER?

Receiving the newsletter does not guarantee membership.

Not sure? Visit nwaca.org to confirm!

Here are 5 great reasons to join today!

GREAT NEIGHBORS = GREAT NEIGHBORHOOD Together, we can continue to do great things for our neighborhood!

STAY INFORMED ABOUT ISSUES THAT AFFECT YOU We are actively involved in our community and advocate for our residents.

GET TO KNOW YOUR NEIGHBORS

We encourage friendships among residents through our events - July 4th parade, National Night Out, Recycling Collection, Garage Sales, and more!

PROTECT AND IMPROVE OUR COMMUNITY

Learn about fire safety, crime prevention, oak wilt, environmental concerns, park development, wildlife management, zoning/planning, and more!

SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL BUSINESS COMMUNITY

We are deeply invested in building strong relationships within our business network to positively impact our neighborhood.

Together we can make a difference! JOIN TODAY @ NWACAORG/MEMBERS

Key Contacts

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Non-emergency (coyote sightings, compliance issues) 311
To check status, go to: http://www.austintexas.gov/department/
myaustincodestatus
APD District Representative,
Officer Darrell Grayson512-974-5242
District 10 Councilmember, Alison Alter512-978-2110
Enroll in the District 10 monthly newsletter:
district10@austintexas.gov
www.district10austin.com

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Each of the Board members can be reached at: info@nwaca.org

The NWACA Board meets on the 2nd Tuesday of each month, except December. Please visit our calendar at www.nwaca.org to see the specific time and location. If you wish to speak at a Board meeting, please send email a week before the meeting, so that we can put you on the agenda.

NWACA is bordered on the north by US Highway 183 (Research Boulevard), on the west by Loop 360, on the south by RM 2222, and on the east by Mopac (Loop 1)

Peel advertising

Please support the advertisers that make the NWACA News possible. If you are interested in advertising, please contact THE PEEL sales office at 512.263.9181 or <u>advertising@peelinc.com</u>. The advertising deadline is the 8th of the month prior to the issue.

NWACA Events CALENDAR

These events are as planned on November 15. As you consider participating in one of the events listed, please check first with the organizer, since the Covid-19 outbreak may affect the ability to conduct the event.

January 3rd, 2pm

Parks Committee Virtual

January 12th, 6:30pm-8:30pm

NWACA Board Meeting Virtual

January 17th, 2pm

Tree and Environmental Stewardship Committee *Virtual*

January 26th, 5pm

NWACA Zoning and Transportation Committees Virtual

February 7th, 2pm

Parks Committee *Virtual*

February 9th, 6:30pm-8:30pm

NWACA Board Meeting Virtual

February 23rd, 5pm

NWACA Zoning and Transportation Committees Virtual









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NWACA Holiday Decorations Awards - NWACA Board

A big thanks to all who helped light up the holidays within the NWACA boundaries. And an extra special thanks to the three households, listed below, who went all out to generate smiles on the faces of kids from 2 to 92. After driving in a socially-distanced caravan on a cold December night, the NWACA holiday lights and décor judging committee picked the following homes for special recognition and awards.

• First place: 4003 Far West Boulevard. A dazzling display of lights of all shapes and sizes greeted all who passed.



4003 Far West Boulevard



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• Second place: 4300 Walhill Lane. Decorations included an enormous and hilarious range of inflatables, painted cut out figures, and swirling light projections.



4300 Walhill Lane

• Third place: 7103 Montana Norte. Decorators mastered the marriage of music and moving light, with large lit sections of the home that pulsed along with festive holiday music.

All winners were awarded special NWACA yard signs. In addition, the first-place winner received a free driveway power wash, while the second- and third-place winners were offered new curb address signage. We hope this holiday decoration contest can become a new NWACA tradition.



7103 Montana Norte

Murchison Middle School Construction Update - Teri Schook



Interior skylight previously open courtyard

Construction at Murchison Middle School (MMS) is scheduled to wrap up, and students will begin utilizing the new spaces and upgrades when they return from Winter Break. In December Murchison had transitioned about 230 students back to in-person schooling. Murchison continues to be the highest populated middle school campus in the Austin Independent School District (AISD).

To recap, the 2017 Bond Project included the following construction and/or improvements for MMS:

• Modernization Phase 1: 6th grade

addition, library and administration relocation, annex roofing, and bus loop addition

- campus master planning
- courtyard improvements
- heating and air conditioning improvements
- site drainage improvements
- computer lab improvements



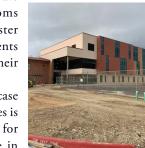
New Library

• student mobile computers

• teacher computers

• wall and ceiling improvements

These elements of the 2017 Bond Project will be completed on schedule. In fact, Modernization Phase 1 will be completed at the time this article goes to press. During the Winter Break, a flurry



Sixth grade building addition

of staff activity. Some 42 teachers are scheduled to move their classrooms immediately following final semester exams just before the break. Students are expected to return and utilize their new space on January 6, 2021.

A virtual grand opening to showcase the new and upgraded MMS facilities is being planned. We expect the date for the grand opening to be sometime in late July 2021.

(All photos here are courtesy of AISD Construction Management.)

Brian's Recent Real Estate Listing Activity in 78731











Multiple Clients Looking in Your Area

I have multiple, pre-approved buyers who want to live in our neighborhood, and I am actively searching for available homes and upcoming listings. In November, the average home price in 78731 increased appx. 19% from \$762,000 in Nov. 2019 to \$905,500 in Nov. 2020. If you're thinking about selling your home, I would love to talk with you.

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Business Spotlight: Another Broken Egg

- Janice Green



What's that light at the end of our pandemic tunnel? A new business in our neighborhood: Another Broken Egg, a breakfast-brunch-lunch eatery in the old Mangia site at Mesa Drive near Spicewood Springs Road.

The owners Nathan and Lianne Straathof, originally from Michigan, are running and biking enthusiasts who were drawn to Austin's beauty and outdoor activities. They picked the Northwest Hills location for their restaurant because of the

long-standing business tenants (e.g., Shirley McPhail School of Dance celebrating their 50th Anniversary). Plus, they appreciate the challenge of the Ladera Norte and Far West Boulevard hills for their cardio breaks.

The original Broken Egg is in Louisiana, which explains the southern-inspired menu items – crab cakes and fried green tomatoes, shrimp and grits, chicken and waffles, Mardi Gras omelette, to name a few – created by Executive Chef Jason, often from family recipes. It was Chef Jason's enthusiasm for natural ingredients, commitment to sustainably caught and monitored Louisiana seafood, and adherence to environmental-friendly packaging and products that sold the Straathofs on the idea of owning the first Another Broken Egg franchise in Austin.

Providing a morning dining spot as their first foray into the world of restaurant ownership was attractive, because as morning people, they enjoy helping customers start their days on a positive note. And who wouldn't be in a good mood after chowing down on some of their tantalizing options: banana bread french toast, lemon blueberry goat cheese pancakes, lobster and brie omelette, benedict burger, chicken mango spinach salad, Louisiana crawfish bowl, and huevos rancheros. Healthy items include gluten-free pancakes, salmon avocado toast, and salads. They have a creative variety of omelettes, scramblers, and power bowls. Check out the B.L.A.S.T – baked bacon, lettuce, avocado, jack cheese, and a choice of red or fried green tomatoes with Cajun remoulade on nine-grain bread. Oh, brother, forget my widening Covid-19-girth!

Nathan and Lianne are very conscious about their Covid-19 safety protocols and they offer online ordering for take-out and delivery dining. If you sign up for The Coop you'll stay in the loop on exclusive offers, seasonal features, promos, and birthday gifts all year long; you'll even a free order of biscuit beignets when you sign up.

The Straathofs are amazed at the number of neighbors coming in and welcoming them. Already they have helped celebrate customers' birthdays and anniversaries and look forward to extending their Northwest Austin business family. They want ABE to be a gathering spot for the neighborhood.

This couple is not only community-conscious on the food front, but they are also involved with the non-profit "Back on My Feet," which fights homelessness by encouraging the transitioning homeless to go for a morning run to help build healthy habits.

No doubt, there have been challenges to opening a new dining business under the shadow of the pandemic. But Nathan and Lianne are full of energy and happy being in Austin and creating long-term ties to NW Hills.

Now, excuse me while I finish my biscuit beignets.

Contact: 8012 Mesa Drive, 512-842-4022, https://anotherbrokenegg.com/location/austin-tx

Murchison Community Garden Update

- Teri Schock

Despite the Covid-19 pandemic, one bright green spot in the heart of our neighborhood continues to flourish. Thanks to Lauren Ward, who launched a community garden on the Murchison Middle School (MMS) grounds, a gardening movement, the Murchison Community Garden (MCG), has taken shape. The MCG is truly a community effort, with neighborhood residents, students, and school employees working together. It is located next to the current MMS school garden at 3400 North Hills Drive, between the new playscape and the school; it faces Hart Lane, a large through traffic area in our neighborhood.

With approval from MMS and faculty gardening coordinator Bret Korba, the MCG nearly doubles the size of the original Murchison garden area. A new chain link fence has been installed; raised beds have been built and planted. The original garden of approximately 1600 square feet has two 8 by 15-foot sheds and a greenhouse of almost 900 square feet that is equipped with electricity, water, tools, and lots of potential. MCG adds 800 square feet of fenced space and provides about 25 beds for rental and use. Students will be working in the space, along with community members. MCG operates through the Murchison PTA.

MCG is building a strong and diversified coalition of supporters neighbors, the Coalition of Austin Community Gardens, the Murchison PTA, NWACA, and more. Thus far, Real Green Landscaping and NWACA have provided MCG with seed money. Real Green also provided irrigation materials and labor. Caroline Alexander is providing funding for a "grow" mural facing Hart Lane, and a Scout is planning to build a kiosk and seating in the garden for his Eagle Project. Bed layout work has begun, along with stone and soil installation. Michelle Young and family have graciously offered to pay for the cost of the stone and soil, and other community members are sponsoring beds.



The goals of the MCG are to cultivate a sense of community in Northwest Hills, create sustainable gardening practices, and provide for people who are in need. The garden is intended for community members without their own gardening space to grow nutritious produce, such as those living in apartment buildings or who have too much shade. MCG is holding a number of the plots for low income or food insecure families and will continue to provide produce to our AISD families in need. In fact, this summer, the garden provided food insecure families with peppers, cucumbers, squash, carrots, and more.

Recently, students have been planting carrots, beans, onions, and other winter plants. Some plots have also been allocated to steering committee members in exchange for their work clearing the garden. Unused beds have been seeded with a red clover cover crop that will replenish the soil's nitrogen. So far, community members have planted winter crops like greens, broccoli, brussels sprouts, and carrots.

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NORTHWEST HILLS AND WESTOVER HILLS

MARKET REPORT UPDATE



SOURCE: ABOR MLS INCLUDING DATA FROM 01/01/2020 THROUGH 12/10/2020 FOR SINGLE FAMILY HOMES. BASED ON NWACA BOUNDARIES: MOPAC/HWY 360/2222/SPICEWOODSPRINGS



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Community members may use the garden after 4:00 pm during the week and any time on weekends; they will care for the garden while the kids are on break. Once the world moves beyond Covid-19, all community member plots will be located in the newly expanded spaces, and the school garden will revert to student-only usage during the school year.

Would you like to be one of MCG's first planters? The cost is \$100 per year for a 4x10 plot, plus a one-time \$25 tool fee. You can also sponsor a plot for lower income or food insecure families. For more information, contact Lauren Ward at lauren. ward02@gmail.com. MCG has started a Facebook group: Murchison Community Garden. It is a private group, but anyone can join.

MGC thanks everyone for their support!



Books and Book Club Ideas

As of this writing, award-winning Austin poet ire'ne lara silva is battling Covid-19. If you speak to God, please pray for her. If you resonate to poetry, please buy her books. Here is an excerpt from her book *Blood Sugar Canto*.



i even speak light till the light subsides this is what they will not tell you and this is what you must know if you hear nothing else i say hear this you cannot live in fear you cannot heal in fear fear will never make you stronger

What should I read next? That's easily answered this time of year with December's lists of best books of 2020. There are lists from Slate, the Wall Street Journal, USA Today, and Vanity Fair, but some of my favorites are those from Goodreads, New York Times, and NPR. My top source though is the Literary Hub at lithub.com. Their Best Books of the Decade is a treasure trove of titles. And while you're online, check out the ever bounteous www.kirkusreviews.com and www.bookandfilmglobe.com

Where should I get my next book? If not the Austin Public Library, I hope you'll buy locally. Book People, our local independently owned bookstore, offers a plentiful and varied array, with well-versed employees to guide you. Then there's our own Malvern Books, specializing in literature and poetry from independent publishers, lesser-known authors, and emerging voices. And for feminist literature, we have Austin's BookWoman.

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Hello neighbors!

We've crunched the numbers to bring you the scoop on how home sales in Northwest Hills fared during the pandemic. Find out about the least and most expensive sale in the 'hood, housing trends and more. >> http://bit.ly/nwhills2020

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Continued from Page 8

Where can I get out-of-print books or indulge an everything-ever-written, research frenzy? Favorites for used books are powells.com, thriftbooks.com, and AbeBooks.com.

With whom can I share my reading? Malvern Books and BookWoman host numerous online readings, book clubs, and events, but the rosters at Book People and the Austin Public Library are particularly interesting, with genre-specific gatherings (even one for mother-daughter readers). Some are by-invitation-only, some are drop in.

Should I belong to a book club? Yes! Your friends and neighbors may already have a group you can join, attending in person once we're all vaccinated. There's also Chez Zee's delicious Texas Author's Series hosted monthly by Cari Clark.

Should I start a book club? Yes! Here are templates for four in our area.

- The Balcones Book Group read 208 "really great books" from 1988 to 2018. Started by Maria Johnson, the 6 women met at each other's home monthly (except summers). Fiction and non-fiction, books were chosen one at a time during each monthly meeting. The person making the selection, both hosted and led the discussion. Light refreshments were served.
- The eight to ten women in the Bad Girls Book Club started it about ten years ago. An email list is circulated so members can vote on reading selections. The monthly meetings, now online, took

place in members' homes; refreshments served by the hostess who also moderated.

- Hotel California is a club where "you can check out but never leave". Started by 12 women in the late 1980's, books in 11 different genres are chosen in December, pre-Covid, at their party/book exchange. The member suggesting a book moderates and hopefully, post-Covid, will return to hosting with dessert served during the first social half-hour of each monthly get together.
- The No Guilt Book Club began in the late 1980s. With a current membership of 19 women, 12-16 usually attend. The number had once swelled to 30 with 18-20 at each meeting, a bit too many for most hosts' homes. With wine, refreshments, sometimes dinner served, each meeting's host, co-host and moderator are chosen at the August meeting at which the final book choices are voted on. The two-tier, decision process is begun in July with 2 suggestions from each active member. The first round of voting by email pares the 38 books to 18. Synopses of these are emailed ahead of the August vote. With December off and August reserved for organizing the year, nine books are chosen, five fiction and four nonfiction, one of these a classic. Significant others are invited to the March meeting and can vote by email on the book to be read.

Book club meetings! Something wonderful to attend online and, hopefully, soon in person.

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History Interview: Betty Wood

- Carol Iones

Betty Wood has had a life of adventure, teaching and living all over the world. She has been in this neighborhood for almost 50 years. To her, Northwest Hills has always felt like a small town inside of Austin.

Betty is from Pampa, in the Texas Panhandle. She was born during the Great Depression and the devastating Dust Bowl years. When the dust storms started, they would place wet towels over the windows and doors, and over their faces so that they could breathe. Afterward came the task of cleaning up the dust that had relentlessly sifted into the house.

She was thrilled to be able to go to college, majoring in Business Education with a minor in English. When jobs for teaching opened in the Defense Department, she and her first husband applied. They were sent to France, then Germany, Ethiopia, Japan, and the Philippine Islands. In those years, she taught American children stationed at military bases.

After her Defense Department travels, Betty knew she didn't want to live in a small rural area, so they moved to Austin. Her first house in 1972 was at 4004 North Hills Drive, just up the hill from the new Murchison Middle School. It cost \$43,000, a lot of money then. They briefly thought about buying an empty lot with a beautiful view up on the peak of Cat Mountain. But that lot cost \$15,000, too much for just land.

She is friends with some original residents of Northwest Hills, such as Margaret Knox. She has fond memories of swimming at the spring-fed pool at the Knox farmhouse, part of the original sprawling Running Rope Ranch. When one of her kids got injured, Dr. Stanley Casner was right there in the neighborhood on Spicewood Springs Road. Northwest Hills had it all: grocery stores, a post office, new schools, and churches. It truly was a small town within Austin.

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Betty was one of the original teachers to open the new Anderson High School on Mesa. The kids were excited to create a new school song and develop new traditions. She remembers one time in 1975, when the sophomore class was planning an event. The father of one of the students had a good friend who played in a band. That musician agreed to help raise money for the school. The kids had a great time dancing to Willie Nelson, performing for free in the Anderson gym!

In her early years at Anderson, Betty (Walker



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then) taught accounting and typing. Later, she taught English. Her philosophy was to teach the student, not the subject. She jokes that she was a jack-of-all-trades, a master of none. Betty received the "Outstanding Teacher" award twice and was 1st runner-up for AISD Teacher of the Year.

Betty loved teaching. She still stays in touch with her now-grown students, many of whom have stayed in the neighborhood. One of her favorite former students is Rush Evans, of KOOP radio. Betty's daughter, Monica Jordan, followed in her footsteps and taught for 30 years at Murchison.

After retiring from Anderson, Betty spent 20 years volunteering with Global Volunteers. This gave her the chance to teach conversational English to native kids in Africa, Asia, Europe, South America, and Mexico. She said that her favorite parts of traveling overseas were that the people were always friendly, and the kids always wanted to know everything about America.

Betty stays active and loves walking in the neighborhood. Every year for the NWACA 4th of July Parade, she has arrived early at the corner of Far West Boulevard and Mesa Drive to claim her spot. She belonged to the Courtyard Tennis Club for years and loves to play 42 and bridge with friends. She still does water aerobics at Crenshaw's on Hancock Drive, and she walks in nearby Stillhouse Hollow Preserve. Her long-time companion Ron Buford recently bought Kristin Schell's book, The Turquoise Table for Betty. Then he assembled a table and painted it turquoise for their own front yard on Paint Rock Drive. Hopefully after the pandemic, she can resume meeting with friends, and maybe even enjoying traveling again.

It was delightful talking with Betty! If you have memories to share, please contact me at info@nwaca.org

Ten Tips to Start an Organized New Year

- Sally Grayum

- 1. Tackle your hotspots (those areas where things always pile up) before you leave the office or go to bed by setting a timer for 15 minutes; when the timer goes off make yourself STOP. Take 15 minutes to scrub your sink, sort mail, or put away toys before bedtime and wake up to a cleaner house the next day.
- 2. Design an easily accessible place and system for shoes and bags. Consider double hooks for backpacks, purses, and jackets.
- 3. Create a "permanent home" for your hotspot items so you can easily put them away. Acrylic file sorters are great for incoming paperwork and putting away homework.
- 4. Keep what you need close by storing things where you use them. For instance, consider storing vitamins on a lazy susan in a kitchen cupboard where you can easily spin them around and take what you need.
- 5. Label storage containers by item or family member's name. Store seasonal items such as mittens, hats, and scarves and/or activity items in containers or bags near your entryway for easy pick up and drop off.
- 6. Straighten up and re-organize in one room from start to finish. Save time and focus by setting aside things that need to go in another room and then put them away at the end of your organizing session.

Continued on Page 14

Here's to the great that awaits.



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Happy New Year!

Best Wishes, The team at Erin Arnold Orthodontics Kaycee, Dr. Erin, and Melinda

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Continued from Page 12

- 7. Remember "quality over quantity". Make quality purchases. Buy oven/freezer safe glass containers instead of Tupperware®. Choose higher quality clothing; get versatile, neutral pieces that can easily be mixed and matched.
- 8. Put things away when you are done using them. Take time to put things where they belong so they don't pile up - things like folded laundry or dirty dishes.
- 9. Create storage systems for overflow items. Once books, crafts, or toys fill up a shelf or container, something must go.
- 10. Sort mail in a central place where you can recycle, shred, and file. Place papers to be shredded on top of the shredder, and do not let them accumulate more than two days.

For further information, you may contact me at sgrayum@ OrganizeMeSally.com.

Auto Burglary and Theft Prevention

- Connie Lundgren

As we are all aware, crimes of all types surge during the holiday season. A quick look at the November 2020 Krimelabb statistics reveal car burglaries are the most common crimes in our area. In zip code 78731, there were 134 incidents reported, and 34 involved car burglaries or theft. In zip code 78759, 348 incidents were reported, and 48 involved automobiles. Texas has the distinction of ranking #2 in the nation for car thefts, behind California according to the Department of Public Safety. In fact, a vehicle is stolen in Texas every 8 minutes and a vehicle is burglarized every 2 minutes.

While keyless car locks, introduced around 1993, are some of the safest, thieves have become tech-savvy and use a device called a key fob code grabber to duplicate the electro-magnetic signal emitted by the fob to open car doors. Officer Darrell Grayson, our Austin Police Department District Representative, suggests using a Faraday bag to protect the key signal. These bags are made to block the signal from the key fob so anything kept inside cannot be accessed from the outside. "Before trusting it, always double-check that it effectively blocks the signal by seeing whether your car unlocks when the key is in the bag." "And don't forget to get an extra one for your spare key," he reminds. "It is best to keep keys away from doors and windows, out of sight and away from code grabbing devices."

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Continued from Page 14

Officer Grayson says a locked car is the best prevention against crimes involving cars; unlocked cars are the biggest contributors to this type of crime. In other words, "If you like it, lock it." Our part of Austin is still one of the safest areas in Austin, but if you would like to do more to help our community stay crime free, consider joining the Neighborhood Watch program or contribute to our Constable Program to ensure patrolling of our streets. You can sign up or contribute on the NWACA website at: www.nwaca.org



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