



nwaca NEWS

NORTHWEST AUSTIN CIVIC ASSOCIATION

NOVEMBER 2021

VOLUME 12, ISSUE 11

Along with colder temps, November invites drivers to “chill” when driving neighborhood streets



NWACA neighbors may have noticed new 25 mph speed limit signs being installed on many streets. We thought it might be helpful to share with you what we know about the change. It's all part of the City's Vision Zero program, which aims to reduce lives lost in traffic crashes to zero.

The City of Austin Web site explains: “Reduced speed limits in Austin neighborhoods and for certain urban core streets were unanimously approved on June 11, 2020, by the Austin City Council to improve safety for all travelers. Data collected by Austin Transportation Department's Vision Zero program shows that speeding is the primary contributing factor in one quarter of traffic crashes resulting in death. Based on a year-long comprehensive engineering study of speed limits on City roadways, the City Traffic Engineer determined that roadway speeds should be reduced to achieve safe and prudent speeds on a wide range of roadways in Austin.”

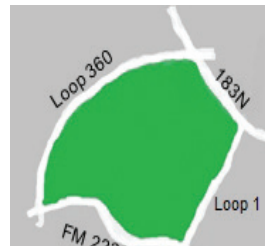
While reduced speed limits may not be universally welcome, the NWACA board would remind readers that we know of at least two instances of pedestrians being hit by speeding or distracted drivers in the last couple of years, both of which resulted in ambulance rides to the ER, heartache, hospital bills, and generally unnecessary loss. Our neighborhood includes many families with young children who can occasionally chase an errant ball into the street. Driving just a little bit slower – and keeping eyes on the road rather than a phone – can go a long way to ensure that drivers can stop in such situations.

Premiering in this edition of the NWACA newsletter is something we're very excited about – a new monthly column “Student Scoop” by Kayla Winer-Winkler, a sixth grader who attends Murchison Middle School.

Also in this issue, neighbor Terry Cole challenges us to think about how to move forward on the issue of homelessness (November is Homeless Awareness Month). Chris Hajdu reports on the exciting new addition of 5280 Burger and Taphouse on Woodhollow Drive. Richard Denney sets the record straight on Austin's highest points. And, our neighborhood waste collection drive focused on Styrofoam, electronics, and dental items is announced for December 4th.

On a house-keeping note: 1) We recently changed membership to be by household again, rather than individuals within a household – something to keep in mind as we approach January when annual dues are paid. 2) We also changed the monthly board meeting date to the third Wednesday of the month. Any member who wishes to join a board meeting is welcome to do so. However, one needs to reach out and let us know ahead of time so we can send a Zoom link, as we are still meeting virtually.

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!
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 Non-emergency (coyote sightings, compliance issues) 311
 To check status, go to: <http://www.austintexas.gov/departments/myaustincodestatus>
 APD District Representative,
 Officer Darrell Grayson...512-974-5242
 District 10 Councilmember, Alison Alter.....512-978-2110
 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 3rd Wednesday 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)

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These events are as planned as of October 15. As you consider participating in one of the events listed, please check first with the organizer.

November 6th, 9:00am-noon

It's My Park Day – Steck Valley Greenbelt
 register at <https://givepul.se/8o66nz>

November 14th, 2:00pm

Tree, Environment, and Wildlife Committee
Virtual

November 16th, 7:00pm

Parks Committee
Virtual

November 17th, 6:30-8:30pm

NWACA Board Meeting
Virtual

November 23rd, 5:00pm

NWACA Zoning and Transportation Committees Joint Meeting
Virtual

December 4, 10:00am-noon

Batteries, Electronics, Dental, Styrofoam Waste Collection event for members
 Mesa Parking Lot, St. Matthew's 8134 Mesa Drive

December 21, 7:00pm

Parks Committee
Virtual

Collection Event December 4: Electronics, Styrofoam, and Bathroom Supplies

- Joanie Arrott

Gather up your outdated computer monitors, old microwaves, iPhone3s, and blown-out stereo equipment. The St. Matthew's Episcopal Church Mesa Drive parking lot will be the site of the Northwest Austin Civic Association's (NWACA) Electronics Collection event. We'll be collecting old electronics, Styrofoam, bathroom toothbrushes, empty toothpaste tubes, used razors, and dental floss containers.

The event is scheduled for Saturday, December 4th, from 10:00 a.m. to noon at St. Matthew's. Collected electronics and Styrofoam will be taken to the City's Reuse and Recycle Drop-Off Center. Bathroom supplies will go to TerraCycle. This event is open to NWACA members only. If you're not a member, you can join at the event for \$25.

We will accept:

- Used electronics such as: computers and related supplies, printers, batteries, cameras, phones, LCD televisions, routers, stereo equipment, microwaves, and small refrigerators; all consumer electronic devices and appliances
- Clean Styrofoam blocks, egg cartons, cups, and containers
- Used toothpaste tubes and floss containers
- Used disposable razors, replaceable-blade cartridge units, and razor plastic packaging

We will **not** accept:

- Rear-projection TVs or those with wooden frames
- Dirty Styrofoam food or drink containers
- Packing peanuts or plastic foam
- Household hazardous wastes including used oil, paint, light bulbs, or chemicals

We're always looking for volunteers for our collection events. We need folks to corral the cars, unload vehicles, load the collection truck, and assist with separating the collected materials. If you're looking for a great opportunity to help serve your neighborhood, meet your neighbors, and protect the environment, come join us! Any questions or volunteer sign-up can be sent to info@nwaca.org.



This year the popular East Austin Studio Tour and West Austin Studio Tour have been combined into one Fall event. The free, self-guided Austin Studio Tour spanning three weekends in November invites you, in-person and virtually, to discover our local artistic talent. You will see working studios; learn about artists' tools, techniques, and inspirations; explore galleries; and meet the artists themselves.

The tour's mission statement calls it "an inclusive and accessible platform for a diverse group of artists to create, exhibit, and discuss their work; to increase the audience that experiences the artists' work; and for that experience to create conversation and build relationships around art and the creative practice." So, while sales are important to artists, the tour is not a chain of craft fairs or street festivals, but rather, an interconnection within the art community. It promotes sustainable benefits between the artists themselves and within the public that supports them.

The East Austin Tour was started in 2003 by participants Shea Little, Jana Swec, and Joseph Phillips. Setting out to increase the visibility of the visual arts and artists, they invited the public into studios and creative spaces. The first year 28 locations opened their doors to a warm public reception, and so a tradition began, gradually blossoming into an Austin institution. By Fall 2018, 585 artists, galleries, and creative projects showcased work to over 50,000 visitors.

The equally beloved West Austin Tour was founded in Spring 2012 and has now become part of the Austin Studio Tour, an all-city event. The new tour's extended boundaries include all 10 Austin City Council districts for in-person artists, plus a 15-mile radius from the Capitol for virtual participants. With expanded participation, the demarcation between the East and West Tours has been pushed further east from Congress Avenue to IH35.

An inspiring, family-friendly experience, the Austin Studio Tour takes place over three weekends:

- o Nov. 6-7, West
- o Nov. 13-14, West & East
- o Nov. 20-21, East

For maps and information visit <https://www.bigmedium.org/ast>

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Student Scoop: Ice Cream - Kayla Winer-Winkler



Hokey Pokey ice cream -named for New Zealand term for honeycomb toffee

Welcome to the Student Scoop, a new column in the NWACA newsletter. We inform the neighborhood about things they should know, and just fun things in general. We look for student writers from all over the neighborhood. If you'd like to write an article or get more information, you can reach me at nwaca.studentscoop@gmail.com.

Perhaps when you read "Student Scoop," you immediately think about ice cream. Well, by luck we decided to cover ice cream today. Here are some fun facts about ice cream you probably didn't know.

You were probably thinking that vanilla ice cream was invented before chocolate, because it's usually referred to as the "original flavor." Well then you would be incorrect because chocolate ice cream was indeed invented before vanilla. The reasoning behind this is, in Europe, people were experimenting with different drinks, such as hot chocolate, tea, and coffee, and then freezing those drinks to see what would happen. This is how ice cream happened and why chocolate ice cream was invented before vanilla.

Another thing you may not know is that New Zealand consumes the most ice cream per year, eating about 28.4 liters per person every year.

It may not be quite so surprising to hear that the U.S. is right behind them with an ice cream intake of around 20.8 liters per capita per year. Rounding out the top 10 are Australia, Finland, Sweden, Canada, Denmark, Ireland, Italy, and lastly the U.K. at 7 liters per year. On the other hand, India and Indonesia share the title of least ice cream consumed per year, both countries consuming around 0.1 liters per person, every year.

Now, you can't talk about food without giving a recipe, so here is a recipe from Taste of Home: You will need two cups of heavy whipping cream, two cups of half and half cream, one cup of sugar, and two teaspoons of vanilla extract. You can also add a flavor of your choice, e.g., chocolate bars or strawberries. If you use fruit, cut it up, and put it in the sugar for some time. This helps the sugar absorb the flavor, but you can always add whole fruit. Put the flavoring and sugar in a food processor, and pulse until flavoring is mixed with the sugar. Add in the heavy whipping cream, half and half cream, and the vanilla extract through the feed tube. Blend until creamy, but lumpy. Then transfer the mixture into a dish and freeze it for thirty minutes. After the thirty minutes are up, take out the ice cream and churn with an electric hand-held mixer. You should repeat this until the ice cream is firm. Once the ice cream is firm, serve and enjoy. You can store the ice cream in an airtight container in the freezer.



Brian Copland

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This Fall my real estate business turns twenty years old – that's two decades of helping clients in Austin make their next move! In that time, I have closed 3,000+ transactions and many of those clients have turned into lifelong friends. The #1 thing I've learned is that while my job title says "real estate broker," people are my passion. Helping my clients start the next chapter in their lives is what motivates me each day.

I love the art of the deal, strategizing a winning plan, and negotiating on my clients' behalf. I love sharing the winning moment when my buyers' offer is accepted, and I love supporting my sellers by removing the stress of the sale. The best part is that I love it all – even those late-night calls advising clients when it matters most.

Over the last 20 years, I have learned to evolve within an ever-changing real estate industry. From printing flyers at home in 2001 to selling properties virtually today, there is one common thread in my career – my clients. Cheers to 20 years of making a meaningful difference in my clients' lives! If you know someone looking to buy or sell in Austin, I'd love to put my two decades of experience to work for them.

Brian Copland, Your Northwest Hills Neighbor. Realty Austin's #1 REALTOR® and ABJ's Top 30 REALTOR® in 2020
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Mount Bonnell: Highest Point in Austin? – Richard Denney

An often cited “fact” is that Mt. Bonnell is the highest point in Austin. Many websites appear to be “copy and paste propagation” of this claim as they have nearly the same verbiage: “Mount Bonnell is considered to be the highest point in Austin, offering one of the most exquisite vantage points in the entire city.”

Such websites can be forgiven because this misconception has been around far longer than the internet. But the fact is, Mt. Bonnell is not the *highest point in Austin*. And more to the point, Mt. Bonnell was probably *never* the highest point in Austin.

Below is a table of the four highest summits listed for Austin¹ by the USGS, with Mt. Bonnell in 4th place. NWACA’s own Cat Mountain tops the list. In fact, you might be surprised that many homes in NWACA are higher than Mt. Bonnell; my house sits at about 905’. But let’s focus on summits.

Name	USGS classification	latitude	longitude	Altitude in feet	USGS topo
Cat Mountain	Summit	30.35243	-97.7797	928	Austin West
Mount Barker	Summit	30.32548	-97.7725	843	Austin West
Mount Lucas	Summit	30.32937	-97.7731	820	Austin West
Mount Bonnell	Summit	30.32076	-97.7733	781	Austin West



Cave at Mt Bonnell USGS 1902



Mt. Bonnell 1800s

If you are one who needs to see with your own eyes to believe it, do this: go to Mt. Bonnell, then gaze at neighboring Mount Barker. It’s higher.

One argument for believing Mt. Bonnell is the “highest point” (or how that got started) might go like this: “Austin’s city limits have changed over time and at one point Mt. Bonnell was the highest point in the city limits.” Let’s tackle that argument.

At Austin’s founding in 1839 the western boundary of the city was West Avenue, hence the name; Shoal Creek flows just west of that boundary. Clearly, in 1839 Mt. Bonnell was outside of the city limits so did not qualify as the highest point then.

It then becomes a matter of knowing when Mt. Bonnell entered the city limits. One might argue there was a time when the city limits expanded to include Mt. Bonnell, but excluded all those higher peaks, including neighboring Mt. Barker. For this we can turn to the “History of annexation actions taken by the City of Austin.”² Per city data, Austin had “full purpose” jurisdiction of both Mt. Bonnell and Mt. Barker “on or before” 1951, and then listed as “Austin City Limits” in 1985. Both were annexed at the same time, as part of the same parcel. That would seem to be the smoking gun that Mt. Bonnell was never the highest point within the city limits of Austin.

Okay, facts be damned. One might argue along these lines: It’s the sheer drop from the top of Mt. Bonnell to the Colorado River below that makes Mt. Bonnell the highest. Well, if you’ve ever sat on the deck of the County Line on the Lake (FM 2222 on Bull Creek) and gazed up at the peak of Cat Mountain, you know that’s a pretty impressive drop!

My guess is that it was the early awareness, popularity, and access to Mt. Bonnell, along with those spectacular 360 degree views, that led to this misconception; that along with a loose definition of “in Austin.”

So does this belittle Mt. Bonnell somehow? I don’t think so. Mt. Bonnell has ample valid bragging rights in the history of Austin. So, how about we change the verbiage to something like this: “Mount Bonnell is considered to be the highest public park in Austin, offering one of the most exquisite vantage points in the entire city.”

Works for me!

Oh, and NWACA folk, how about that Cat Mountain?! Not bragging, but we know the truth; nudge-nudge wink-wink; say no more.

¹ I’ve kept this list to what one would consider “core Austin” by filtering on the Austin named topos. Mt. Bonnell’s ranking only goes down the further out you look. Mt. Larson is excluded as it is in Rollingwood / Westlake Hills.

² <https://data.austintexas.gov/Locations-and-Maps/Annexation-History/amuv-wxzzr>



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MARKET UPDATE

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AVG SALE PRICE PER SF



\$872,919
AVERAGE LIST PRICE



9
DAYS ON MARKET



24
CLOSED SALES



SOURCE: ABOR MLS INCLUDING DATA FROM SEPTEMBER 1-30 2021 FOR SINGLE FAMILY HOMES, BASED ON NWACA BOUNDARIES: MOPAC/HWY 360/2222/HWY 183

SOLD OVER ASKING IN SEPTEMBER 2021

- | | | | |
|----|--|----|---|
| 01 | 3800 CROWNCREST CV
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Listed at \$900,000 |
| 02 | 3601 LAUREL LEDGE LN
Listed at \$825,000 | 07 | 8703 OAKMOUNTAIN CIR
Listed at \$750,000 |
| 03 | 7105 WATERLINE RD
Listed at \$895,000 | 08 | 3807 HYRIDGE DR
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Community Puzzle Swap Opens to Serve Our Neighbors

- Sandra Ely



The *NW Hills Puzzle Swap* was created by and for our community as a Girl Scout Silver Award Project. Everyone is welcome to use the puzzles at no cost! A puzzle swap operates like a Little Free Library: just keep, swap, or borrow and return when you're done.

Look inside the "Puzzle Swap" storage bench outside of Doss Elementary School at 7005 Northledge Drive, to find an

assortment of puzzles that range from 60-1000 pieces, plus tips and supplies for keeping the puzzles in good condition. With guidance from Bonnie Lang, Doss Elementary School Librarian, a team of Doss leadership students will help keep the *NW Hills Puzzle Swap* stocked and ready for use.

If you are interested in opening a future location, we have extra puzzles and guidance for you. Contact austinpuzzles.com or anderson@bluebonnetcircle.org.

Horticultural Curiosities: Trees, Shrubs and Woody Vines

- Jon Plum

Fall is when nature puts on a show of color and change. It's also time to ready your garden for success so plants will return with new life and vigor in the spring. Planting trees and woody plants is best done in fall as well as pruning and mulching. Assess trees damaged in last year's freeze for viability. I recommend evaluation on a case-by-case basis using the help of an experienced arborist.

When planting woody plants, dig a hole twice as large as the root container, then mix the soil with compost or backfill with good garden soil. Containerized specimens can become root bound. If the roots are very thick and tangled, gently loosen the roots or cut them in a few places to encourage growth into the surrounding soil. Water thoroughly after planting, and fertilize with an organic fertilizer such as Hasta Gro. There is usually no need to keep the newly planted trees soaked with water - mother nature will do the rest until the weather warms in the spring.

Consider planting species underrepresented in Central Texas. Black oaks, such as live oaks and red oaks, are susceptible to a variety of fungal diseases including oak wilt. Species from the white oak group are more resistant. In general, white oaks have lobed or rounded leaves versus pointed leaves, and they have lighter bark. White oak



Mustang Grapes courtesy Ladybird Johnson Wildflower Center

species to plant in Central Texas are the Bur Oak, a majestic white oak with large leaves and acorns; the Mexican White Oak, a more moderate sized tree now common on the University of Texas campus; and the Chinquapin Oak with beautiful leaves. Rarer species of endemic white

oak include Lacy Oak as well as the Buckley Oak (also known as the White Shin Oak). The largest known Buckley Oak in the world grows within sight of downtown Austin. You might know that wood from white oaks is used to make barrel staves for the wine industry.

If you plan to add a vine to your garden this year, try the native mustang grape. They are vigorous and can be messy, but they are also easy to maintain. The grapes are tart and bitter, but the growth habit is fantastic for larger arbors, fences, and trellises; and the vines add a distinctly Mediterranean feel to the garden. If you enjoy a glass of French wine from time to time, you should thank the native mustang grape and the actions of T.V. Munson. In the 1880s a vineyard blight called phylloxera was sweeping through France and other parts of Europe. Munson, a botanist familiar with Texas grape vines, proposed grafting the mustang grape rootstock to existing vines in France, since the mustang grape is resistant to phylloxera. This saved the French wine industry and remains a practice today. So, there may be a little bit of Texas in that glass of pinot or chablis. Enjoy!

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Gourmand's Corner 5280 Burger and Taphouse

— Chris Hajdu

Well, it's finally happened. Someone has decided to have another go at the former El Arroyo and Cielo Bistro Location on Wood Hollow Drive, and it's a bit of a homecoming.

Clay McPhail, former owner of El Arroyo and a University of Texas graduate, is opening up an Austin location of his Denver-based burger bar, 5280 Burger and Taphouse. McPhail, who was an owner of El Arroyo from the mid-1980s through 2012, is returning to this once former El Arroyo location.

5280 Burger and Taphouse is known for using the freshest, all-natural ingredients and for their burgers, homemade ice cream, and great draft beer. Also on the menu are fresh cut fries, done Belgian style (fried twice), and seasoned to perfection. Fries are available as a side or by themselves in a variety of styles (Poutine, smothered in queso, and more.)

The food at 5280 is under the direction of classically trained executive chef Derek Baril, who previously worked at upscale Colorado restaurants such as Wild Standard and Salt. His experience brings some culinary oomph to the menu. This influence includes using local fresh ingredients and making almost everything in-house, including the brioche buns, pulled pork, ketchup, mustard, ice cream, and even house-made American cheese. The menu also includes a wide array of appetizers, salads, and sides.

Beverages include a selection of local craft beer and shaketinis (made with the previously mentioned house-made ice-creams – YUM!)

When the weather is right, expect the crowds to fill up the outside patio. I always thought that the patio at this location was meant to be a special place to gather and hang out. I think this restaurant may have just the right mix of food and beverage to really pull that off.

By the time this article hits your door, the restaurant should be open, given that the grand opening is scheduled for Wednesday, October 27.

Hope to see you there.

7032 Wood Hollow Dr,

Austin, TX 78731

512.580.6016

<https://www.5280burgerbar.com/>

Homeless Neighbors: Where Do We Go from Here?

— Terry Cole



I started Street Youth Ministry (SYMin.org) in 2008, and I am a NWACA neighbor. I've been working with homeless young adults since 2003. In that time, I've seen three waves of homeless visibility crises in Austin, including this most recent, very ugly one. I believe none of us liked it, including the homeless. So where do we go from here?

First, let's start with basics. This is adapted from something I've been teaching schoolchildren for years:

1. Homeless people come in all sizes and ages. We see a certain stereotype in the media, but they come in all ages, from babies to grandparents.

2. Homeless people often look different on the outside -- dirty, ragged, tired, poorly groomed. There are reasons for that, and they don't change anything on the inside.

3. Homeless people like the same things you and I do -- having fun, having friends, eating tasty food, watching movies, listening to music. It's just much harder to do those things when you have no home base.

Now, let's talk about the recent visibility crisis. We haven't seen radical surges in the number of people experiencing homelessness. It's been rising steadily, along with other poverty issues in our region. We're made aware of our homeless at times when they are more visible. The last wave was a crisis brought about by major policy changes and their poor implementation. That has been – or is being – corrected, but we can learn something about homelessness from what happened. When given the choice of living out of sight "in the woods" or living in the city -- by a busy freeway with noise and exhaust, on a sidewalk where they're unwelcome and yelled at, or under a busy bridge in crowded dirty conditions -- they chose the latter. Something is very wrong with living "in the woods." It's dangerous out there. The vulnerable are preyed upon there in terrible ways. The homeless voted with their feet when it became possible to live in full sight rather than "in the woods."

What is needed to house our homeless? First, we need transitional housing. Most people find it very hard to recover while living on the streets, moving from place to place in an effort to find a place that will tolerate camping and where their belongings are still there when they return. Legal camping places and more transitional housing are needed, but these are not permanent (nor should they be). Permanent housing is achieved in two ways: moving to independent self-support by working, saving, and selecting market-affordable housing; or through support such as Social Security disability or permanent supported housing. Both take significant time to achieve.

Is housing enough? Living on the streets is stressful and traumatic; and it can damage a homeless person.

Continued on Page 11

Most people require some type of guidance, healing, and self-discovery when they become homeless. Transitional housing is scarce, but services for those transitionally housed are even more difficult to find. We need more, and I suspect the only solution is to involve agencies, service-providers, and faith organizations that help with healing, teaching, counseling, and building social and emotional well-being. Homelessness is isolating, and community is the antidote.

How can you help? Build compassion. Look for ways to humanize the face of homelessness for your family members and at your workplaces. Smile and wave at our homeless neighbors. If you want inspiration, stories.SYMin.org can help. Look for community solutions that stop forcing homeless people to hide. Insist on equal enforcement of laws that keep all in our community safe, whether housed or not. Look for ways to support the private and faith-based organizations that provide discovery and healing services. They have leadership, knowledge, and experience helping homeless people discover their capabilities and pathways to healing. Pick your strength -- food and nutrition, education and mentoring, substance abuse and support, mental health support, health and personal hygiene, community building and social well-being—and get involved or support it. I'm happy to help make recommendations.

We are all neighbors to one another, and we're all more alike than different.

Cooking as a Wildfire Risk

— Joyce Statz

The article title probably has you guessing that the topic is campfires or runaway barbecue fires. Those would be risky activities for our neighborhood at a time of low humidity, high temperature, and dry vegetation. If these fires get out of control, they can easily ignite a burnable area of the wildland urban interface and cause a wildfire.

However, we will focus on another scenario. Suppose there is a house fire. Once it well underway, there will be embers flying from that fire, much like they do from a wildfire. Perhaps there's less wind to loft the embers far away, but they could easily get to a neighbor's house or a ventilation system. We saw that happen several years ago in a house fire on Ladera Norte, where the neighbor's house had extensive damage from embers that got into the attic.

As documented by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) on their public education web page, the primary cause of house fires is cooking fires, and the leading cause of fires in the kitchen is unattended cooking. Fire departments around the country respond to more than 170,000 fires per year involving cooking. Thanksgiving is the leading day for these fires, with more than three times the average.

Three out of five cooking fires involve the kitchen stove, though I can attest that oven fires also occur. On a Thanksgiving weekend several years ago, I was busy cooking for a crowd, a bit distracted perhaps. Trying to protect some muffins from people with the munchies, I hid them in the oven, nestled in a plastic storage box.

Forgetting that fact, I turned on the oven to pre-heat and went about my slicing and chopping. A few minutes later, there was smoke billowing out of the oven, the smoke alarm was blaring, we were fanning the smoke out the open windows, and... the local Fire Department appeared! Explaining what I'd done was rather embarrassing!

The moral of the story – don't hide flammable things in the oven!

NFPA provides these recommendations:

- Be alert! If you are sleepy or have consumed alcohol don't use the stove or stovetop.
- Stay in the kitchen while you are frying, boiling, grilling, or broiling food. If you leave the kitchen for even a short period of time, turn off the stove.
- If you are simmering, baking, or roasting food, check it regularly, remain in the home while food is cooking, and use a timer to remind you that you are cooking.
- Keep anything that can catch fire — oven mitts, wooden utensils, food packaging, towels, or curtains — away from your stovetop.
- If you have a small (grease) cooking fire and decide to fight the fire...
 - On the stovetop, smother the flames by sliding a lid over the pan and turning off the burner. Leave the pan covered until it is completely cooled.
 - o For an oven fire, turn off the heat and keep the door closed.
- If you have any doubt about fighting a small fire... More than half of the people injured in home fires were hurt while attempting to fight the fire, so if it's not easily squelched, call the professionals.
 - Just get out! When you leave, close the door behind you to help contain the fire. Call 9-1-1 or the local emergency number from outside the home.

More than half of the people injured in home fires were hurt while attempting to fight the fire, so if it's not easily squelched, call the professionals.



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Understanding City Code: Austin Short-Term Rentals

– Alan Carson

During major events and festivals such as SXSW, ACL, and F1, hotels will sell out, and visitors look to private homeowners for accommodations. These are far more common than one would expect, as a recent survey has shown that there are over 11,000 such homes, apartments, and bedrooms for rent, of which about 7,000 are illegal – that is, not licensed by the city. Following is a description of the highlights on making your home a short-term rental (STR), defined as rental of a residential building for less than 30 consecutive days. There are two types of STR's, with type 1 being owner occupied, and type 2 not occupied by the owner.

There is an initial license fee with subsequent annual fees. You will be required to submit proof of insurance, certificate of occupancy, your driver's license, as well as proof of payment of the Hotel Occupancy Taxes to the City of Austin and to the State of Texas. Penalties for an illegal STR may be assessed. The city's Code Department is responsible for enforcing laws pertaining to STR, with 17 full-time inspectors investigating and serving citations.

There are problems with STR's, principally cited by neighbors. During a recent eight-month period, there were over 1,300 complaints to the Austin Code Department, of which 93% were for unlicensed STRs. Most complaints concerned party houses and transience. These were in neighborhoods that were once quiet, friendly, and tight-knit. Austin cracked down on rentals in 2015, passing an ordinance to phase out all full-time short-term rentals and to allow only those where the owner lives onsite and rents only partially or occasionally. Also, there is a minimum spacing required between STR's within a neighborhood.

The relevant city ordinance can be found by doing a web search for *Austin Municipal Code*, then selecting *Code of Ordinances*, and searching for 25-2-788 within the code. Details on how the program is run can be found at this City of Austin web page <https://www.austintexas.gov/departments/short-term-rental-license-program>

Report Street and Sidewalk Issues to 311

– Transportation Committee

See something; say something. That advice applies to street and sidewalk issues, too.

Is a sidewalk not passable because of overgrown bushes or tree limbs? Is there a pothole? Is a streetlight out? Missing a section of sidewalk along a street? These won't get fixed unless they get reported, and for annoying things like missing sidewalk segments, the more people who report them, the more likely they'll be dealt with. Call 311, download the mobile app or use the online form at <https://www.austintexas.gov/departments/311>.

Deer Rutting Season

– Wildlife Management Committee

November through December is deer mating season in Texas, also known as "rutting season." During this time, we all need to use extra caution; deer are paying attention to one another and not to humans and cars. You'll probably see more mature male deer than usual, and at times females will be scurrying ahead of them. Be careful, as they may dart in front of walkers, runners, cyclists, and moving cars. Give them plenty of space. Keep dogs on a leash at a safe distance from the deer.

Given the frequency with which cars and deer collide, it would be prudent to check your auto insurance to ensure you have adequate "Collision – Other" coverage, which applies to such incidents. Recently, an encounter with a deer on Greystone Drive required more than \$3,000 in repairs, though the apparent damage was small!



If you're a gardener with a medium or large agave plant within a deer's reach, you might want to put a barrier around it during mating season. Male deer like to rub the velvet off their antlers using the agave spines, destroying the plant's big wide leaves in the process.

To report an injured or dead deer, call 311. Be prepared to provide a precise address where the animal can be located.

Yellowjackets and Hornets

– Wizzie Brown, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension



Fall can bring yellowjackets into areas that are closely associated with humans. These small wasps usually feed on protein but seek out sources of sugar in late summer and early fall. This can lead the wasps to areas of human habitation or parks to find garbage cans, recycling areas, or even sporting events or picnics for a sugar source.

Yellowjackets are small, about ½ an inch long, with yellow bodies with black markings. They create a paper-like nest out of chewed wood fiber. The nest is completely enclosed except for a single opening for the wasps to enter. Nests can become fairly large in size and may contain up to 20,000 adult wasps.

Hornets are a type of yellowjackets and often create nests in aerial locations whereas yellowjackets are cavity or ground nesters. Nests are typically abandoned in October or November as next year's queens fly off to locate suitable overwintering locations. Abandoned nests typically decompose and are not used the following year.

Yellowjackets may be confused with honeybees or paper wasps. While yellowjackets are approximately the same size and color as honeybees, they do not have hairy bodies. Paper wasps are colored differently than yellowjackets and make an open-faced paper nest.

Yellowjackets are beneficial insects because they feed on other insects within the landscape and can help to keep pest populations under control. If nests are not near human activity, they should be left alone.

If treatment is necessary, it is best, and safer, for nests to be treated by a pest management professional. Underground and cavity nests are best treated with an insecticidal dust sprinkled around the opening. Aerosol sprays may also be used but tend not to be as effective as dusts. If wasps are foraging around garbage or recycling cans, make sure cans have tightly fitting lids and are emptied on a regular basis. Garbage and recycling cans should be cleaned with soap and water periodically to remove buildup of debris.

For more information or help with identification, contact Wizzie Brown, Texas AgriLife Extension Service Program Specialist at 512.854.9600.



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Monarchs on the Move

By Cheryl Conley

The most amazing event happens every year at this time. It's the migration of monarch butterflies. There are two populations of monarchs in the United States. One is the Eastern North American population that migrates to Mexico. The other is the Western North American population that overwinters in California along the Pacific coast near Santa Cruz and San Diego. Migration takes eight to ten weeks and depending on the starting point, some butterflies travel over 3,000 miles. Can you imagine this delicate insect traveling through high winds, rain, hail and heavily traveled roads to reach its destination?

The Eastern North American population of monarch butterflies are of special interest to those of us in Texas. The monarchs fly south using several flyaways. When they reach central Texas, they merge into a single flyaway until they reach their overwintering grounds in the Oyamel forests in Central Mexico. The forests provide an almost ideal microclimate with temperatures ranging from 32 degrees to 59 degrees Fahrenheit. At night, in order to stay warm, the butterflies cluster together. It's not uncommon to have thousands of butterflies in one tree.

So how do they know where to go? Scientists believe they use the position of the sun as well as an internal magnetic compass that directs them south towards the equator. As they near their final destination they are able to smell and pickup on social cues to guide them.

So what happens when they reach Mexico? They hibernate until February and March. After hibernation, they find a mate, quickly get down to business and then start heading back up north. They stop many times along the way to lay eggs in milkweed plants. After enduring a long

migration south, hibernation, traveling north in the spring and laying eggs along the way, this generation of monarchs dies. These butterflies are considered the fourth generation of monarchs per year.

The first generation happens between March and April when the eggs from the last generation hatch into caterpillars and then become butterflies. They start their journey north to find food. Their lifespan is 2 to 6 weeks.

The second generation is born in May and June and they travel north as well. Their lifespan is 2 to 6 weeks.

The third generation is born from July to August and they journey north to their final destination. They lay eggs along the way and those hatched eggs become the final generation of the year. Lifespan is 2 to 6 weeks.

The fourth generation is born from September to October. This is the only generation that doesn't die in 2 to 6 weeks. This is the group that migrates south. This generation always returns to the same trees as the fourth generation before them. No one really understands how they do this.

Monarchs are indeed amazing but in recent years, fewer and fewer butterflies have been returning from their migration to Mexico. This is due to habitat loss and extreme weather conditions. Here are some things you can do to help save the Monarchs.

- Plant native milkweed. Local nurseries usually stock these plants.
- Other plants to purchase are the butterfly bush, cosmos flower, lantana, lilac and zinnia.
- Create a Monarch way-station. For more information, check out this link: <https://www.monarchwatch.org/waystations/>

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Over the next 5 years, I observed on LinkedIn Dawn earning awards for all her hard work and success. Every month she seems to be in the Million Dollar Club and every month I think to myself, of course. Whatever the top tier of recognition is, undoubtedly Dawn will achieve it. I'm sure it takes much more work than I appreciate, but I think it's just natural for Dawn.

Fast forward to 2021 and my company is closing the Austin office. It's time to move again. I'm assigned a case number with Cartus and start the move process. **I told my Cartus contact that I will only work with Dawn Lanier**, trusting that she will work with us as we haven't spoken in a very long time. I also relayed that I don't care what the rules are about getting an independent market assessment, so please respectfully let that person know that they have no shot at our business.

The fundamentals of staging, listing, and negotiating are core skills that Dawn excels at and everyone who works with her already knows that to be true. What is maybe not as obvious is the ability to navigate the corporate policies of both the employer and Cartus. The two together can be a thankless and arduous process, but Dawn handled them with ease. I knew that she had some tedious paperwork that was for all practical purposes something that I would deem busy work, required for an unexplainable corporate rule. Dawn handled the requirements quickly, accurately and ensured that all the people at Cartus had what they needed when they needed it.

After we agreed to sell our house, still at the top of the market, I naively thought Dawn was more or less done and in cruise control until close. I came to learn that she still had quite a bit of paperwork and obligations that Cartus required of her. **As always, she nailed it and kept everything on track and kept all the stress off of the Wall family. Her thoroughness allowed us to receive our funds timely and move on with our relocation. At one point, I recall hearing someone at Cartus, wishing that Dawn could always be the company rep for them to work with.**

I will close by saying that Dawn is awesome at what she does, she is the only agent we recommend, we are so thankful that we met her in 2016, and even more thankful that she was there for us in this super cycle of 2021. **If there is a customer appreciation award, we cast our vote for Dawn Lanier."**

~The Wall family



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