

**Walnut Creek
Neighborhood
Association**

Austin, Texas

Eubank Acres
Oak Ridge :: Walnut Forest

May/June 2012

**Report from the front lines: Annual Meeting notes on Page 1 and 2
Register, Read, Evaluate, Vote! Election info on Pages 1 and 5
Shady Oaks Garden Club Spring awards & Neighborhood Bulletin
Board on Page 4
Good news and solicitation from local schools on Page 3**

WCNA News

Protect Your Property Register & VOTE!

WCNA now has two deputy voter registrars in residence: Board members Martha Aviles and Jill Leberknight. If you are new to Travis County or have had a name or address change in the past year you can register to vote right from your home. Just contact Martha or Jill (contact information on address page) and they can arrange a time to get you registered.

So easy; No excuse not to vote this year!

Hello, new neighbors!

If you are a new resident in the WCNA neighborhood, we truly would like to welcome you, and also to make sure our mailing/contact list is updated and we have a chance to contact and greet you, and to provide you with information about us and the neighborhood.

If you want to be listed, call or email one of the board members (listed on the last page) or send us a note at the mailing or email address below. Thank you, and please let us know about things that either please or concern you about your new neighborhood.

Walnut Creek Neighborhood comprises three subdivisions bounded by Walnut Creek, I35, Braker Lane and Lamar: Walnut Forest, Eubank Acres, and Oak Ridge. Membership in the association is \$15 per year, with the FY beginning in March. Dues may be paid by mail to

WCNA
PO Box 82746
Austin, TX 78708-2746

Contact the board and/or the newsletter by email at

wcna.contact@gmail.com

You Shoulda Been There!

Notes of the Annual General Meeting of the Walnut Creek Neighborhood Association

A lively and enjoyable WCNA Annual Meeting was held in the Lawshae Community Center at St. Mark United Methodist Church on Tuesday evening, March 27th, with about 100 attending and with free child care provided for the first time(!). President Robert Meadows ran the meeting with style and humor, aided with similar vitality by his wife Monica who provided the visual props. Giving thanks to host St. Mark (and encouraging participation in their Food Bank; see bottom of page 2) Robert outlined and discussed the multiple activities and pursuits of WCNA over the past year or so, with lots of audience participation. Actions to protect the integrity of our residential neighborhood included many interactions with city agencies (including the city council) with respect to zoning requests (some opposed, some supported), help with issues associated with crime and transients, with keeping our most helpful constable, etc. While we still have a way to go to have our periphery match our neighborhood's interior beauty and friendliness, WCNA is "on the job" and always looking for help; Contact a board member if you'd like to get on the list to help with a project or two during the year.

In the same vein, Theresa Jones – who heads the project to beautify our street entrances – showed some possibilities, to the extent of generating scaled prototypes of a couple of the proposed designs she has received from you (neighbor), co-workers and friends.

Both of these models were well-received, and even more well-received was the concept of street sign "toppers". Attendees gave unanimous consent for the board to proceed toward (cont'd below) **Theresa and Her Entrance Beautification Models**



procurement of these decorative/informative signs mounted above regular street signs, as depicted in the figure at right. The idea is that they will provide both a unifying theme and identity for the neighborhood, whether mounted only on entrance signs or – ideally - on every sign in the 'hood. Designs appropriate for our neighborhood are under consideration, and costs – with anticipated offset contribution from the city – will be obtained soon. It's likely that at that time you will be asked to help make the decision of how many to buy. If we want them on all signs we – individual homeowners – probably will need to provide a bit of supplemental funding (perhaps \$5 to \$10 per home) are participate in some form of fundraising. Standby for more in coming weeks!



Street Sign With “Topper”

Even the financial report was better than in the last couple of years, with overall activity producing a slightly positive net income. On the other hand, a tendency toward reduction in membership in the association and attendance at National Neighborhood Night Out in October is worrisome. Attendance at NNNO has dropped despite moving from early August to early October, providing much more pleasant weather conditions. Several possible reasons were advanced by attendees, including “not getting the word out”, the switch to “covered dish” dining, schools being back in session, etc. So these suggestions will be part of planning for this year, starting very soon – the date for NNNO this year is October 2nd.

Several residents have been enthusiastically pursuing installation of a children’s playscape near the entrance to our neighborhood park, Walnut Bluffs Trailhead, on Cedarbrook Court. This has received widespread interest, and attendees voted to proceed toward implementation. An action group has been formed to start jumping through the hoops to make it possible, using as much city funding as possible.

We were addressed by Mary Rudig, President of the North Austin Coalition of Neighborhoods (Walnut Creek Neighborhood Association is a member), concerning the upcoming city bond election(s) . She urged the membership to come “in force” to the Candidates Forum at St. Albert's on 18 April 2012, to vote, and to lobby for inclusion of the North Lamar/Burnet Road project (see March-April issue) in the bond election in November?????. Subsequent turnout at the candidates forum was outstanding, and the bond task force committee on transportation has reported positively for the project (about 34 million dollars). Inclusion in the task force recommendations to the city council is almost certain, though details could change, but the council could change it almost any way they want. So let’s hope the winning candidates are sensitive the the almost 20% of Austin voters who live in our area and finally approve some improvements to our sadly-neglected main arteries!

Attendees also were generally positive about approaching inhabitants of the apartments at our northwest corner boundary (On the Green) with the possibility of membership – in some form – in our Walnut Creek Neighborhood Association. After “pros and cons”, the board was authorized to research the issues and possibilities.

Before all this, the membership voted to re-elect Brad Wilcox, Jean Ramsey, Jill Leberknight, Bunnie and Dorsey Twidwell, and Martha Aviles as directors for terms of 2012 to 2014. Tasha Bowser was appointed earlier by the president to replace Witney Milberger-Laird, who retired to take care of her recent addition to the family, for the remainder of her term (2013), which is coincident with that of Tony Potts.

Then we adjourned, consumed the remaining refreshments, put up the chairs and went home. For those who missed it: Hope to see you next year!

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED ...

St Mark UMC, located adjacent to the neighborhood at 601 W Braker, is a relatively small community-oriented church. The church sponsors several outreach programs, but two in general have a direct impact on the local neighborhoods and require local volunteer help to continue operation.

The food bank (also known as the Love Box) opens its pantry doors Wednesday and Friday 10-12 AM to provide a few bags of canned, fresh and frozen food to those in need. Volunteers are needed to assist loading bags and processing people coming to the pantry. The pantry also needs assistance picking up food donated from various businesses in the area and from the capital area food bank. NOTE: Food is purchased from the capital area food bank with pantry funds, so donations of dry or canned goods (or money) directly to the St Mark Love Box are always welcome. (continued below)

An after-school program called "The Meadow" provides an environment for children from Walnut Creek Elementary a place to get homework help and burn off a little energy after school. Volunteers are needed to assist and watch the children 3:30-5 PM Monday and Wednesday afternoons. The program will be extending into summer providing a place for children to gather for a few hours of crafts and activities. Besides volunteers, donations of craft materials or school supplies are always welcome.

Volunteers can schedule their time one or two times a month or each time the doors are opened. Please contact the St Mark office, 836-5747 for more information on these or other activities sponsored by St Mark or to make a donation.

Dobie Middle School Improving!

This middle school for many of the students from our area/neighborhood, has been an underperforming school for some time. However, in recent years efforts to improve (especially academic) performance have resulted in J. Frank Dobie College Preparatory Academy (Dobie Middle School) recently being selected one of 120 National Demonstration Sites for Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID), a kindergarten through postsecondary school "system" that has supported thousands of students in becoming confident, college-going scholars. Selection came through a process of application screening and site review by a validation team from AVID's headquarters in San Diego.

AVID National Demonstration Sites were initiated in 1993, and Dobie adopted the program about that time. However, restructuring during the 2006-2007 school year produced much more dynamic administrative support resulting in this national designation. As such, it will serve as a model for middle schools from all over the country, with many visiting to observe methods of implementation. Dobie's AVID system serves 160 sixth, seventh and eighth grade Dobie students directly, and provides assistance through student-based leadership for the entire campus. The following is a student-generated list of advantages offered by the program: learn to be better organized, learn to take notes, request help in any subject during tutoring, get help applying for college, get help securing financial aid for college, go on monthly field trips, participate in service projects, become a campus leader/mentor/role model, and listen to great guest speakers.

One of the cornerstones of the Dobie program is interest in serving the community, which "...may be as nearby as the classroom next door or as far away as a barracks in Iraq". Students are included in the decision-making process that creates the service-related projects which "...should reflect the interests and needs of the students on our own campus". Given recent disappointing performance by both our elementary and middle schools, this selection provides some needed encouragement about future possibilities; Clearly good schools are strong drivers/indicators of healthy neighborhoods.

For more about AVID see <http://archive.austinisd.org/academics/sss/avid/index.phtml>. Also check out the following article about getting involved with our elementary school, Walnut Creek Elementary.

Reading Buddies Wanted!

by Jim Letchworth

Remember the satisfaction you used to get teaching your child to read? Remember the smiles they used to get on their faces when they finally were able to say a certain new word right or when they learned to tell a noun from a verb? If you're like me, those early learning years were some of the best I had with my kids.

Mine are all grown up now and don't care to have me teaching them anymore, but I've found a place where I can enjoy the satisfaction of helping teach those early lessons of math and reading again. The S.M.O.R.E.S program at our neighborhood school, Walnut Creek Elementary, is in need of "reading buddies" and mentors for kids who need a little extra help getting a good start in their education. You can volunteer for as little as thirty minutes, one day a week - to four hours a day, five days a week.

According to a 2009 article from the New York Times, Andrew Sum, Director of the Center For Labor Market Studies at Northeastern University, ..."the collective cost to the nation over the working life of each high school dropout (is) \$292,000. Mr. Sum said that figure took into account lost tax revenues, since dropouts earn less and therefore pay less in taxes than high school graduates. It also includes the costs of providing food stamps and other aid to dropouts and of incarcerating those who turn to crime.

Two reactions to the above problem are 1) complain about "the system" until we're blue in the face, or 2) do something positive to help on a local, one-on-one level. From a purely economic perspective, helping raise the reading and math levels at our neighborhood school also should eventually make Walnut Creek a more desirable neighborhood for new families moving in or setting up a household in Austin. A more desirable neighborhood should in turn translate into higher property values. So, helping educate the kids at our neighborhood school, can be a "win-win" move. If you agree, do yourself a favor and contact Mrs. Hausman at 414-3938.

WCNA Board Meetings

Generally the first Monday of each month; Me & U Bistro
All welcome (Check with a board member to verify date and time.)

Contacts of Interest:

City Contacts:

Mayor Lee Leffingwell, 974-2250
lee.leffingwell@ci.austin.tx.us

Mike Martinez, 974-2264
mike.martinez@ci.austin.tx.us

Laura Morrison, 974-2260
laura.morrison@ci.austin.tx.us

Sheryl Cole, 974-2255
Sheryl.cole@ci.austin.tx.us

Bill Spelman, 974-2258
william.spelman@ci.austin.tx.us

Chris Riley, 974-2256
chris.riley@ci.austin.tx.us

Kathie Tovo, 512-974-2255
Kathie.Tovo@ci.austin.tx.us

County Commissioner,
Sarah Eckhardt, 854-9222
Sarah.Eckhardt@co.travis.tx.us

**EMERGENCY Police, Fire,
EMS, Animal Control: 911
City of Austin:
<http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/>
Phone: 311**

**Neighborhood Contact
Information**

**WCNA Newsgroup: [wcnanews
http://groups.yahoo.com/](http://groups.yahoo.com/).**

**NextDoor: NextDoor WCNA
wcnanextdoor.com**

WCNA contact:
wcnanextdoor@gmail.com

Neighborhood Bulletin Board

Pool picnic party Saturday, June 16

Saturday, June 16 – pool party and picnic
Walnut Creek Metropolitan Park pool parking area
6:00 pm-8:00 pm (pool closes at 8)

Bring:

- admission money for the pool if you plan to swim
- picnic supper
- picnic blanket or chairs
- squirt guns/super soakers for squirt gun fight
- yourself, your kids, your parents, your neighbors

Pool admission:

Senior \$1
Adult \$3
Junior (12-17) \$2
Child 1-11 \$1
Infant under 1 - FREE

Shady Oaks Garden Club

The club recognized the following as the Spring “Most Attractive Yards”:

First Place was awarded to the Greinert residence at 11905 Glenda Court. Large beds of low, colorful flowers being tended by butterflies lined both sides of the driveway and a rosebush in full bloom welcomes visitors at the front door.

Honorable Mention:

The Cosel residence at 703 Jetta Court had four large rosebushes in full bloom, a rock bed with large flower pots and two red nandinas graced the entryway.

The Reed residence at 11809 Indianhead was attractively set off by ivy beds against the house, a birdbath and two large pots of tiny white flowers at the front door.

The Tate residence at 11810 Tedford created a warm setting with a wrought-iron bench and a rosebush at the front door, and pots of flowers added a touch of color to the entrance.

Note: WCNA also has a Facebook group: wcnanews@groups.facebook.com.

NextDoor.com is now the “preferred” membership group for most internal communication, with residence inside the boundaries required. The site also provides instant notification for emergencies, attachments to postings and larger files in the various subsections. To receive an invitation to join, Contact an officer or board member; Phone numbers and email addresses are on the last page.

Neighborhood Events Bring Folks Together

By Sara Breuer

There's nothing like sharing a meal with friends on a beautiful spring evening to make you love where you live. A group of neighbors gathered on Saturday, April 28 to share a potluck supper at the Walnut Bluffs Trailhead near Oakbrook and Hornsby. This was the second annual event, and everyone agreed we should schedule one for the fall as well.

Block parties like this are a great way to create a strong community. As I like to say, a neighborhood isn't made of houses, it's made of people. Everyone is so busy these days, I know it's hard to make it to every neighborhood event. I'm not an official of the neighborhood association, I just decided it would be fun to set up a dinner where we could get together, enjoy our beautiful area, and get to know each other better.

Please consider organizing an event for your neighbors—on whatever scale works for you. Don't rely on the WCNA Board of Directors to handle everything. They're volunteers and are all busy people, and they're taking care of a lot of things, from zoning issues and code violations to neighborhood garage sales.

Here are a few quick tips to make it easy and fun to set up an event of your own.

1. Decide on what type of event you want to do. Here are some ideas:
 - a. A potluck where you select a location near you, invite everyone in the neighborhood, and see what happens.
 - b. A block party where you invite everyone on your block. You can organize a menu or activities, or just eat and visit.
 - c. A progressive dinner party where you find three households in close proximity who will each host a course: first course, main course and dessert. You can have just the hosts attend, or invite a few more people, depending on what the hosts can handle.
2. Pick a date, time and location.
 - a. Don't get too wrapped up in trying to find the perfect date when everyone available. The perfect date doesn't exist.
3. Invite people
 - a. Decide whether you want to invite everyone on the Yahoo, Facebook and Nextdoor groups, or whether you want to narrow your invitation list.
4. Coordinate
 - a. It's up to you how much control and coordination you want to do. You can let people show up and bring what they will, or you can assign and coordinate attendance, food and other supplies.
5. Have fun and share the fun!
 - a. Remember, this is about meeting people and having fun. Don't sweat it if it's not "perfect."
 - b. Take a few pictures and write up an article for the newsgroups or newsletter.

2012 Texas Primaries & Other Election Date Information

The San Antonio federal court issued an order March 1 setting Texas primary elections for May 29 and the runoff election date for July 31. The first day a voter may submit an application for early mail out ballot is June 1st.

Other Election News

Voter Registration Deadline for Nov 2012 Elections: October 9, 2012

Federal and State Elections: November 6, 2012

AISD Board of Trustees Election: November 6, 2012 (moved)

Upcoming Election Dates: http://www.co.travis.tx.us/county_clerk/election/dates.asp

Travis County Voting Page: <http://www.traviscountytax.org/goVoters.do>

League of Women's Voters for Austin: <http://lwvaustin.org/>

League of Women's Voters for Texas: <http://www.lwvtexas.org/>

State of Texas Voting Page: <http://www.sos.state.tx.us/elections/pamphlets/largepamp.shtml>

Home Appraisals: To Protest or Not To Protest

By now, you “should” have received your home/real estate tax appraisal(s) for this year from TCAD. It is likely that your appraisal is lower than last year’s, which may lead to higher tax rates to compensate for the effect on revenue to the taxing authorities (city, county, schools, and hospital). If you think you may want to protest your appraisal, you can get help via Jill Leberknight, our neighbor and real estate specialist for this area, by contacting her via email at jill@weemus.com . Considering the low sale prices reported last year, she recommends seriously considering filing a protest if your price per square foot is only slightly higher than the values shown below. She says sales statistics in our neighborhood for last year definitely predict a higher success rate for such protests, especially in Walnut Forest. Note that current activity indicates to Jill that things are getting better. Her summary report for 2011-2012 will be published in the next newsletter, including these encouraging signs both in our neighborhood and Austin-wide.

Jill has provided “sold” statistics for properties in our neighborhood over the 13 months ending on the first of March, in a PDF document available on the WCNA NextDoor website (<https://wcna.nextdoor.com>). In this document she indicates how to fill out the protest form you received with your appraisal and how to approach meetings with reviewers at TCAD if you file a protest. If you want this document but can’t get it from NextDoor*, contact Jill as described above. The “sold” statistics are repeated here:

Walnut Creek Neighborhood “SOLD” Statistics for Jan 2011 - February 2012

<u>EUBANK ACRES:</u> 15 Homes sold; 2 were foreclosures, 5 were remodeled				
Ave. Sales Price	Avg price/sq ft	Avg days on mkt	Max Sale	Min Sale
\$169,784	\$96.11	66	\$220,000	\$136,000
<u>OAK RIDGE:</u> 4 homes sold, 2 were foreclosures, 0 were remodeled				
\$167,869	\$84.21	77	\$175,000	\$164,074
<u>WALNUT FOREST:</u> 5 homes sold, 3 were foreclosures, 1 was remodeled				
\$100,015	\$70.81	88	\$129,000	\$77,700

*must be a member to have access; Membership is strongly encouraged: See Page 4, bottom left.

Word on the Street

******Spotlight******

Jon Dailey, who lives in Walnut Forest, does custom finish carpentry work, specializing in cabinetry. Small pieces can be produced in his home shop, with larger projects at his shop on Brown Lane. The shop is connected to Fine Lumber, which is an excellent source for materials to match his quality work. As you can see from his card, he can be reached at 512.350.3448.



DAILEY CABINETS

JON DAILEY
OWNER

DAILEYJON@GMAIL.COM
WWW.DAILEYCABINETS.COM

9407 BROWN LANE, BLDG #5 (512)350-3448
AUSTIN, TX 78754

Do you have a home-based business or offer a neighborly service such as babysitting, errand running, or lawn mowing? We would like to keep an updated list on our yahoo group and possibly feature you in the newsletter. Please respond to bowser.tasha@gmail.com with name, contact info (phone/email), services provided and rates.

Support Our Supporters!

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To place an ad, contact Jim Letchworth - jimletchworth@yahoo.com. The rate is \$90 for the full year (six bi-monthly issues).

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11300 Hunters Lane
Austin, Texas 78753
Phone: 512-837-2268
Fax: 512-837-0815

Marianne Newberry, Director
Bill Newberry, Business Manager



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About WCNA and the newsletter

WCNA membership is open to any resident (owner or renter) or property owner within the boundaries of the association. To become a member of WCNA: Dues are \$15 per household for a calendar year. Send a check to:

WCNA
PO Box 82746
Austin, TX 78708-2746

Dues notices and payment envelopes are included in the Nov/Dec and Jan/Feb newsletters each year.

WCNA News is sent to every household within the boundaries of the Walnut Creek Neighborhood Association: Braker, Lamar, I-35, and Walnut Creek.

To contribute to the newsletter: email wcna.contact@gmail.com

The opinions expressed in articles printed in this newsletter are the explicit opinions of the writer(s) and are not to be implied as the opinions of either the editor or the Board of Directors of the Walnut Creek Neighborhood Association, Inc.

