

Walnut Creek Neighborhood Association News



Jan - Feb 2013



Lucky New Year O-13: Let's make it a great one!

Things to remember

Water rate increase (or, possibly, decrease depending on your usage): 1 Jan. See page 5

Free spay/neuter, rabies shots and microchipping via city: After 1 Jan. See page 2

North Austin Garden Tour important dates: 31 Jan, 28 Feb, and 1 June. See page 5

Plastic bags outlawed/restricted: 1 March. Complicated rules: See page 4

U.S. Treasury checks delivered by direct deposit for most people: 1 March. See page 4

Jill's Hidden Problems in Walnut Creek Neighborhood Real Estate Clinic: 30 Jan. See page 3

Next Bulk Item (11 Feb) and Large Brush (18 March) pickups.

WCNA dues due for CY 2013: Coupon on page 6; Return envelope enclosed.

Shady Oak Garden Club Christmas Lights Winners: Pages 4, 5 & 6

A New Neighborhood Christmas Tradition Joyfully Started!

At the start of November, Jill Leberknight – knowing we have a number of good singers around - decided she would try to organize a group to go caroling within the neighborhood as Christmas day drew near. A notice was put into the Nov-Dec newsletter, and as the time approached she put out reminders of the day: The 22nd. And time: 6:30. And with an initial planned route starting at Bluff Bend park entrance, up to Tedford, over to Scurry, down to Hornsby, over to Caddo, down to Indianhead, Indianhead to Oakwood to Caddo again, then up Caddo and return to the starting point. Note for next year: This is an ambitious route traveling on foot!

At the appointed hour, a “core group” – pictured here – showed up to discuss and “practice” preparatory to setting out. Jill provided hard copies of the lyrics to most of the old standards (some of us learned the real words to some songs), and warming up showed we could (mostly) carry a tune. So off we went, immediately raising doubts about the strategy of starting off trying to sing while climbing the Tedford hill (Perhaps we were fortunate that we didn't get many “listeners” on this leg, as it proved difficult to huff and puff synchronously with the music).

As we went along we picked up more singers, reaching a maximum when we started down Indianhead of about sixteen. By this time we were cycling through the songs for the second or third time, maybe showing some improvement, and had learned that we needed to knock on doors to make sure we had listeners before using up too much of our valuable breath (although we were going downhill at this point).

Everyone who participated made it clear that he or she thoroughly enjoyed the evening, including most of the “recipients”, and that we should do it again next Christmas. With, perhaps, a few modifications/additions. For example: Transportation (absolutely critical if the whole neighborhood is to be covered); We understand that this was done using a trailer (and perhaps tractor?) in the “old days”, like a hayride. Having an accompanying instrument or two would also enhance presentation (who knows what key(s) we sang in...), and having “refreshments” along the way would help bolster spirits, especially if the weather weren't as perfect as it was for this premier performance. Other suggestions will be eagerly received! As will more of those good singers...



The Saga of Val and Jonah, the Bluff Bend Dog

Nobody's heart bleeds for animals in distress more than Val Henson's. That's why she has big Murphy, a dog she rescued five years ago from an abusive situation here in the neighborhood. She also has performed countless other rescues in our neighborhood over the years. So when she heard about sightings of a dog trying to survive in our park her first instinct was not to call Animal Control (with whom she had some less-than-happy experiences with Murphy) but to think "I've got to rescue him!"

On November 6th, Val finally caught sight of the elusive dog, and her mission started. The dog wouldn't approach her or anybody else who saw it, so she set about the process of feeding it with intentions of finding its owner/home. Her first step was to set up a covered feeding station, with a motion-sensing wildlife camera secured to a nearby tree and trained on the feeding area. She caught several good pictures of him (determined from the pictures) before someone cut down the



tree and stole the camera. She posted pictures all over the internet looking for the owner, as its behavior

indicated he was a tame dog despite his understandable shyness in this situation. He likely was lost or abandoned, thin and possibly injured, trying to survive in our little park for the last six months along with foxes, deer, raccoons, possums, coyotes and birds who live on some of the same food sources. He quickly learned that the feeding station was a reliable and safe place where he could get food every day, and this made him a good candidate for trapping. Val also set up an igloo dog house for shelter when the weather turned cold, and he adopted it immediately.

All Val's web-spinning didn't turn up an owner, but she did find Michael Peterson, who lives nearby in Gracy Woods and who had just returned a Husky he had rescued (to a family that lives on Hornsby St.) when they met.

She and Michael started talking and she soon found that he would be enthusiastic about fostering Jonah if/when he was captured.

Val also found Kate Robinson, who has an animal rescue operation (<http://www.straightfromthestreets.org/>), with the equipment, expertise and willingness to make the capture. Kate quickly got down to the task with Val. A large trap was set up and locked open with food inside for several days to let our boy get used to eating there. On the selected day, the trap door was untethered and the trap armed to capture, and the boy was soon theirs.



In short order, it was verified that this was a sweet, tame dog, and Michael named him Jonah. Val took Jonah to the vet, where it was found that he was covered in fleas and ticks, had a fever and a dislocated hip which would require surgery. However, he was heartworm-free, which pretty much compensates for all the rest! He is very thin, but is now being nursed back to full health preparatory to surgery for the hip. It won't be long afterward that he'll be ready to make someone a great companion, able to tell you all about his saga!

A website where donations toward his surgery can be made via credit card or PayPal has been set up.:

<http://www.giveforward.com/jonahsurgery>

Kate made a moving video of Val's odyssey with Jonah that can be viewed on her Facebook page, along with other information about her rescue operation: <http://www.facebook.com/Katetotherescue>

All the pictures collected by Val with her wildlife camera can be viewed at her Facebook page:

<http://www.facebook.com/valerie.henson.777>

The **Austin Animal Center**, at 7201 Levander Loop – left off Airport Boulevard just before the 183 intersection – provides **free/low cost spay/neuter, rabies vaccinations, and microchip** implants for eligible residents: <http://austintexas.gov/department/animal-services> ; 512-974-2000

2012 Walnut Creek Home Sales Review
Jill's 2012 WCN Sales and 2013 Predictions

By Jill Leberknight, WC neighbor, WCNA Board member, and area real estate specialist

2012 was another year of real estate extremes in our neighborhood. We again saw low prices on distressed properties sold but continued to see higher than usual sales with our remodeled homes. All four subdivisions experienced increases in values that I predict will continue in 2013. Walnut Forest saw historic highs in average price per square foot and final sold prices. Extreme home make-overs are selling for high dollar values in a matter of days. Moderately updated homes are selling in under 30 days and often in the top range if they have unique property features like a large lot. Even our distressed properties are selling in record times, often to investors who are flipping them for top dollar in a few months. Inventory overall moved fast, and at times throughout the summer we had more buyers wanting to move into the neighborhood than available homes.

My formal prediction for 2013 is that home values and days on market will continue to remain strong if not improve slightly for the interior of the neighborhood. Austin is still in a solid sellers market and inventory remains low in Walnut Creek neighborhood. These two scenarios are key ingredients for positive real estate activity. However, continued efforts are still needed to improve our borders in areas like Pollyanna and streets that border Braker, IH 35 and Lamar. These areas are fighting more troubling market-value issues such as crime, physical appearance, poorly maintained rentals, and traffic.

SUBDIVISION	HOUSES SOLD	AVERAGE PRICE PER SQUARE FOOT	AVERAGE SALES PRICE	AVERAGE DAYS ON MARKET	CHANGE
Eubank Acres	14	\$98.03	\$148,77	51	1.98% 
Walnut Forest	3	\$98.01	\$156,500	22	28.7% 
Oak Ridge	6	\$95.89	\$180,250	28	12.6% 
Spanish Oak Ridge	1	\$88.54	\$200,000	2	8.4% 
Entire Walnut Creek Totals	23	\$97.48	\$157,993	40	7.66%

FREE SEMINAR: *The 5 Most Common Home Inspection Red Flags in WCN and how you can keep your home from falling victim*

Join Walnut Creek Neighborhood Real Estate Expert Jill Leberknight on Wednesday, January. 30th at 6:30pm at Me & U Bistro to learn about common but hidden problems in our Walnut Creek Homes, how they impact home sales, and steps you can take to solve some right now.



Shady Oaks Garden Club 2012 Christmas Lights Awards
First Place: Sara Breuer & Henry Mateer

WCNA Board Meetings

Generally the first Wednesday of each month at 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

Yahoo Newsgroup: WCNAnews
groups.yahoo.com/group/wcnanews

NextDoor: NextDoor WCNA
<https://wcna.nextdoor.com>

WCNA contact:
wcna.contact@gmail.com

Bulletin Board

Shady Oaks Garden Club Christmas Lights Awards

FIRST PLACE – 11922 OAKBROOK (see Page 5)

White lights outline roof with attractive blue lights decorating the roof top ridges. Red, green and white lights drape top of front door. Hundreds of white lights on three large bushes in yard.

HONORABLE MENTION – 11706 TEDFORD (see Page 6)

Colorfully painted wooden cut-out figures of Santa and Mrs. Claus stood on either side of a sleigh and decorated tree, with several elves scattered around the lawn. Golden/white lights outlined the roof.

HONORABLE MENTION – 702 WREN (see Page 5)

Two white reindeer pulled Santa in a red sleigh under a large Zilker Park-type multi-colored tree. White icicle lights decorated the front and roof edges, with white running lights on the roof ridge.

WCNA Board Meeting Schedule Changed

The board now normally will be meeting at 6:30 p.m. on the first Wednesday (changed from Monday) of each month, at Me & U Bistro. Date, time and place are subject to change, so it's a good idea to check ahead with a board member (last page) before going.

Single-Use plastic bags from many stores will be **outlawed**

starting 1 March. These include the thin, two-handled ones used for just about everything now. Grocery and merchandise stores will not be able to use them, though thicker ones can be provided, with or without additional charge. Several retailers are exempt; e.g., dry cleaning bags. Most importantly, the "product bags" at grocery stores, the very thin bags used to hold bulk, produce and meat items, will remain "legal". Bottom Line: Bring your own big bags! And wash them occasionally if exposed to potential bacteria. See the AAS: <http://www.statesman.com/news/lifestyles/food-cooking/what-you-need-to-know-ahead-of-austins-single-use-nTpkb/> for more details, and learn the business side at a training session at <http://austintx.swagit.com/play/11152012-652>

Starting March 1st the U.S. Treasury will be handling Social Security, SSI, and most other checks issued by the federal government via Direct Deposit or Direct Express Debit MasterCard. Contact the "Treasury Go Direct Call Center" at 800 333-1795 to find out how this may affect you.

Don't forget dues for next year! Envelopes are provided with the November and January newsletters.

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

NextDoor.com membership requires residence inside the boundaries of WCNA membership. The site also provides features not found in the others; e.g., 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.

APD Receives \$1Million Grant To Help Address Crime in Area

This past Fall Austin was named one of seven cities nationwide to receive a three-year U.S. Justice Department grant aimed at revitalizing neighborhoods. This federal grant, part of The Byrne Criminal Justice Innovation Program, will be directed toward the Rundberg area, which suffers 11% of all violent crime in Austin. The project is designated **RESTORE RUNDBERG**, and the money will be used to increase police presence and to hire the University of Texas at Austin sociology department to research and develop innovative ways to mitigate criminal activity in the area.

In a recent interview by KXAN, Police Chief Art Acevedo said he expects the face and reputation of the area to change soon for the better. During this same interview KXAN spoke with David Kirk of the UT sociology department who said the project will include hosting community meetings and gathering public input to find ways to change the culture of the area. "I predict that at the end of the three-year period, we will see real change, change that will be noticeable," Kirk said.

Walnut Creek Neighbors and board members attended the first of these community meetings on December 18th at Lanier High School. "Exploring creative solutions seemed to be a theme that rang through at the meeting" said Walnut Creek Board member Jill Leberknight who attended along with Wayne Tobias, Pat Pitt, Tasha Bowser & Martha Aviles.

Organizers of RESTORE RUNDBURG are looking for members of the community to get involved in this planning and creative process. If you have an interest in participating or attending meetings please contact restorerundbert@austintex.gov and indicate your residence in the Walnut Creek Neighborhood. Walnut Creek Board members intend to have a presence at these planning meetings in 2013 and will report progress.

Shady Oaks Garden Club 2012 Christmas Lights Awards

**Honorable
Mention:
Julie Berg**



North by North Austin Garden Tour

The North Austin Coalition of Neighborhoods is presenting its first-ever garden tour Saturday and Sunday, June 1 and 2, 2013. This inaugural North by North Austin Garden Tour is a fundraiser for the design and construction of demonstration garden projects at three North Austin schools: Lanier High, Dobie Middle and Wooldridge Elementary. The tour of private gardens will be on Saturday, June 1 only. Classes and demonstrations will be held on Sunday, June 2 at one of the beneficiary schools

We are seeking nominations for gardens, as well as cash and in-kind sponsors. Nominations are open now until January 31. If you have or know someone who has an interesting garden in the 78758 or 78753 ZIP codes, go to lovenorthaustin.com and download the nomination form, or email info@lovenorthaustin.com. Go to the same site to volunteer to plan the event, become a sponsor, or volunteer to be a staff member during the event.

New city water rates will show up on your Feb bill. The structure has also been changed to generate 5 tiers of usage; Only the bottom three are likely of interest to us. As stated in the January Austin Energy Customer News, if your usage is less than 6,000 gallons/month your cost likely will decrease. Above 6,000 gallons your cost will increase, e.g. by about 10% for 7,727 gallons, including a "Reserve Fund Surcharge" which is designed to assure sufficient income in adverse conditions. For more details go to www.austintexas.gov/department/water

WCCC: Young Abandoned Kitty Ready For Adoption

Last year on October 3rd a large carrier appeared on the driveway of a WCCC volunteer. Inside, it appeared, were 7 kittens. Upon more careful observation it was found that one was a very young, very small nursing mother, who was nursing the three smallest kittens. Homes were found for all but "Li'l Mama" and the largest "kitten", a black-and-white, short-haired tuxedo boy perhaps a year old. After some good work by foster "parents", he was accepted into the Austin Humane Society's adoption program. Since AHS is a no-kill facility, he will stay there as long as it takes to get adopted. The sweet, playful boy, with his good looks, should find a home relatively easily, despite the overcrowded conditions at both AHS and Austin Animal Center.

This left us with only Li'l Mama – see her picture on the last page - who has become a sweet girl - active and playful - making her a good candidate for adoption. She's a tiny (perhaps six-pound) brown Tabby, with beautiful "spots and stripes" marking, as you can see in her picture. She's been spayed and tested, so is ready to go to a good home. Since it's likely she came from the neighborhood, it would be especially appropriate if she could stay here. So if you're looking for a really good little companion contact Pat Pitt: s.pitt@earthlink.net , 837-6620.

**Shady Oaks Garden Club
2012 Christmas Lights Awards**

**Honorable Mention:
The Tobiases**



The Dues "coupon" below is intended to be cutout and returned with your dues payment for the year 2013. The annual dues are \$15, and you also can choose to contribute to any of the ongoing projects listed, or make a contribution to the general fund to be used where needed ("General" contributions are treated the same as dues money, so any amount more than \$15 not designated for one of the projects automatically goes into this fund). Note that volunteers are almost always needed for the categories listed on the form. If you check one of these, please contact a board member if you haven't been contacted within a short period.

2013 WCNA Dues and Contributions Form

This form is included in both the Nov-Dec and Jan-Feb newsletters, so please note whether you sent in your dues in November or December to prevent accidentally paying again with the January issue. Please make checks out to "WCNA" and return in the envelope provided or your own to WCNA, P.O. Box 82746, Austin, TX 78758-2746

NAME _____ PHONE _____

ADDRESS _____

EMAIL _____

DUES (\$15 per year): \$ _____

DONATION: General Fund \$ _____ Walnut Bluffs Trails (park) \$ _____ Cat Coalition \$ _____

TOTAL INCLUDED: \$ _____

I would like information about participation with:

WCNA Board or Officer ___ Newsletter Production ___ Park Maintenance ___

Neighborhood Beautification ___ Oak Wilt Abatement ___ Cat Coalition ___

COMMENT(S): _____

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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 78758-2746

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.

