

Nov



Dec

2013

# Walnut Creek Neighborhood News

Walnut Creek Neighborhood Association

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### **Neighborhood Night Out: A Fabulous Function!**

It was a good Turnout for a Prodigious Pizza Party!

Well over 100 adults and kids showed up and enjoyed good weather and congenial fellowship at the 30th annual National Neighborhood Night Out on a perfect first day of October. Pizza, salad, watermelon and ice cream, combined with the opportunity to meet and visit with old and new neighbors, attracted the largest turnout since the date was changed from August to October 3 years ago. Of special note were six families who had moved to the neighborhood since the 2012 NNNO - more than 1/3 of the families in this category. Perhaps partly because of these folks the number of "kids" was higher than any since the date was shifted from "summer vacation" to a school night.

Some special guests who dropped by were Imam Islam Mossaad from the North Austin Muslim Community Center, several county constables, APD Chief Art Acevedo and our APD district rep Officer Angela Johnson, and representatives from the Austin Fire Department.

Kids enjoyed a Bounce castle and a bubble machine, as well as getting to experience all the lights and sounds from a new fire truck and a police car (pizza, ice cream and sirens - a trifecta for the kids!).

Jill "Buttermilk Biscuit" Leberknight MC'd the "special residents" contests for the evening. Gift certificates for "Most Senior (OK, oldest) Resident" present and

"Longest (in the neighborhood) Resident" were both won by Margaret Tolbert on Oakwood; "Youngest" present was Sadie Shumate on Presa, and "Newest Resident" award went to Scarlett and Jordan Calvin and daughter Stella on Oakwood. They'll be eating at local restaurants as prizewinners.

(Vice President) Theresa Jones ran the largest Silent Auction in several years included two mosaic-embedded stepstones by Monica Meadows, two model dinosaurs from Michael Crawford, a plant, a "Barbie Quilt" and a children's Dinosaur Softbook from Margaret Brewer, a University of Texas apron from Sandra Stramler, and a Texas flag flown over the capitol from Tim Mateer. The record returns are destined for the 100 Club, an organization that supports families of first responders killed or injured in the line of duty.

Homemade salad by Alison Louise Brown accompanied the pizza from Pizza Hut, ice cream from Blue Bell, and watermelon from Central Market provided and prepared by Sharon Porter (a "new" Board member). Board member Jean Ramsey organized this part of the event, all members contributed to the effort and President Robert Meadows oversaw the whole operation.

It was a great crowd, which we hope will grow even greater next year.

### **Oh, Didn't It Rain? (Blind Boys of Alabama)**

Halloween provided perfect weather, following serious storms that soaked the neighborhood with about 4 inches of rain during the two previous days. Here's the "rain record" for the neighborhood through October this year compared to previous periods:

From January through August, we had about **18.7** inches, not very different from the long-term average for this period but much better than in recent years. We've had more than that - **18.9** inches - in just the past two months (Sept-Oct) to give a total of **37.6** inches so far this year. Compare that to a total of **34.5** inches for all of last year and **17.2 inches in 2011**, which was the worst single - year drought on record. The long term yearly average for Camp Mabry is a little over **32** inches.

The rain has been distributed very unevenly, however, and too little has fallen on the drainage areas for lakes Buchanan and Travis to significantly affect their near-record low levels, so watering restrictions remain in effect.

In case you haven't bookmarked it, these numbers and almost any other weather information for the neighborhood can be obtained from the automated weather station at the residence of Wendy Hodges & Scott Messec on Oakwood between Braker and Covington at

<http://www.wunderground.com/weatherstation/WXDailyHistory.asp?ID=KTXAUSTI123>, which shows numerical and graphical data in real time, and historical values and graphs from since the installation date in 2010.

### Split Garage Sale Goes Well (Thanks for no rain!) by Robert Meadows

WCNA held its annual neighborhood-wide garage sale on two Saturdays this year: 19 and 26 October. This garage sale was originally scheduled for only 19 October, but the prospect of inclement weather on the 19th prompted a reschedule to 26 October. However, three households were unable to reschedule and, due to their extensive preparations, they went ahead with their garage sales on the 19th with advertising support from the Association. Fortunately, the morning of the 19th was clear, with the thunderstorms having gone through at about 3 am, but was a bit cool. Still, good results were reported from garage sales on Oakwood and Tedford.

19 households held sales on the following Saturday, 26 October, with the full support of the Association. The weather was good, and the shoppers were out in full force - a distinct improvement over 2012. Excellent results were reported from Whitewing, Oakwood, Presa, Covington, and Hunters Lane. Unfortunately, there were no reports from the few garage sales at the north end of the neighborhood (this year, for some reason, the sales were very much concentrated at the south end).

We experimented this year with the use of red vinyl "arrow" signs to direct traffic around the neighborhood, and I think these had a good effect. Next October, we will experiment with using more "arrow" signs, setting up map dispensers (like the Realtors(RM) use) at key intersections, and writing better newspaper ads using some ideas suggested by ads placed by other neighborhoods.

### **Shady Oaks Garden Club Most Attractive Yard Awards for Fall**

**First Place: 11903 Oakwood.** Beautiful yard with a curved landscape area near the front of the house. The well-manicured area contains a water feature and various plants and shrubs.

**Second Place: 11811 Indianhead.** Very unique and beautifully landscaped yard. A large variety of plants, flowers and shrubs. Pebbled-stone pathway curves its way through all this landscaping.

**Third Place: 11807 Whitewing.** Beautifully manicured lawn with several circular flower beds with bright blooming flowers. Mailbox is also surrounded by yellow flowers in a circular bed.

**Honorable Mention: 12001 Indianhead.** This is a very community-friendly yard, with a variety of flowers, shrubs and even a children's library with a bench. Neighbors strolling with their children can sit and enjoy the scenery and read a book. Books are freely taken and donated by residents.

Several other homes were very competitive! Thank you all for making this a beautiful place to live!



St. Mark Pumpkin Patch before the crowds arrived.

### New Elementary Schools to Reduce Crowding at Walnut Creek and McBee

The new school at 102 Rundberg finally was given its name on Nov 3rd: Dr. Janis Guerrero Thompson Elementary. Guerrero Thompson was a native Austinite who taught and became Executive Director for Planning and Community Relations for AISD. The school is in the middle of the stressed Rundberg area and will be attended largely by lower socio-economic kids. Part of the need for the school was to relieve overcrowding at McBee and Walnut Creek elementary schools; WCE was more than 120 kids over maximum last year.

Another new school is being built in remodeled facilities of an old lighting factory near the Rundberg-Metric intersection, making use of rare property in this area sufficiently large for a school. Note this project stems from the bond elections ten years ago; The bond proposition for three new schools in the May elections was not approved. See more detail at <http://goo.gl/r2UF7y>.

The bond issue approved in May to upgrade equipment and fix systemic facility problems in AISD have been held up by a lawsuit filed by Travis County Taxpayers Union, based on alleged illegally vague wording of the proposition on the ballot. This suit won't be settled before January 2014.

### Fall Trailhead Potluck Brings Neighbors Together

It was more than just another beautiful day in the Walnut Creek neighborhood Sunday, September 22 when neighbors gathered for the fall trailhead potluck picnic supper. This time around, with a cool front bringing much-appreciated autumnal weather, we enjoyed a supper that was heavy on protein. From fried chicken to smoked sausage, there was plenty to go around.

The potlucks have been extremely informal affairs with little organization (We may need to get more organized on the meal planning front in the future to ensure a well balanced meal). Neighbors gathered around the tables covered with vintage tablecloths and loads of homemade goodies. Folks who've been in the neighborhood for decades traded stories with new homeowners, who enjoyed learning about the history of the neighborhood.

We encourage everyone to think about doing informal gatherings to meet neighbors and create the kind of friendly bonds that create community for years to come.

### Christmas Carolers Ho!

Those who participated last year will remember what a blast the inaugural Walnut Creek Neighborhood Christmas Carolers had (see [WCNA newsletter for January - February 2013](#) in "Documents" on the NextDoor site). Those who were there, those who wanted to but couldn't make it, and those who would like to be "caroled" this year take note: **It's Happening Again, thanks to Jill Leberknight (again)!** Now we just need to find the best date to accommodate the greatest number of singers and players and get it organized. We're hoping we can have some instruments this time, and perhaps "transportation" as well; Last year on foot we were able to get to less than half the neighborhood. With enough participation we would like - as was done in the distant past - to make a hayride of the occasion, thereby getting to as much of the neighborhood as possible. This also would allow carrying refreshments to assure sufficiently wet whistles for the whole excursion.

And so a poll will be undertaken sometime after Thanksgiving to find the best caroling evening around Christmas. And also the best alternative evenings in case of bad weather. Look for the poll on the Yahoo WCNAnews and NextDoor sites. You can also give any suggestions you have for the event and/or your best dates to participate to Jill verbally at (512) 294-7296 or by email to [jill@weemus.com](mailto:jill@weemus.com).



**Walnut Creek Carolers Lifting Their Voices in 2012**

**Snakes on a Plane:** In case you missed this news article about an eco-tourism guide who was convicted of carrying (smuggling) snakes on planes, unsurprisingly he was from Texas (Tyler). Apparently our Texas snakes weren't profitable enough: He was bringing exotics from Peru in (through Miami) under his jacket, in violation of laws in both countries. The federal judge in Tyler wasn't too worried about it: He sentenced the man to three years of probation. Haven't heard where the snakes wound up (so to speak)...

### **Telephone Scam Targets Utility Customers**

A new scam is targeting City of Austin utility customers. The scammers mask their telephone numbers to make it appear that a call is from (512) 494-9400, the City of Austin's customer contact center main number. Details of the tricks used can be found in the NACN newsletter at [www.lovenorthaustin.com/1/category/newsletter-link/1.html](http://www.lovenorthaustin.com/1/category/newsletter-link/1.html), along with lots of neighborhood news relevant to us, and lists of contacts and events of interest. If you want to get this newsletter via email you can subscribe from that site as well: Click on the NACN: Who We Are link.

Section 3

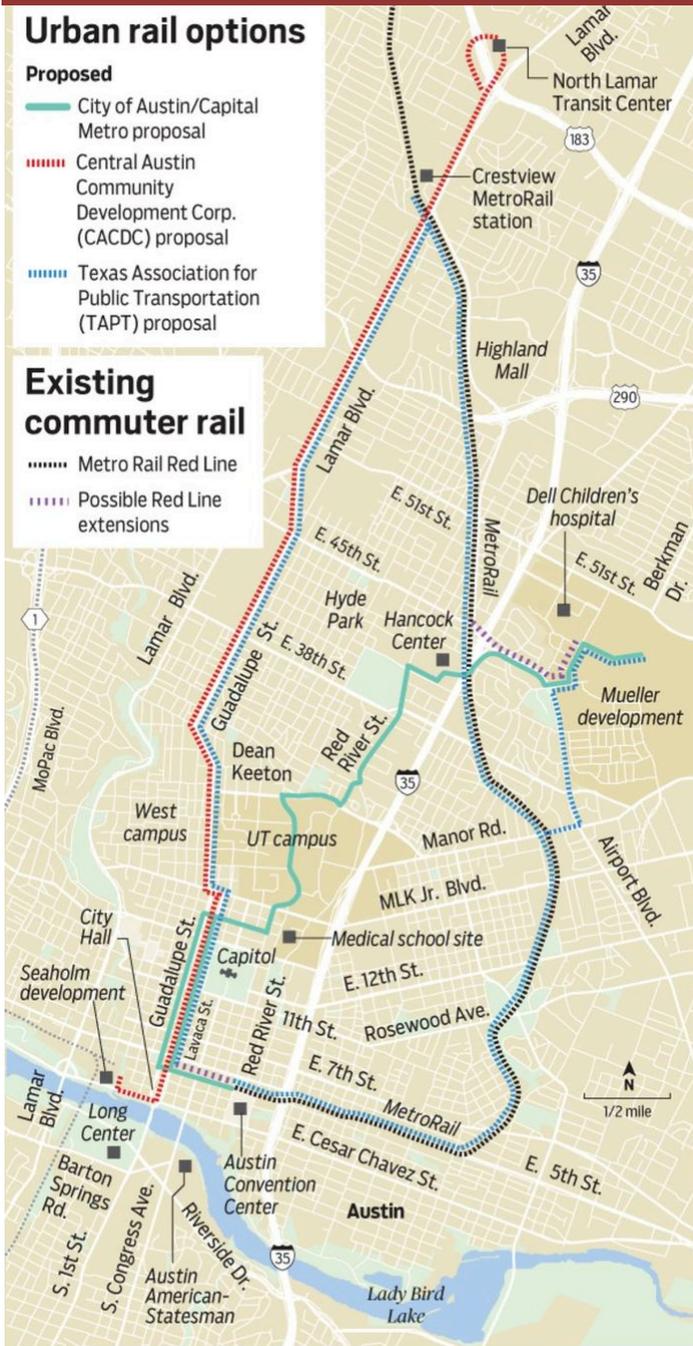
City-County News and Events

Urban rail options

- Proposed**
- City of Austin/Capital Metro proposal
  - - - - Central Austin Community Development Corp. (CACDC) proposal
  - - - - Texas Association for Public Transportation (TAPT) proposal

Existing commuter rail

- - - - Metro Rail Red Line
- - - - Possible Red Line extensions



LINDA SCOTT / STAFF

Urban Rail: Tell the City Your Opinion!

The city will propose an “Urban Rail” for connection with the current “Commuter Rail” – MetroRail – to provide better local access when using that line (Note: Voting on a line connecting Georgetown with San Antonio via Austin is also coming in the future). The city project currently soliciting public input online is called “Austin Connect”, and the most direct path is via [www.projectconnect.com/connect/resources](http://www.projectconnect.com/connect/resources) (this is a pretty “squishy” site; i.e. difficult to find specific information).

The city has made a preliminary selection for a route for the initial section of this proposed urban rail system, seen as the “aqua” solid line in the map from the Austin Statesman (5 Oct, <http://goo.gl/OHbZ8a>) shown to the left, comprising sections that run from the Convention Center to Guadalupe/Lavaca, over to the coming UT medical school site, then upward through the UT campus and eventually over to the Mueller development.

The very different routes proposed by Texas Association for Public Transportation (TAPT) and Central Austin Community Development Corp (CACDC) in an attempt to change the decision are seen as dotted red and blue lines, which together loop from the Crestview Station down Lamar/Guadalupe, across on 5th to the Convention Center Station, then follow MetroRail over to East Austin and back up to the Crestview Station, with short excursions to Seaholm, Mueller and the North Lamar Transit Center at 183. Both the alternate proposals and a defense of the preliminary selection are given in this edition of the Statesman, which makes it a good starting place to develop your own opinion. It’s argued by the opponents that the costs of the two routes would be comparable, despite the very different lengths of the routes.

Note that the existing commuter rail line (MetroRail) from Leander is shown as well, and coincides with the competing proposal from the Crestview Station to the Convention Center Station.

If you decide the Lamar-Guadalupe route would be better for Austin, the opponents of the current route plan have set up a site to petition for change:

[www.change.org/petitions/i-want-to-ride-light-rail-on-guadalupe-north-lamar](http://www.change.org/petitions/i-want-to-ride-light-rail-on-guadalupe-north-lamar)

More information and links to related sites are given in the NACN online newsletter for November (see Contacts).

**Travis County Burn Ban Lifted**

The county burn ban was lifted on 20 September until further notice. To check current restrictions on burning in the county see <http://goo.gl/eeHAhW>

**Stage 2 Watering Restrictions Remain in Place**

Wee are not amused! Jerry the cat was reprimanded by his owner repeatedly for peeing on his laptop, when he had done no such thing. The fact that his owner felt bad when he discovered that the odor came with the computer from the factory doesn’t excuse that behavior, though Jerry may have forgiven him by now. If you have recently bought a Dell laptop (Ultrabooks seem to be the dominant carriers) and sense a smell some have likened to a cat litter box, you are advised to contact Dell’s technical support to have the palm rest replaced. It is further noted that the smell has nothing to do with “biological contamination”.

**In Case You Missed Them:**  
**These are now state law(!)**

As of 1 September a bunch of new laws came into effect. Some of the traffic laws you may have thought already existed, like the requirement either to slow down by 20 mph from the posted speed or change lanes (if such exist) when approaching TxDOT workers and/or vehicles stopped with flashing blue or amber lights. You cannot pass in the lane closest to the workers/vehicles at the legal speed limit - even if they're not actually in it - or you risk a \$2000 fine.

You can't use a cell phone from your car on school property unless the car is motionless or you're using a hands-free device (guess they thought enforcement of the latter would be impossible).

You can now show proof of (car) insurance via your cell phone (not sure how that works).

I thought this was always required: Both front and rear license plates now must be displayed (what did they give us two for before?). Failure could cost \$200.

Home-baked goods that can be sold to the public now include candy, coated and uncoated nuts, fruit butters, dehydrated fruits and vegetables, popcorn, cereal, granola, mustard, coffee and more (Whaaaa?).

Wineries are now allowed to stay open on New Year's Eve until 2:00 a.m. (i.e., on New Year's morning, obviously).

Carrying a switchblade knife is now legal (but they're so scary!). If you can carry a gun it doesn't make a whole lot of sense to prohibit a dinky knife.

You can use a tanning bed only when you reach 16 years of age, and from 16 to 18 only with parent's consent.

Outdoors you'll have to fend for yourself.

**City Council "Districting" Progress**

On the 6th of November, after many public meetings with many passionate speakers and with many competing maps submitted, the Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission approved a second official "Proposed Final" map for the 10 new districts (<http://www.austinredistricting.org/>). It is a very friendly interactive document that can be opened in Google Maps. The biggest change between the first and second maps is in the district to which we are currently assigned: District 7. The first map had this district running from Howard Lane all the way down to include Tarrytown, being very narrow between the north end and south end. The south end on the new map is at 45th Street, which would seem to make much more sense when striving to keep the districts compact and with adjoining neighborhoods (defined for mapmaking purposes by Precinct Number) having similar interests and concerns. This latest map looks to be much better for us in this respect. The goal is to have the final map finished for submission to review by the Federal Government by the end of December, so it's unlikely to change much from this version. Dates for future public meetings can be found on the ICRC site given above.

**The "coupon" below** is intended to be cutout and returned with your dues payment for the year 2014. 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 for use where needed ("General" contributions are included with dues money, so for bookkeeping purposes the excess from paying more than the \$15 automatically goes into this fund). Note that categories for which volunteers are almost always needed also are listed on the form. If you check one of these and don't hear from a board member or other volunteer in a short time, please contact one of the board members shown on page 6.

**WCNA Dues and Contributions Form for Calendar Year 2014**

This form is included in both the Nov-Dec 2013 and Jan-Feb 2014 newsletters, so please check to see 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 78708-2746

**Note: You can use PayPal to charge dues at <http://goo.gl/5iQIk>**

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 as/in:

WCNA Board or Officer \_\_\_ Newsletter Production \_\_\_ Park Projects \_\_\_

If you're web-savvy, you can manage payment of any Austin utility through a single portal at [goo.gl/UVHTj](http://goo.gl/UVHTj)  
 Large Brush and Bulk Collection Schedules: <http://austintexas.gov/department/residential-curbside-collection-schedule>  
 Neighbor-generated file of criminal activity in the neighborhood: <http://goo.gl/N8H4i>

## Section 4

## Events and Contact List

**Don't Forget!**

**Park Work Day rescheduled to 7 December**

**Bulk Item Collection: Week of February 10th**

**10-1 "Districting" public meetings: Check at**

[http://www.austintexas.gov/cityclerk/boards\\_commissions/meetings/2013\\_116\\_1.htm](http://www.austintexas.gov/cityclerk/boards_commissions/meetings/2013_116_1.htm)

**North Austin Coalition of Neighborhoods Website/Newsletters (Lots of relevant information)**

[www.lovenorthaustin.com/1/category/newsletter-link/1.html](http://www.lovenorthaustin.com/1/category/newsletter-link/1.html)

**Interested in helping patrol the neighborhood during the day? Contact Robert, our President (See all board members contact information below right).**

**Into fiber arts? Join the group at** <http://goo.gl/1a5dgP>

**Dues can now be paid via PayPal!:** <http://goo.gl/5iQIk>

**We have a new website:** [www.WCNANews.com](http://www.WCNANews.com)

**WCNA Board Meetings** are generally held on the first Wednesday of each month at Santorini Cafe. Everyone is welcome to attend, but check with a WCNA board member (see below) to verify that the date -and/or time - hasn't changed.

**City/County Contacts:**

Mayor Lee Leffingwell, 974-2250  
[lee.leffingwell@ci.austin.tx.us](mailto:lee.leffingwell@ci.austin.tx.us)

Mike Martinez, 512-974-2264  
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Sheryl Cole, 512-974-2255  
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Chris Riley, 512-974-2256  
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Kathie Tovo, 512-974-2255  
[Kathie.Tovo@ci.austin.tx.us](mailto:Kathie.Tovo@ci.austin.tx.us)

**County Commissioner Pct 2**

Bruce Todd, 512-854-9222  
[Bruce.Todd@co.travis.tx.us](mailto:Bruce.Todd@co.travis.tx.us)

**EMERGENCY:** Police, Fire,  
EMS, Animal Control: 911

**City of Austin:** All services, codes  
& code violations, animal reports:  
Phone: 311 Online: <http://austin-plcsrprod.cwi.motorolasolutions.com/Home.mvc/Index>

**APD Burglary Unit**  
<http://www.facebook.com/APDBU>

**Report  
abandoned/suspicious  
vehicles: 512 974-8119**

**North Austin Coalition of  
Neighborhoods Newsletter:**  
<http://www.lovenorthaustin.com/>

Angela Johnson, APD District 2 Rep  
for our area (512) 974-5043  
[angelajohnson@austintexas.gov](mailto:angelajohnson@austintexas.gov)

Sam Lindsey, County Constable  
(512) 854-4515  
[sam.lindsey@co.travis.tx.us](mailto:sam.lindsey@co.travis.tx.us)

O'Shay Garden, County Constable  
(512) 854-9697  
[oshay.garden@co.travis.tx.us](mailto:oshay.garden@co.travis.tx.us)

**WCNA Board and Officers**

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Theresa Jones	Vice President
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Sharon Porter	
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Nov :: Dec 2013

PRSRT STD.  
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Ken Ward's Caddo Spider Lair



G. Brewer's "Backyard Barbeque" Buck



### About WCNA and the newsletter

**WCNA membership** is open to any resident (owner or renter) or property owner within the boundaries, including perimeters, of the association.

**Membership 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.

Payment also may be made using PayPal: See page 6 (Section 4)

**WCN News** is sent to all members and every household within the boundaries represented by the Walnut Creek Neighborhood Association:

Braker Lane, North Lamar, I-35, and Walnut Creek.

**To contribute an articles** to the newsletter, send contributions via email to [wcn.contact@gmail.com](mailto:wcn.contact@gmail.com) or contact a board member.

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.

*Gingerbread tree Image (front page)0 courtesy of nuchylee at [FreeDigitalPhotos.net](http://FreeDigitalPhotos.net)*

