



Walnut Creek Neighborhood News

Walnut Creek Neighborhood Association

Sep
Oct
2017

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We're Skipping National Neighborhood Night Out This Year

Walnut Creek Neighborhood Association has been hosting a *Neighborhood Night Out* event in conjunction with the national program since the '90s. National Night Out was started in 1984 as a community-police relationship-building program, initially with participants turning porch lights on and sitting in front of their homes on the evening of the first Tuesday in August. It has become an event marked by neighborhood activities such as block parties, cookouts and even neighborhood-wide parties such as the one hosted by WCNA. The emphasis is meant to be on neighborhood security and safety, with interaction with first responders such as police and firefighters amplifying literature about techniques

for keeping ourselves safe and secure. We started out with yard parties in a large yard in the 'hood, but grew quickly and so shifted to use of the fellowship center and grounds at St. Mark United Methodist Church. The event evolved to include food, drinks, and "door" prizes, initially from donations from

restaurants and other businesses. The number of families - especially kids - in the neighborhood afforded such participatory things as a dunking tank, with well-known neighbors volunteering to be the "dunkee".



This was part of the crowd at the 2005 National Neighborhood Night Out, held at St. Mark UMC on August 2nd. Two tents were used to escape the sun.



The Dunking Tank was popular with the kids, especially ones who could throw a baseball. Also with the "dunkee" who cooled off in the August heat.

Several things have conspired to reduce participation in the event in the recent past: The recession ended the era of donated catering for such events; The hot weather in Texas motivated a date change to the cooler first Tuesday in October; The number of kids in the neighborhood - especially ones attending Walnut Creek Elementary - diminished; The shorter and darker days - and thus reduced party

time - on a school night made it harder to fit into family schedules.

In recent years, even with pizza, ice cream, door prizes, and a bounce house for the kiddos as well as (continued but reduced) participation by police and firemen, attendance has been significantly lower than in the "old days". As much as we enjoy the event and meeting neighbors from the four subdivisions that make up Walnut Creek Neighborhood, the WCNA board has decided not to host the event this year. The cost - NNO is by far the most expensive activity sponsored by WCNA - doesn't seem justified by this lower participation rate. It appears that the event doesn't provide the appeal that it did in the past. I.e., it's not working well to attract a high percentage of residents. While the neighbors that attend greatly enjoy the opportunity to get to know neighbors that are not immediately adjacent to our homes, it seems that the funds expended aren't being as effective as they might be. This, combined with a (dues-paying) membership rate that has shown a slight decrease in several recent years, indicate to the board that the money could be better spent.

The board has been discussing this issue in the scheduled meetings (first Wednesday of each month at Santorini Cafe) for several months, with possible alternative activities being the focus. We solicit your ideas and opinions about this issue as we move to establish a new event - or events - to pursue our mission to generate stronger "community" in our neighborhood, or perhaps to return to some version of NNO. If you have thoughts, opinions questions, or anything you'd like to say about this subject, please take advantage of our open board meetings: Contact a board member (listed on page 6), or email WCNA at wcna.contact@gmail.com.



2005 was the last NNO which was catered free for WCNA, by Carrabba's Italian Grill: The food was great!

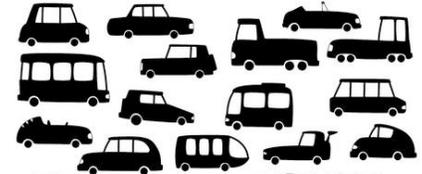
Walnut Creek Neighborhood-Wide Garage Sale: Saturday Oct 21st from 8:00 a.m. - 5:00p.m.

This annual event will be advertised widely, and participation is free.

Contact Robert Meadows, ROBERTL@MEADOWS.COM / (512) 339-0229 to register and get on the map!

Walnut Park Crossing: Disappointed Again

After several neighbors spent several long periods counting cars traveling on Covington during rush periods to get an estimate of summertime cut-through traffic just ahead of the stated completion date for the new street between Park 35 on I-35 and Lamar, the opening of Walnut Park Crossing (WPC) slipped past that date promised by the developer. This may have negated the attempt to quantify the effect of WPC on cars cutting through the neighborhood using (primarily) Covington/Caddo/Scurry to avoid the hassle created by rush-hour traffic on Braker. The first thing that seemed apparent from the counts was that summertime traffic is clearly lower than during "school days". This difference is not known with confidence, since no recent counts have been made for rush hours since school restarted. We're now hoping to get another count with schools open and the road completion again delayed.



Meanwhile, Larry Peel Development has encountered more difficulties finishing the road. The location of a storm drain line was mismarked, leading to adjustments and delays, and an unknown gas line was discovered which had to be capped. In addition, to get electrical power connected at TCEQ, which is supplying power for the street lights, an easement from the state had to be granted. Peel expects paving to begin as soon as the easement is granted and the other issues are resolved, which now is projected to be mid-October.

It seems unlikely that the company is being dilatory about this, since a certification of occupancy cannot be obtained until the road is finished. Of course such a certificate won't be needed in the near future since the apartments are now in the framing stage, and significant traffic passing through the complex certainly wouldn't help the delivery of materials and equipment to and from the jobsite.

The first counts from our observers (Gary Brewer, Donna Estes and Pat Pitt) indicate summertime total cut-through traffic on the order of a thousand cars over all three busy periods (morning, noon and evening).

Summarizing "rush hour" traffic counts on Covington:

- Average number of cars on Covington between 6:45 and 9:15 a.m., three observation periods: 179
- Average on Covington between 11:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m., three observation periods: 317
- Average traveling East=>West on Covington between 4:00 and 6:00 p.m., five observation periods: 699.
- Average traveling West=>East on Covington between 4:00 and 6:00 p.m., three observation periods: 77
- The total traffic (average) during the three high-activity periods was 1272 vehicles.

For the most part these numbers include residents as well as commuters, although if the observers knew a car was from the neighborhood it was not counted. Total traffic counts - made by the city using automatic counters - on the same streets made in past years indicated just under 2000 cars, including all local neighborhood traffic.

An interesting side note: Police stakeouts at the stop signs at Oakwood and Hornsby on Covington have always indicated that drivers who ran the stop signs overwhelmingly were residents of the neighborhood. The observations by the participants of this current traffic count corroborate those reports: Virtually all stop sign runners were known to be residents. Gets old, stopping at those signs over and over, eh?

Walnut Creek Bookclub is Open For New Members

Are you interested in joining the Walnut Creek Book Club?

The Walnut Creek Book Club is kicking off the fall semester by meeting at Santorini Cafe, located at 11800 N. Lamar, on Thursday 21 September 2017. We invite you to join us from 7-8:30 p.m. We do ask those attending to please place a drink or food order at their bar to show our appreciation for the use of their back room.

September's book title is *Our Endless Numbered Days* by Claire Fuller.

Please contact one of the following if you want more details or have any questions.

Tasha Bowser <Bowser.Tasha@gmail.com>

Val Henson <ver_meer@sbcglobal.net>

Alison Louise Brown <s.pitt@earthlink.net>

We hope you can make it and look forward to seeing you there!

The book club normally meets the 3rd Thursday of every month. Each month, a new host, location and book are selected for the next month's meeting. For those who do not wish to join the book club but would like to read along, the book title for each month will be posted on social media once it is selected.



Harvey and Associates

We're at the peak of hurricane season, and it's clear this is the "big time" in the Atlantic (and Pacific as well). Going by the alphabet, Harvey is the eighth of eleven tropical storms originating there this season so far, with six reaching the 74 mph wind speed to qualify as hurricanes. Hurricane Harvey made a horrible mess of much of SE Texas and SW Louisiana. But even the worst natural disasters (if you can call this human-aided event "natural") have their good sides. In our case, what was beginning to become a serious drought period was transformed into a life-giving one for our vegetation. Over the four days of Harvey in Austin, the weather station on Oakwood measured 8 inches



Here's what a tornado can do: This large tree was twisted to shreds in Pickens County, Ala during Harvey
From AAS, Sat.2 Sept 2017

of rain, and it mostly fell at rates that were absorbed pretty well. This is because - despite Austin being in its crosshairs when it came ashore - Harvey stalled when it ran into a high pressure area to the north and west of us. In the end only the outer bands of rainfall reached us, which put us in the sweet spot for precipitation. And of course there is no more burn ban anywhere locally for the time being. Unfortunately the flood control reservoirs on the Colorado River - Lakes Travis and Buchanan - to our northwest got very little out of Harvey because of the stall. While they remain relatively full, Lakes Travis and Buchanan are lower than normal for September and

appear to be going down further.

Harvey turned out to be more a wind event than a flooding event in our neighborhood. Many of our streets were littered with limbs and debris from trees, and some trees were damaged or felled resulting in other damage, including to power lines though outages were brief.

Perhaps considered more damaging by many people was/is the increase in gasoline prices resulting from shutdown of Texas and western Louisiana refineries. If no other similar events occur, this situation should ease over the next couple of months. It's going to take a while for the people sheltering in Austin (and all over the state) to get back to their home areas, and even longer into their homes. The effect on pets - and all animals - was just as bad and their return to homes likely will take even longer than for the humans. Austin shelters and rescue operations are now stuffed with pets of Harvey refugees and they generally are



Large Elm blown down by Harvey's winds on Whitewing

"Back in the old days" in WCN, when there were no leash laws and everybody was about the same age with numerous school-age kids and pets, our beagle Tony used to behave much as Otis does in Sinton. Nearly everybody recognized him and he never got into fights with other dogs (or cats) in his wanderings around the 'hood (including especially on the creeks). It's certainly better that we are required to keep our dogs constrained, even - and especially - when walking with them. Some dogs would act like Tony, but many would create havoc and serious injury to other dogs and cats if free to roam. There have been several horror stories about loose dogs in the neighborhood and our park, involving both pets and wildlife. In addition, many people are genuinely fearful when they see dogs running free, so please keep yours under your control with a leash when away from home, and report loose dogs on our social media and to the city via 311 when appropriate. Also, please be a responsible dog owner by picking up your dog's poop. A few folks have provided containers - and even bags- around the neighborhood for convenience, and find both at the entrance to Walnut Bluffs Park. pp

not accepting animals for the time being. Pet rescue stories abound from the storm, with vacant spaces all around Austin being "borrowed" for temporary shelter and donated food and other supplies pouring in after the storm. You probably couldn't avoid seeing the picture showing Otis the dog rescuing himself by carrying a large bag of kibble from the HEB in Sinton down the street toward home when the image went viral. Everybody in Sinton knows him, and he just walked into the HEB and picked himself out a bag of his favorite. In WCN a feral kitten was taken in by the Walnut Creek Cat Coalition, having been fed and socialized by generous nearby neighbor Donna Estes, who calls him Tiny. Being naturally inclined toward humans, he is now highly socialized and available for some lucky adopter. Many other cats were lost, some temporarily and some which haven't been found so far, including the mother and siblings of the kitten.



Otis carries dog food in Sinton during Harvey



As the cliché goes, we dodged this bullet. Though no homes reported flooding, Harvey nevertheless has shown the need for regionally-based, comprehensive flood mitigation infrastructure, requiring serious financial investment and serious politics.

Add to the critters that live in our neighborhood a new, stealthy avian: an Indian Peahen, the female peafowl which are known mostly from the flamboyant feathers of the male. This girl seems to be traveling mostly along Skunk Creek, which runs from south of Braker lane between Oakwood and Whitewing to join Walnut Creek. She has been sighted many times on the creek from about 11400 to the bridge at Covington. She usually is seen grazing on seeds scattered by wild birds under bird feeders, but like chickens, they are omnivorous and can eat a wide variety of seeds, plants, fruits, insects, and small animals such as worms, lizards and snakes (they've been known to eat poisonous snakes and plants). Of course she also needs a source of water, and will check out your compost heap.

Perhaps someone brought her into our neighborhood knowing they like bamboo shoots and grubworms, commodities much too prevalent here!

So if you see a large grey-brown bird grazing - or even roosting in a tree - in the Skunk Creek area you can believe your eyes. She has been captured in (poor quality) pictures but she is quite shy and moves to conceal herself in foliage when she detects that she is being watched.



An Indian Peafowl in front of the male of the species, the Peacock. Her less showy appearance can make her hard to see.

You now can track where your money for (at least) one bond election is, and is going: **Project Explorer, under the Capital Improvement Program**, is a new city site which will reveal current status of projects and



programs funded under the 2016 Mobility Bond Program which we voted to instate last year to the tune of \$720 million. The many projects established under this bond were divided into three categories: Regional Mobility (to address congestion and safety issues, \$101 million); Corridor Mobility (to enhance mobility, safety and connectivity in some primary transportation corridors, \$482 million); and Local Mobility (sidewalks, bike paths, trails, transportation safety, and the Safe Routes to School Program, \$137 million). This site will allow you to check the progress of each project in each category relative to its plan, a tremendous improvement in transparency by the city. If things go "normally" we'll see projects finally starting to be worked on years after the bond election, but perhaps the

anticipated transparency will help in the execution.

This is just a start, according to the web site (<http://capitalprojects.austintexas.gov/projects>) for Project Explorer: In the future we will see information about projects funded by all sources: Capital projects all will be transparent, we're told.

After the Lege: New Laws You May Not Be Aware Of

The dangerous period that occurs every two years in Texas known as the Texas Legislature session happened again this (odd-numbered) year. Then just as we thought we had escaped the worst when it ended in May, the governor extended the dreaded period with a special session, now mercifully over. We think a total of more than 1,000 new laws were passed in the regular and special sessions, but thankfully most were irrelevant to us. Here are a few that might sneak up on you if you haven't paid attention:

- A weak statewide ban on **texting while driving** is now in place. Of course everyone is against this activity, but implementation was the struggle. As a result it's pretty toothless, as it's only a misdemeanor with small fines, and it applies only to sending or reading text while behind the wheel of a moving vehicle, with loopholes you could drive a car through (e.g., it's OK to use it for "navigation" and to make phone calls). The good news is the attempt by the governor to negate the stricter laws in Austin and other Texas cities did not become law.
- Texans can now **carry swords, machetes, sabers, spears and knives** with blades more than 5.5 inches long in most public places (swordfights on 6th St. if cops are issued same?).
- Texans will be offered a chance to donate to a fund to **reduce the backlog of untested rape-kit evidence** when they renew a driver's license or register a vehicle, and
- Bystanders who **break into hot cars to rescue children** and elderly or disabled adults can't be sued for the damage if they call 911 first.
- Cost for a **gun license** has dropped from \$140 to \$40. Now how about reducing drivers license cost?
- Judges' home addresses will be removed from government records, and courthouse personnel will receive extra security training (as a result of the attempt on Judge Kocurek's life last year).
- If you **win more than a million dollars** on the lottery you may choose to remain anonymous(!).

New Laws continued

- Schools are required to create **cyberbullying policies** and let students anonymously report online bullying. School officials also must tell a victim's parents about reports of online bullying.
- **Sexual assault definition** has been expanded and victims and witnesses have been exempted from being punished for such crimes as possession of alcohol if they report the criminal assault act.

Good luck locating those other 990-odd other laws; they're intentionally made hard to find.

November election: AISD School Bond on the ballot. Officials say the Billion Dollar Bond won't affect the tax rate. That doesn't mean it won't raise your actual taxes, since appraised home values have increased markedly. In fact, the rate may even be reduced for this reason. The money will be used for two new schools, modernizing two schools, expanding a number of schools, relocating the Liberal Arts and Sciences Academy, and maintenance. This is one we should educate ourselves about. (And always protest your appraisal if you can!)

Interested in Texas History?

The eighth *Save Texas History Symposium* is being held this month, September. This project engages volunteers to work with state employees for the purpose of digitizing the archives of the Texas General Land Office with the intention to make sure the history of Texas represented therein is "saved" - protected from deterioration and loss - as well as made more accessible to researchers and the public. The symposium is being held nearby on the UT Pickle Campus in the Commons Learning Center, which is Building 137 at 10100 Burnet Road, on the 16th of September between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. Tickets are now on sale for \$80. There also is an associated reception at the Texas Military Forces Museum at Camp Mabry, 2200 W. 35th St. on the same day from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. for \$75. Register and purchase tickets for both at <http://www.glo.texas.gov/save-texas-history/>.



The purchase of a ticket will allow entry to the Texas General Land Office Archives, Room 170, 1700 N. Congress Ave., for tours and lectures about resources for studying World War I from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m. on Sept. 15th.

Speakers will examine how Texas affected the war and vice versa, including the events that led to American entry into the war, how Texans had a major impact on fighting in Europe, how the state's daily newspapers discussed the Mexican Revolution and its impact on driving support for WWI.

Veterans and service members can receive a \$10 discount by using promotional code TXVET during registration. Teachers and school administrators can receive a \$10 discount by using promotional code TEACHER. Registrants will receive free copies of "Trench Knives and Mustard Gas: With the 42nd Rainbow Division in France" by Hugh S. Thompson and "Escape from Villingen, 1918" by Dwight R. Messimer.

For tickets and more information: savetexashistory.org. (from Austin American-Statesman)

Austin WATER CONSERVATION STAGE

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7 PM - Midnight

Home Car Wash Allowed with
Bucket or Auto Shut-Off Hose

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Drip Irrigation: Any Day/Time

Water Wise Symposium for Home Gardeners

Saturday Sept 30th, Admission Free

Save precious water and money by capturing, channeling and controlling water in the lawn and garden. Get practical advice from a panel of Austin experts in this day-long program.

Seminar is free and open to the public. Sign up below to reserve your seat!

Tentative Agenda:

- Rainwater Collection, Ed Parken, Travis Co Master Gardener
- Rainscapes, Tom Franke, City of Austin Watershed Protection Dept
- Water Efficiency
- Home Design for Water Collection/Conservation, Billy Kniffen, ARCSA instructor
- Greywater Use and Design, Robert Stefani, Austin Water
- Rebates from City of Austin, Chris Charles
- Panel Discussion: Best Practices

Lunch is on your own at near by restaurants

For questions: Texas A&M AgriLife Extension-Travis Co at 512-854-9600



Austin Central Library while under construction at 710 W Cesar Chavez

Grand Opening of Austin Central Library

Planned for October 28th!

The 200,000 sq. ft., \$125 million library is essentially completed after more than four years, the almost-one-year delay caused mostly by complicated requirements generated by new technologies and features needing to pass inspections. The old central library, Faulk Central at 800 Guadalupe, will cease operating as a library on 16 September and will be converted to a display space and archival repository for the Austin History Center located at 810 Guadalupe.

Transfer of books and other material has already begun, so some materials may not be available at Faulk. The new library will allow

library members to get to articles from the first two floors of Faulk and pick up holds, as well as use computers and the reference desk, in the interim. The architecture is very impressive based on pictures at several sites (e.g. <http://austin.towers.net/a-look-at-austins-new-central-library-inside-and-out/>); Looks to be a great new place to visit and take visitors in Austin in the very near future.

Register to get Dangerous Condition Alerts on Your Phone

The Homeland Security site WarnCentralTexas.org was established to provide alerts about dangerous situations - such as floods and wildfires - to registered phone numbers based on the locations given for the phones. If you have a land line you are already registered, but if your primary phone is cellular you need to register it with the site. To do this you can go to <http://warncentraltexas.org/> and sign up for voice, text or email alerts. Or you can call 866-939-0911. You will be notified about relevant threats, disasters or other public safety events and will be given specific directions as appropriate. To check low-water crossings in real-time go to <https://www.atxfloods.com/>.

Another one of "those" Church Bulletins:

"The class on time management ran long this morning, so children's chapel will be moved to the gym."

Austin City Council

- Mayor Steve Adler, 512-978-2100
Steve.Adler@austintexas.gov
- Ora Houston, 512-978-2101
Ora.Houston@austintexas.gov
- Delia Garza, 512-978-2102
Delia.Garza@austintexas.gov
- Sabino "Pio" Renteria, 512-978-2103
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- Alison Alter, 512-978-2110
district10@austintexas.gov

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

City of Austin: All services, codes & code violations, animal reports: **Call 311**

Get the smart phone 311 App:
Austin311 on Google Play and iTunes

Adam Soliz, APD District Rep
(512) 974 8143
adam.soliz@austintexas.gov

Adan Ballesteros, County Constable,
Pct 2 (512) 854-9697
Adan.Ballesteros@co.travis.tx.us

Austin Police Department Animal Cruelty Unit Tip Hot Line:
(512) 978-0523

North Austin Coalition of Neighborhoods Newsletter is now a blog site, following a wide range of general city as well as neighborhood issues and events.
Read and Comment:
<http://www.lovenorthaustin.com/>

WCNA Board and Officers

- | | |
|----------------------------|--|
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It's Baaaack!

Great news! The Fresh for Less Farmer's Market, by Austin Farmshare, will be returning to St. John's on October 1st! As earlier this year, they will have fresh fruits, vegetables, organic foods, etc. from 11 am to 1pm each Sunday. St. John's is at 11201 Parkfield Drive, at the corner of Parkfield and Braker!

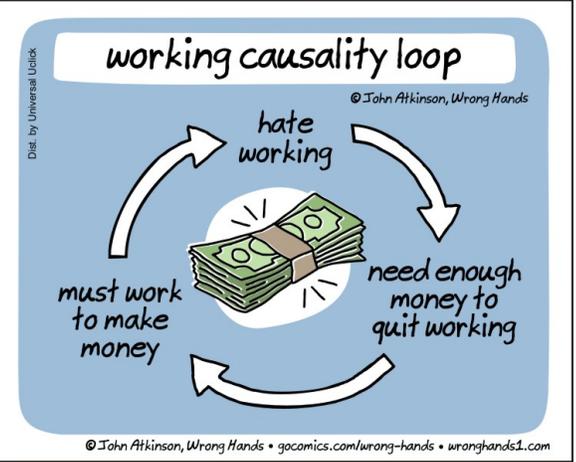
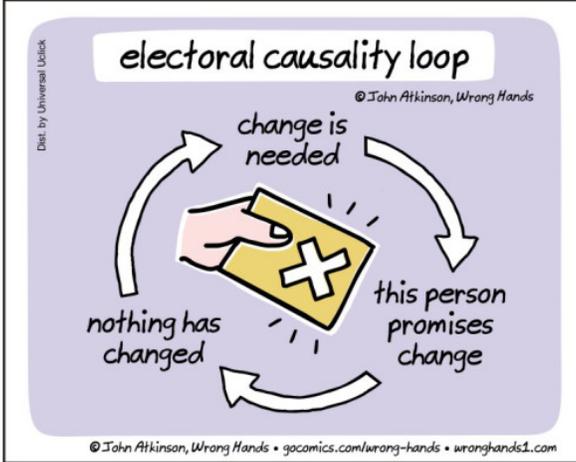



SANTORINI CAFÉ
 mediterranean cuisine
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Monday to Friday
 11:00am - 2:00pm

Happy Hour
 Daily 5-8pm

11800 North Lamar Blvd, Bldg #1, Austin, TX 78753
 PHONE: (512)833-6000
 Facebook: Santorini Café, Music & Entertainment
 Call us to make reservations for Private parties and Meetings

Sep :: Oct 2017

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Walnut Creek Neighborhood Association

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

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:
<http://goo.gl/5iQIk>

WCNA News is sent to every household within the Walnut Creek Neighborhood Association boundaries: Braker Lane, North Lamar, IH-35, and Yager Lane.

To contribute content to the newsletter, send contributions via email to wcna.contact@gmail.com or contact Pat Pitt, 512 837-6620.

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

Calendar of Events

Sep	11-15	Big Brush Pickup: Starts on Monday and ends on Friday or when all is picked up
	17	Austin Museum Day: http://www.austinmuseums.org/museumday/
	19	Talk Like a Pirate Day – aaarrrr!
	20 Wed	Blue Recycle Container Picked Up: Curbside by 7:00 a.m.
	21	Walnut Creek Book Club; Santorini's 7-8:30 p.m.
	22	First Day of Autumn
	23-24	Pecan Street Festival - pecanstreetfestival.org
	29	85th St. Elias Mediterranean Festival: http://www.sainteliaschurch.org/medfest.htm
Oct	1	Farmer's Market Returns to St. John's Episcopal; 11 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
	3	National Neighborhood Night Out
	4 Wed	Blue Recycle Container Picked Up: Curbside by 7:00 a.m.
	6	ACL Music Festival: Zilker Park (first weekend of two)
	9	Columbus Day
	13	ACL Music Festival: Zilker Park (second weekend)
	18 Wed	Blue Recycle Container Picked Up: Curbside by 7:00 a.m.
	21	Walnut Creek Neighborhood Garage Sale
	28	St. Mark UMC "St Market Day Fall Festival & Pumpkin Patch"; 9-4
	28	New Austin Central Library Opens at 710 W. Cesar Chavez
31	Halloween	
Nov	1 Wed	Blue Recycle Container Picked Up: Curbside by 7:00 a.m.
	4-5	Texas Monthly Barbeque Fest; https://goo.gl/FN76eg
	5	Daylight savings time ends (set clock one hour back, sleep one hour longer)