

happy holidays

# Walnut Creek Neighborhood News

Walnut Creek Neighborhood Association

A pdf version in color is available at [www.WCNAnews.com](http://www.WCNAnews.com)

Nov  
Dec  
2021

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## Neighborhood Night Out Was a Blast!

For many years WCNA sponsored a Neighborhood Night Out (NNO) event on the afternoon and early evening of the date prescribed by the national organization, the first Tuesday in August. The intent of NNO is to teach and promote neighborhood coherence to enhance home security and safety. The hope is that by bringing neighbors together in an evening of camaraderie spiced with information about working together, residents will learn methods to improve all aspects of security in their neighborhoods. First Responders and other city officials are encouraged to attend the local events and provide hands-on knowledge about such methods.

Our “happening” was usually held on the grounds of St. Mark UMC, with tents to reduce the effects of direct Texas summer sun, with free food, usually catered by a local restaurant (Carrabba’s was a favorite). Starting around dinnertime, the event drew large numbers of adults and, especially, children, since school was not in

session. It was not uncommon to have speeches by politicians as well as representatives of APD and AFD.

Then attendees aged and attendance began to wane. In 2012, the national organization recognized the heat problem in Texas and other southern states and declared those wishing to avoid same could elect to hold their NNO event on the first Tuesday in October. We quickly changed to that date: cooler but with subsequent loss of daylight hours and conflict with elementary school schedules. Attendance continued to decline. Recent years has seen the event held on different days of the week and, once, in combination with another event, with no significant increases in attendance.

Then we missed 2020 altogether, of course, and discussions of alternatives to the national strategy abounded. In 2019, Tony Potts started a “neighborhood safety team” operation, using active patrolling to help us improve feelings of security in our homes. He was soon joined by Luis Chapa, who worked to recruit more team members and establish a “charter” for the group. Luis used extensive social media to spread the word about the group and its refreshed approach to safety. He also recognized needed infrastructure work to fix some risky situations around the neighborhood, and recruited volunteers to eliminate the risks, and usually improve the appearance as well.

We pause to note that we are going to lose Tony soon, as the family will be moving out of the neighborhood. Let’s all join together to thank Tony for his outstanding contribution to making WCN a safer place!

Meanwhile, the Neighborhood Safety Team (NST) has established zones within the WCN boundaries with designated (volunteer) “Captains” for each. Besides making periodic patrols of their zones, these folks represent a rapid contact group for reporting “situations of interest” from a safety perspective. You’ll see their posts on Facebook and Nextdoor from time to time alerting neighbors of safety concerns and updates!

In addition to their Captain duties, the NST has established a practice/tradition of holding Safety Meetings every month to discuss issues amongst themselves and with any neighbors wishing to attend. These meetings have become increasingly more communal, with refreshments and good company to provide a space for neighbors to get to know each other. NST is then a manifestation of what the national NNO organization is all about.

**Accordingly, this year Luis declared the NST’s October safety meeting the “Annual Neighborhood Night Out” event,** in lieu of the nationally-sponsored event.

On Sunday October 24<sup>th</sup>, this year’s NNO event was held at the Chapa residence. Luis made his family’s famous chili recipe for folks to enjoy a good old-fashioned Frito pie with the fixins! Neighbors also brought their favorite food dish to contribute for others to enjoy! (A delicious homemade macaroni and cheese dish and some delightful desserts just to name a few). Activities included pumpkin carving, door prizes, sports zone for football and soccer games, and an amazing Balloon Sculpture for the kids to enjoy! Special thanks to our new WC neighbor Mister Twister (Alex Graf) for offering his services! The event drew approximately 60 neighbors from every corner of WCN, with a wide range of ages, diversity and household dynamics.

Thanks to everyone who attended! The Safety Team looks forward to continuing the monthly meet ups! Keep abreast of when and where on the WCN website ([www.WCNAnews.com](http://www.WCNAnews.com)) and on the neighborhood social media, Facebook and Nextdoor.

**What a fun way to get to know each other!**



Luna, Courtney and Luis hosted our NNO at their home.



“Mister Twister” keeping the kids enthralled with balloons

**Goblins and Skeletons and Witches, OH MY!**

**Walnut EEK! Was a "Happening" Again!**

They came in singles and bunches again, just like last year! Kids of all ages, walking, riding in cars, even in a "hayride trailer". 95 homes in all parts of the neighborhood signed up to participate in the event, 90 of which gave out treats to the "kids". The locations of the participating homes were shown on a map of the 'hood that you could print out or just keep on your smart phone to guide your wandering. Whether you covered your immediate area, walked the whole area (and some did!) or rode and walked, you could find treats galore.

50 homes decorated for the occasion, which automatically entered them into a drawing where 16 won gift cards donated by local businesses. Two \$50 gift cards were included in the drawing, one to Specs and one a Visa/cash card provided by WCNA. And while there were fewer lavishly decorated homes than last year, there were plenty to enjoy.

The map gave the addresses of all homes participating, and whether each was decorated and/or giving out treats. And our **Neighborhood Safety Team** members were patrolling to help assure everyone stayed safe.

The whole thing was organized via social media, so you see it can provide good things as well as those questionable ones. Thank Sara Merrell, Melissa Huber and Eric Shaughnessy for making it happen.

**Let's do it again next year, OK?**



**Look close: There are only two real people here!**



**The Castle on Glenda Court was most impressive: That's a real Knight there!  
There he is in daylight at lower right.**

One worrying observation: Many participants, both adults and children, wore dark clothing and carried no flashlight or other form of lighting and/or reflective patch which would clearly show their presence in the dark. While driving from place to place to take pictures I encountered more dressed like this than not. While Halloween probably suppressed the number of people driving "as usual", there were many doing so around the neighborhood. **NOT SAFE!**

For any "street" event taking place in the dark, encouragement to dress accordingly should be made together with the announcement. And anybody walking the streets (left side!) on any evening/night is encouraged to wear some light-colored apparel, even if it's just shoes, to help protect yourself and night drivers.

**We Had an Election!**

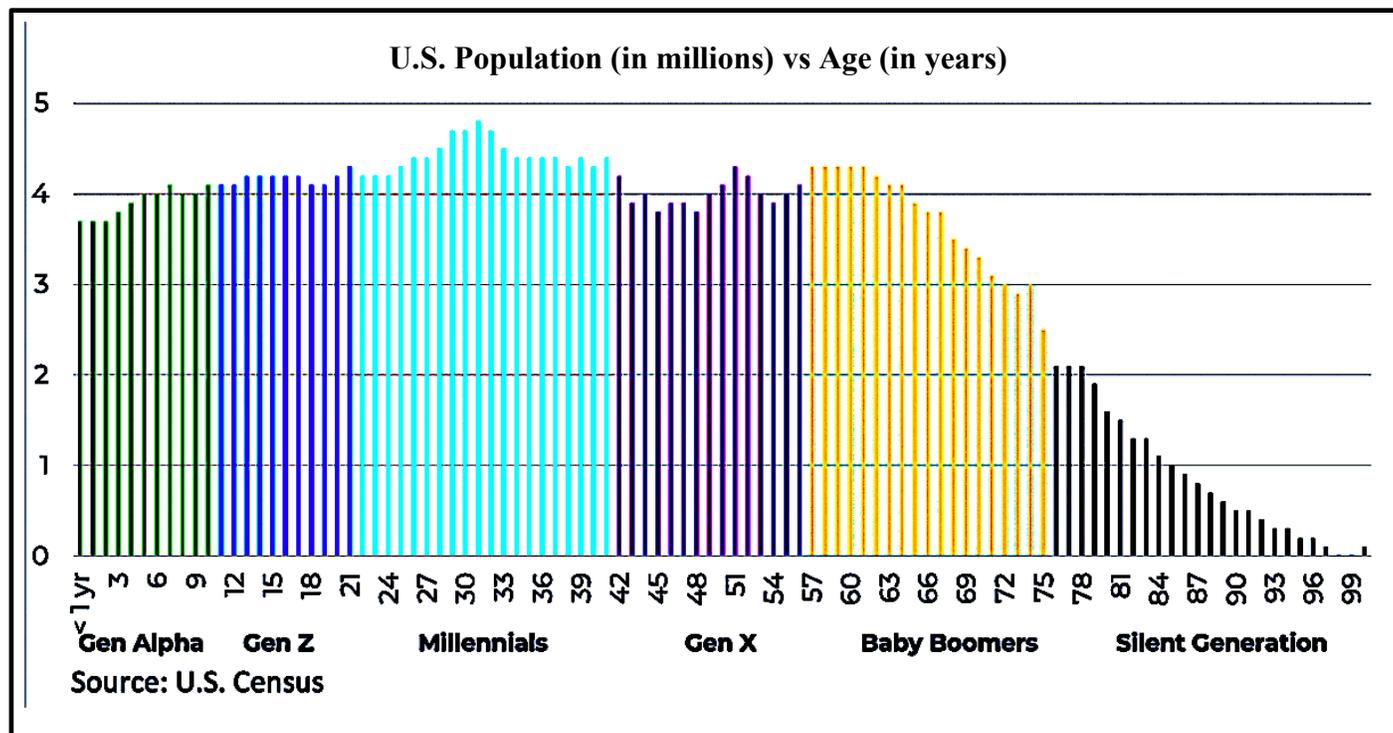
As is frequently the case, the first Tuesday in November brought elections – this time without human candidates (this being an odd-numbered year with no special elections for public office). The most contentious issue for the city of Austin was the petition-induced Proposition A, organized by the "Save Austin Now (SAN)" organization. This proposition was intended to require the City to hire a specified number of police officers related to the number of residents. There were some training and deployment requirements as well. Originally advertised on their website as a percentage generated under the auspices of the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), this claim was removed when challenged by a reporter from KUT-FM in an interview with the co-founder of SAN, as no such number could be found on any DOJ site. (Apparently the number is an average from a survey of police departments in many large U.S. cities). The percentage of officers in large city police departments across the country varies considerably, with levels of violent crime not clearly correlated to the percentage.

The estimated cost to the city was also a wide-ranging number, but all were large enough to make it clear that the cost of meeting the requirement eventually would require higher taxes or reduced services in other areas.

As you certainly know, the proposition was defeated by a two-to-one margin. This doesn't mean the number of officers won't increase: APD currently is funded for about 200 more officers than it has, due in large part to attrition. SAN blames the attrition on loss of morale because of the shuffling of APD funds motivated by the killing of George Floyd by a police officer in Minneapolis last summer. It's likely this was a factor in some officers' decisions to retire early or quit, but the department has been understaffed for several years and the cadet training class scheduled for after this traumatic event was cancelled to introduce some new courses related to police – resident interactions. But apparently APD has no difficulty attracting applicants, as the next class had many more applicants than needed to fill the spots available. In any case, adding new officers will take significant time, surely several years.

### *What Generation Are You?*

I've been searching for a "visual" with this information for years, mostly because I have never known which "generation" I belong to (just before the Boomers, in case you wondered; now I know I'm a member of the "Silent Generation", the smallest, and pretty rapidly disappearing). Of course these generally-accepted definitions are – or at least were – arbitrary, but sociologists and media-types had to come up with some way to set us against one another... I mean distinguish us from one another. This chart was generated from the latest census data by the National Association of Realtors, and does a great job of letting us know where we stand (or sit, or lie).



Polling about this subject in the Atlantic shows that we generally don't know what percentage of the population "our" generation represents (as defined by the separations shown above). For example, 74% of Boomers think they're in the Boomer category defined above, but a smaller percentage of each successive generation thinks they're in their category as shown: That is, ~53% of Gen X, 45% of Millennials and 39% of Gen Z (now I don't feel so ignorant!).

### *A Christmas Caroling Event: We're Working On It!*

The intensive logistics involved may preclude our pre-pandemic hayride, though it's too early to tell here in early November. Alternative approaches are being explored, ranging from having a "stationary" event, strolling as we did the first year, traveling and singing only to homes who request it as we did in 2019, and other approaches as well. Because of AISD getting out on Friday, Dec 17<sup>th</sup>, the most likely date looks to be Sunday, the 19<sup>th</sup>, but also possibly Tuesday the 21<sup>st</sup>. It's also likely we'll start earlier, meeting around 4:00 p.m. at a place dependent on the scenario(s). When the date and procedure are settled – with your help through social media – volunteers will be advised and the procedure will be announced via [www.WCNAnews.com](http://www.WCNAnews.com) & social media in advance of the date.

## ***Work on “Our Trail” Has Finally Actually Started!***

The section of the Northern Walnut Creek Trail that includes our Walnut Bluffs Trailhead/Park is finally beginning construction, after fits and starts over nearly 30 years. The overall urban trail project eventually will encircle Austin if completed.

On Thursday evening, the 4<sup>th</sup> of November, a zoom meeting set up by the project manager Genest Landry from the Public Works Department was held to allow anyone who wished to “meet the contractor” who will be building the concrete path in our park, between Walnut Creek Metropolitan Park and a point near our entrance on Oakbrook. (The sign shown at right announcing construction is just inside our entrance.)

Clearing for start of construction has already begun on either side of Lamar just south of the Walnut Creek bridge: Excavation machinery has been active on the west side near the entrance to Walnut Creek Baptist Church, and some trees and bushes are being removed on the east side during the first weeks of November. Excavation on the east side is expected to start in mid-December. These points on Lamar will be points of entry from either side of Lamar down to the trail on either side of the bridge. Of course we hope that these two entrances will handle all or most of the “public” foot and bike traffic on the path, leaving our Oakbrook entrance primarily for neighborhood use.

Volunteer work to transplant native plants prior to clearing of areas will be led by Cliff Tillich, a Parks advocate. During actual construction of the trail, expected between the first of January and late April or May, space on either side of the construction will be closed to the public. For this reason, Gary Brewer (the Kubota Kid) has been planning and working to complete an “inner trail” that will allow us to continue using the park as usual (sorta) during this period. (This is further described in the article below: Gary says this inner trail isn’t quite finished but is “usable” already). Also, Ms. Genest indicates there will be room on both sides outside the closed space for “informal” access, so we may still be able to get to most of the creek itself.

The contractor will not use our Oakbrook entrance for construction access: all such entrances will be from Lamar. In fact, no operations will be carried out on city streets: The operation is addressing every concern we have raised!

Many of us have been looking forward for many, many years to this trail, which will allow safe access to the facilities at Walnut Creek Metropolitan Park (pool, hiking and bike trails, athletic fields and open spaces, off-leash dogs, etc). On the other hand, many also are trepidatious about the access the path will provide into the edge of the neighborhood. It’s hoped (by us) and expected (by Parks folks) that public use will actually work against people who would represent a threat to our safety, and city employees say this is what they’ve found in most similar cases.

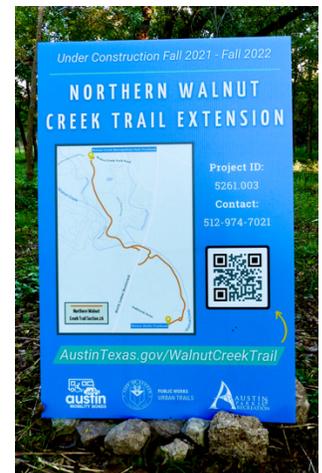
***Regardless, let’s embrace the opportunities the facility opens up to us!***

### ***It’s My Park Workday – 6 Nov - Was Terrific! Amazing! Etc!***

More than 30 volunteers signed up to work on Gary (the Kubota Kid) Brewer’s “inside” trail, which parallels - to the south and west - the “old” trail, running from the entrance on Oakbrook to the old Lamar bridge, sometimes very close to Walnut Creek, in our Walnut Bluffs Trailhead/Park. This inner path had been “roughly” opened up by Gary with his machinery, and the plan for IMP Workday was to continue clearing so as to allow regular, easy use of the park while the new concrete path is being built (see article above). This was serious work, digging roots and cutting limbs and brambles. Many of the volunteers came from outside of the neighborhood, some members of The Sierra Club. Lots of energy produced great results: The Inside Trail is now useable, though not as smooth as it eventually will be. We hope to have it finished and under maintenance by mid-December.

Meanwhile, great thanks to the organizers, Tasha Bowser & Dorsey Twidwell, and all the volunteers who took part in the project, including Tim Entress and Gary and Margaret (of course), and especially those who came from outside the neighborhood and devoted such energy to it. May you all get to use it soon!

In the picture at right, the “Y” split in the trail shortly after you enter the trailhead can be seen. The trail that curves to the right is the “main” trail, the one we’ve been using for many years. When the concrete trail is finished, a “loop” will mark the end of the “public” trail, and a narrower path will continue up to this entrance. The trail that curves off to the left is the start of the “Inner Trail”, which obviously existed in a rough form until recently. IMP volunteers made it much more walkable, and efforts will continue to make it a convenient alternative while the main trail is under construction.



**City sign at our park**



**Just inside the Oakbrook entrance:  
The Inner Trail curves left**

### *Some Good Medical News in Our Perilous Time*

We've been so embattled by the staggering effects of the continuously-changing COVID virus that we may have become inured to the advances going on around us, some of them truly amazing. For example:

**Covid Pills:** Two companies have been testing some pill therapies for COVID-19: Merck and Pfizer. They've now done enough testing to request, or begin the process of requesting, Emergency Use Authorization. Merck's pill apparently reduces the likelihood of severe illness and death in vulnerable groups by more than 50%, and Pfizer's pill is testing around 90% effective for the same groups. These look to deserve the term "gamechangers"!

**Alzheimer's Breakthrough(?):** This is cutting edge research we're learning about; it's mindboggling to us "Silents" and "Boomers" but probably becoming normal to everybody else.

It's suspected that the Beta-Amyloid chemical in the brain found to be highly correlated with Alzheimer's is actually a cause of the disease. How it gets to the brain has been mysterious, because it's almost impossible for "foreign" components to get through the "Blood Brain Barrier" (BBB). This term refers to specialized structures in the major blood vessels of the brain which react to foreign ingredients in the bloodstream to prevent them from reaching the brain's circulatory system.

The Beta-Amyloid is associated with toxic fat-protein complexes produced in the liver. So here's the "science fiction" part: mice were genetically modified to make their livers produce the same toxic proteins that we humans produce(!), and the effects of the toxic proteins in the bloodstream were tracked. It was found that these toxic complexes interfered with the linings of tiny blood vessels in the mouse brains, causing them to leak. Thus the substances were able to breach the BBB and cause inflammation and loss of neurons in the mouse brains. This opens the door to understanding how Alzheimer's trigger components get into the brain, and thus to development of methods to prevent it (assuming this mouse model holds for humans).

**Liver & Pancreas Transplant Surgery Coming to Austin** (AAS, 1 Nov 2021): Liver and pancreas transplants currently are not available in Austin, but that is starting to change with the opening of the **Adult Abdominal Transplant Center at Dell Seton Medical Center at the University of Texas** on 1 Nov. The development of this center started in Fall of 2019, but the Pandemic caused much of the space for it to be taken for COVID treatment. It's now ready to start, first with adult kidney transplants, followed by pediatric kidney transplants (both are already available in Austin), and then will advance to pancreas transplants next year. Liver transplants will follow in 3 – 5 years. Within about 5 years Austinites will no longer have to travel to other large Texas cities.

### *North Lamar International District Fall Festival:*

#### *An Official Roots & Wings Pop-Up Event*

by Sara Merrell

Saturday, Nov. 6<sup>th</sup>, was an especially gorgeous fall day in central Texas and therefore the perfect time to celebrate the season and all its natural glory, from bursts of wildflowers to beautiful butterflies wafting on the breeze.

That's why I hope you were one of the 70 or so people who turned out for the North Lamar International District Fall Festival and Tree Adoption Day. This was one of many official *Roots & Wings* Pop-Up Events that took place across the city between October 24<sup>th</sup> and November 6<sup>th</sup> to help us all connect with nature, trees, and pollinators by celebrating Arbor Day & Monarch Appreciation Day. It was hosted by our local business district's board of directors in Partnership with TreeFolks, a local nonprofit devoted to maintaining and improving Austin's urban tree canopy.

In addition to giving away 40 five-gallon, native trees, the event featured an informative talk by certified arborist Jason Derks and an expert planting demonstration by holistic gardener, Anna Konvit. One of our newest neighbors, Alex Graf, AKA Mister Twister, Balloon Artist Extraordinaire generously donated his talents and was a big hit with the kiddos, who also enjoyed arts & crafts and a scavenger hunt designed to help them learn about monarchs and other pollinators.

The event took place at the *North Lamar International District Food Forest*, located at the corner of Kramer & Parkfield. This greenspace is a gift to the community from the district's merchant association in the hopes that it becomes a place for the community to come together, learn, and enjoy nature. It is currently the home of 13 small fruit trees, but it is our goal to further develop it into a full food forest, which includes multiple layers of different types of edible plants that will someday be available to the community to harvest for free.



Never too young to learn about plants from Jill!

If you are interested in learning more about the Food Forest or the merchant association, visit us on Facebook or reach out to the board members right here in your 'hood: Sara Merrell and Jill Leberknight. And stay tuned for more fun, educational, community events at the food forest!

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jill@agentjill.com

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### TOP 20 HIGH-IMPACT CLIMATE ACTIONS FOR HOUSEHOLDS AND INDIVIDUALS

OUR FOOD 🍏	OUR WASTE 🗑️	OUR TRAVEL 🚗	OUR ENERGY ☀️
<b>12.4%</b>	<b>1.3%</b>	 <b>2.8%</b>	<b>8.6%</b>
			Distributed Solar Photovoltaics (64.9)
			Insulation (18.5)
			LED Lighting (15.7)
Recycling (11.3)	Electric Cars (9.8)	High-Performance Glass (11.3)	
Reduced Plastic (5.4)	Hybrid Cars (4.7)	High-Efficiency Heat Pumps (9.1)	
Reduced Food Waste (103.1)	Composting (2.9)	Telepresence (4.4)	Smart Thermostats (7.3)
Plant-Rich Diets (102.2)	Recycled Paper (1.4)	Electric Bicycles (1.6)	Low-Flow Fixtures (1.5)

The data presented here represents Gt CO<sub>2</sub>-eq | Graphic designed by Chad Frischmann

**PROJECT DRAWDOWN**

At <http://www.drawdown.org/>, the impact of various actions we can take personally to help reduce effects of climate change have been studied for years. This graphic represents current results of their research.



Monique's carved pumpkins: Amazing!

A skeleton at the Klumppts!

Look out, Google Fiber Man!

**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 \$25 per household for a calendar year. Send a check to: WCNA ; PO Box 82746; Austin, TX 78708-2746

Dues notices 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 to Yager Lane and North Lamar to IH-35.

**To contribute content** to the newsletter, send contributions via email to [wcna.contact@gmail.com](mailto:wcna.contact@gmail.com) or contact Pat Pitt, 512 837-6620.

### Calendar of Events

Nov	11	Veteran's Day
	11	Blue Recycle Container Picked Up: Curbside by 7:00 a.m.
	13-14	East Austin Studio Tour - <a href="https://www.bigmedium.org/ast">https://www.bigmedium.org/ast</a>
	17	Blue Recycle Container Picked Up: Curbside by 7:00 a.m.
	17-21	A Christmas Affair
	19	Blue Genie Arts Bazaar - <a href="https://bluegenieartbazaar.com">https://bluegenieartbazaar.com</a>
	20-21	East Austin Studio Tour - <a href="https://www.bigmedium.org/ast">https://www.bigmedium.org/ast</a>
	22-26	AISD Fall break
	25	Blue Recycle Container Picked Up: Curbside by 7:00 a.m.
	26	Thanksgiving Day
Dec	4	Holiday Sing-Along and Holiday Stroll - <a href="https://downtownaustin.com/what-we-do/signature-events/holiday-stroll/">https://downtownaustin.com/what-we-do/signature-events/holiday-stroll/</a>
	8	Blue Recycle Container Picked Up: Curbside by 7:00 a.m.
	15-24	Armadillo Christmas Bazaar. <a href="https://www.armadillobazaar.com">https://www.armadillobazaar.com</a>
	20	AISD winter holiday break (20 December 2021 - 4 January 2022)
	21	Winter begins
	22	Blue Recycle Container Picked Up: Curbside by 7:00 a.m.
	24	Last day for Blue Genie Arts Bazaar & Armadillo Christmas Bazaar
	25	Christmas
Jan	31	New Year's Eve
	1	New Year's Day
	5	AISD classes resume
	5	Blue Recycle Container Picked Up: Curbside by 7:00 a.m.