

# 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  
2022

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## I Think I Speak for All of Us

when I say “*We Need Rain*”: We were still 10 inches below normal for the year at the end of October! On the other hand, the hot/warm and dry weather we’ve experienced this Fall has provided a great backdrop for the staggering number and diversity of neighborhood events we’ve had in this period, including:

*Good Neighbor Fest, Walnut Bluffs Trail opening, Neighborhood Night Out, St. Mark Pumpkin Patch, Neighborhood Garage Sale, It’s My Park Day, Walnut EEK!, and the Roots & Wings Pop-up Event!*

## WOW! This Was a HAPPENING!

### Good Neighbor Fest 2022: A Community Effort

by Emily Shaughnessy

What would our community be like if neighbors from all different backgrounds could know, enjoy, and take care of each other? That’s the question we set out to answer with the inaugural ***Good Neighbor Fest*** on September 24.

This inaugural fest was an experimental community event that brought together diverse local businesses, nonprofits, artists, performers and residents for an afternoon of connection and fun. It was organized by ***We’re All Neighbors*** (a nonprofit founded by neighbors Emily Shaughnessy, Eric Shaughnessy, and Stacy Claye) in partnership with neighbor Jill Leberknight (*Agent Jill*) and her team at *Austin Holistic Real Estate Group*, and supported along the way by some amazing volunteers from the neighborhood!

Throughout the festival, specific “connection areas” allowed neighbors to get to know one another and contribute to public art pieces. These included a Wishing Tree (led by neighbor Sally Richardson) where attendees could tie a ribbon around a tree to make a wish for the community; a postcard station (led by neighbor Tim Mateer) where folks could make and write a postcard to local seniors; and a community discussion in the “Outdoor Living Room” (led by Ashley Cuellar, the new pastor at St. Mark UMC).

The WCNA and other local neighborhood associations had booths, along with nearly 50 local artisans, restaurants, and nonprofits. About 1,250 people attended! on a warm and dry Fall day.

The goal of Good Neighbor Fest was to help unite our community across differences, celebrate our diversity, and showcase the many resources this area has to offer. The organizers don’t see it as a one-time-event, but rather a jumping off point to explore ways we can be better neighbors to one another.

The festival could not have happened without the tireless efforts of many neighborhood volunteers as well as the partnership of Agent Jill and her team. Jill’s support of Good Neighbor Fest is a testament to the collaborations that are possible and the things we can accomplish when businesses, nonprofits, and residents all work together under the vision of “community first.”

Jill believes that her business thrives by helping others succeed—a belief she turns into action through her community education property tax protest series and her hands-on involvement in community initiatives, support, fellowship, and events such as Good Neighbor Fest 2022. This is the type of energy and heart that we need from our local businesses and neighbors if we want to strengthen our community and keep it safe.

Special thanks also to the following neighbors for all their help with the event: Melissa Huber, Cynthia Gesotti, Kelly David Burns, Ashley and Cory Arnerich, Christian Ninaud, LuzDary Montoya, Alex Graf, Adrian Paulino, David Roseboom, Kaamileh Hamid, Max Meehan, Siobhan and Jeff Blackburn, Tim Entress, David and Agnes Park, Anderson Franklin, Gail Thomas, and Pat Watson. Also, thank you to everyone who graciously loaned backyard furniture to help create “Connection Areas” at the festival!

What else is possible in our neighborhood if we join forces to meet our common needs and goals? Let us know your ideas at [hi@WereAllNeighbors.org](mailto:hi@WereAllNeighbors.org).



Jill Leberknight (right) & DJ Kelly Davis-Burns  
at Good Neighbor Fest

## **There was so much to see and do at Good Neighbor Fest!**

Not many close-in parking spaces left by the time I got there, and the grounds were alive with participants: The ones in booths, food trucks or on stage and those of us wandering around in amazement. There were booths with adults admiring artwork and checking out various and diverse opportunities and areas surrounded with kids having a great time. The kids also could scramble over the bounce castle (with slide) or visit the petting zoo, which held a large variety of small animals. The “zoo” had to limit entry to about ten at a time – with supervision for the small ones – so they could actually feed and pet the amazingly docile inhabitants without human and animal bodies bumping together.



Blowcommotion Brass Band Tears It Up!

One of the most popular sites was outside the north wall of the St. Mark sanctuary, where diverse performers put on a terrific show, organized by Stacy Claye and emceed by our own experienced DJ, Kelly Davis-Burns. There were delightful dancers from the *Love of China Dance Schools*, and also *Heavenly Dragon Lion Dancers* (and drummers) from the *Thien Hau Temple* on Lamar at Yaeger, who danced and entertained the crowd in their colorful dragon costumes. The loudest – and quite impressive – music show was performed by *Blowcommotion*, a nonprofit organization brass band, who blew the (imaginary) roof off! Just a wonderful afternoon of entertainment to go with all the neighborly happenings! It's hard to imagine a more enjoyable afternoon in the neighborhood.



The Kids Having a Great Time With “The Balloon Man” (Alex Graf) and Water Balloons

## **Recap on the October, 2022 WCNA Neighborhood-wide Garage Sale**

The annual neighborhood-wide garage sale sponsored by the Walnut Creek Neighborhood Association (WCNA) was held on Saturday, 1 October 2022. There were 12 participants, which is low. There were 16 participants in 2021; the event was cancelled due to Covid in 2020; and there were 14 participants in 2019. There were 23 participants in 2018, which is a more typical participation level for the previous 15 years.

Reports from the field were that there was good-to-excellent traffic, but a certain selectivity in whether lookers actually stopped to peruse the offerings.

The cost to the Association was about \$160. Other incidental costs were funded by donors.

The Association will be holding **SEMI-ANNUAL** sales in **2023**, i.e., during the Spring (date not yet set, perhaps in the **latter half of April, 2023**) and **21 October 2023**. Information on these sales will be posted to neighborhood social media and [www.WCNAnews.com](http://www.WCNAnews.com), and will be published in the appropriate newsletters in advance.

## **Neighborhood Night Out (NNO)**

### **Continues to Adapt**

Again this year, it was decided to hold NNO on a weekend rather than the nationally-designated date (the first Tuesday in October). Last year it was combined with a Safety Team Social date, which proved to be a good choice in terms of participation. This year, Safety Team Lead Christian Ninaud offered to host the event in his large, shady and attractive front yard (which has managed to hold onto a lot of green grass despite the devastating drought!) from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. on Sunday, October 16<sup>th</sup>. Even with the warm weather and short duration the event drew a convivial crowd, comprising about equal numbers of kids (as young as infants) to adults (some in their eighth decade). The hosts, Christian and his wife Luzdary, Sara Breuer and Melissa Huber, set out tables of “projects” for the kids and food for the adults (and kids as well, of course). A number of newer members of the neighborhood joined many “old regulars” for a very pleasant afternoon.



Everybody stands back while Zoey Milam-Kast tries to break the piñata open while Emile Ninaud moves it up and down



Then Luzdary brought out the pumpkin piñata, and things got swinging. Two of the girls took swings at the thing while Emile Ninaud pulled it up and let it down to make it harder to hit. Zoey Milam-Kast and others managed to bash it pretty impressively, but the thing just wouldn't bust open. Finally Luzdary grabbed it and flushed the candy inside out with upward heaves and – a bit carefully after watching the previous violence applied to the poor piñata – kids converged on the “spoils”.

Some brave “older kids” also enjoyed the zip line connected between two widely separated trees.

Everybody enjoyed conversations and refreshments around the yard, and especially on the large porch/patio in front of the house. And then, suddenly, it was time to go home!

## **Another WOW! Walnut EEK! was PHENOMENAL!**

**No, no, no: Ghosts and ghouls** don't come out on Mondays, right? **WRONG!** Halloween (Monday) evening in Walnut Creek Neighborhood was crawling – well, mostly walking and running – with them at what has become the biggest event in the 'hood: Walnut EEK!

You can see a cool video from the event at <https://tinyurl.com/EEKvid>.

This was the third year of the event, originally dreamt up by residents Eric Shaughnessy and Becca Sharp. This year's organizers were Cynthia Gesotti, Melissa Huber, Max Meehan, and Julie Prien with essential help from a host of other neighbors. The concept is to create a family-friendly “Trick-or-Treat” evening using an all-volunteer approach, utilizing social media to the max. Walnut Creek residents are encouraged to decorate their homes – with prizes to enhance participation and creativity – and sign up via [www.WalnutEEK.com](http://www.WalnutEEK.com) to be added to the treat map.

This year, several “Spooky Stops” were set up to provide printed maps and EEK! info along with refreshments, glowsticks, and more treats. In addition, some new “Pop-Up Events” were introduced: a movie night with an outdoor screening of the kid-friendly cult classic Mad Monster Party, a “Halloweenie Roast” to kick off trick-or-treating, and a Pumpkin Trailhead Scavenger Hunt proceeding from – you guessed it – the Walnut Bluffs Trailhead.

A big thank you to ALL the Walnut EEK! volunteers, as well as the generous donors to this year's event: Walnut Creek Neighborhood Association, Smokin Beauty, Thirsty Armadillo, Ashley Arnerich, Tasha Bowser, Eric Shaughnessy, Angela Garner, Melissa Nix, and Julie Fletcher!



A continuous crowd at Max's Fun House/Kid-Scary Movie/Halloweenie Roast on Hilltop

## **Our Safety in the Walnut Creek Neighborhood (WCN)**

*by Christian Ninaud, Safety Team Lead & Sharon Porter*

Who is responsible for your personal safety? If your answer was “I am,” you are correct. This column is dedicated to your personal safety and, therefore, the safety of our neighborhood.

If you follow neighborhood communications, you may know these general safety practices. For example, you have deadbolt locks on your doors, an alarm in your house, and you use them. You have a Ring or other system linked to your cell phone. You keep no valuables in your car and keep the doors locked. Even better, you keep your car in the garage and never leave the garage door open. You keep your lawn mowed and house maintained, not leaving items out for “drive by lootings.”



Safety Cleanup Team on 12 Sep 2022: Robert Meadows, Cynthia Ann Gesotti, Adrian Paulino (kneeling), Tim Entress, Luzdary, Emile & Isabela Ninaud and Eric Shaughnessy. Photo by C. Ninaud

You joined the Walnut Creek Neighborhood Association (WCNA), and Nextdoor or Facebook WCNA page. You read the newsletter, attend neighborhood meetings and events such as Neighborhood Night Out or Safety Socials. You participate in events like Safety Team neighborhood trash clean-ups. You stay connected to your neighbors and by being out and about in the neighborhood you can spot new or suspicious activity.

For exercise, you may walk, run or bicycle in the neighborhood. You carry an alarm on your key fob, and a cell phone. You have Safety Team Lead Christian Ninaud's number in your phone: (512) 971-7628, and can text to report suspicious activity, see a downed tree, or an obstacle in the road that is unsafe. The phone is in your pocket and you remain alert to your surroundings. If you see a person in distress or a crime in progress you call 911, or use the City of Austin 311 app to report things such as disabled cars or camps on City property.

The Safety Team currently has three block leads that cover areas of the neighborhood. A Block Lead does patrols as able and participates in Safety Team decisions and planning. We would like to find two new Block Leads, and you can text Christian Ninaud, or contact him via Facebook Messenger if interested. You can also join the Facebook Messenger group, **WCN-Safety Chat** to stay connected on safety issues.

The January column will address the Safety Team in more detail.

After an accident at Caddo and Lamar that damaged the fence around this property, the Safety Team got to work fixing it so the property would not turn into a dumping ground for trash. Thanks to all the neighbors that pitched in! (Note: the collision destroyed Gary & Margaret Brewer's RAV4 and damaged Gary's right eye!)



Safety Team Members Repair the Fence on Lamar Hit by a Pickup in an Accident: Max Meehan, Tom Porter, Christian Ninaud, Sharon Porter, Aaron Cobb & Fox Meehan Photo ES.

## **Second Annual Roots & Wings Fall Festival: 2022** by Sara Merrell

**On Saturday, November 5<sup>th</sup>**, this event was held at the Food Forest, Kramer and Parkfield, from 11:00 'til 2:00, in coordination with Austin Nature in the City (<https://www.austintexas.gov/department/austin-nature-city>).

With something for all ages, it was well-attended by adults and kids on a perfect Fall day. North Lamar International District (<https://northlamarinternational.org/>) and Tree Folks teamed up to give away native trees, including oaks and figs, and all fifty of them were adopted! There were many kinds of activities for the kids, including arts and crafts, educational, a scavenger hunt and "Mister Twister", the balloon man Alex Graf. Features also include a pumpkin patch, lawn games, free snacks and free mulch: The Festival was a *tour de force*!

Speakers included Certified Arborist Jason Derks (*Austin Tree Doctor*), Vicki Blachman (Master Naturalist and Gardener), and CoA Park Ranger Jimmy Evans, with expert information about trees, bugs and wildflowers, and animals native to our habitat (via skeletons and other artifacts). Also for (ahem) the kids, our own Emily Shaughnessy lead a story time, featuring beautifully illustrated children's books about monarchs, other pollinators, and even some leaves that are a little bit nervous about their impending fall, and how they overcame that fear with the help of a friend. Big thanks to all of you for making a beautiful day even more so!

Thanks also to our emcee Rush Evans: Catch him on Koop Radio, 91.7 FM; Off the Beatles Path (yeah, those Beatles).

Note: If you missed out on getting a tree, visit [Treefolks.org](https://treefolks.org) and check out the *Neighborhoods Program* for other tree adoption events or other ways they distribute free trees.



One of the very many activity tables at the 2022 Roots & Wings Festival on Nov 5<sup>th</sup>

## **Saturday, Nov. 5 was Austin Parks Foundation's It's My Park Day**

This is the one where you can get a T-shirt for volunteering at a park, which about 15 folks did at our Walnut Bluffs Trailhead. Gary Brewer mowed the vegetation on each side of our "inner trails" crossing under the highlines, and Sara Breuer guided the planting of native grass and flower seed on these strips, then spread a layer of mulch on top of the seeds. The thin layer of mulch is intended to hold and protect the seed until it germinates and starts to grow, and also suppress unwanted vegetation. Now all we need is rain...and not too much at a time!

After the work, volunteers collected around tacos and coffee, brought by Dorsey Twidwell.



Roman Bowser watches Robert Meadows spread mulch alongside the trail

## **Local Election Results**

At Press Time, this is how things looked:

Looks like all Austin propositions and AISD and ACC school bonds passed pretty comfortably.

The Austin mayor's race will be a runoff between Celia Israel and Kirk Watson, on December 13<sup>th</sup>.



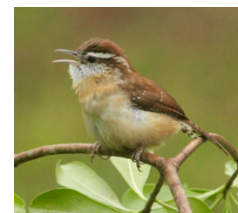
## Winter Birds in Central Texas

By Jennifer L. Bristol

The spring bird migration is a thing of beauty; however, I find myself enjoying the winter birds of Central Texas more and more. Our neighborhood sits on the edge of the Blackland Prairie to the east and the Edwards Plateau to the west. This convergence zone gives us prime seats to enjoy a mix of birds of both ecoregions.

Many of the birds that return to our neck of the woods during the fall and winter months are smaller and in their less flashy winter or non-breeding plumage. If you move slowly through the grasslands of the Walnut Bluffs Park, you will see a mix of White-crowned, White-throated, Chipping or Song Sparrows feeding on the seeds and insects of the native plants. The woods closer to the creek can have Orange-crowned and Yellow-rumped Warblers, along with Ruby-crowned and Golden-crowned Kinglets that move at lightning speed along the branches. When there is water in Walnut Creek watch for both Great Blue and Green Herons to be wading and fishing along the edges of the water.

When there are plenty of insects and native seeds and berries to eat, most birds will not come to your bird feeder until after the first freeze limits the amount of available food in an area. After the first freeze, Northern Cardinals, Carolina Chickadees, Black-capped Titmice, White-winged Doves and Red-bellied Woodpeckers will dine more regularly at a feeding station. If you have a brush pile or stack of firewood, you most likely have a little brown bird that hops in and out of the pile- that's the Carolina Wren. These little brown birds don't care what season it is- they do "Carolina Wren stuff" all year round. They build winter nests to hang out in and they sing and defend their territory even when it's not breeding season.



Carolina Wren in WCN  
Photo by Jen Bristol

The fall and winter months are also a great time to hear and see Eastern Screech-Owls and Great Horned Owls. Those are the two most common owls in this area and we have both living in the trees and woods near Hornsby Street and at the Walnut Bluffs Park. They are most active at dusk and at night, so they are harder to see, but listen for the American Crows when they are mobbing something in a tree: it is most likely either an owl or a hawk. Speaking of the crows, they form large flocks this time of year. The flock (called a *murder*) that roosts at Walnut Creek Metropolitan Park (WCMP) is about 50 birds this time of year. The Black Vultures also roost at WCMP on the power lines in the center of the park. While there are some Turkey Vultures live in the area year-round, most of them migrate to South Texas or Central America.

One of the things I love about birds is that they are the wildlife that is around us all the time, yet change with each season. If you want to explore more birding places in Texas check out *Parking Lot Birding: A Fun Guide to Discovering Birds in Texas*.

### Apology From the Editor by Pat Pitt

I included a short article in the Sep-Oct issue without sufficient thought. The article very briefly described results of some brain-scan experiments on two groups of subjects, and it was the group definitions which should have prevented its publication in our neighborhood newsletter. The groups were described as "Conservative" and "Liberal", using only "traditional" as the modifier in the article (in the past, self-identified conservatives tended to resist rapid social and economic changes and liberals tended to promote such changes). These terms have taken on many more - and much more extensive - connotations in political life today. Articles using such terminology, or any apparently political articles, should not be included in the WCNA Newsletter.

The decision to include it was mine alone, and did not represent the views/opinions of any board member or officer of WCNA. All articles in this document follow this rule: The authors are responsible for articles with their names attached; Others are the responsibility of the editor. I apologize, and will strive to insure that this policy is maintained in the future.

### The Walnut Creek Neighborhood Association is looking for 1-2 volunteers to join the Communications Committee.

#### **Responsibilities:**

- Work with WCNA Communications Committee to identify articles to be posted on the website
- Upload content to WCNANews.com in a timely manner
- Attend a 30 minute biweekly meeting

#### **Requirements:**

- Computer literacy and access to a computer
- Time commitment of approximately 1 hour weekly
- Knowledge of and/or willingness to learn tools such as Zoom, Wordpress, Divi, and Google Drive

Please contact <[WCNAnews@gmail.com](mailto:WCNAnews@gmail.com) or [bowser.tasha@gmail.com](mailto:bowser.tasha@gmail.com)> to learn more!

## Dues and Contributions Form for Calendar Year 2023

Please clip and return with payment.

Dues for 2023 are \$25

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DUES (\$25 per year): \$ \_\_\_\_\_

DONATION: General Fund \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Walnut Bluffs Trails (park) \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Safety Team \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Walnut Creek Elementary \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Cat Coalition \$ \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL INCLUDED: \$ \_\_\_\_\_



QR Code to pay dues or donate

### Join and/or support WCNA: You can use PayPal for both dues & contributions.

PayPal is a popular way to become – or remain - a member, or to make a donation toward WCNA projects (shown on drop-down menus on the Donate site). You can use any credit card to make a payment via PayPal through the “join/donate” page on the WCNA website, <https://wcnanews.com/membership/>

Alternatively, with your smart phone using a QR code reader you can go to the same page using the QR code at left.

*Note: You don't have to join PayPal to use it for payments.*

### Austin City Council

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**Call 311**

[Get the phone app: **Austin311** on Google Play and iTunes]

APD District Rep: **Adam Soliz**

512 974-8143

[Adam.soliz@austintexas.gov](mailto:Adam.soliz@austintexas.gov)

County Constable, Pct 2

**Adan Ballesteros**, 512 854-9697

[Adan.Ballesteros@co.travis.tx.us](mailto:Adan.Ballesteros@co.travis.tx.us)

**APD Animal Cruelty Unit Tip**

**Hot Line: 512 978-0523**

**Emery Sadkin**

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<https://tinyurl.com/OakwoodWeather>

**Office of Police Oversight**

[policeoversight@austintexas.gov](mailto:policeoversight@austintexas.gov)

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On 22 September 2022, with St. Mark Pumpkin Patch all set up, volunteers prepare to start sales.



Tiny pig and chicken at the Petting Zoo, Good Neighbor Fest



Scary Pirate Going-ons at Ashley and Cory's on Glenda Court



The WCN booth: Sara Breuer, Gail Thomas, Heather Schalin, Melissa Huber, and Siobhan Blackburn and Reagan

# AISD Fall Break: 21-25 Nov; Winter Break: 22 Dec - 9 Jan

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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 \$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 issues.

Payment also may be via PayPal:  
<https://wcnanews.com/membership/>

**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 [wcnanews@gmail.com](mailto:wcnanews@gmail.com) or contact Pat Pitt, 512 837-6620

Note:

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

Nov	16	A Christmas Affair - <a href="https://www.jlaustin.org/a-christmas-affair/">https://www.jlaustin.org/a-christmas-affair/</a>
	18	Blue Genie Arts Bazaar - <a href="https://bluegenieartbazaar.com">https://bluegenieartbazaar.com</a>
	19-20	East Austin Studio Tour - <a href="https://www.bigmedium.org/austinstudiotour">https://www.bigmedium.org/austinstudiotour</a>
	23	Blue Recycle Container Picked Up: Curbside by 7:00 a.m.
	21-25	AISD Fall Break
	24	Thanksgiving Day
	29	Giving Tuesday - <a href="https://iliveheregivehere.org/givingtuesday">https://iliveheregivehere.org/givingtuesday</a>
Dec	3	Holiday Sing-Along and Holiday Stroll - <a href="https://tinyurl.com/HollStoll">https://tinyurl.com/HollStoll</a>
	7	Blue Recycle Container Picked Up: Curbside by 7:00 a.m.
	15-24	Armadillo Christmas Bazaar - <a href="https://armadillobazaar.com">https://armadillobazaar.com</a>
	21	Winter begins
	21	Blue Recycle Container Picked Up: Curbside by 7:00 a.m.
	22	AISD winter holiday break (22 December 2021 - 9 January 2022)
	24	Last day for Blue Genie Arts Bazaar & Armadillo Christmas Bazaar
	25	Christmas
	31	New Year's Eve
Jan	1	New Year's Day
	8	AISD classes resume
	4	Blue Recycle Container Picked Up: Curbside by 7:00 a.m.
	16	Martin Luther King Jr. Day - Banks and Post Office Closed
	22	Chinese New Year - Year of the Rabbit