

The Whispers

PUBLISHED BI-MONTHLY BY NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS, INC. FOR THE WHISPERING OAKS HOMEOWNER'S ASSOCIATION

The Annual New Neighbors' Greeting Event 'Twas a Smash Hit!

The second of what is intended to be an annual affair saw more than 50 Whispering Oakers meet, greet, and entertain members of seven new households. (Last year saw attendance at almost 50.) The event was held, again, at Los Azulejos Restaurant, on Military Highway at N. Winston Lane. There was lots of finger food and cute-little-container food that was first rate.

WOHA President Simon Esparza spoke briefly, introducing the present and past Board of Directors. Then the Board's Secretary and Social Director (how does she have time to run an institute and raise a family?) Evita Morín made a brief request for new residents to join the HOA, which they did.

That was it! The rest of the evening was for eating and greeting. And "a good time was had by all."



President Esparza addresses the crowd. Behind him are Board members Janis Witt and Adele Barnett.



Jim Schneider yakking it up with Diane Crawford and Richard Pressman—all very long-time residents.



Judine Taylor (right) chats with newer residents Andrew Bordman and Rene Thurman.



More of the crowd listening to President Esparza.



SPRING CLEANING Declutter Day!

Saturday, March 25th 9:30am - 11:30am

Whisper Willow at Whisper Forest

Free mobile shredding truck available to all residents courtesy of WOHA members!

Paper will be professionally shredded and recycled. No other materials allowed.





2023

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Peter's Prez-spective

A message from Peter J. Lund
Incoming President

So who's this guy—and where's Simon? Well neighbors, have no fears. The Board hasn't let Simon slip away just yet. He and I have merely switched roles for 2023. Simon has taken over as Vice President and I will attempt to fill his shoes as President. He and I will continue to work just as closely as we have for several years now, but some of the time-consuming duties will now officially fall on my shoulders. Writing this column perhaps six times a year comes to mind. But with so much good news to share in this issue, this edition could write itself.

The big news, of course, is the nearly half-mile sidewalk extension along Lockhill-Selma that was installed last month (See article, p. 10). We can thank Councilman John Courage for that overdue safety improvement. WOHA had repeatedly expressed concern to his staff about pedestrians, including school children from nearby EKHLA, walking along the edge of this increasingly busy roadway. So when the Board got word that another sidewalk project elsewhere in the district had run into delays, and those funds could be reallocated toward us, we pounced! The councilman even found additional monies to make sure the improvement was exactly what the community needed. The final tab came to over \$170,000.

Those funds could have gone to another important need, albeit in a different neighborhood, but they came our way. In fact, this is the third taxpayer-funded roadway safety upgrade directly benefitting Whispering Oaks in just the past four years. Put simply, WOHA's working relationship with the Council team would be easy to overlook, but it has paid off time and again. When I've spoken with leaders of other neighborhood associations, some tell me they have little contact with their Councilperson. From my experience, that's a huge missed opportunity.

Neighborhood-level advocacy is critical to the health of a community. And while every Council staffer across the city strives to respond to all constituents, being part of a well-regarded association carries extra weight. After all, an active and inclusive association like WOHA routinely engages hundreds of residents to gather important feedback which provides city officials with a consolidated viewpoint to set priorities.

In each column, I'll continue sharing the Board's efforts and encourage your feedback to keep us on track. Together, we really are making a difference.

A message from Simon Esparza **...Loyalty**



That's my theme for this month's issue. That's because, as of last 1 October, WOHA had begun our new fiscal year. And so now's the time we want folks to show their loyalty to this neighborhood that gives them so much.

Think about what this neighborhood means to all of us: how beautiful the architecture is and the owners' front yards are, how relatively safe it is, how beautiful the entranceways are now, and how nicely

landscaped they are. But that's not to mention how friendly the great majority of our neighbors are. If you are walking along a street and you pass someone you don't know, chances are that person will say hi anyway. That's how we are in Whispering Oaks.

Now that last part's free. As the old saying goes, "It don't cost nuthin' to be friendly." But, as everyone knows, keeping up a neighborhood is not free. And that's where loyalty comes in. Those of us who show our loyalty by volunteering to be on the Board and put in the many hours

(Continued on page 3)

(Continued from page 2)

depend on the loyalty of the hundreds of folks who recognize that electricity is not free, water is not free, maintenance is not free, insurance is not free, and, of course, social events are not free (even if we charge for some of them).

Keeping the common areas looking good—which enhances everyone’s property values here, for no one wants to move into a poorly kept neighborhood—might seem an obvious task for your all-volunteer Board. But how about the costs that aren’t seen: the cost of legal advice, the cost of fighting politically to maintain and improve the roads around us, the cost of dealing with developments that create problems for some of our residents (such as a new school in the area).

So please, folks, if you’ve not yet done so, renew your inexpensive \$125 membership or join if you’ve not yet joined. And add a little to the pot. Most folks do. And, remember, you don’t have to plunk it down all in one lump sum. The dues by themselves are only \$10.44 a month, which can be paid out automatically. You won’t even miss it! But if we aren’t getting it from you, we sure will miss it!

Meanwhile, as you drive and, even better, walk our neighborhood, look around. See all the beauty. And, remember too, while each home is, of course, the owner’s responsibility to keep it looking nice, keeping the neighborhood’s common areas nice—and fighting politically to keep our neighborhood safe and secure—is the responsibility of everyone. We need and appreciate your loyalty.

FLOOD INSURANCE? Do You Need It Now?

Property owners along the Olmos Creek drainage channel and water run-off areas on both sides of Whispering Oaks are strongly encouraged to attend the San Antonio River Authority’s Flood Plain Map meeting on Tuesday, 14 March, at the Hardberger Park Urban Ecology Center.

SARA engineers and City of San Antonio staff will assist homeowners in looking up the new flood plain data for their particular address and be able to answer questions on flood risks, insurance requirements, and the potential for new drainage projects.

Water volumes entering Olmos Creek are expected to rise due to increased development around Whispering Oaks—Wurzbach Parkway expansion, the Alon Marketplace, and the Woods and Estates of Alon neighborhoods—all constructed since the previous flood events in 1998 and 2002. Because of this, SARA and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) have partnered to create a draft map of new flood-plain data to present to the public for their comments and action.

While some WO homes may already have flood insurance in place, many addresses along Whisper Bow, Forest, Green, Willow, and Valley may soon be added into the risk area, necessitating flood insurance coverage by mortgage companies.

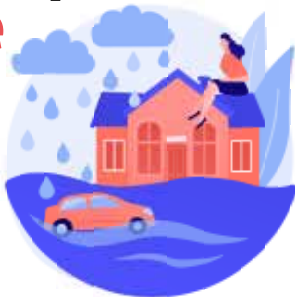
Flood insurance can be relatively inexpensive for homes in a Category X, but if that address is later mapped into a flood zone, the most the premium can rise is 15% a year. Waiting to apply for flood insurance until after a mapping change can mean a difference in thousands of dollars a year. Flood insurance does not typically take effect until 30 days after application. Residents whose homes will be categorized within the flood plain are strongly encouraged to contact their property insurance agent regarding appropriate coverage by 31 May.

SARiverAuthority.org has a risk map where an address can be entered to display potential risks for run-off and flooding. For more information, call 210-227-1373 or attend the meeting March 14th. Whispering Oaks Homeowners Association Board member Ben Dilly (bendillyttu@gmail.com or 210-601-1602) is our neighborhood liaison for this extremely important matter.

Flood Plain Map Open House

TUESDAY, 14 MARCH
6:00 pm–7:30 pm

Hardberger Park
Urban Ecology Center



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Swim Club

**It's almost time
to get wet in the ...
Whispering Oaks Pool**



Did you know that the Whispering Oaks swimming pool is heated year-round? So come join us for a summer—or winter—of fun at your neighborhood pool. It's exciting to see all the young families moving into our neighborhood. The Whispering Oaks Pool is a great place to meet your neighbors and hang out. Come swim, play basketball or tennis, or grill some burgers with family and friends.

The Whispering Oaks Pool is funded by membership dues, so your membership helps keep our neighborhood pool operating. While we have members from our neighborhood, our membership is open to people outside our neighborhood as well. So, please invite you friends to be members, then you can all come enjoy this wonderful facility. With your membership you get access to the pool and tennis courts all year. As we have a heated pool, come enjoy a warm winter afternoon playing in the pool.

Our pool is run by a volunteer board from Whispering Oaks. So if you have a volunteer's heart, we have opportunities for you. If you are interested but not sold, please come check us out during our holiday parties, which are open to the entire neighborhood. The next one will be the Sunday before Memorial Day is celebrated.

For information, visit our website at woswimclub.org.

Swim Team News!



We are pleased to announce that Kyrlyo Shvets accepted, once again, for this summer to be the Head Coach. Plus, we are also excited that Amy Gibson and Liam Stallard agreed to stay on as assistant coaches. Last summer, they were all excellent, so we are looking forward to a wonderful 2023 season!

On-line registration will begin 2 April 2! Program runs from 15 May through 29 June 29. Sign-up deadline is 22 May!

The first three weeks, 15 May to 2 June, offer afternoon/evening-only practices because school is still in session. Then we switch to morning practice times on 5 June. Evening practice will be limited in size and all attending must be pre-approved and assigned to the sessions by the coach and/or team rep. As we approach the registration date, additional dates and times will be posted on our site.

We encourage you to enroll your swimmer in this learn-to-swim program. It is an excellent way for your child/children to learn to swim, to meet other families in the neighborhood, and to build lasting friendships. Swimmers will get to show off their talents by participating in swim meets with other teams as well. Participation is not mandatory, but our goal is for 95% of our swimmers to participate.

We allow swimmers from outside the neighborhood as well, so we encourage members to invite their friends. Dates and



Blue Marlins getting coaching instruction from our pros.



Are these Blue Marlins enjoying themselves, and each other—or what?



logistics are still being worked out, so please go directly to whisperingoaksbluemarlins.swimtopia.com for the latest information and to sign-up. For information not found on the site, send an email to teamsabluemarlin@gmail.com. Please be sure to include your contact number. Email is preferred, but you may also text LoGina Vinceslio at 210-389-3363. Please include your name in the text.

Happy swimming!

Oak Wilt-Again (and Again)

Seems that Erin Davis never “wilts” under the pressure. She is a Staff Forester for the Texas A&M Forest Service who has spoken to Whispering Oaks folks several times over the past five years. On Tuesday, 24 January, she spoke again, this time before a crowd of at least 60 mostly Whispering Oakers at Hobby Middle School. There’s plenty to be concerned about—and lots of misconceptions to exacerbate the situation.

Luckily, the Wilt has not spread to the West Side—not yet anyway, for it’s moving all too quickly (a map will be published next issue). And Whispering Oaks is not the only place concerned, as one might think. There were attendees from Castle Hills, Elm Creek, and Hunters Creek, ‘cause they wanna keep that evil thing outta *their* neighborhoods.



Ms. Davis’s presentation lasted an hour and a half because there were so many questions from the audience, and then she stayed another half hour answering still more questions. There is so much to know—and so many opportunities to save trees.

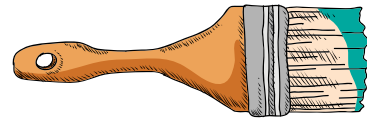
Important points that Davis made:

1. The beetle that carries the infection will attack an otherwise perfectly healthy tree.
2. The loss of trees on a property will reduce the home’s overall value 15–20%.
3. Only about 10% of untreated trees survive.
4. It costs more to remove a dead tree than to treat a live one.
5. Full information can be found at TexasOakWilt.org—including a federal cost-sharing program.

So here’s some valuable advice:

1. Carefully monitor Red Oak trees constantly to make sure they don’t develop a fungal mat, which attracts the oak wilt beetle. If a Red Oak shows signs of shedding and/or oozing bark, it needs to be cut down and the wood removed *immediately*.
2. Obey city rules concerning trimming, spraying and other tree care ordinances.
3. Do not prune February 1st to June 30th.
4. Spray all cuts and wounds with a sealant within 30 minutes.
5. Use only city-licensed contractors for tree maintenance.
6. Consult a certified and licensed arborist at the first signs of any issue with their trees. When trying to save our native Live Oaks, time is of the essence!

P.S. Thanks to Hobby Principal Lawrence Carranco who, once again, provided a meeting place for Whispering Oaks, and to Janis Witt, WOHA Board member, who does it all!



New Letter Boards

Always trying to keep the neighborhood in good repair, the Board has replaced the old letter boards inside the two marquees. Seems the old ones didn’t hold all the letters in position—and who wants to deal with the challenge of trying to read that kind of stuff! So, enjoy the announcements.

By the way, the announcements are managed half the year by the WOHA Board of Directors and half by the Swim & Tennis Club. The marquees are located by both sets of tennis courts, one east, one west.

Whispering Oaks Online Communications

Did you know Whispering Oaks HOA is on social media? Please join our Facebook page and Nextdoor Whispering Oaks HOA group for up-to-date information on events and other important news about our neighborhood.



Facebook:
Whispering Oaks Homeowners Association SA



NextDoor:
Whispering Oaks Homeowners Association group

Also, don’t forget about the Whispering Oaks HOA website! You can contact the HOA board and join the HOA here. <https://www.whisperingoaks.org/>

“Coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress.

Working together is success.”

—Henry Ford

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Oak Wilt

Misconceptions

Isn't It True That...

Oak Wilt affects only Live Oaks. **False.**

Oak Wilt can affect all species of Oaks with varying degrees.

If my neighbor's trees are affected, that does not mean that my Oaks will be. **False.**

Likely, my Oak trees **will** be impacted, **especially** Live Oaks or any root-grafted Oaks.

If Oak trees die of Oak Wilt, there is no need to remove them. **False.**

Infected Red Oaks (e.g., Spanish Oak, Shumard Oak, Black-jack Oak) should be cut down and destroyed as quickly as possible to prevent fungal mats from forming. For White Oaks (e.g., Chinkapin Oak, Monterrey Oak) and Live Oaks, there is a chance that some of the canopy will survive and regrow. However, after a tree dies, it becomes a serious safety hazard and its removal is likely to be mandated by the City. Don't forget, the cost to remove a dead tree is typically 5x greater than protecting it with fungicide treatment.



Leaves of a dying Oak.

There is no real danger in trimming Oaks February through June as long as you paint the cuts. **False.**

The sap-feeding beetles are most active in spring. In addition, the fungal mats where the beetles pick up fungal spores grow mostly in the spring. Therefore, it is very risky to trim Oak trees February through June, so should be avoided as much as possible.

If an Oak dies of Oak Wilt, it can then be used for firewood. **It depends.**

Fact: if a **Red** Oak dies of Oak Wilt, you want to destroy and dispose of it as quickly as possible. If you cut it down to logs, it could still form fungal mats, which beetles will visit, picking up the fungal spores and spreading Oak Wilt.

A **Live** Oak or **White** Oak that dies of Oak Wilt, on the other hand, cannot form fungal mats, and are therefore safe to store and use as firewood.

Oak Wilt **does not** transfer or move in the smoke from burning.



Identifying an Oak Wilt problem.

Watering Oak trees can prevent Oak Wilt. **False.**

The vascular pathogen that causes Oak Wilt, *Bretziella fagacearum*, affects trees that are both stressed or thriving.

Trenching guarantees that trees within the entrenched area are safe. **False.**

Trenching is effective in stopping the localized spreading of Oak Wilt through interconnected roots by mechanically destroying these connections. However, trenching can sometimes fail due to several factors, including location, equipment, etc.

If any of my Oak trees die, that represents just a loss of some shade. **False.**

Trees provide multiple ecosystem services, including habitat, carbon sequestration, improvement to air quality and water quality, etc. Property value decreases with the loss of trees, too.

One can always tell if a tree is infected by looking for signs such as dying leaves. **Possibly, but not always.**

There are some foliar symptoms that are usually present when an Oak tree has Oak Wilt, but this is not always the case. Sometimes, foliar symptoms can be confused with other diseases or abiotic stressors, such as drought or freeze damage.

If my neighbors around me treat their trees, then I don't have to treat mine. **False.**

Injecting Oak trees with fungicide will avoid the development of the disease in that particular tree. However, it will not stop the spread of the pathogen to nearby oaks via interconnected root systems.

Oak Wilt is much more likely to attack a tree that's sick already. **False.**

The vascular pathogen that causes Oak Wilt, *Bretziella fagacearum*, affects trees that are either stressed or healthy.

—Texas A&M Forest Service

Monkey business... Whispering Oakers *Celebrate* Neighbor and Contribute to Wildlife Rescue & Rehabilitation



Just some of the food collected for the animals.

For a 70th milestone birthday, long-time Whispering Oaks resident and Board of Directors member Janis Witt wanted to contribute 70 pieces of fruit to one of her favorite organizations—Wildlife Rescue and Rehabilitation. That group is noted for their no-kill sheltering of injured, orphaned or otherwise incapacitated wild animals from the south-central Texas area.

A group of Janis's friends and neighbors came together at a January birthday luncheon and brought more than just 70 apples and bananas. They filled two SUVs and a van full of fruit destined for the animal refuge, several hundred pounds of food in all.

"I was extremely touched and proud of my neighbors and friends," said Janet, "but not surprised. Their generosity is typical of Whispering Oaks—always caring and sharing is a hallmark of our community."

The WRR staff later sent photos of the animals enjoying their birthday party fruit and planned on using the birthday-party theme as an example of a type of event that could benefit the organization. A fruit-raiser? A produce party?

WOHA Legacy Fund Makes Estate Gifts Easy

Longtime residents know the value of a pleasant, safe neighborhood to live in and to raise a family. That's why some asked WOHA to create an easy way to include Whispering Oaks in their estate planning.

The Legacy Fund is a flexible way to ensure that Whispering Oaks remains one of San Antonio's most admired and desired communities for decades to come. Unlike the Capital Fund, this option allows the donor to specify how their gift shall be utilized. Family naming rights can even be awarded for major projects. The Legacy Fund enables the donor to select a community enhancement that reflects the joy their family found in Whispering Oaks and to share it with future residents.

You can always make a donation now and watch your selected project come to life. Otherwise, earmarking a gift to the community through your estate can be as simple as adding WOHA as a beneficiary to an existing bank account, investment account, or insurance policy. Modifying a will or engaging an attorney is not necessary. To give the donor peace of mind should their financial plans change, rest assured that all future commitments remain no-obligation.

Have questions? Ready to plan a gift? Contact the Membership Director, January Smith, through the Board of Directors contact, board@whisperingoaks.org, or visit our website, whisperingoaks.org, for the Advisory Form to notify WOHA of your designation.



Whispering Oaks Holiday Decorations Contest And the Winners Are...

The grand prize and a \$100 HEB gift card went to the Garcias, at 3015 Whisper Lark, whose intricate old-world scene illuminated in the home's front window set it apart from any others in the neighborhood.



The two runners-up were the Muses, at 11010 Whisper Ridge, with trees wrapped in a silver and gold lighting scheme, and with matching golden prancing reindeer and an angel; and Jeffrey Owens's home, at 11330 Whisper Falls, that featured hundreds of brightly multicolored lights woven around and draped from the trees, and matching multiple wreaths carried out the theme. The runners-up each received an HEB card for \$50.

The Whispering Oaks Homeowners Association thanks all the residents who decorated their homes, creating a colorful, festive atmosphere across the whole area.

And, very sorry that there are no photos!



How D'Ya Say It Right?



Nowadays, perhaps because of the influence of the lyrics of popular music, there has developed the practice, when speaking of two or more persons, of turning the pronouns of a subject into objective pronouns and the pronouns of objects (the object of the action) into subjective pronouns:

Her and my brother went to the store with my mother and I.

Her did? Her went with I? No, it should be this:

She and my brother went with my mother and me.



The most common form of this error is to begin a sentence with "Me":

Me and George are going to the movies.



This may be the result of the sense that one should never put oneself first, so using the objective pronouns deflects that.

But it's still wrong. The correct form is simply this:

George and I are going to the movies.

Again, put simply, a sentence can never begin with "Me." Never.



WaterSaver Coupons & Rewards

Your WaterSaver Rewards points will be awarded within two weeks after you have attended an approved event. If you are interested in signing up for the rewards program or want to learn more information, please visit:

www.gardenstylesanantonio.com/watersaver-rewards/

To view the CPS Calendar of Events, visit:

www.gardenstylesanantonio.com/events/

Three points

Earns you a \$30 coupon to be used at participating local retailers toward a variety of water conserving materials including:

- Plants
- Mulch
- Rain barrels
- Birdbaths and bird feeders
- Compost
- Other landscaping supplies

Five points

Earns a \$50 coupon toward the purchase of the above items from participating local retailers.

Seven points

Earns you a \$70 coupon to be used at participating local retailers toward these water-saving garden materials.

Fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides and rocks are not eligible items.

Rewards points will be awarded within two weeks.

Rewards coupons expire 180 days after issue.

Tell them you saw their ad in your **Neighborhood Newsletter!**

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WHISPERING OAKS GARDEN CLUBBING

"I like gardening— it's a place where I find myself when I need to lose myself."

— Alice Sebold

"To forget how to dig the earth and tend the soil is to forget ourselves."

— Mahatma Gandhi

Giving and Giving & Giving

The Whispering Oaks Garden Club is a member of the "federation" of garden clubs in San Antonio. Part of their dues goes to the S.A. Garden Center. That organization assigns what they call a "Garden Therapy" charity to each club. Theirs is the Sarah Roberts French Home, a nursing residence located near Woodlawn Lake. Pre-pandemic, they would visit the women who live there, conduct activities for them, give them small gifts, etc. But because of the pandemic and subsequent French Home rules, they don't visit in person anymore, although they do deliver gifts. At the January 19th meeting, they decorated 50 Valentine bags and filled them with little gifts ready for delivery.



Caroline Wernli and Theresa Walker making up bracelets for the gift bags.



Some of the Garden Club members with the packages they prepared at their January meeting for the Sarah Roberts French Home.



Betty Lezanic and Ann Parsons deliver fifty Valentine bags to Sarah Roberts French Home Activity Director Terri Richardson.

Advice from a Sunflower

Know your roots.

Spread seeds of happiness.

Rise, shine, and hold your head up high.

Keep your face to the sunshine.

Keep growing.

—Nicole Basque



Upcoming garden club activities include a March Quad-Club Luncheon and Style Show at the Quarry Golf Club, an April Botanical Garden Tour and Food Demonstration, and the ever popular "End of Year" Party for members and guests. Then, after a summer recess, our "new year" will start up in August with a new board of officers and a fresh lineup of meetings, presentations, and events.

WOHA Secures \$170K for New Lockhill-Selma Sidewalk

It's done! The City of San Antonio had announced plans to install a sidewalk along the southern edge of Lockhill-Selma alongside Whispering Oaks. WOHA successfully lobbied Councilman John Courage for the pedestrian safety upgrade along this increasingly busy roadway, and the district team secured the necessary funding.

The new concrete links existing sidewalks which currently terminate at the Koltz Academy, on Dreamland, and near 2618 Lockhill-Selma to the north. It also extends into our community up to 90 feet on the north side of Whispering Wind and connects to the existing sidewalk to provide safe passage. Nearby bus stops will remain as is.

The four-foot sidewalk with curb borders the roadway whenever feasible, falling well within the City's legal right of way for public improvements. The sidewalk's path meanders a bit to reduce the need for tree removals.

Sidewalk ramps were installed at all intersections and driveways. Entrances to three residential driveways were modified to ensure that a level surface meets standards for a continuous public walkway. Mailboxes were also relocated at no expense to the homeowners.

The roadway was not widened, and its northern edge was not modified. WOHA continues to lobby the City for widening of Lockhill Selma's two-lane stretch; however, that project could cost nearly \$3 million due to relocation of utility poles



Workers set sidewalk guides to avoid cutting down a tree.

and potential bridge expansion. Such funding would most likely come from a future bond, if approved by voters. In the meantime, City engineers designed the new sidewalk, knowing that future expansion would likely impact the roadway's northern edge.

WOHA thanks its members whose support makes on-going advocacy for community improvements of this type feasible.



Where'd that Bunny Hide that Egg?



The annual Whispering Oaks Easter Egg Hunt is coming up. Please note that participation is limited, once again, to children under 92. No exceptions.

Date: April 1st

Time: 10:00 to 12:00 (please arrive at 9:45)

Location: Whispering Oaks Pool

Besides the Easter Egg Hunt, there will be a Crafts table, along with a Games for the little ones and a Cake Walk for the teens and adults.

Anyone wishing to **volunteer** to help run a station or to donate candy, a cake, decorations, or prizes should please contact

Rich Shevlin at rtshevlin@gmail.com.



By volunteering, teens can earn service hours.

Bye, Bye, Fiesta 16

In late December, the tower, the last part of the Fiesta 16 Cinema, that used to be on Vance Jackson just below DeZavala, came crashing down. And, alas, the Fiesta 16 was no more.



This year, there are no April Fool's joke stories. So the joke's on you!

Listen to
STEVE CASANOVA
WEEKDAYS
10 TO 3



Where Do the Old Folks Go?

That old expression that “old folks are put out to pasture” just doesn’t apply around here! The new District 9 Walker Ranch Senior Center has been open for seven months now, and it is one busy place! Happily, all activities are free of charge to seniors. And, yes, if you’re a senior, there *is* such a thing as a free lunch.

The 26,360 square-foot center, which includes public art by renowned artist Stephen Galloway, is situated on a six-acre lot adjacent to the Walker Ranch Historic Landmark Park, just off West Avenue at 835 W. Rhapsody. The facility includes a main dining hall, exercise rooms, a computer lab, and an activity space for senior-specific programming. As well, there is a District 9 satellite office—staffed, interestingly enough, by two Whispering Oaks neighbors, Pam Harrison-Martinez and Louis Bixenman. To use the facilities, all one needs to do is sign up as a member.

Construction of the state-of-the-art Walker Ranch Senior Center was funded through \$14.2M in the approved 2017–2022 bond program, making this center the City’s second senior center built from the ground up and designed specifically for the programming and functions of the Senior Services Division.

Monday–Thursday, 7:00 a.m.–8:00 p.m.
Friday, 7:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m.



District 9 Councilman John Courage greets guests at lunch.

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Good Advice

from Social Security

Scammers frequently target the older and other more vulnerable members of our communities. They pretend they are from

Social Security or another government agency to steal your money or personal information.

Caller ID, texts, or documents sent by email may look official, but they are not. Fraudsters are calling to verify information about the 2023 cost-of-living adjustment for people who get benefits. Remember, this adjustment is automatic, and a beneficiary does not need to verify anything. Social Security won’t ask you to provide information or money to get your benefit increase. Know that how we do business with you doesn’t change because it’s the holidays. We may email or text you about programs and services, but we will never ask for personal information via email or text.

Recognizing the signs of a scam can help you avoid falling victim to one. These scams primarily use the telephone to contact you, but scammers may also use email, text messages, social media, or U.S. mail. Scammers pretend to be from an agency or organization you know to gain your trust. Scammers say there is a problem with your Social Security number or account. Scammers pressure you to act immediately. Scammers tell you to pay in a specific way.

Know what to look for and be alert. Scammers don’t take days off and neither should you ... when it comes to making sure you identify suspicious communications and report it. If you receive a questionable call, text, or email, hang up or don’t respond and report it at oig.ssa.gov/report. Scammers frequently change their methods with new tactics and messages to trick people. We encourage you to stay up to date on the latest news and advisories by following SSA’s Office of the Inspector General on LinkedIn, Twitter, and Facebook or subscribing to receive email alerts.

WANNA READ SUMPIN’ FUNNY?

An enormously wealthy 65-year-old man falls in love with a young woman in her 20s and is contemplating a proposal. He asks his friend, “Do you think she’d marry me if I told her I’m 45?” ...to which is friend responds, “Your chances are better if you tell her you’re 90!”

Y OTRO EN ESPAÑOL

Un desequilibrado está escribiendo muy concentrado sobre un papel, cuando se le acerca un enfermero.

“Qué está haciendo?”

“Estoy escribiéndome una carta a mí mismo.”

“¿Escribiendo una carta?” le pregunta irónicamente con una sonrisa. “¿Y qué te está diciendo?”

“¿Cómo voy a saberlo si todavía no la he recibido?”

Animal Friends Word Search

Answers on page 14



- AARDVARK
- DONKEY
- HIPPOPOTAMUS
- OTTER
- SALMON
- ALLIGATOR
- DOVE
- JACKAL
- PANTHER
- SLOTH
- BABOON
- EAGLE
- JELLYFISH
- PARROT
- SWAN
- BARRACUDA
- ELK
- KIWI
- PEACOCK
- SWORDFISH
- BEAR
- FERRET
- LEOPARD
- PELICAN
- TIGER
- BISON
- FOX
- LION
- PIG
- TORTOISE
- CAMEL
- GECKO
- LLAMA PORCUPINE
- TROUT
- CHIMPANZEE GOAT
- MACAW
- QUAIL
- TURKEY
- CHINCHILLA GOPHER
- LARK
- RACCOON VULTURE
- WOLVERINE



Whispering Oaks Sales

Jan 1, 2022-Jan 1, 2023

Prepared by Jean Marie Ruffini,
Resident Realtor®

	Price	Per Sq. Ft.
Sold listings – 26		
High	\$700,000	\$265
Median	\$397,999	\$175
Low	\$255,000	\$127
Pending – 3		
High	\$450,000	\$207
Low	\$399,900	\$142

“According to the San Antonio Board of REALTORS®, 2022 closes with another decrease in sales

San Antonio - The year ended with slight increases in average and median prices for all (new and existing) homes, according to the Multiple Listing Service (MLS). Average and median prices rose 6 percent each, now at \$379,869 and \$324,000, respectively. Residential rental also saw an increase of 8 percent, now at \$1,810.

For the ninth consecutive month in 2022, homes sales saw a decrease, this time of 30 percent,” said Sara Briseno Gerrish, 5ABOR’s 2023 Chairman of the Board. “This is the biggest year-over-year decline we’ve seen in the last couple of years.

–San Antonio Board of Realtors



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Ever Hear of 'Life Hacks'?



“Life hacks” can save us both time and money, and they can be pretty cool. We’ve learned quite a bit while researching life hacks, so we want to share some of our favorites with you. Hope you like them, too.

- 1. Need a holder for your cookbook?** Use a pants hanger. Hang the hanger from the upper cabinet knob and use the clasps that normally hold pants to hold the cookbook.
 - 2. Are the feet broken on your keyboard?** Utilize binder clips to replace broken feet. Binder clips are also great for organizing the cords around your computer.
 - 3. Want to get organized in 2023 and frustrated with that box full of tangled cords?** Use toilet paper rolls to house the cords and write on the outside what each cord is for. It will make for easy identification and quick retrieval.
 - 4. Put a pair of hosiery over the end of the vacuum** to find lost jewelry such as a ring or earrings.
 - 5. Next time you are doing laundry,** put some ice cubes in the dryer with your clothes. Ice cubes will keep them from wrinkling.
 - 6. To prevent the boiling liquid from spilling,** put a wooden spoon over the pan.
 - 7. Low on kitchen counter space?** Pull out a drawer and place your cutting board on top.
 - 8. Short on cabinet space?** Mount shower racks on the inside of lower cabinets and use them to hang lids from pots and pans.
- ...and our all-time favorite for people like us whose memory is not as sharp as it once was...
- 9. If you put something down temporarily, say it out loud.** (“I’ve put my phone on the dresser.”) This engages many more areas of the brain (particularly the language centers), which creates a richer memory and makes it more likely you’ll remember where you put it.

—Courtesy of Neighborhood News

Spring Break – Airline Travel Tips

By Sharon Reynolds, Neighborhood News Staff Writer

In South Texas, Spring Break usually occurs between late February and mid-March. But no matter when Spring Break occurs for you, if you plan on traveling by air this year, follow these tips to have a safe and fun vacation.

Travel Tip #1 – Get your TSA Pre-Check and CLEAR Security Programs. To save time at the airport, plan ahead and get your TSA Pre-Check or Clear approval. Airport personnel get overwhelmed during Spring Break and standing in long lines can get frustrating and cut into your fun time. There is a fee of \$78 for a five-year membership for the TSA Pre-Check program. Typically, wait times in line with your approved TSA Pre-Check are around 10 minutes or less. Visit www.tsa.gov/precheck to learn more about this program.

Another program that is worth looking into is Clear. This is a privately-run security program that cuts you to the front of the security line after a fingerprint and retinal scan is performed to verify your identity. The cost of the Clear security program is significantly higher than the TSA Pre-Check program, at \$189 per year. To learn more about the Clear security program, visit: www.clearme.com.

You may be able to enroll in both of these security programs for free depending on the credit cards you have in your wallet. Check with your credit card company to see if they offer credits for these programs. Also, while over 80 airlines participate in one or both of these security programs, not all airlines do, so be sure to check out the airline website to confirm.

Travel Tip #2 – Fly at the Right Time. If you don’t love large crowds at the airport, you may be able to avoid the worst crowds and longest lines by not flying during peak days and times. Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Saturdays are the slowest days to fly, and so, usually have the cheapest rates. Also, it’s better to try to book the earliest flight that you can. Earlier flights have better odds of getting off the ground on time. For a smoother experience, if possible, avoid connecting flights. The more connecting flights you have on your trip, the more opportunities there are for something to go wrong.

Travel Tip #3 – Use Carry-on Bag Only. Another way to make your Spring Break travel easier on yourself is to travel with only a carry-on bag. This way, you won’t have to worry about checking your bag, picking up your bag, or having your luggage get lost during the trip.

Travel Tip #4 – Check for Canceled or Delayed Flights. Keep an eye on flightaware.com to view a daily dashboard of cancellations and delays. This website provides real-time, historical, and predictive flight tracking data. This website will alert you of any significant issues with your upcoming flight in the event you need to make alternative plans for your travel day.

Follow the above tips to have a stress-free Spring Break trip and get ready to relax and enjoy a well-needed break!

RESOURCES: <https://thriftytraveler.com/>
<https://www.tsa.gov/travel/security-screening/whatcanibring/all>
<https://www.chiff.com/travel/spring-break.htm>

Animal Friends

Word Search Answers from page 13



First Day of Spring

By Sharon Reynolds, Neighborhood News Staff Writer

This year, the first day of Spring falls on Monday, March 20, 2023, which is also the spring, or vernal equinox. The spring equinox occurs as the sun crosses the celestial equator vertically from south to north. Equinoxes occur only two times per year. Afterwards, the Northern Hemisphere begins to tilt towards the sun, giving us more hours of daylight. During this time, the Southern Hemisphere experiences the beginning of Autumn, as it is tilted away from the sun thereby providing less hours of daylight and more hours of night.

On February 2, 2023, the groundhog known as Punxsutawney Phil made his appearance in front of hundreds of witnesses thereby assuring us of six more weeks of winter. Statistically, Phil has predicted a long winter 78% of the time and has only been accurate 40% of the time. Additionally, Phil's predictions since 1887 show he is more likely to predict a longer winter and has only predicted an early spring 15% of the time.

Here in South Texas green grass is everywhere with roses blooming and flowers emitting their lovely fragrances. According to the USA National Phenology Network, the south usually experiences spring earlier than everyone else, however, this year, it came

20 to 25 days earlier, which is remarkable because it has never occurred that early before. Average temperatures have been higher than 6 to 10 degrees above normal in South Texas. These extra warm temperatures make a huge difference for plants and animals which adds to their required number of growing days.

A global warming analysis illustrates that winters are warming up faster than any other season in the United States. In fact, over the past 50 years, the average temperature in winter has warmed by at least one degree Fahrenheit in every state. In addition, 70% of states have seen an increase in temperatures of at least 3 degrees Fahrenheit. Across the world, studies show that the length of winter is also shrinking.

Unfortunately, Phil the groundhog has not taken global warming into consideration in any of his predictions and would most likely be spot on if he had. Happy Spring everyone!

RESOURCES:

- <https://www.almanac.com/content/first-day-spring-vernal-equinox>
- <https://www.washingtonpost.com/weather/2023/02/01/groundhog-day-spring-winter-2023/>
- <https://www.usanpn.org/news/spring>





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