

Mesa Park MESSENGER

Volume 16, Issue #6

December/January 2010

Duval Quiet Zone On Its Way!

By David Crowley

Our neighborhood is soon to be a lot quieter! After the city puts in medians on Duval Rd at the intersection with the Union Pacific Rail Road (UPRR) line in July, the crossing will become a 24 hour quiet zone. This means that the train horn will no longer blow every time a train comes through. Don't worry, the crossing will actually be safer than it is now. The train horn is now only needed to alert anyone that is ridiculous enough to drive around the closed gates. With a 50-100 foot long median installed in the center lane it is less likely that vehicles will try to bypass the closed gates which makes the crossing actually statistically safer than before with a train horn and no median.

Terry Tevis got the word that the city transportation department had good news for us at the last Austin Neighborhood Association Council meeting. Gordon Derr, Transportation Dept Assistant Director and City Council

Member Chris Riley invited her to join with several other South Austin neighborhood representatives surrounding the UPRR tracks to tell us all the good news. After asking the city for years to create quiet zones in our neighborhoods, we were thrilled that our requests have been heard. The South Austin neighborhood representatives have been asking for the train horn to be silenced since the late 90's. Mesa Park just recently started working to get a quiet zone at Duval Rd and fortunately happened to get involved at the right time. Gordon Derr actually lives near one of the crossings in South Austin and was anxious to get the project on the city's timeline. When Union Pacific came to the transportation dept. to discuss improving the tracks and wanting the city's help he got the quiet zone project coordinated with the track improvements. Many thanks to Terry Tevis, Gordon Derr, and Chris Riley for making this happen.

Farewell From Val Schroeter

When my husband, Hubert Conrad (Bert) and I started the Mesa Park Neighborhood Association in 1977 and worked to save the land for a Park, we never dreamed that we would have the honor of having the Park named after Bert in 1985. After Bert died in 1982, some neighbors petitioned the city to name the Park, Schroeter. I had the honor of attending the dedication and cutting the red ribbon. Now that I am 81 years old and moving to a Life Care Facility, I would like to take this opportunity to say how much I have enjoyed living on Spotted Horse for 33 years and wish to thank all the Neighborhood Association officers (past and present) for all they have done to maintain the Park and keep Mesa Park a safe and pleasant place to live.

Sincerely,
Val Schroeter



Holiday Decorating Contest

Make sure your house is ready for the Holidays! The MPNA will be judging houses on December 16th and 17th between 6 and 8 p.m. We will be driving around the neighborhood and take pictures of the best decorated homes in Mesa Park. Have your lights on by 6pm.

1st place: \$50.00

2nd place: \$30.00

3rd place: \$20.00

Honorable mentions: 3 spots with newsletter recognition.

Foods Dogs Should Never Eat: A Holiday Reminder

By Linda Cole

The holiday season is an exciting time of year. We're preoccupied with Thanksgiving and Christmas preparations, and may not be paying close attention to what our pets are up to. However, the spilled raisins on the floor or the bowl of candy sitting on the coffee table could harm them. It never hurts to have a reminder about foods dogs should never eat, especially during the holiday season when more food is available and easy for canines to find.

Raisins and grapes are favorites during the holidays in cookies, salads or by the handful, yet they can be deadly for dogs. Scientists have no idea why, but raisins and grapes can cause kidney failure quickly in dogs. Both contain an unknown toxin and just a few can cause your dog to vomit and become hyperactive, which are early signs. Within 24 hours, they will become lethargic and depressed.

Chocolate, especially dark chocolate, can cause abnormal heart rhythm, tremors, seizures and death. Even though most people know never to give their pets chocolate, the holiday season sees an increase in pets that have been poisoned by chocolate every year.

Candy and gum are foods dogs should not eat, *especially* those containing Xylitol. This "natural" low calorie sugar substitute is made from Birch tree bark, and can also be found in sugar-free baked goods, mints, toothpaste, kids vitamins and diet foods. Many people are not aware of the dangers of Xylitol to pets, because vets have only recently discovered its toxicity in dogs. It takes very little to increase insulin in the dog's system which leads to a drop in blood sugar and liver failure.

Because Xylitol is present in so many products, we may not realize that what our dog just ate could be lethal. It's important to read labels to determine if Xylitol is present in the cupcakes or cookies you left on the kitchen counter. Vets are anxious to get the warning out to pet owners about the dangers of Xylitol to dogs. Please pass the information along to your friends and family, and keep all products with Xylitol safely stored in cabinets and away from inquiring canine noses.

Nutmeg is a spice often included in homemade recipes for dog food and treats, but is considered a food dogs should never eat. Nutmeg is known to cause seizures and tremors

in dogs. It can cause dogs who eat large amounts to hallucinate.

Salt and other spices are ingredients dogs don't need. Too much salt can produce sodium ion poisoning and can be fatal. Salty snacks should be avoided along with most spices.

Macadamia nuts and walnuts cause muscle tremors, rapid heart rate, weakness or paralysis in the hindquarters. Nuts in chocolate candy or cookies is double trouble. Nuts can also cause bladder stones, and just a few is all it takes for some dogs.

Onions and garlic can make your dog anemic by destroying red blood cells. A small amount may not hurt them, but if they eat large amounts or daily (whether cooked, raw, dehydrated or powdered) they risk becoming anemic. Garlic is not as toxic as onion, but it can build up over time and cause a toxic reaction if eaten daily. Cats should never have garlic.

Fat trimmings and cooked bones should not be given to your dog. Fat can cause pancreatitis, and cooked bones can splinter or become stuck in the dog's throat. Splintered bones can cause lacerations in the dog's digestive tract. *(Continued on page 4)*



Get a head start on next year's fitness goals!

New reduced membership rates for 2010 at The Quarries!

A Quarries Fitness Membership offers:

- Precor Cardio Equipment and Cybex weight machines
- Free weight room
- Indoor walking/jogging track
- A variety of group fitness classes
- Full court basketball/volleyball courts
- Childcare during scheduled fitness classes
- Complimentary towel service
- Locker rooms with full service showers
- Personal Training (\$25/hr)

Neighborhood Christmas special!

Join before Christmas and pay no joining fee and workout in December for free!

*Must commit to a 1 year monthly membership.

Walk, run, or ride over to The Quarries for a great workout!

hpbc.org/quarries

241-0233

Hazardous Waste Drop-Off

By Claudia Ullrich

Students from the Liberal Arts and Science Academy at LBJ High School will be coordinating this effort. They believe this service is beneficial to residents in our neighborhood because of our neighborhood's distance from the hazardous waste dump, which is located very far south, near IH-35 and H-71 with limited drop-off hours. Many of these materials end up stored away in garages, recycling bins or the landfill. These students will be collecting drop offs in their truck and then taking them to the city facility on the neighborhood's behalf. This is an extraordinary example of community service.

What is hazardous waste?

Anything that is flammable, corrosive, toxic, poisonous, reactive, or explosive is hazardous and should not be put in your trash. Look for words like "Caution," "Warning" or "Danger" on the label.

Common hazardous waste items around the house include paints and solvents, lawn care chemicals, household cleaning products and automotive products. Products such as

batteries, thermometers and fluorescent lights are also hazardous.

Covenant United
Methodist Church
4410 Duval Rd
Saturday, January 2nd
8-11 am

Paints and Solvents: Solvents Latex paint, oil-based paint, furniture strippers, paint thinners, etc.

Lawn Care Chemicals: Fertilizers, pesticides, pool chemicals, herbicides, insecticides, fungicides, etc.

Cleaning Products: Bleach or products containing bleach, ammonia or ammonia-based products, all-purpose cleaners, furniture polish, spot removers, scouring powder, oven cleaner, bathroom cleaners, bug spray, etc.

Automotive Products: Products Motor oil, oil filters, gasoline, anti-freeze, lubricants, car

batteries, brake fluid, transmission fluid, car wax, metal polish, etc.

AT THIS PICK-UP, WE CANNOT ACCEPT LAWN CARE PRODUCTS OR POOL CLEANING PRODUCTS, but these items can be taken to the main facility.

The main facility does not accept:

- Radioactive waste
- Medical waste
- Explosive materials
- Computers or other appliances
- Any waste generated by a business
- Tires

For more information, search online for "city of austin hazardous waste."

Aluminum Can drop-off

In another extraordinary example of community service, the Grissoms, Mesa Park residents, have offered to collect aluminum cans and take them to exchange for money. That money in turn will be donated to Blue Santa.

Please collect your aluminum cans in grocery or black plastic bags and drop them off in the driveway at 11703 Shoshone Drive.

Tree Matters

By Paul Pedroncelli

Several years ago, my family and I moved into Mesa Park and were excited to finally own our first house. It was a small house, but large enough for us, with three large trees, and plenty space in the front and back yards. Some time has passed since then but we no longer have the three trees. An ice storm, a strong thunderstorm, aging, and termites have all took their toll on them. We had a couple of ash trees like many in this neighborhood, and also a fruitless mulberry tree. Now, we are considering planting some trees that we will be able to enjoy for many years to come, but will also be strong and be here for decades.

So we have begun the process and here are some general thoughts that I have had on this subject and might be worth considering as many trees in our neighborhood are nearing their life expectancy. Buying a new tree is exciting and it is good to take your time and think about the implications before you actually buy and plant one. Some areas of consideration are what effects the new tree will have on your home, on your landscape, and on your wallet.

Trees add value to your home and to your neighborhood. Depending on the size and density of the canopy, they can also reduce en-

ergy costs by shading your house from the sun. Also, a deciduous tree can have dual benefits. It can help cool a house by shading it during the summer, and then when it loses its leaves in the fall, the sun will be able to warm the house.

But what effect will it have on your landscape? Some trees have denser canopies than others and so it may be difficult for grass to grow underneath it. How near or far will you choose to plant the tree to your house may depend on the spread of the canopy. Are you thinking about xeriscaping in the future and if so, what kind of tree might be best? What about growth rate? You may want to see results fast, but what is the life expectancy of the faster growing trees? And then there is fall cleanup. Some trees produce acorns, some fruit, and some seeds.

Maintenance can be one of the most costly areas of any purchase. Tree trimming can be done by you when a tree is smaller.

Once a tree is larger, and you may be older and a little less agile, it is usually safer to hire a company to do the work than doing it yourself but it can cost hundreds of dollars. Some companies even have arborists who examine the tree before trimming, trying to identify possible signs of disease or damage, and make suggestions on various treatments.

These are just some general thoughts on the subject. There is a lot of information out there on the internet, in the library, and also from nurseries and arborists who love to share their knowledge.



SUNTEX LANDSCAPE

Lawn Maintenance. Tree Trimming.
Installation.

Brian Boehm

Serving Mesa Park for 7 years & Former Resident

(512) 461-5909

MPNA Crime Reports from APD for Mesa Park Neighborhood

October 3, 2009 - December 2, 2009

Crime	Address	Date	Time
AUTO THEFT	117xx SHOSHONE DR	10/22/2009	.927
CHECK WELFARE	50xx POWDER RIVER RD	11/15/2009	.2159
DEBIT CARD ABUSE	43xx RED CLOUD DR	10/07/2009	.1128
DECEASED PERSON	116xx NATRONA DR	10/13/2009	.853
DWI	47xx RUNNING DEER DR	11/02/2009	.422
FAMILY DISTURBANCE	48xx WIND RIVER RD	10/07/2009	.1714
FORGERY AND PASSING	117xx SPOTTED HORSE DR	10/21/2009	.1412
HARASSMENT	116xx BIG TRL	11/02/2009	.1318
INTER EMERG PHONECALL FAM/DATE	117xx SHOSHONE DR	10/31/2009	.2206
TERRORISTIC THREAT	50xx POWDER RIVER RD	11/15/2009	.2111
WARR ARREST NON TRAFFIC	117xx BIG TRL	11/16/2009	.1756

Help us to reduce the crime in our neighborhood by getting to know your neighbors. Please participate in National Night Out in October and the Police Appreciation Event in the spring.

Poinsettia Pointers

Source unknown

Buying Tips:

- Avoid plants with drying lower leaves or other signs of wilt. Look for dense, green foliage to the soil line.
- The “blooms” of a poinsettia are actually colored leaves called bracts. The true flowers are the button-like parts at the base of the bracts. Look for greener red-tipped flowers; yellow pollens a sign of age.
- Protect from temperatures below 50 degrees when transporting.

Home Care:

- Remove paper or plastic sleeves around pots or plants to let the poinsettias breathe.
- Place plant in indirect sunlight. No part of the plant should touch cold window panes.

- Keep poinsettias away from warm or cold drafts, radiators or open windows. Ideal temperature is 60-70 degrees. Keeping the poinsettia in a cool room (55-60 degrees) at night will prolong blooming time.
- Water when soil is dry to the touch and avoid over watering. Always remove plant from any decorator container before watering. Water only when soil is dry and allow draining completely.
- Don't fertilize when plant is in bloom.



Dogs *(Continued from page 2)*

Fruit pits and seeds, if swallowed whole, can obstruct the small intestines and cause painful inflammation for dogs. Peach, plum and cherry pits contain cyanide which is poisonous to us and dogs.

This is a small list of foods dogs should never eat. Most of these foods will be in kitchens, in fancy bowls on coffee tables or counters, and will be raw, baked or cooked this holiday season. Please make sure all guests, young and old, understand it's alright to pet the dog, but not to feed him or allow him to steal a “treat.” It only takes one bite of the wrong food to end a holiday celebration early with an emergency trip to the vet.

Add the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center, (888)-426-4435, to your emergency phone list alongside your vet's. If you think your dog ate something they shouldn't have, call your vet or the ASPCA immediately. You can also see a comprehensive list of foods dogs should never eat at peteducation.com.

Neighborhood contacts:

President/Quarries Representative: **David Crowley**, mesapark@crowleyhome.net or 11621 Spotted Horse Dr., 78759

Volunteer Coordinator and Newsletter Editor: **Susan McVicker**, susanmcv@att.net

Board Members: **Cindy Lindsay**, 346-2232, TreeTopProp@prodigy.net; **Gina Mattiza**, gmattiza@austin.rr.com; **Terry Tevis**, 736-8469, mpnapres@yahoo.com; **Claudia Ullrich**, claudia.mpna@gmail.com; **Paul Pedroncelli**, Webmaster, paulp.mpna@gmail.com

Emergency: 911

Police Non-Emergency: 311

NW Austin Police District Representative: SPO Mike Dunn, mike.dunn@ci.austin.tx.us, 974-5553

Reminder: The MPNA is not an HOA (Homeowner's Association). If you have a complaint or need to report a violation, please contact the appropriate city official for assistance. Thank you!