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West Austin News

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Neighborhood Pools Risk Closure Under City Aquatic Master Plan

By Cory Walton

West Austin's historic Deep Eddy pool, along with neighborhood pools Reed, Northwest, and Westenfield, could be allowed to die under a City Parks and Recreation Department (PARD) Aquatics Department master plan presented June 10.

PARD in 2012 began an Aquatic Assessment with the help of consultant Brandstetter Carroll Inc., in an effort to determine the most desirable and sustainable aquatic system for the city.

The plan ranked Austin pools' suitability for improvements, based on criteria such as nearby demographics, accessibility, facility condition and site considerations. Fourteen of the city's 33 pools ranked poorly. Many of the 14 are in the city's oldest central neighborhoods. The plan recommended closing an unspecified 10 pools to save money. However, based on the "poor" site suitability rankings, it's not hard to see which of West Austin's pools would be on the city's hit list.

The plan estimates it would cost \$193 million to fix all city swimming pools and build four new ones. To do away with 10 existing pools, PARD Director Kimberly McNeeley says the cost of saving and consolidating the rest would be about \$96 million. Adding to consol-

idation the construction of four new pools in underserved areas would cost \$152 million. There is no plan for where any of the money would come from.

Reluctant to support a plan they said will almost certainly lead to closing swimming pools, PARD board members at a July 25 meeting declined to endorse

sure our community, municipal, and free neighborhood pools." Said founder Laura Cottam Sajbel, who lives near Travis Heights' Big Stacy pool, a hot spring-fed, WPA-built facility and one of the city's few year-round outdoor pools, "I had no intention to enter city politics, but I had to do something to

“My fear is that this tool sets up an **aquatics version of the Hunger Games,**”

—RICK COFER, CITY OF AUSTIN PARKS BOARD

the master plan's first draft. Board member Rick Cofer called the plan a "decommission report" that shouldn't be recommended to the City Council without greater consensus. "My fear is that this tool sets up an aquatics version of the Hunger Games," Cofer said. "Except, instead of teenagers killing each other, you have neighborhoods pitted against each other."

In the meantime, since the June 10 plan unveiling, several citizens groups have emerged to oppose potential neighborhood pool shutdowns and to seek solutions to sustain them.

Among these, Love Austin Pools (LAP) www.loveaustinpools.wordpress.com was formed shortly after the June 10 PARD announcement in order to "protect, preserve, and trea-

save our neighborhood pools. They're too important a part of our communities and character to just let them die."

LAP is finding common cause with groups like Friends of Deep Eddy www.deepeddy.org a group instrumental in the 2007 restoration of the historic pool's 1936 bathhouse. Friends of Deep Eddy's Leon Barish noted the first draft plan's rankings seemed to unduly rely on the facilities' age while ignoring not only their historic value, but also real maintenance cost considerations. Both Deep Eddy and Westenfield pools had complete infrastructure rebuilds within the past four years, he points out.

Technical writer and Allandale neighborhood resident Steve Johnson had started



Morning swimmers at Deep Eddy Pool

PHOTO BY CORY WALTON

Friends of Northwest Pool several years ago in an effort to gain some basic amenities for the pool. But with the master plan's release and Northwest's suitability ranking, he says, the organization had to ramp up its efforts and shift its focus to the pool's survival. The groups are finding alliance with neighborhood associations and the Austin Parks Foundation among others.

The City Council on August 10 voted unanimously to table a vote on the plan and sent it back to PARD for further study and called for formation

“I had to do something to save our neighborhood pools.”

—LOVE AUSTIN POOLS (LAP) FOUNDER LAURA COTTAM SAJBEL

of a task force of Parks Board members.

"I don't know how to resolve these challenges, said Council Member Kathie Tovo, who motioned the postponement, "but I do know that our neighborhood pools are much loved, much used, and having them within people's neighborhoods, rather than in more re-

gional facilities, is hugely beneficial."

The time frame to provide feedback from the Parks Board task force is intended to coincide with development of the city's 2018 bond proposal. The task force's first meeting was scheduled for September 10.

Cancer Survivor drafted by St. Andrew's Lacrosse

St. Andrew's Episcopal School will officially draft DJ and Jaxen Mojica as its newest varsity boys lacrosse team members on Sunday, September 17 at 3:30 p.m. inside the St. Andrew's Upper School library.

"We are beyond thrilled to welcome DJ, his brother Jaxen, and parents Ashlei and Rocky Mojica to the St. Andrew's Boys Lacrosse program," Head Coach Josh Blumenthal said. "We hope to enhance the lives of both boys, as well as those of our current team members, through this unique and supportive relationship."

The Mojica family will be officially welcomed to the team during a draft party, at which time the brothers will sign official draft letters, and receive game jerseys. DJ and Jaxen have already accepted their official men's lacrosse apparel along with their own personal lacrosse sticks as they get set to cheer on their teammates. St. Andrew's sophomore Ethan Hanna and senior Cason Doyle will serve as student ambassadors to the Mojica family.

"We look forward to including DJ and Jaxen in as many activities as their schedule allows, and consider ourselves fortunate to have the entire Mojica family become a part of our family," Blumenthal added.

DJ Mojica is a seven-year-old boy who was diagnosed with a Primitive Neuroectodermal Tumor (PNET) at 17 months old. He survived three brain surgeries to stop a brain bleed, tumor resection and shunt placement. DJ then completed three rounds of chemotherapy at Dell Children's Hospital and an additional three rounds of high dose therapy with stem cell rescue at Methodist Children's Hospital in San Antonio. In December 2013 a new spot was found on one of DJ's routine MRI's. He had surgery to remove the new spot. Preliminary pathology showed that the spot was made of the same tissue as the original tumor.

DJ's brother Jaxen Mojica is a six-year-old kindergartner who stays active playing football and baseball. He and DJ are eager to learn to play and help coach lacrosse this spring.



Cason Doyle '18, DJ Mojica, Jaxen Mojica, and Ethan Hanna '20 played catch in an earlier meetup on St. Andrew's campus this summer

The match between DJ, Jaxen, and St. Andrew's was made during Pediatric Cancer Awareness Month and came about from the work with the Friends of Jaclyn (FOJ), a nonprofit organization based in New York. Their mission is to improve the quality of life for children battling pediatric brain tumors and other childhood cancers and to raise awareness through their Adopt-A-Child, Safe on the Sidelines, and Guardian Angel Programs.

St. Andrew's joins the rapidly growing list of FOJ school partners, which includes the University of Cincinnati (baseball), Amherst College (field hockey), University of New Hampshire (men's ice hockey), Lake Forest College (football), and University of Florida (softball).

To read more about DJ's journey visit <https://www.facebook.com/teamdjthebrave/>

Capital Area Dental Foundation Fundraises for Low-Income Patients

On April 29, many of Austin's finest dentists gathered at the JW Marriott Hotel in downtown Austin for the annual Smiles Over Texas Gala. The Capital Area Dental Foundation (CADF) holds this gala to raise money for charitable dental care in Central Texas.

CADF has a strong reputation as a nonprofit. They won the "Nonprofit of the Year" award in 2014, and Texas Oral Health Coalition named CADF-founder Leonard Dolce "Oral Health Champion of the Year" in 2015. In 2016, CADF provided \$265,000 worth of dental care to over 835 patients. Four hundred guests attended the gala this year, which raised \$175,000 for various dental charities.

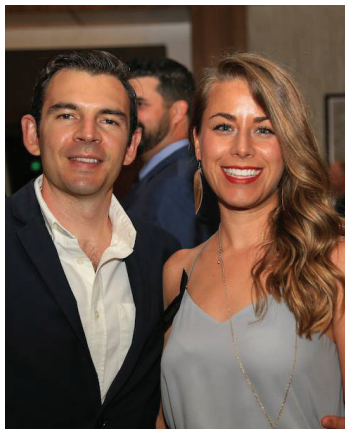
Comedian Pat Hazell served as the event's emcee. Hazell has had a long career, writing for television shows and opening for Jerry Seinfeld in 1990s. The Rocket Brothers Band provided live music. Guests could check out the authentic western wear at Texas National Outfitter's pop-up shop.

Guests played casino games before sitting down to dinner. For the fundraising portion of the evening, guests placed bids during a silent and live auction. CADF gave St. David's Foundation the honorific title of "Royal Flush" sponsors. There was also a raffle with a \$1,000 prize, which guest of honor Deloris Fields won.

Deloris Fields is a stage IV breast cancer patient who has



Dr. Christina and Justin Hobson



Daniel and Kacie Stair Culotta



Executive Director Megan Woodburn, Deloris Fields, Dr. Kent Macaulay

received significant dental care from CADF at no cost. Her volunteer dentist, Dr. Kent Macaulay, also attended the gala.

CADF provides volunteer dentists to five different charitable programs, and their work helps many different groups. They serve Austin's music community through the Health Alliance for Austin Musicians, they work with the poor by partnering with St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Church, and they offer dental care to children who arrive in Austin for cardiovascular



Pat Hazell, Amie and Dr. Benjamin Nemec

surgery through the international charity HeartGift.



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Westside Stories

SUZANNE HOFMANN ERICKSON



By Forrest Preece

I’ve been friends with Suzanne Hofmann Erickson for a long time. But now I know that in high school, she was the girl who stood atop the cheerleader pyramid and did flying back flips onto the ground. That’s a good thing, because being able to do flips helps in the world of media and public relations.

Finding out tidbits like this makes writing these columns fun. It’s always an enjoyable experience to sit down with an acquaintance and hear about their lives. On a recent afternoon, Suzanne and I had lunch and, as we were wrapping up, I sneaked a look at my watch and was shocked to see that we had been there for two hours. Honestly, I thought that we had been talking for maybe a little over an hour. Well, as they say, “Time flies . . .”

During our visit, Suzanne shared some enjoyable stories with me about her life growing up in Menard, Texas. That town was full of energy but was small, so the kids in the high school all had to do a lot of things – and Suzanne did that in spades. Besides being a cheerleader, she served on the student council; played point guard on the basketball team and ran track; competed in UIL one-act play, speech and debate; was in the National Honor Society; was valedictorian of her class; participated in 4-H (president as junior and senior and winner of the Gold Star Award her senior year); and was active in the MYF youth group at the Methodist Church. She helped organize the first Adopt-a-Highway program through the 4-H Club and her mother, Gwen Bean Swindall, headed up the Sesquicentennial Wagon Train celebration that passed through Menard. They organized several beautification projects to prepare the city for the event, including beautifying “The Ditch,” the historic water irrigation system that ran through town, creating a park-like lighted and landscaped mini-San Antonio River Walk. “It was fun, my first real taste at giving back to my community.”

In her sophomore year, she became the first student from Menard High School to travel to the state UIL scholastic meet in poetry interpretation. That was her competition category and the contest took place on the University of Texas campus. When she set foot on the 40 Acres, all bright-eyed, she told herself, “This is where I’ll come to school someday.” A couple of years later, she was enrolled in courses there, a fourth-generation member of her family to attend UT (her great-grandfather graduated from UT Law School



Suzanne Hofmann Erickson in 1907).

She graduated with a bachelor of science degree in speech communication in December 1992 and was immediately employed as the executive director of the Greater Austin Sports Foundation, which is now the Austin Sports Commission. Back then, the GASF was part of the Chamber of Commerce and Glenn West, its president, hired her. She reported to Angelos Angelou, the chamber’s economist, because her organization was under Economic Development. Suzanne had some of Austin’s heaviest hitters on her board including Pike Powers, Bill McLellan, Charles Akins, Gerald Daugherty, Mimi Correa, Chris Knepp, and Jerry Olson. “I learned so much from these civic leaders,” Suzanne says. She was there until 1996 when she began doing PR/marketing contracts for Motorola and Nolan Ryan/Round Rock Express Baseball Club (she was key in launching the team), and Angelou Economic Advisors.

Then, a tragic set of circumstances directed the next part of Suzanne’s career. Mimi Correa, who was on her GASF board and had become Suzanne’s treasured mentor, became ill and passed away unexpectedly, and there was a wake for her at the Four Seasons. As the event was winding down, Suzanne approached David Weeks, a PR heavyweight who had been Mimi’s business partner, and asked him if she could give him some assistance. She wanted to work with him on a contract basis and had soon set up in his office in the Norwood Tower. That was when David was handling several high-profile political races, including the Rick Perry campaign for lieutenant governor. They won the race, got through the 1998 political cycle and took a breath. At that point, David approached her about coming on board as his partner. They rocked along gaining some terrific accounts and doing great work. Then, four years ago, they were approached by a large national firm about a buyout. Soon, R&R Partners owned 51 percent of their firm. But now, they have decided to change their business model once again. Weeks&Co has been resurrected and as of the end of March, Suzanne launched her own agency, SHE-

SHE Media + Design. (Yes, those are her initials.)

Suzanne is very happy and feels blessed that she has a terrific roster of diverse accounts, including the national media placement for C3 Presents which produces Austin City Limits Music Festival as well as a host of other events around the country, Audi/Volkswagen, the award-winning Texas spirit brand Balcones Distilling, University of Texas Co-op, HPI Real Estate and Investments, The Kindness Campaign, Red-Bird Boutique, Butterfield Custom Homes/Butter-Lutz Interior Design, and Liza Beth Jewelry. She also has a handful of crisis communication clients and law firms she advises on messaging and media training when they find themselves in difficult situations.

Despite all the play-for-pay clients she has, Suzanne finds time to handle a lot of civic work, too. Some of her motivation for giving back to the community comes from her Leadership Austin and Junior League training; but a lot of it is that she sincerely cares a lot about the civic fabric of Austin, the way she did back in Menard. For instance, she has done substantial work with the Seton Breast Cancer Center “Celebration of Life Luncheon.” One huge task she tackled was being on the Dell Children’s Center Gala Board and co-chairing the auction – a gargantuan undertaking in anyone’s book. In her Junior League service, she handled PR for Christmas Affair and was involved with the event the first year they netted \$1 million. Thinking about how things have changed in this town, Suzanne notes that most of the major charity galas now net \$1 million or more and the Dell Children’s has almost hit \$2 million. “We’ve come a long way,” she says.

Recently, she joined the Helping Hand Home Society. One of her motives for doing that is she wants to expose her children to environments that other kids experience so they can learn about being grateful. Her husband is native Austinite Stephen Erickson, and their boys, 11-year-old twins and an eight-year-old, attend Hyde Park and Casis respectfully. Suzanne and Stephen volunteer where they can to support their boys’ activities, ranging from



Left: Rodgers Maxwell “Jelly” Bean and granddaughter Suzanne Hofmann in Menard, Texas, December 1970



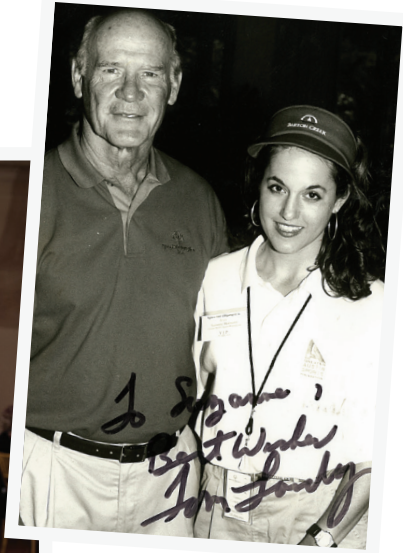
Suzanne performing at the Homecoming Pep Rally held in downtown Menard, her junior year (1986). That summer, Menard High’s varsity squad won the Best Small Varsity Squad at Texas Tech Cheerleader Camp in Lubbock.



Suzanne with friend and legendary coach Darrell Royal at the Dallas Cowboys Training Camp Gala in 1994.



Suzanne and Stephen Erickson with children David, Eli and John



Suzanne in her Greater Austin Sports Foundation days with coach Tom Landry

sports to Boy Scouts to church activities at Tarrytown Methodist.

Another civic involvement for her is her participation on the Crime Council Development Board. This group is seeking to create better relations between the police department and the community. “We need to sit

down with some of these groups and try to find common ground about how things need to work for the police to effectively do their jobs.”

Suzanne is a star in the public relations world of Austin event and sports planning and marketing, political, corporate, public affairs, crisis communi-

cations, she has done it all. But she still “knows where she came from.” While we were talking, she showed me her necklace which was made from a pin she inherited from her grandmother. “I like wearing it. It reminds me of my small-town roots and where I was raised.”

To underscore her allegiance to the place where she grew up, Suzanne brought me a copy of a remarkable book called “Forever Menard.” This is no 12-page stapled brochure containing a handful of three-paragraph stories. It is a 440-page, hardcover book that would look appropriate on a bookshelf in any fine library and it is full of long stories written by people from Menard. Suzanne’s piece is about her grandfather on her mother’s side, Rodgers Maxwell “Jelly” Bean. He got the nickname because he was a snazzy dresser and obviously, his surname makes it work. “Jelly” ran the town’s only drug store in the Bevans Hotel and he served as the de facto physician, in that era when druggists could prescribe medicine for common ailments. A multi-talented soul, he also headed up a band called “Jelly Bean and his Gloom Chasers.” He eventually started a 38,000-square foot (yes, that many zeroes) store on the corner of Menard’s main street and Highway 83 where he had the only ice maker in town and even sold appliances. Suzanne says, “It was the Wal-Mart of the 1950s!” In her closing paragraph, she writes that when she returns to Menard and walks through the store she is filled with memories of her childhood and in her mind, “the smell of grandpa’s cologne fills the air as he walks past . . .”

Houston LOVE



By Paige Alam

Houston is hurting following Hurricane Harvey, so Austin also suffers. It’s as if the two cities, or many cities across our great state of Texas, are so tightly intertwined that we cannot separate the pain the people we love there are enduring. The same can be said for those who love Port Aransas, Rockport, Beaumont, and many other cities ravaged by the intense flooding following what Harvey brought. Houston though, so grand and mighty, hits close to home. It has become a symbol of the hurt Texas is feeling.

My best college girlfriend was with me here in Austin

when the floods came to her city, staying here while her youngest daughter acclimated to college and sorority life. She and I met at UT so many years ago, so the moments were poignant and sweet, paired with sadness and worry. What was happening here in Austin was not mirroring the devastation that was going

organizing work crews for the rebuilding of homes, and donating countless dollars. While we pray, we also try to discern the best way to offer a hand. This is going to take some time, and as many wise people have offered up, the Harvey recovery is a marathon and not a sprint. Everyone is hopefully pacing themselves and offering hope and help where and when they can.

The Bible has plenty to say

“He reached down from on high and took hold of me; he drew me out of deep waters.”

– PSALM 18:16

on for her back home. I was at a loss for words. All I could do was offer my presence, a place to stay, ears for listening, and a heart for prayer.

What do we do, Austin? I’ve heard of many loading up trucks of supplies, housing their now homeless friends,

about flooding and Psalm 69:1 seems to be a prayer Houstonians would have been crying out with, “Save me, O God, for the waters have come up to my neck.” This verse from Isaiah 43:2 offers some comfort in the distress of flooding with, “When

you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you.”

This is another one of those times when words don’t offer the kind of comfort we want, but actions just may. The people who are suffering may not want to hear about God’s provision from someone who is not going through what they are enduring, but they may appreciate the love and kindness showed to them in their suffering.

In natural disasters of this magnitude, we may feel like our efforts don’t matter. But, they do. If you can’t be in Houston, donate to an organization who will send someone who can. Our efforts mean something to someone, especially that one person or the many who need help. Houston, although we may not be able to walk through all of this with you, Austin is with you. Our love for you is as big as this God-blessed state of Texas.

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BBBS Ice Ball Gala Raises Largest Amount Ever

Thirteen proved to be a lucky number as Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Texas' 13th annual Ice Ball Gala raised a record-breaking \$670,000 for the organization, with donations still coming in and final numbers expected to exceed this early total. Despite inclement weather, the largest fundraising event for BBBS drew a capacity crowd of 800 people to the JW Marriott on Saturday, August 26. The black-tie affair was an elegant evening focused on raising funds to create life-changing friendships between at-risk youth and caring adult mentors.

"The 2017 Ice Ball Gala was a big success on every level, far exceeding our expectations," said Brent Fields, CEO of BBBS. "We had record attendance, amazing energy and an unprecedented amount of funds raised to support our mission of helping children succeed in life. The funds raised at Ice Ball, and throughout the year, allow us to serve and support close to 1,000 mentoring matches and to move as many children off our wait-

ing list as possible. A big 'thank you' to all those who attended and to our sponsors for helping create an event that will be forever changing lives."

Bigs and Littles were on hand to welcome guests as greeters. The festive evening began with a number of exciting activities including a silent auction, a raffle, a Big Board mini live auction, Kendra Scott Mystery Boxes, and a photo booth with the signature Ice Ball ice sculpture.

The Big Board auction was new to this year's event and featured an assortment of special items such as a golf flag autographed by PGA champion Jordan Spieth, SXSW interactive badges, a Uchiko dinner for four and a San Antonio Spurs VIP experience, among other items.

Guests were lead into the ballroom by The Memphis Train Revue, a Dixieland band, where they enjoyed a seated dinner, the evening's program, and a live auction, which offered opportunities to win exclusive experiences and trips including a

UT tailgate party, flag football with Colt McCoy, trips to Paris and Cabo San Lucas, tickets for the 2018 Dell Match Play Golf Championship, and a "choose your own adventure" passport package featuring a choice of trips to 25 different world-wide destinations. Excitement filled the room as the crowd participated in games and the live auction led by auctioneer Gayle Stallings and emcee Mike Barnes, KVUE Sports Director.

During the 'Fund A Friendship' portion of the evening guests were invited to make donations to help fund more mentoring relationships. A moving video told the story of Big Sister Maggie, and her Little Sister Kirida's relationship. Kirida, a recent high school graduate who is beginning her first semester at Texas A&M Uni-

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Texas serves nearly 1,000 children in Central Texas every day. For over 46 years, we've matched children, ages 6-16, with caring adult mentors who offer encouragement and support to each child. BBBS depends on donations to recruit, screen and train volunteers, and to provide on-going support for children, families and volunteers as they build and sustain long-lasting relationships. Last year, more than 98 percent of the children served by BBBS remained in school and avoided early parenting.



Christine and Blake Absher, Ice Ball Event Chairs

PHOTO BY CHRIS CASELLI

versity, thanked the crowd for helping to make life-changing friendships like the one she has enjoyed with Maggie possible. Their story provided a powerful example of the impact BBBS' mentoring program has on chil-

dren, families, volunteers, and the community as a whole.

"I was absolutely amazed by the turnout and by the enthusiastic support our Central Texas community showed at Ice Ball!" said Carlos Barbosa,

BBBS' Board Chair. "We were bracing for the rain, but what an amazing show of support we received! Huge thanks to all who came out, and to those who couldn't make it but still found ways to support our agency!"

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Jermaine Thomas and Justin Yarborough

PHOTO BY CHRIS CASELLI



Brent Fields, CEO Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Texas

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The Austin Center for Grief & Loss stands with victims of Hurricane Harvey. As we grieve for our fellow Texans, it is important for us to acknowledge the losses victims have faced and support our community as we move forward rebuilding from this tragedy.

When a natural disaster of this caliber strikes, we are left with feelings of hopelessness, anger, sadness, and frustration. We experience a fog of disbelief, unsure of how to move forward. We wonder what we can do to help those who have been impacted. We also have the opportunity to work together to support evacuees seeking respite in Austin.

At The Austin Center for Grief & Loss, our mission is to provide grief counseling and support services to children and adults experiencing a loss. Hurricane Harvey is a sobering reminder that loss can present itself in many forms. As we are left picking up the pieces, we are faced with the reality that we must move forward. At our center, we help individuals coping with loss address three phases of grief—What

is lost? What is left? What is possible? With every loss experience, we are also given the opportunity to find greater meaning and value in our life.

We want to offer our support to those impacted by Hurricane Harvey and the opportunity to build connections. Austin Grief is now providing Hurricane Harvey Support Groups on the 2nd and 4th Tuesday of every month. In times of greatest need, we choose to connect, love, and help.

Grief has the power to transform individuals. In this transformative process, grieving persons become expanded rather than diminished, more, rather than less. If you have been impacted by a death or loss, regardless of the nature, we are here to offer our support.

Please call Austin Grief for more information at (512) 472-7878 or visit Austingrief.org today.



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Mack, Jack, and McConaughey's Gala Raises Money for Children's Charities

The Mack, Jack and McConaughey fundraiser takes place every April over the course of two days. This year's events took place on April 21 and 22, and included a golf tournament, a fashion show, a silent auction, and a live concert.

Supporters gathered at the Moody Theater on April 21st for a gala and a Miranda Lambert concert. Longhorn cheerleaders shook their pom-poms and cheered as attendees climbed the stairs to the red carpet. During the cocktail hour, guests bid on a glamorous spread of Texas-themed goodies.

This fundraiser began when Austin's most-famous resident, Matthew McConaughey,

teamed up with two other Texas greats — Top 40 Billboard country singer Jack Ingram, and Mack Brown, an illustrious UT football coach. Mack, Jack, and McConaughey's mission is to "empower kids," and proceeds from the fundraiser go toward a curated selection of children's charities.

This year, the fundraiser raised money for CureDuchenne, Dell Children's Medical Center, Just Keep Living Foundation, The Rise School of Austin, and Heart Gift.

CureDuchenne came to the attention of the fundraiser through Mack and Sally Brown. Tim Revell reached out to Mack in 2009 to ask for help rais-

ing money for CureDuchenne. Both of Revell's sons suffer from Duchenne, which is a form of muscular dystrophy. The Browns have been closely involved with CureDuchenne ever since. Tim and Laura Revell attended the gala.

McConaughey's favorite cause will also benefit from the fundraiser. McConaughey started the Just Keep Living Foundation to encourage health and wellness among inner-city high school students. He developed the curriculum with his wife, Camila Alves, who also attends the Mack, Jack, and McConaughey gala every year.



Amy and Jack Ingram



Camila Alves and Matthew McConaughey



Sally and Mack Brown



Michelle Lewis, Cindi Bewley, and Liza Coldewey



Kim Shipman, Tim and Laura Revelle



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St. Stephen’s welcomes students for new school year

St. Stephen’s Episcopal School welcomed students back to campus last week for the 2017–18 academic year. Boarding students from across the United States and around the globe battled travel issues raised by Hurricane Harvey to make their way to campus for the first day of classes on Aug. 30.

“St. Stephen’s campus experienced sustained rain and notable wind, but we were fortunate to have been spared from the worst impact of the storm,” said Head of School Chris Gunnin. “We were forced to push all of our start-of-school activities back a day, but we were able to return to full campus life by mid-week.”

All of St. Stephen’s 686 students made it back to campus safely, although those students from the Houston area — the region hardest hit by the storm — faced stressors as they readied themselves for school. “Several of our students’ families were displaced by Harvey, so these students had much more to contend with than just gathering school supplies for the new year,” Gunnin noted. “These young men and women have shown incredible maturity and grit in the face of true

crisis. Our school community is committed to assisting those families impacted by the storms in Houston and other coastal regions of Texas, regardless of whether their children attend St. Stephen’s,” he said.

Kindy Verderber, who teaches Middle School science at St. Stephen’s, was one of the first faculty members to initiate relief efforts on campus. “My family evacuated from New Orleans during Hurricane Katrina, so I know firsthand what it feels like to be displaced,” she said. Verderber and others worked with students to prepare emergency toiletry kits for people affected by the hurricane. “Our 6th grade students traveled to Wimberley last week. Several families from evacuated communities were housed at the same camp where they stayed, so students were able to deliver their care packages directly to the people they wished to help.”

Even the littlest of Spartans sought ways to help. On Labor Day “campus kids” — children of residential faculty and staff — spent their morning compiling care packages for families affected by the storm and flooding.



6th graders Isabella Messina, Evelyn McKenna, Kamsiyo Mba and Ava Gonzalez



“I am always excited to welcome faculty and students back to campus in the fall,” Gunnin noted. “This year, however, was very different for a number of people in our community. Even in the open-

ing days of the school year, our students and faculty truly embodied our mission to look beyond ourselves to serve others. I could not have been prouder of our school community than I was last week.”

St. Stephen’s January and Conyers Medal in AAU Junior Olympics

While many St. Stephen’s Episcopal School students took the summer to relax and recharge, two Spartans spent their summer vying for greatness in the world of track and field.

Following success in the spring SPCs, seniors Jamal January and Cameron Conyers participated the Golden West Invitational with St. Stephen’s Coach Paul Carrozza. In addition, as members of the Trojan Track Club, they competed in numerous AAU track events, advancing to the AAU Junior Olympics, where they both finished with outstanding results.

At the Golden West Invitational Conyers placed first in 200 and second in 400m and January placed second 110 and third in the 300m hurdles.

At the Coaches Coalition Conyers placed first in the 200m. January won four gold medals and collected scholarship funding as high-point male athlete. He placed first in 110 meter hurdles, 400 meter hurdles, and long jump and triple jump, setting person-



Jamal January and Cameron Conyers

al records in three of the four events.

TX MileSplit voted Conyers Texas male athlete of the year.

In AAU Track both January and Conyers competed and advanced to the Junior Olympics.

Conyers, now ranked No. 7 in the 200m, received a medal for finishing in the top eight and was named “All American.” January finished with a ranking of 13th overall in the 110 (14.49) and 12th in the long jump (21ft 11 inches).

St. Stephen’s Students Honored at Carnegie Hall

This summer St. Stephen’s Episcopal School senior Rachel Schlesinger and 8th grader Hudson Quinn were honored at the 2017 National Scholastic Art & Writing Awards ceremony in New York City, where they received Best in Grade Medals for their creative works.

Schlesinger was honored for her documentary film, “Inge,” which was accepted into the 2017 SXSW film competition. Quinn was recognized for his novel, “Omaha.” An excerpt

of Quinn’s novel, which he wrote in 7th grade, will be included in an anthology of winners’ essays, poetry and more, “Best Teen Fiction of 2017–18.”

The Scholastic Art & Writing organization is one of the oldest and most respected student arts programs in the country. Students in grades 7 to 12 submit work in 16 different categories, including visual arts, creative writing, film making, editorial cartooning, costume design and more. Following regional competitions across the

United States, Gold Key-winning submissions are judged again on the national level.

“Of the many thousands of entries, about 700 works receive National Gold Key Awards,” explained Elizabeth Hansing Moon, St. Stephen’s fine arts department chair. “Gold Key Winners are invited to a special ceremony at Carnegie Hall, where they are honored alongside the arts educators who taught and mentored them. In total 24 students are chosen Best in Grade from among the

national Gold Key winners — two in art and two in writing for each grade. St. Stephen’s students Schlesinger and Quinn were two of the 24 top national winners.

“This ceremony is an inspiring celebration of these young artists’ creative spirit, as well as an important acknowledgement of the long hours of hard work and excellent teaching that allow them to express their ideas in powerful and profound works of art,” Moon added. “St. Stephen’s is a place that invites kids to explore ideas, to put things together in new ways, and to share their efforts with

the larger community.

“The entire St. Stephen’s community is extremely proud of these students, as well as their instructors — Upper School film teacher Mike Dolan and Middle School writing teacher Vicki Woodruff,” she concluded.

Right: St. Stephen’s senior Rachel Schlesinger and 7th grader Hudson Quinn received “Best in Grade” medals at the Scholastic Art & Writing Awards Ceremony at Carnegie Hall this summer.



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Trinity Episcopal School Welcomes 534 Students for its 19th Year

By Kerri Qunell

In August 1999, Trinity Episcopal School opened with 13 first graders as the dream of longtime Austin educator Jane Hill and a small group of parents looking for a rigorous and innovative Episcopal academic program offered in a diverse and highly nurturing environment. This August 22, Trinity welcomed 534 students, Kindergarden through 8th grade, to campus on the first day of the new school year. Trinity has flourished quickly, but with a solid foundation and a deep commitment to the mission and core values that guide the school each day.



JoRel and Jack Nye with Jorja



Grayson and Johanna Gunter



Anitra Hilaire with Blake and Sloan



George, Anne, Silas and Mia Herrington



David and Cari Hawn with Polly



Nelissa Torres, Lorena Koppel, Sofia Koppel, and Seth Koppel

Honors Research Initiative, St. Michael's-UT Education Partnership



HRI Class Members: (L-R) Aldan Dye, Linus Gibson, Zach Woods, Gabriel Cascarano, Instructor Dr. Dennis Sheeter, Grace Lawler, Tara Senn, Pendo Mugofwa, Madeleine Montgomery

St. Michael's has launched an Honors Research Initiative class that bestows three University of Texas credit hours to the eight students participating in this exciting opportunity (replete with lab coats and name badges). St. Michael's is one of only four Austin-area high schools in the program, which is funded by a NIH Science Education Partnership Award. "The pioneering HRI program provides high school students the opportunity to initiate and engage in real-world research experience with faculty and graduate students at The University of Texas at Austin and potentially experience similar gains," as stated on the College of Natural Sciences website. Senior Zach Woods commented on why he chose to participate. "I hope to one day have a career in medicine, either as a physician/surgeon or in biomedical research. Participating in the HRI program will help give me insight into what my future career in science will be like and will give me the opportunity to study/explore my passions for science in a new light." During the first semester, students develop their own research projects and learn re-

search methodology. In the second semester, students will work with Dr. Tim Riedel to learn advanced techniques in molecular and cell biology to answer scientific questions that concern our local water ways. Senior Madeleine Montgomery said working with Dr. Sheeter inspires her. "Dr. Sheeter is an incredible teacher, which makes this class so enjoyable. The increased responsibility on us individually allows us to learn for the sake of learning, instead of covering a set amount of content for an AP test or other course. We have much more control as students in this class." Instructor Dr. Dennis Sheeter has been pursuing this opportunity with the University of Texas for several years and said he is thrilled to finally have the opportunity to make it a reality at St. Michael's. "I believe HRI acts as the perfect advanced class in high school to learn scientific inquiry techniques. As juniors and seniors, the students have had enough math and science and possess the necessary curiosity to start asking great personal inquiry questions."

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Anderson High School Wins Taco Shack Spirit Competition

Anderson High School won this year's Taco Shack Bowl Spirit Competition in the wee hours of the morning before the big football game against McCallum High School on Wednesday, August 31, 2017.

This year marked the 16th year the two high schools faced off for the title, which is hosted by KXAN News.



Anderson High School cheerleaders and band members at Taco Shack, located at 3901-C Spicewood Springs Road. Bottom Row: Little Troy (Eva Cornelious), Leigh Dougal, Camille Pham, Nicole Childress, Devyn Sureck, Elizabeth Garner, Madison Hernandez, Big Troy (Luke Fuka); Second Row: David Oh, Luna Dare, Katie Musick, Taylor Elliott, Luca DeCamillo, Lily Zachary, Sarah Farrell, Brenna Siebert; Top Row: Anabelle Gilliam, Carlie Laycox, Hallie Varner Tyler, Elise Benavides, Lily Kuenast, Emma Vrana, Claire Swann, Katharine Young, Syndey Chlidress

The cheerleaders decked out Taco Shacks at 3901-C Spicewood Springs Road and 4001 N. Lamar Blvd. and met at 6 a.m. for the live broadcast. This year the spirit title went to Anderson High School, while the Knights prevailed later in a hard-fought battle at House Park.

Anderson Cross Country

The Anderson Cross Country teams competed in the Austin ISD XC Invitational last Friday. The Trojans faced four district opponents (Bowie, Akins, Del Valle, Manor) at the AISD Meet. Twenty-four high schools competed in the AISD Meet. The teams continue to improve each week. The teams earned 10 medals overall and an AISD Championship plaque for the 9th grade boy's team and an AISD runner-up plaque for the 9th grade girl's team.

The Anderson varsity girls finished in 10th place overall in the 5A/6A division. Lanie Jordan and Jordan Suter each finished in the top 25. Paola Huynh, Sam Fariss and Agnes

Honeybul rounded out the scoring for the varsity girls team.

The Anderson varsity boys finished in 11th place overall in the 5A/6A division. Shea Donohoe finished in 11th place overall for the team. Alex Rocha, Jacob Singer, Thomas Dinh and Gabe Palomares rounded out the scoring for the varsity boys.

The junior varsity girls finished in 3rd place overall. Gabby Reyna earned a medal with a 9th-place finish and Brooke Jordan, a medal with a 10th-place finish. Gabby Levitt and Hannah Nassor finished in 11th place and 12th place respectively. Kate Jeffrey rounded out the scoring for the junior



Alex Rocha



Austin Meisner



Jordan Suter

varsity girls.

The junior varsity boys finished in 9th place overall. Cory Kittleman, Chris Livaudais, Vinay Shankar, Alvar Juarez and Drew Keough rounded out the scoring for the junior varsity boys.

The 9th grade girls team finished as runner-up. The following girls earned medals for their fine efforts. Nardos Southwick-5th place, Cherryn Cha-6th place, Ava Cornett-7th place, Piper Cornett-8th place and Madison Isaacs-10th place.

The 9th grade boys team won the 9th grade boys cross country division. Justin Morwood won the 1st-place medal. Tristan Roach and Robinson Dinh earned a medal with an 8th place and 9th-place respec-



Paola Huynh

tively. Miley Mills, who had a 12th place finish and Conner Gockel rounded out the scoring for the 9th grade boys team.

Highland Park welcomes five new teachers

By Alana Moehring Mallard

Highland Park Elementary started the new school year last month with all kinds of improvements: new landscaping and temporary watering system, new trail washout mitigation between the quarry and the tennis courts, new little kids playground, new gym floor and mural, new outdoor courtyard and front entranceway.

"It's been a real smooth start, really nice," said principal

Katie Pena. "We have 641 kids. Last year 643 – so, very stable."

Pena and Highland Park's staff of 80 welcomed five new teachers this year. Jennifer Hartley and Morgan Kaapke are new kindergarten teachers. Hartley comes from New York City, and Kaapka is a UT grad who student-taught at Highland Park. New to HP's first grade is Megan Thomas who comes from AISD's Norman Elementary. Jacqueline Gober, from Southern California and an Arizona State

grad, joins the second grade staff. Coming back to HP as a special education teacher is Alexandra Kammell, who student-taught at HP and then spent two years teaching in Nicaragua.

"It's really nice to have new faces and new energy," Pena said.

Highland Park's teachers and all staff enjoyed a day together before school started, Pena said, with a catered lunch in the library and a trivia game led by Geeks Who Drink, a local

– and national – entertainment group. "It was hilarious," Pena said. "So much fun to find out random knowledge that people have." Fourth grade teachers, calling themselves May the Fourth Be With You, won the game.

Highland Park started the school year with a back-to-school picnic and dance competition this past weekend, and later this month is the Scottie Golf Classic, a fundraising and community event. Hoot is Oct. 21 – games, rides, food – a huge family and community outdoor festival complete with costumes.



PHOTO BY ALANA MOEHRING MALLARD
Highland Park PE coach Jim DeLine and principal Katie Pena

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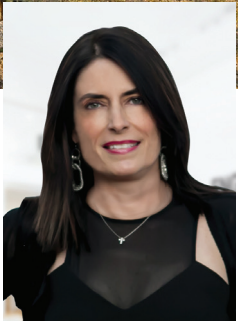
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