



MAY 2019 | VOLUME 25 | NUMBER 2 // NEWSLETTER OF THE CHERRYWOOD NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

### Neighbors Champion Legislation Fighting Balance Billing

he Flea spoke with Erin Calver about her family's experience with a surprise medical bill and recent experiences speaking out in favor of legislation currently working its way through the Texas Legislature.

In April 2017 Drew Calver, an Austin High history teacher, was home in Cherrywood when he had a heart attack. A neighbor rushed him to St. David's Medical Center's ER, and he was admitted to the cardiac unit for treatment. St. David's bill for the surgery and hospital stay was \$164,941, of which his insurer paid \$55,840. Drew received a bill for the balance of \$109,101. Only after NPR/ Kaiser Health Network published a story by Chad Terhune featuring him did St. David's reduced the charges to \$782.

The Flea: Prior to Drew's heart attack, had your family had any experience with surprise billing? **Erin:** No. But we quickly learned that Drew's AISD health insurance is a "narrow-network" plan, offering little coverage outside its network. So, for us in a cardiac emergency, when we needed health insurance the most it didn't protect us.

Once we got national attention and our medical bill was taken care of, we very relieved. [But] we had heard stories, specifically about other AISD teachers, who have emergency room bills from St. David's. We realized that sharing our story was a powerful tool to help others.

The Flea: How did you connect with the Center for Public Policy Priorities?

**Erin:** Through a Cherrywood neighbor! CPPP has been working on this issue for 10 years. Our neighbor went to graduate school with Stacey Pogue, CPPP's senior policy analyst.

Stacey reached out to us asking if we wanted to meet with Senator Hancock [R-North Richland Hills], co-author of SB 1264. We spoke to Sen. Hancock about our story and



DREW CALVER WITH HIS DAUGHTERS WHILE AT ST. DAVID'S. PHOTO ERIN CALVER

attended the press conference. Then, we were asked to speak at the Senate committee hearing. It was an eye-opening experience with lots of industry groups lobbying their interests. It was a scary moment as it looked like the patients' stories were getting drowned out. But on April 2, the second anniversary of Drew's heart attack, it made it out of committee (7-2)!

The Flea: What exactly does the current bill propose?

**Erin:** Senate Bill 1264 removes patients from disputes between insurance companies and providers in situations where patients have no choice, like medical emergencies. Patients will only be accountable for their copay and deductible. The hospital cannot "balance bill" the patient. It establishes an arbitration process between the hospital and insurance company, taking the patient out of the equation.

The Flea: Why do you think this political moment in time coupled with a powerful story like yours is what's moving this issue forward? Erin: I believe Drew's story resonated with a lot of people for two reasons. First, he was a healthy person who suddenly collapsed from a lifethreatening heart attack, but also the fact that so many Americans have dealt with unforeseen, overwhelming medical bills. Unfortunately, our health care system is a nightmare that many people know all too well.

The Flea: What do you hope comes next?

**Erin:** Besides SB 1264, there is also SB 1530 that allows selffunded insurers to opt into the arbitration program. If this bill passes it will help a lot of people whose health insurance

is self-funded, like AISD, the next step would be an awareness campaign.

Also, because ultimately this needs to be fixed on a federal level, Congressman Doggett has proposed a bill to stop the practice of balance billing. Hopefully healthcare will take center stage again, and Congress will move on the issue.



### CITY WATCH

### Council Member Kathie Tovo Hosts Walking Town Hall

by Jim Reed

n Saturday, April 26, Council Member Kathie Tovo, three members from her staff, and several city representatives joined Cherrywood residents for a walking town hall meeting to discuss several land use and transportation issues, as well as to meet neighbors face to face.



The event started off at the new Vida Pura Juicery on Manor Road, where Tovo gave welcoming remarks to the group and city staff provided relevant updates. The group moved to the corner of Walnut Avenue and Manor Road, where a proposed pedestrian hybrid beacon (PHB) is slated for installation once funding has been identified. While paused at the corner, the group

witnessed several occurrences of people maneuvering among moving vehicles to cross Manor Road, emphasizing the importance of the PHB.

The group then walked down Walnut Ave to 34th street to Cherrywood Road,

witnessing many poorly "docked" dockless scooters, including some deposited in yards and blocking sidewalks. It was discussed that the operating permit granted to commercial dockless mobility providers should include specific docking restrictions. The town hall continued down

Cherrywood Road to the Cherrywood Green, where another group of neighbors were waiting to discuss the importance of pocket parks like the Green and Grackle Green.



The town hall proceeded back up 34th Street to intersect the neighborhood's only north-south sidewalk, along Lafayette Avenue. The group followed the sidewalk to Cherrywood Coffeehouse and crossed 38th Street safely with the help of the PHB. More neighbors joined the group to hear CM Tovo's closing remarks.

We want to extend a special thanks to Council Member Kathie Tovo, her staff, and city staff for their participation.



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# Meetings





## **Cherrywood Quarterly Meeting**

Wednesday, May 15, 6:30 pm Servant Church

#### **Agenda**

- · UBC bylaws opdate
- Sidewalk plan in action
- Patterson Park playground update and next steps

### Stay Connected

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### **NEIGHBOR PROFILE**

### Filmmaker PJ Raval Wins Acclaim for "Call Her Ganda"

by Vivienne Heines

ilmmaker PJ Raval wants to tell the hidden stories in our communities, focusing on people whose lives are rarely seen on screen.

Raval's films have received international recognition, and he was named one of *Filmmaker Magazine*'s 25 new faces of independent film. His most recent project, "Call Her Ganda," will air on PBS in July 2019. This award-winning feature documentary, which was an Official Selection of the 2018 Tribeca Film Festival, follows the story of a transgender Filipina woman who was murdered by a 19-year-old U.S. Marine. It's slated for theatrical release in the U.S. in late September.

"I'm interested in telling stories about the LGBTQ+ community," said Raval, who is a Cherrywood resident. "I like to champion stories and voices that are underrepresented—people of color, women, anyone coming from various underrepresented groups."

Raval's other films include "Before You Know It," a feature-length documentary following the lives of three gay, senior men, and "Trinidad," which details a Colorado city's emergence as the "sex change capital of the world."

"These films are very personal to me," Raval said. "One film propels me to do the



next. When I finish one film, I'm left with questions for another film. Although I'm not on screen, the film becomes my experience."

Raval grew up in central California and came to Austin in 1999 for graduate school in film studies at the University of Texas at Austin. As an undergraduate he doublemajored in molecular biology and visual arts.

"I have a secret past as a molecular biologist," he said. "I did work as a researcher in a lab that was contributing to the human genome project." He says he "fell into" filmmaking after becoming enchanted with street photography and portraiture.

"Doing street photography has really informed my work as a documentarian," he said. As for the lab background and its impact on his current work, Raval describes himself as detail-oriented.

"Science really makes you pay attention to process. As an artist, a lot of what we're doing is focusing on the artistic process."

After graduate school, he lived in Austin on and off for about five years before settling here per-

manently. "A lot of my films were shot around the world [but] I would always find myself returning to Austin, to ground myself temporarily or figure out my next steps."

Raval chose to live in Cherrywood because he views it a creative and community-oriented neighborhood.

"I hope people in the neighborhood continue to support the local arts," he encouraged. Currently, Raval is shepherding "Call Her Ganda" through the distribution process, getting it out to as many communities as possible. Additionally, he's starting to develop and consider his next project.

"The kind of films I work on take several years to develop. I'll start to embark on new work fairly soon," he promised.

# CHERRYWOOD CALENDAR of CULTURAL EVENTS

#### CHERRYWOOD COFFEEHOUSE

Weekdays, 8 am

Free yoga

Saturays, 9 pm Geeks Who Drink

Sundays, 10:30 am Kids concert

June 16, 2 pm Austin Jazz Workshop



#### **AUSTIN FILM SOCIETY**

May 5, 12, 19, 26

War & Peace, parts 1-4

May 25

Rock 'n' Roll High School

May 30-June 2

Doc Days

#### **VORTEX REPERTORY CO.**

May 24—June 2 Chickens in the Yard

July 19–21 Summer Youth Theatre

August 2–4

The Donner Party: Original Puppet Opera

#### NATURE'S TREASURES

May 25

Healing Arts Festival & Market

June 6-8

International Expo of Agate

August 10

Spiritual Life Production's Psychic Fair

#### **CHERRYWOOD**

July 4, 10 am
Fourth of July Parade

#### MAPLEWOOD ELEMENTARY

May 24

Last day of school

#### PATTERSON PARK

June 3, 4 pm

Opening Day Pool Party

June 8, 10 am

Friends of Patterson Park Meeting



### GREEN SPACES

### Patterson Park Updates

by Jennifer Potter-Miller

riends of Patterson Park raised \$5,700 during the Amplify Austin city-wide Day of Giving for park improvement projects and community events. We are so grateful to all the neighbors who supported the campaign and the sponsors who provided matches, including Franklin Barbecue, Nature's Treasures, Urban Patchwork, Liaison Creative + Marketing, Erin Tassoulas Design + Build, and Austin Parks Foundation.



JUST A FEW HUNTERS COMBING PATTERSON PARK FOR EASTER EGGS.

The fifth annual Patterson Easter Egg Hunt brought out almost 300 neighbors to hunt for 3,000 eggs and enjoy a potluck brunch at the park. The egg hunt is Friend's of Patterson Park's biggest event of the year. There was so much happy energy (and glucose intoxication) in the air on the perfect spring day, and it's wonderful to see families returning year after year. Thanks to Servant Church, a great partner once again.

#### News from Grackle Green



MR. BIG SUPERVISES TREE PLANTING. PHOTO LINDSAY OLINDE

The little pocket park on Manor Road now has 13 new trees and a handful of new sponsors, including Sour Duck, El Chilito, Sugar Mama's, JuiceLand, Μi Madre's, Bird Bird Biscuit, and Sam Hellman-Mass. Austin Public Works will soon remove the lot's bam-

boo to make room for more native trees and add an irrigation source. Play structure installation has been delayed until the fall. However, the demonstration garden, fence, picnic table, and benches will be installed over the summer. Follow updates on Facebook and Instagram @gracklegreen.



NEW PLAYGROUND EQUIPMENT.

The Patterson Park playground addition is almost complete. It added two new climbers (a circular monkey bar and starburst climber), two new spinners, a seating wall, and auditorium seating with boulders that doubles as a natural play area. FoPP will celebrate with an ice cream party on the day the fence is removed. FoPP is currently coordinating with Austin Parks Foundation and the Parks and Recreation Department on plans for a bigger celebration this summer. The park project was made possible by an Austin City Limits Music Festival Community Grant from APF, a match by FoPP, and the support of PARD. Come down to the park and play!

The Neighborhood Partnering Program project to update furnishings at Patterson Park has been delayed but will likely be installed this summer. Look for new benches, grills, recycling and trash containers, trail markers, and an information kiosk. The next phase of the Neighborhood Park Plan involves tree planting and landscaping (focused around the pool area as it has lost all its shade trees in the last few years) and improvements to the athletic fields and courts. Join the planning discussion at FoPP's June 8 meeting, 10 am at the pavilion.

Patterson Park Community Garden is entering into its third full

year of operations, and it continues to grow its membership from 26 plot owners initially in 2016 to 45 plot owners in 2019. Not only are gardeners becoming adept at grow-



ing vegetables and wildlife-attracting plants, they are also growing as a community that learns from one another and shares common experiences. Gardeners are becoming more focused on sustainable practices and learning how to be better stewards of the land. Several plots are still available! For more information, please visit https://pattersonparkcommunitygarden.wordpress.com/.

### NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS

### Maplewood Green Team Explores Willowbrook Reach

A group of secondgrade Maplewood Elementary students in the school's Green Team toured the Willlowbrook Reach greenbelt in early April. Staryn Wagner and Erin Cord from the city's Watershed Protection Department led an engaging chat with the students about how the Reach has gone from being a grassy lawn to a maturing and diverse riparian ecosystem since it was developed in 2010.

The kids learned that water in the creek can have many classifications: a riffle, "like a whitewater rapids: when water moves over rocks and gets oxygenated"; a run, "water moving on the

surface, kind of smoothly"; or, a pool, "deeper area of water." Wagner identified some of the trees and plants along the Reach, like Huisache, Engelmann's Daisy, Spiderwort, and Box Elder, and talked about some of the wildlife that visits the area, including owls and hawks. The group talked about how native grasses and tree roots help control erosion, and how shade keeps water cool enough for more species to thrive.

The Green Team thought it was cool that the restoration has taken the exact amount of time as they had been alive, and that water in the creek makes its way all the way to the ocean. Wagner, whose enthusiasm for the ecosystem is contagious, has helped shepherd the project since 2011. Cherrywood is so lucky to have city staff and neighbors committed to this conservation project, and that its youngest residents are inspired to keep caring for this special green space.



STARYN WAGNER & THE GREEN TEAM.

## HAPPENINGS

#### THE OWLLEN FAMILY

A family of five Eastern Screech owls are the newest neighbors on Breeze Terrace. The Dock-Allen Family calls them the Owllens, and the babies are Owlison, Owlfonso, and Owlivia. They are most active at dusk and are the cutest kids on the block.

#### **CONGRATULATIONS!**

Architect Kim Power was nominated for an Austin Under 40 Award for her work as a partner at Dick Clark + Associates..

### AARON FRANKLIN ON STEAK

Wilshire neighbor Aaron Franklin, an internationally known pitmaster and star of BBQ With Franklin (PBS), published his second book. *Franklin Steak*, co-authored by Jordan Mackay, was released by Ten Speed Press in April. The pair cooked more than 100 steaks while writing the book, which they shared with lucky neighbors.



#### SIDEWALK MEETING

The project manager and engineer for new sidewalks on Cherrywood Road and Schieffer Avenue met with neighbors for a walk around the improvements on April 30. These long-planned projects will make connectivity in the 'hood so much stronger.

#### MARDI GRAS

2019's Mardi Gras Parade was a big hit. Thanks to everyone who came out to *laissez les bon temps rouler*!

### -----NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS

### Land Use and Transportation Committee Update

by Girard Kinney, AIA

he Cherrywood Neighborhood Association is attempting to learn as much as possible about the recent sale of land by TxDOT to a private enterprise for a CVS building at the northwest corner of Manor Road and Airport Boulevard. A city case manager indicated that the property was offered to the city, but that the city declined to purchase it.

Due largely to CNA's efforts, the MLK transit-oriented development boundaries extend east on MLK and Manor Road to the intersections with Airport Boulevard, capturing these intersections where the TxDOT right-of-way included large triangles at each of the four corners. We knew these two intersections would someday represent excellent opportunities for gateway projects, including pedestrian-oriented uses at ground level with office and mixed-income housing above the first floor. Most neighbors would welcome the CVS as one component of a larger, denser, mixed-use project at this corner.

Although CNA is questioning details of the sale itself, assuming that it stands, the next step will be discussion at the Planning Commission (PC) Zoning hearing, and/or at the PC Codes and Ordinances subcommittee meeting. Simultaneously, the developer will seek a FLUM amendment and a zoning change to allow its project to proceed on the site. CNA



NORTHWEST CORNER OF MANOR ROAD AND MLK.

hopes that by working with neighbors, residents of adjacent neighborhoods, and neighborhood planning area teams, it can encourage CVS to utilize a more urban, mixed-use development and leave space for installing a roundabout at the intersection.



### NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS

### Spring Gardening Tips

by Wayne Kamin of Troubadour Landscape

herrywood's historically deep, high clay content Blackland Prairie soil is a rich biological ecosystem. The more it teems with advantageous creatures ranging in size from microbes to burrowing earthworms, the more it thrives. Soil dwellers digest and convert diverse organic matter, minerals, air, and water into nutrient forms that nourish plants and help root systems, plant stems, and tree canopies in resisting infestation and disease. New, healthy soil is produced as a byproduct of all the activity. Throw some sunlight in the mix for photosynthesis, and the results are proper plant growth, reproduction, and enhanced fruiting.

Here are a few tips to help you get off to a good start with your soil:

- When site planning for a garden bed, designate a spot gets 6-8 hours of sun per day from the south and east. Test the soil in this area to determine what you may need to do to augment it. Your favorite local nursery will have soil testing kits and expert advice.
- Build garden beds narrow enough (about 4 feet across) that
  you can reach the side opposite where you're standing without
  having to climb into the bed. That'll help avoid compaction and
  preserve natural aeration as well as advantageous microbial
  colonies and larger beneficials, root webs, seeds and plants.
- Avoid digging up established in-ground or raised garden beds, unless they've been taken over by Bermuda grass, mint rhizomes, or other plants with aggressive root systems. Cover the soil with 2-3 inches of certified organic compost. You can purchase this at your nursery or use some from your own or your neighborhood's compost pile. Gently incorporate it with a hand trowel or tine shovel, then smooth it over with a rake or similar tool, or by hand. For seeding, using a trowel, spoon, or your finger, etch the ground and follow the planting and watering instructions on your seed packet. For veggie and herb

starter pots, dig a hole wide and deep enough to accommodate the root system and a little additional compost. Plant so that the roots are at ground level. Add  $1/4^{\prime\prime}$  of compost and carefully firm by hand. Deeply but gently water the ground rather than the plant tops in the mornings or evenings. Water on the plant canopy and leaves can invite disease, infestation, scorching, or freezing. Thereafter, devise a regular and consistent watering schedule.

- Avoid applying artificial or synthetic herbicides, pesticides, and fertilizers to your plants. Some of their ingredients don't safely biodegrade and can inhibit healthy growth and harm the "good critters" that support our gardens. The same goes for the wood or other materials used in building your raised bed that can contain toxic preservatives such as arsenic and creosote. A good rule of thumb is if you don't want to eat it, why feed it to your garden's inhabitants? Instead, try to make your own treatments. Orange oil added to a 20/80 vinegar and water solution will work well to eliminate unwanted critters. Garlic or pepper spray is a useful unwanted pest disrupter. But, take note, apply these solutions in low- to no-wind conditions so that you don't burn your eyes or throat. Brewing and applying compost tea is another make-at-home garden enhancer.
- Amend your soil with mulch and compost at first establishment and seasonally thereafter. Apply a 1-2 inch layer of leaves, straw, pine needles, or other mulching material around planted seeds and starts. Allow a circular space of about an inch around the stem so as not to inhibit the growing process. Over time, mulching, like composting, will boost soil height.

Soil integrity in the garden and in the landscape as a whole is about completeness. Gardeners, as stewards of Mother Earth, may well never achieve perfection. But we can enjoy the journey and reap the benefits of our efforts.

### Welcome to the Neighborhood, Amy's!

Amy's Ice Cream opened its new Manor Road location on April 11, and celebrated by serving free scoops. *The Flea* spoke with Isabelle (2), Lucia (7), and Nico (9) while they enjoyed theirs first of many visits to the scoop shop.

**The Flea**: What is your favorite ice cream flavor?

Isabelle: Vanilla with chocolate chips

Lucia: My favorite ice cream is Oreo with rainbow sprin-

kles!

The Flea: If you were an ice cream what would you be?

**Isabelle**: Strawberry, it's pink.

**Nico**: I would be made of Oreo ice cream, my blood would be chocolate syrup, and I would have sprinkles in my hair.

**The Flea**: What are your favorite words to describe ice cream?

Isabelle: Sticky, cold, messy.

Lucia: How about "a world of deliciousness?!?"



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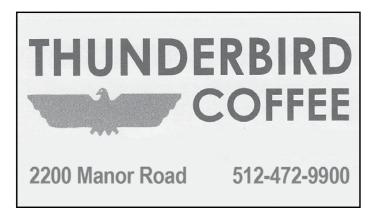


















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