

Willow Creek News & Views

Winter 2015

A publication of



WCHOA ~ Willow Creek Homeowners Association, Inc.

"Deed Restricted Single-Family Neighborhood" — www.wchoatx.com

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Message from the Board:

SEASON'S GREETINGS! We hope this finds everyone in good health, recuperating from a great Thanksgiving, and preparing for a joyous holiday season. We want to let you know what a privilege it is to serve on the WCHOA Board. Our board members are active and we are thankful that things are running along very smoothly.

Serving on the board is an excellent way to get to know your neighbors and keep up with what is happening in our neighborhood. If you are interested in serving as a board member or a volunteer, please contact one of the current board members.

Best wishes for your holidays and have a prosperous new year!

Message from the President:

The recent storms – including heavy rains, floods, and even a tornado – presented a challenge for our neighborhood and, again, for our city and county. The rains were hard, flooding every creek and river in the area with fast-moving

and extremely dangerous and damaging currents. Not even recently raised roadways and new bridges, designed to avoid the flooding problems of the past, were exempt.

Our hearts go out to so many in our community who were still working to get ahead of the devastation of the Memorial Day floods and found themselves, again, victims of the arbitrary and powerful forces of nature. We recognize and applaud the efforts of so many of our Willow Creek neighbors who have given – and continue to give – their time, their energy, and their resources to assist those who need a helping hand. At this special time of year, as we plan celebrations with family and friends from near and far, we have much to be thankful for. And as we share our bounty, please remember those who have lost so much.

While some of our neighbors did experience problems from the Halloween floods, primarily from the storm's high winds and from water rushing downhill into lower-lying areas, it is encouraging to know that the



complex flood-control systems put into place over the years to protect our neighborhood from catastrophe were effective. From our own properties, many of us could see Purgatory Creek transformed into raging, foaming, white water. And a short drive up Hunter Road made it clear just how devastating the flooding was in other areas of the city – many much closer than we expected.

Our neighborhood, like the neighborhoods around us, is located smack in the middle of “flash-flood alley.” We saw all too clearly what the heavy rains and winds can do when they have their way with unanchored yard items – turning them into projectiles – and even with the large



and heavy stones lining drainage ditches. The effects of the erosion are still evident in some areas on Tate Trail, Handler Hollow, and Leslie Lane. In my own case, it's taken weeks to clear our yard

of tons of stone that were washed into our intersection, making it all but impassable on the day of the storm. Others saw their properties become magnets for countless empty water bottles, plastic bags, and other air- and water-borne debris. Planted areas, particularly those with Hill Country flora, appear to have experienced far less erosion than others.

Most disturbing, the emergency siren recently erected in our neighborhood did not issue a tornado warning when needed. The city's engineering department explained that the nature of the storm – which included possible lightning strikes to some sirens – prevented them from activating. The sirens have been tested since then so that we will receive advance notice that a tornado is on its way. Our first responders did an outstanding job rescuing people who were stranded in their homes, in schools, or on the road as the waters quickly deepened. Unfortunately, their job was complicated by those who did not understand the power of rapidly rising and swiftly moving water and, rather than turn back when they saw their path blocked by swirling, brown waters, drove ahead anyway. The brutal strength and life-threatening danger of a flash flood cannot be underestimated. It is relentless and impossible to predict. Flash flooding is similar to a mini tsunami—it is relentless when it starts and cannot be controlled. Take the storm warnings seriously.

Respect the water—it is deeper than you think and it carries debris which could slash your tires or cut your feet. Remember that animals sense trouble before anyone else and if they head for high ground, so should you.

- Becky Dobbins, President

Be Prepared:

- Have a location in your house for storm protection. Build a storm closet, if possible.
- If you know a storm is coming, remove items from your porches that may become projectiles.
- Bring your pets into the house or garage.
- Prepare a few sand bags and keep them handy.
- When the siren is activated, get into a safe place immediately.
- Have an emergency medical kit.
- Keep your cell phone charged – as we've seen, landlines and internet service are vulnerable.
- Have a battery-powered lantern and plenty of batteries.
- Have a battery-operated or hand-cranked emergency radio.
- Do not walk through moving water—it may be deeper than you think – it may have washed away underlying sidewalk or roadway -- and may contain rocks, glass, debris, or harbor dangerous, frightened animals.
- Keep drinking water available – in both recent floods, portions of the city were without potable water.
- Landscape appropriately—use the natural habitat as much as possible.
- Remember to keep your gutters or culverts clean of debris.

Hays County Food Bank:

The food bank is located at 220 Herndon Street in San Marcos. Give them a call at 512-392-8300 to find out their specific needs. They will provide a list which really helps you select the right items. It's the holiday season and the gift of sharing is most appreciated.



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National Night Out:

Another successful night out! Willow Creek Homeowners Association welcomed over 150 people on Tuesday, October 6 to National Night Out at Dick's Classic Garage parking lot. The weather was perfect, the hot dogs were great, and the 30 plus drawing prizes were a big hit! The total value of the door prizes was \$990. Many thanks to the donors and volunteers who made it happen. Special thanks to Dick Burdick, for his generosity and hospitality in allowing us to use his facility for the event. Blue Sky Mortgage provided the ice and drinks.

Drawing prizes were contributed by Conley Car Wash, AutoPro, McCoy's Building Supplies, Sage Capital Bank, Tres Hermanas, The Damron Group, Pioneer Bank, Glass With Class, Texas Roadhouse, WCHOA, Becky Dobbins, and Jon Leonard.



Deed Restriction Reminders:

- Please remember that Willow Creek is a single-family residential neighborhood. We take pride in our uniqueness.
- No lot shall be used for any business, commercial, trade, mercantile or professional purpose (this includes vacation rental by owner and rental by the bedroom to unrelated family).
- Remember you need to get approval from the Architectural Committee before making outside improvements to your home, or adding a pool or other structures to your lot.

Hays County Recycling & Solid Waste Centers:

Centers are located in Wimberley 512-618-7175 and Driftwood 512-858-9514. Both are open Tuesday through Saturday from 8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m., closed Sunday and Monday. Plan ahead—call and make sure you understand the rules and guidelines. As an example, they accept solid waste items using a specific fee structure, accepting cash or check only. Refer to the website at <https://www.co.hays.tx.us/recycling-solid-waste-1.aspx> for the specific list of what they accept for recycling. They do not accept hazardous waste, pool chemicals, and plastic bags.



Upcoming Holiday Lighting Contest:

Once again we will be judging your efforts to bring joy and happiness to yourselves and the entire neighborhood. Each year we have some exciting displays that range from serious to comic. Judges will begin their work on December 18 and complete the review by December 23. Gift cards and free one-year WCHOA memberships will be awarded to the best displays selected by the judges. If you'd like to volunteer for one of the judge positions, please send an email with your contact information to wchoa99@gmail.com. If we have more volunteers than we can use, we will do a drawing to select the lucky volunteers. The lights in our neighborhood are a joyous reminder of how we feel about the holidays, so please participate—either as a judge or with a holiday lighting display. Winners will be announced on our website.

Burn Ban:



The burn ban has been lifted in Hays County—call 512-393-7896 in advance to confirm with the county authorities that you are planning to burn in Hays County. Note however, that open burning of brush, trash, or debris is **prohibited** at all times within city limits.

Drive Carefully:

We appreciate the improved driving in the neighborhood. The speed demons seem to have shifted to other streets to demonstrate their racing skills. For those of you who jog or walk, especially on Stagecoach, please wear safety vests. It is hard to see pedestrians even in sunny weather. The life you save may be your own. We send a special thanks to our local law enforcement agencies for their increased vigilance and presence in our neighborhood.



Send Us Your Photos:

Send us a photo or photos of your outdoor holiday display. We would love to include it in our picture gallery on our website.

Many thanks to the City and to San Marcos CISD:

The additional lane in front of Hernandez has certainly done its job and has alleviated the very serious safety challenges for the young students, and delays and congestion for drivers. There were many near misses and traffic backups prior to its construction. Many kudos to the city and the school district for listening to our concerns and acting on them. Responsiveness is important to our homeowners, especially when it is a serious safety issue. It pays to belong to the Willow Creek Homeowners Association.



Hunter Road and Wonder World:

Those of you who attended the city growth strategy sessions spoke loudly and clearly about keeping the surrounding areas as natural as possible and to preserve the “specialness” of the Willow Creek area. Recently, the City of San Marcos Planning and Zoning Commission voted against turning the Wonder World/Hunter Road corner into another traffic/flood zone challenge. We thank them for their foresight since turning this area into a mini Kohl’s Corner would not be

ideal for San Marcos. If anything changes, we will share with the community immediately.

Interested in helping the Animal Shelter?

Many animals get displaced or lost when there are bad storms. Many end up at the City of San Marcos Animal Shelter. If animals are chipped it makes it much easier to get them home. Please be sure all your pets are chipped, including indoor animals. If an “indoor only” pet gets out, it can be a huge problem to identify the owners and get the pet back home. A chipped animal gets home! The animal shelter takes cash donations as well as dog/cat food, treats, cat litter, bedding, towels, blankets, and comforters. Did you know you can also purchase a Kuranda bed specifically for the San Marcos Regional Animal Shelter at www.kuranda.com/donate/5410? Also, Smile Amazon (smile.amazon.com) has the wish list for items they need—it’s easy, and in a matter of minutes, you can make a difference.





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Neighborhood Theft:

Recently another incident of theft from an unlocked vehicle in our neighborhood was reported. Although we are a very safe area (this is the first theft report since August), it pays to remain vigilant. Protect yourselves and your property – keep your vehicles, houses and outbuildings locked.

The Construction Dirt Pile:

The dirt pile on Stagecoach continues to be an eyesore even though it is slowly being used to create other home foundations. We continue to press for its removal.

Streetlight Outages:

Need a streetlight bulb replaced? Since part of the neighborhood is in the city and part in the county, there are different contact numbers:

- **City:** SMTX Connect Service Requests through the city website, the SMTX Connect app on your smart phone, call 888-491-3119 or text 617-500-3111. Be sure to give the exact location of the pole where the light is located and also inform them that the area is serviced by PEC.
- **County:** Contact PEC directly at 512-393-7779 (the general office number) and be sure to provide the exact location of the pole where the light is out.

City News on Green Waste/Recycling Carts:

On November 24th the following information was posted on the City's website:

Question: What happens if I use the carts for the wrong items?

Answer: The City and Texas Disposal Systems (TDS) have reassessed the City's new green waste cart program and how the recent flooding has impacted this and all waste services.

After further discussions, any green waste cart that is continually contaminated will be removed from the residence.

Items accepted in the green waste carts include yard waste (leaves, grass clippings, weeds, branches up to 5" in diameter) and soiled paper products (to-go pizza boxes, cartons with gabled top, paper plates, paper towels, paper napkins, paper cups). Any other items that are placed in the cart could contaminate the cart and the recycling process.

If there is contamination in the green waste cart, TDS will not empty the cart. The resident must remove all contamination. Residents can put up to 2 extra 30-gallon trash bags by their trash cart, on the next regularly scheduled trash service

day for free until November 30th. Any extra trash bags set out by the trash cart after November 30th will be charged the contract rate of \$9.03 per bag.

Starting the week of November 30, city staff will be auditing green waste carts before they are emptied to check for contamination. If there is contamination, the cart will be moved off the curb and a letter stating why the cart was not emptied and a flyer with the correct placement of material will be taped to the green waste cart.

Question: Isn't it a compost cart? Why can't I put food scraps in it?

Answer: It is not for compost. It is for green waste only. It can only be used for yard waste and soiled paper products. State regulations prohibit food scraps in carts that are not picked up weekly.

Fireworks & Pets:

We want to remind all residents that it is against city code to use fireworks within the city limits and also in the ETJ (Extraterritorial Jurisdiction) which includes all of the Willow Creek Estates subdivision. Not only do fireworks pose a serious danger to the safety of persons and property, it may be very frightening to our pets.

Residents are encouraged not to engage in this activity and to also make sure that their pets have a safe and secure indoor place on New Year's Eve so they don't become spooked and run away. We have had many violations over the last few years and it's a dangerous way to celebrate. Be considerate. If you must use fireworks, go to a sanctioned location; please do not use your backyard.



Annual Spring Garage Sale:

Our annual spring WCHOA neighborhood garage sale will be held on April 1st and 2nd this year.



Heating Safety:

The Hays County Fire Marshal's Office has provided us with these heating safety tips:

- Keep anything that can burn at least three feet away from heating equipment, like the furnace, fireplace, wood stove, or portable space heater.
 - Have a three-foot "kid-free/pet-free zone" around open fires and space heaters.
 - Never use your oven to heat your home.
 - Have a qualified professional install stationary space heating equipment, water heaters or central heating equipment according to the local codes and manufacturer's instructions.
 - Have heating equipment and chimneys cleaned and inspected every year by a qualified professional.
 - Remember to turn portable heaters off when leaving the room or going to bed.
- Always use the right kind of fuel, specified by the manufacturer, for fuel burning space heaters.
 - Make sure the fireplace has a sturdy screen to stop sparks from flying into the room. Ashes should be cool before putting them in a metal container. Keep the container a safe distance away from your home.
 - Install and maintain CO (Carbon Monoxide) alarms to avoid the risk of CO poisoning. If you smell gas in your gas heater, do not light the appliance. Leave the home and call your local fire department or Gas Company.
 - Install wood burning stoves following manufacturer's instructions or have a professional do the installation. All fuel-burning equipment should be vented to the outside to avoid carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning.
 - Test smoke alarms monthly.



**Seasons
Greetings**

From Your WCHOA Board