

# *Willow Creek News & Views*

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***WCHOA ~ Willow Creek Homeowners Association, Inc.***

*"Deed Restricted Single-Family Neighborhood" — [www.wchoatx.com](http://www.wchoatx.com)*

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## ***President's Message—A Season of Sharing:***

As Thanksgiving approaches, we are reminded of the importance of family, friends, and community. We are thankful for what we have and, traditionally, we gather together to share our thanks, and a special holiday meal, with those who are close to us. For most of us, that requires hours in the kitchen, preparing luscious—and prized—family recipes, whether we're serving them at home or bringing them "over the river and through the woods" to grandmother's house or the home of someone we're close to.

Remember, though, not everybody is as fortunate as we may be. Distance, illness, accident, age, infirmity, or lack of resources may keep others we know from enjoying the holiday as they might like to—or as they once did. If you're like me, you've probably rarely celebrated a Thanksgiving that wasn't marked by an abundance of wonderful food—and leftovers enough to enjoy for days on end. If you're in a position to share, and know some folks who might not otherwise get to enjoy the food and companionship of this, the first American holiday, think about how you might bring an extra measure of joy to their holiday. Perhaps you can extend them an invitation to your home or bring a holiday meal to their home.

Interested in helping out in a larger way? Contact local churches, veterans' organizations, or civic and charitable associations, and ask how you can help—with food or by volunteering to help cook and serve holiday meals to those in need. This is also the time of year when the Hays County Food Bank has a very real need for additional resources, financially and through the donation of nonperishable food items, to help families and individuals who might otherwise experience hunger on this day marked by bounty for so many of us.

So many of us have so much to be thankful for. So let us take a moment to give thanks as we enjoy the time we spend with our relatives and friends on this special day. And accept my warmest wishes and thanks, and those of the Board and officers of the Willow Creek Homeowners Association. I want to personally thank everyone who made this year a success for our neighborhood and for our association, by participating in our events, patronizing our advertisers, and contributing to making Willow Creek Estates one of the greatest places to call home. Thank you for being great neighbors.



—Becky Dobbins, President

## **Holiday Decorations:**

Once that last slice of leftover pumpkin pie is finished, many in our community start thinking about holiday lights. Some of us will be busy at the malls on Black Friday, hunting up bargains. Others, though, will pass, so they can get a head start wrapping bright, twinkling lights around trees, windows, and on porches, not to mention colorful, seasonal lawn decorations. Our neighborhood has always stood out for the incredible range of eye-catching holiday displays, and the use of the latest technology to keep them fresh and interesting.



We're looking forward again this year to our annual Willow Creek Homeowners Association annual holiday lights and decorations competition. This year, our judges will be traveling through the neighborhood, enjoying the sights, and working to narrow down the range of incredible lights and decorations to those that will receive the Directors' Award and those that will be chosen as one of the coveted "Top 3." And who knows, there may even be a wild card—a home with decorations so unique and eye catching, that our judges just can't pass it up.

We'll even have yard signs designating each winner. That's some serious bragging rights! So get busy, we know just how creative Willow Creek folks can be. You choose your theme, your colors, and your overall approach. And keep this in mind—we're not just judging lights. Many displays are meant to be seen in daylight, without lights, and we definitely don't want to exclude them. We'll start the judging on December 14 so awards can be given no later than December 22. We'll also send out an email blast announcing the winners (with addresses) so our neighbors have plenty of time to see them. With 500 properties in our neighborhood, we know there will be plenty of decorating activity. And our winners will each receive a gift cards to a local business.

## **PEC UPGRADES:**

Pedernales Electric Cooperative crews recently completed work to make system improvements to better serve the growing energy needs of our area. Green ribbons were attached to poles, bushes, fences, etc. as a marker that the work at that location was completed. PEC says those ribbons may now be removed. We appreciate PEC's thoughtfulness in advising each home well in advance of when there would be a short power interruption as the work was completed.

## **Winter Is A'Comin' In:**

To borrow from an old, seasonal expression, "Yes, Virginia, there is a winter in Texas." And as you prepare your properties for the Texas version of winter, please remember the following: it freezes in San Marcos—generally only one or two days at a time, and not so long ago, for a two-week period. And—freezing or not—our nights do get cold. That affects our plants, flowers, and trees. That affects our pets. And, most expensively, that affects our plumbing.

**Greenery:** Young trees, and almost all plants and shrubs are vulnerable to cold weather. Any warm-weather flora planted in your yards may not survive frosty weather-events without human intervention. Potted outdoor plants can be moved inside or to a covered porch area, or, like planted flora, they can be covered with plastic, cloth, or other sheeting. (But take care that plastic should not come into direct contact with plants.) Make sure any coverings reach the ground and are secured—with stones, boards, or other items that the wind won't take away. Extra mulch around the roots may help the plants retain heat.



Never assume your plants will “weather” any condition. Even native Texas plants succumb to frost. Need more information? Contact a local gardening shop for advice or go online to learn how Texas winters affect the local flora.

**Critters:** Sometimes it seems counterintuitive, but those fur coats on our dogs, cats, and other pets aren’t enough protection in freezing weather. And the bottoms of their paws are bare and more sensitive than you might think—particularly on icy surfaces. And ice-storms aren’t uncommon in our parts, even if the ice melts away halfway through the day. Remember, too, that when the weather is cold, the water in your pet’s dish can freeze, so keep an eye on it and change it when necessary. You might also want to provide some kind of temporary shelter, out of the wind, if you have a friendly stray that comes by your home for the occasional meal or attention—or if the temperature plunges while you’re not at home and your own pet is outside. You can heat a temporary shelter with a low-wattage incandescent light bulb—just be sure to avoid having it too close to a flammable surface.



**Pipes:** Even a short freeze can burst water pipes that are exposed to the cold. This includes pipes in an outside sink, external spigots where you attach your garden hose, or your lawn irrigation system. The best advice we’ve ever had is to turn off each outside water line, using its inside master control valve, and then drain the outside pipes once you’ve turned off the water from the inside. Once you’ve done that, keep the spigot open to minimize any freezing damage from residual water that may still be trapped in the pipe. If you can’t do that, the next best thing is to insulate outdoor pipes and spigots, or, where possible, wrap them with water-pipe heating cable, available at home-improvement and hardware stores. But don’t wait until the last minute, when a freeze is predicted, and there’s a rush on supplies. Plan ahead and be ready.

### **PARKING ON GRASS:**

It is a city code violation to park vehicles on the grass beside your driveway or house. If you need additional parking spaces, and you live in the City of San Marcos, contact the city to determine what is required (poured concrete pad, pavers, rocks, etc.), and arrange for any necessary construction permits. Of course, before you do anything related to construction, you also want to check the Willow Creek Homeowners Association covenants that govern this type of activity on your property. The WCHOA will be happy to help you determine if there are any specific requirements that affect your project. Covenants for all sections of Willow Creek are posted on our website, <https://wchoatx.com/restrictions-covenants/>.

### **RVs, BOATS, TRAILERS:**

Most of the sections in our Willow Creek neighborhoods prohibit the parking of RVs, boats or trailers in driveways or streets for more than 72 hours at a time. These vehicles may only be permanently housed in a covered garage of adequate size which must be approved by the Directors or Architectural Control Committees of the HOA. As there are 14 different sections, all with slight variation in restrictions, consult your Covenants and Restrictions or contact us for more information specific to your property. It’s our experience that our neighbors don’t want to see large vehicles parked in back yards and visible from the street or over fences. Please help us to preserve the natural beauty of our beautiful subdivision.

## **Traffic. Traffic. Traffic:**

We just can't say enough about traffic. And as traffic continues to increase in one of the fastest-growing areas in the nation—and as we see an tremendous increase in truck traffic with the nearby H-E-B and Amazon distribution centers—please be extra careful, especially in merge areas. Watching daily near misses, no matter what kind of vehicle somebody is driving, has become common for most of us. It's disheartening to watch (or experience) the "zoomers" run stop signs and lights, and tailgate regardless of the road or neighborhood conditions.

The "merge" areas are especially problematic since the term "merge" sometimes seems to be foreign to some drivers. Larger tractor-trailers need room to maneuver and "cutting them off" in merge areas—or when they're making the left from Wonderworld onto the northbound I-35 access road—can be a killer, or at least result in some serious collision damage to your vehicle. Most professional drivers have extensive training and experience and anticipate potentially dangerous driving patterns. But one of the primary responsibilities of any driver is to "watch out for the other guy." Be aware. Anticipate. And know what to do if the other driver doesn't. Drive as if your life depended on it, because it does.

Stagecoach Trail is the "Main Street" through Willow Creek Estates. With that, comes the heaviest amount of traffic, the most speeders, and other hazardous conditions that come with that. And with darkness now coming earlier each evening, it's a good time to remind pedestrians—whether power-walking, just out for a stroll, jogging, pushing a baby stroller or carriage, or walking a dog—to please, be safe. Wear reflective clothing, night or day, on any street, when walking or jogging. Never assume that a driver sees you. Don't let your pet off its leash. Stay as close to the side of the road as possible. Carry a light when the sun goes down. Always assume that 100% of your safety belongs to you.

## **SMTX Connect Mobile App:**

This is r-e-a-l-l-y cool! An app you can install on your Apple iPhone or Android phone that offers a simple way to report problems or issues, request services, and comment to the City of San Marcos. Service requests can range from potholes to graffiti removal, parking problems, uncollected trash, junk vehicles, missing stop signs, safety issues, tall grass, noise, and much, much more. Each will and be routed directly to the appropriate city department for action.

You can report anonymously, or you can include your name and an email address to receive a status report. We've talked to folks who have used the SMTX Connect Mobile App and they say the city has reacted quickly and appropriately to their concerns. It's also helpful to know that many restrictions in homeowner covenants may also be violations of city ordinances. When that's the case, and your report an issue through the SMTX Connect Mobile App, the appropriate city department will follow up and work to abate the issue. It's definitely something you want to consider for your iPhone or Android Phone. You can report a problem when you see it, without having to wait until you get back home or get to work, get busy with other things, and possibly have the issue slip your mind.

Want to know more? Here's the link: <http://sanmarcostx.gov/209/SMTX-Connect-Mobile-App>

One word of caution: SMTX Connect does not replace 911 for emergencies. You should continue to dial 9-1-1 for health, fire, and police emergencies.

