



OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE

Laurel Oaks Neighborhood Association

MAY 2011 • VOLUME IV, ISSUE V

DEAR NEIGHBORS,

With spring and summer in full bloom, now is the perfect time to work on our yards and homes, especially before it gets too hot. I am seeing a lot of activity in the neighborhood where people are adding mulch to their flower beds, trimming plants and shrubs, planting flowers, fertilizing their lawns and trimming their trees.

I have received some emails from concerned neighbors about the tree trimming that is going on right now as it relates to Oak Wilt. This topic also comes up at almost every board meeting since our oaks are such an important asset to this neighborhood. Many experts recommend not trimming your oaks between the months of February and June.

If you are considering trimming your trees now or in the near future, please review these two links and/or consult a licensed arborist before doing so. We frequently have companies coming through our neighborhood soliciting tree trimming jobs-this information may help you make an informed decision.

<http://texasoakwilt.org>

http://www.laurel-oaks.org/Announcements_MVG7.php

Best Regards, Ellen Kelsey

GARDENING NEWS FROM CARAWAY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Check out the blog for The Caraway Green Team:

<http://carawaygreenteam.wordpress.com/>

For occasional emails about gardening projects around the school, email MMLN@austin.rr.com



NEWSLETTER TIPS

The monthly newsletter is mailed to homes in the LONA neighborhood unless you select other options. You can sign up to receive the newsletter by email or you can receive the newsletter by mail and email. See www.peelinc.com/LaurelOaksNA.

The newsletter is for the LONA neighbors and is most interesting when the articles are of local interest to the neighborhood. Do you have an interest in gardening, bird watching, wildlife habitats such as owl or bat houses, recycling or? Share your knowledge and interests with the neighbors, submit an article.

A reminder on submitting articles for the LONA newsletter is sent via email to the neighborhood Yahoo! group each month. If you want to join the LONA neighborhood Yahoo! group, go to <http://www.laurel-oaks.org/Membership.php> for information on LONA membership and how to join the Yahoo! group.

This is the newsletter article email reminder sent each month to the neighborhood Yahoo! group: *Please submit your articles online at the link below by the 5th of each month. All submissions will be sent directly to Diane Willis (newsletter editor) for review. She then compiles all articles and submits them to Peel, Inc. for publishing. This service is FREE and we need more local information to make the newsletter great each month.*

You can submit short or long articles.

Diane will proof them before submitting to Peel.

HOW TO SUBMIT:

Go to: www.peelinc.com/articleSubmit.php

Be certain to select "Laurel Oaks NA" from the drop down list once on the Peel website. Deadline is the 5th of each month. If submitted after this date, the information will be added to the next newsletter. Or use the link from the LONA website: <http://www.laurel-oaks.org/> - Newsletters - Click on "instructions for submitting articles."

If you would like to advertise there are advertising rates posted also on the LONA website - newsletter page.

*-If you have any questions,
please contact Diane at secretary@laurel-oaks.org*

Laurel Oaks

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Emails sent to LONA_Board@laurel-oaks.org will go to all listed above. Please address your email appropriately. Visit LONA's website for more information, www.laurel-oaks.org

NEWSLETTER INFO

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PUBLISHER

Peel, Inc. 512-263-9181
Advertising..... advertising@PEELinc.com

**NOT AVAILABLE
ONLINE**



MAY EVENTS *at the Wildflower Center*

National Public Gardens Day

9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Friday, May 6

Special wildflower and ecology tours

Gardens on Tour

9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday, May 7

A special self-guided tour to secret garden treasures featuring unique ways to design with native plants. Five gardens plus the Wildflower Center for \$25 or pay \$6 for individual gardens. Origami artist Joan Son in the store noon to 4 p.m. Sponsored by South Texas Money Management.

Texas Highways Photo Exhibit

Monday, May 2, through Sunday, May 8

Honoring National Wildflower Week

Nature Nights—Butterflies

6 to 9 p.m. Friday, May 20

\$1 admission

Silk Paintings

Opens Saturday, May 28

Uniquely layered silk with colorful additions by Catherine Flowers in the McDermott Learning Center.

Memorial Day

Monday, May 30

The Wildflower Center is open.

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FINANCIAL FOCUS

“Munis” Can Still Work for You — Even in Tough Times

No matter where you live, the chances are good that a state or local government near you may be having some difficulty in balancing its budget. As a citizen, you're probably concerned about how this situation will affect your life and your community. But as an investor, you may also wonder how this might affect any municipal bonds you own. Fortunately, the outlook might be brighter than you think.

Of course, taken to the extreme, the financial challenges of some state and local governments could conceivably affect their ability to fulfill the payment obligations on their municipal bonds. But investment-grade quality municipal bond default rates historically have been very low, especially when compared to those of corporate bonds. And municipalities are cutting spending, eliminating nonessential programs and, in some cases, raising taxes or fees. In short, they are taking steps that, while potentially painful to residents, are likely to help them continue making timely payments of interest and principal on their municipal bond obligations. Furthermore, municipalities must still fund various projects, and even one bond payment default could impact their future ability to borrow money in the form of new municipal



bonds.

So are munis right for you? The answer depends on your situation — your goals, need for investment income, current investment mix, risk tolerance and so on. But if you want to receive interest payments that are exempt from federal taxes, you may well be interested in exploring municipal bonds. Keep in mind, though, that municipal bonds may be subject to state and local taxes and the alternative minimum tax (AMT).

In addition, you'll want to be familiar with “taxable-equivalent yield.” Typically, municipal bonds pay an interest rate that's lower than those paid by taxable bonds. Since this interest is free from federal taxes, however, the rate may not be as low as it appears. The taxable-equivalent yield measures the rate you'd have to earn on a

taxable bond to match the income from a tax-exempt municipal bond. And the higher your tax bracket, the higher your taxable-equivalent yield.

Suppose that you're in the 35% marginal tax bracket, and you are considering a tax-exempt municipal bond with a 3.33% yield. You simply divide 3.33% (0.0333 in decimal form) by 1 minus 0.35 (your tax bracket), which would give you 0.0512, or 5.12%. In this tax bracket, a muni with a 3.33% yield is equivalent to a taxable bond with a 5.12% yield. (This example is for illustration purposes only.)

Keep in mind that, before investing in bonds, you should understand the risks involved, including interest rate risk, credit risk and market risk. Bond investments are subject to interest rate risk such that when interest rates rise, the prices of bonds can decrease, and you can lose principal value if the investment is sold prior to maturity. So it's best to discuss municipal bonds with your financial and tax advisors.

By adding quality municipal bonds to your portfolio, you can show faith in your municipality, your investment dollars can help support worthwhile projects in your area, and you receive a steady source of tax-exempt income.

LONA DONATION FORM

YES! I would like to make a donation to help LONA raise funds.

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Amount Given: \$ _____

General contributions are used for LONA web site hosting and domain costs, event expenditures & general administrative costs.

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Laurel Oaks



NATUREWATCH - AVIAN ACROBATS

by Jim and Lynne Weber



Small to medium-sized songbirds with long, pointed wings, forked or squared tails, and inconspicuous legs and feet, swallows are characterized by their adaptation to aerial feeding. Unlike other groups of birds, swallows have a streamlined body shape that has evolved to efficiently hunt insects on the wing, allowing for great maneuverability, endurance, and frequent periods of gliding. When not performing their avian acrobatics, swallows are often seen perching in long rows on branches and wires.

Spending most of their waking hours hunting for flying insects, swallows have short bills, strong jaws, and a wide gape. They feed at speeds up to 25 miles per hour and are selective about their prey, tending to choose the larger insects rather than scooping up every insect around them. Swallows also use aerial flights to attract a mate, and are monogamous breeders. While they can be territorial, most form at least loosely aggregated colonies with both the male and female jointly constructing their nests, made primarily with mud and sometimes added bits of dried vegetation.

Swallows migrate to Central and South America for the winter and three species of swallows return to the Austin area in late March and April, with breeding occurring soon after. The most common is the Barn Swallow (*Hirundo rustica*), with a dark slate blue back, reddish brown throat, cinnamon or buffy chest, and deeply forked tail. They prefer to nest in suburban areas, often building their mud structures under the eaves of porches and overhangs. Males have 18% longer tails than females, and females generally choose a mate by the length of its tail. Barn swallows begin hawking for insects an hour or so before dawn, accompanied by their liquid, energetic chattering.

Found mostly flying around overpasses and bridges where they prefer to build large mud nest colonies, Cliff Swallows (*Petrochelidon pyrrhonota*) have a squarish tail, buffy rump, dark chestnut throat, and a pale forehead. Normal flights follow a rollercoaster path, with rapid ascents on quick wingbeats, followed by downward glides. Courtship flights in the spring are followed by copulation on the ground.

Cave Swallows (*Petrochelidon fulva*) look quite similar to Cliff Swallows, and are distinguished by their buffy throat and cinnamon forehead. Locally common and increasing their range to the north and east, Cave Swallows historically occurred only in dimly lit interiors of caves or sinkholes, but over the past few decades have begun utilizing man-made structures such as low bridges and culverts. When returning to the location of their mud nests, they fold their wings and plunge in at a high speed, then circle around inside the cave/structure to lose momentum before landing.

Adept aerialists, swallows do many things on the wing, including drinking and bathing. The next time you witness their swooping flight and distinctive chattering, take a moment to appreciate these avian acrobats!

*Send your nature-related questions to naturewatch@austin.rr.com and we'll do our best to answer them. If you enjoy reading these articles, look for our book, *Nature Watch Austin*, to be published by Texas A&M University Press in 2011.*



Cliff Swallow



Barn Swallow



Cave Swallow



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LOCAL AUSTIN CHARITY -IMAGINE A WAY-

Offers Hope for Central Texas Area Children Affected by Autism

Imagine A Way announces the launch of their non-profit organization, established to offer Central Texas Area children diagnosed with Autism greater accessibility to services and therapies. This grass-roots charity was born less than a year ago in the hearts of Joel and Carolyn Price after their son, Joshua, was diagnosed as being on the Autism spectrum. Imagine A Way is now honored to observe Autism Awareness Month (April 2011) as an official non-profit organization whose mission is to support and provide hope and services to local families whose child has received this challenging diagnosis.

"After Joshua's diagnosis we recognized consistent, targeted therapies were critical for his development. We felt so grateful for our ability to provide these for him. The early intervention and therapies gave us the hope that we would get our son back," said Joel Price, founder and President of Imagine A Way.

And then they realized there are families who cannot afford these same essential therapies.

Statistically, the window for making the biggest difference in a child dealing with autism is between the ages of 2 and 6. While help and support slowly improve through legislation, children everyday are entering and leaving this window of time without having had the opportunity to get the help and resources they need at the most critical time they need it.

Early, consistent therapy is proven as one of the most influential factors for the successful socialization and development of Autistic children. Yet it is costly and not always covered by insurance or social services. Limited resources can mean the difference in reaching the child or losing them.

Imagine A Way was founded to help families provide their child with these essential therapies, enabling them to reach their full potential. The impact this local organization will have upon these families will be truly life changing.

Joshua was diagnosed with autism in March of 2007. At age 2 1/2 Joshua was slowly drifting away and the Prices found themselves in unfamiliar territory, trying to bring him back to them. Last November, the therapies and commitment paid off. "While picking up my son from therapy," Joel remembers, "the therapist told me that when they asked him what he wants to be when he grows up, Joshua's answer was... "I want to be like my Daddy!" Wow! What a gift. A gift we are intent on sharing."

*Imagine A Way is just that. A gift for
families affected by Autism.*

(Continued on Page 10)

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Laurel Oaks

Imagine A Way- (Continued from Page 8)

Imagine A Way is planning their first annual Founder's Event for next month, and would like to invite anyone interested in joining with them as a Founding Partner to please visit their website (www.ImagineAWayFoundation.org) or call for more information. With intentions to touch local families in this very practical and personal way, this organization will make a huge impact.

"We are dedicated to making a difference one child, one family at a time," Joel explains. But with a heart as big as this, it won't be long before Imagine A Way touches the whole community.

About Imagine A Way:

Founded in 2010, Imagine A Way is an Austin based 501(c)(3) non-profit organization bringing support, therapies and hope to Central Texas Area families affected by Autism.

For more information about Imagine A Way visit their website at: www.ImagineAWayFoundation.org

WHAT CAUSES AUTISM?

By Connie Ripley

Autism is diagnosed in one out of 110 children (1 in 70 boys). In 1975, autism effected 1 in 5,000. It is the fastest growing serious developmental disorder in the U.S., but is it a disorder or a disease?

The reasons for this huge increase, especially the 57% increase between 2002 and 2005, are being explored by parents, physicians and scientists. The means of diagnosing being essentially the same, what in our current world is causing the escalation of autism at alarming rates?

No totally supported cure exists. Early detection and intervention are the best treatments.

Many concerned parents are blaming childhood immunizations—due in part to a well-publicized study by Dr. Andrew Wakefield (founder the Austin-based Thoughtful House) linking the measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) vaccine to autism. Medical organizations and drug companies have spent millions combating what they call his "fraudulent research findings", yet Wakefield still holds his findings as factual. Who do you believe? The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) is finally citing studies showing that early exposure to mercury-based thimerosal is associated with motor and phonic tics in boys. Others are claiming the measles vaccine is a live virus that may continue to live in some children.

The age of parents, either mother or father, has been shown to possibly have an impact on the diagnosis. According to the federal government's leading autism body, the Interagency Autism Coordinating Committee (IACC), "Recent studies suggest...that parental age...may confer environmental risk." The Dr. Oz television show had a large portion of one show on the causes. This was a well-accepted cause, but why?

In-Vitro fertilization appears to also be in question. A recognized physician and autism specialist states that 29% of her autism patients were conceived in-vitro. (It is important to note that this is only one physician's findings and is not a published study.) Could this also be linked to age of parents? The federal government is also studying Toxins as a possible cause. The unusually high incidence of autism in children around Texas power plants is cited in some studies.

Mitochondrial DNA damage is finally getting a lot of attention from both physicians and the federal government.

Current scientific findings support the concept of a medical disease causing a dysregulated immune system to constrict the blood flow in some children's brains, primarily the temporal lobes affecting motor skills, social integration and speech. Some physicians claim that when "the villain" that causes the damage can be identified and removed from the child, autism symptoms diminish. Is this a vitamin deficiency, a virus, a fungus, sensitivities to toxins or certain food allergies?

The CDC now wants to do a 5 year study on the potential risk for post vaccine "neurological deterioration" and a study of

(Continued on Page 11)

What's on your to-do list this month?



Change Your World - sundays @ 10 am

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What Causes Autism- (Continued from Page 10)

mitochondrial dysfunction. This comes after the IACC announced a shift in research priorities toward environmental triggers, which could include toxins, biological agents and “adverse events following immunization.” Does a genetic predisposition to the disorder exist in some children? While each gene appears to affect only a small percentage of cases, groups of genes appear to account for a greater percentage of autism risk. When children are exposed to certain toxins, viruses, fungi or conditions, autism could be the result, but not in all siblings and not in all twins.

Why are four times as many boys as girls affected with autism?

Something causes this early disruption in the development of the brain of one in 110 children (Some even say the number is more like one in 91. The U.S. military is stating 1 in 80 in ads on TV!), but what?

Autism Speaks is North America’s largest autism science and advocacy organization. Autism Speaks is funded primarily by local walks. The Greater Austin Walk Now for Autism Speaks committees and teams are being formed for the 2011 Walk at Dell Diamond on September 24. Your help is needed! Please contact Walk Manager Traci Whitney at traci.whitney@autismspeaks.org or go to www.walknowforautismspeaks.org/austin

Every 15 minutes a parent is told his/her child has autism!

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Tuesday, May 3rd, Doors open at 6PM, Movie at sundown**

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For more information, visit our website at www.colinshope.org

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