



Garden Oaks Gazette

A publication of the Garden Oaks Civic Club



JANUARY 2015

AN 18-FOOT TALL HIGH SPEED RAIL RUNNING THROUGH GARDEN OAKS?

By Mark Klein, *President, Central Northwest Super Neighborhood Council*



An elevated high-speed rail is being proposed above the BNSF railroad tracks along 34th Street, *running right through Garden Oaks* and other long-established neighborhoods in the area including Inwood, Magnum Manor, Oak Forest, Independence Heights, Lindale, and others.

Proposed by the private, for-profit Central Texas Railway, the bullet train would ferry passengers between Houston and Dallas at 200 mph every 30 minutes from 5:30 a.m. to 11:00 p.m.

The Garden Oaks BNSF line is one of two “preferred” routes being considered by the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) in conjunction with the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT). The other route would also bisect highly populated neighborhoods along the Union Pacific rail line through the Washington Avenue corridor.

Continued on page 20

UPCOMING EVENTS

High-Speed Rail Town Hall Meeting

Monday, January 5
6:30 p.m.
Lutheran High School
1130 W. 34th Street

January Civic Club Meeting

Tuesday, January 6
7:00 p.m.
Speaker Vince Ryan, Harris Co. Atty.
Garden Oaks Montessori
901 Sue Barnett Drive

GOMM Pancake Breakfast

Saturday, February 7
8:00-10:30 a.m.
Garden Oaks Montessori
901 Sue Barnett Drive

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JANUARY CIVIC CLUB SPEAKER VINCE RYAN, HARRIS COUNTY ATTORNEY

Vince Ryan has served as Harris County Attorney since 2009. The Harris County Attorney is the civil lawyer for Harris County, related governmental entities and their officials. But the ultimate clients are the people of Harris County.

A Houston native, Vince served in the ROTC while attending the University of Houston. Upon graduation he became an active duty officer in the United States Army, first serving in Europe and then volunteering for service in Vietnam. He returned to active duty for Operation Just Cause which ousted the dictator of Panama in 1990. After his service in Vietnam, Vince left active duty and attended the University of Houston Law School. While practicing law, Vince attended Rice University and received a Master's Degree in History. He also remained in the Army Reserve and retired as a Lieutenant Colonel.

Vince first began working in the County Attorney's Office under Mike Driscoll and served as an Assistant County Attorney and First Assistant County Attorney from 1981 to 1987. He left to begin three terms on Houston City Council in 1988. Following his Council service, Vince was appointed to the Board of the Panama Canal Commission which oversaw the Canal and its historic transition to Panama on December 31, 1999. During and following his service on the Panama Canal Commission, Vince was associated with several prominent Houston law firms and continued his community involvement, serving on various boards.

Vince is married to Pam Rodriguez; they have three sons. Vince is and has been involved in many community and non-profit organizations.



Garden Oaks Gazette

The Garden Oaks Gazette is the official publication of the Garden Oaks Civic Club and is published monthly. The submission deadline is the 15th of each month for publication the following month, unless otherwise noted.

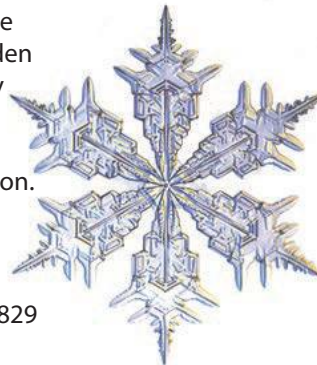
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HEARD UNDER THE OAK TREE

By Terry Jeanes

Welcome, New Neighbors!

Congratulations on joining our community. We hope to see you at a civic club meeting soon.

982 Althea	895 West 41st
847 Lamonte	854 West 42nd
1054 Lamonte	919 West 43rd
713 Sue Barnett	955 West 43rd
423 West 31st	1026 West 43rd
304 West 32nd	1042 West 43rd
220 West 34th	

Happy Birthday

Hannah Stender.....	1/4
Katy G.	1/6
Mae T.	1/8
Diane Heath.....	1/9
Phil Ramirez.....	1/10
Patricia Semands	1/19
Lindsay V.	1/24
Shellye Arnold	1/30
Owen H.	1/30
Joe Muscara.....	1/30
Caroline C.	1/31

Happy Anniversary

Alice & Mark Sarmiento..... 1/30

Congratulations

A high-five to **Grant V.** whose Farm Day picture earned him the distinction of Artist of the Month at St. Anne Catholic School.

Out and About

On Thanksgiving Day, Garden Oaks residents **Jason** and **Marissa Feit** ran the Turkey Trot in Gruene, Texas. **Robert De Veau, Devin Hunter,** and the **Shamblen** family ran in the TXU Energy Houston Turkey Trot benefitting Sheltering Arms Senior Services.

Disney World had Thanksgiving visits from **Susan Morris** and also the **Odinets** family. The **Odinets** also enjoyed the Houston Zoo Lights.

Lucy M. celebrated her 13th birthday in New York City at the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade along with parents **Sean** and **Caroline** and brother **Josh**.

Randy Evans competed on Food Network's *Kitchen Inferno*, which numerous neighbors gathered to view at a special watch party at Lillo and Ella.

Special Thoughts

Heartfelt condolences to the family and friends of long-time Garden Oaks resident **Oscar Ochoa**, WWII Navy veteran and founder of O.D.'s Printing, who passed away on December 2nd. Oscar dearly loved our neighborhood and showed it through his volunteerism and sponsorship of Civic Club activities, including the printing of the *Gazette*. He will be greatly missed.

Deep sympathy for the friends and family of another beloved neighbor, **Gilbert "George" Vera**, who also passed away in early December. George was an avid cyclist seen often through the years riding along the streets of Garden Oaks.

Condolences to the family and loved ones of **Maria Lawson**, Garden Oaks resident and animal advocate. Maria passed away on December 4th surrounded by her partner and their furry children.

Special thoughts for **Lori Kennedy** and **Joe Muscara** on the recent loss of their pet cat Max Power.

Wishes for healing and speedy recovery to **Rita Hartman** and **Angelica Sullivan** following their surgical procedures.

To highlight an event, celebration, or other tidbit, contact Terry Jeanes at 713-812-9154 or terry@terryjeanes.com.

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GARDEN OAKS CIVIC CLUB MEETING MINUTES

By Cindy Bartos, Secretary

December 2, 2014

Location: Garden Oaks Montessori Magnet School, 901 Sue Barnett

Residents were greeted as they arrived with a festive variety of holiday musical selections provided by the impressive sounds of the Waltrip Ram Band.

Welcome: President Sheila Briones called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m. and welcomed Waltrip Ram Band Director Jesse Espinosa and thanked him and the band for their appearance tonight. The first of 10 tickets was drawn for one of the ten poinsettia plant centerpieces. A motion was made and seconded to approve the November 2014 minutes as published in the *Gazette*. The motion passed.

President Briones called on Nominations Committee member Brenda de Alba to report the committee's suggested slate of officers for 2015 Garden Oaks Civic Club Board:

President: Sheila Briones
 Vice President: Chris Lindsay
 Secretary: Cindy Bartos
 Treasurer: Jerry Butler

Brenda asked for nominations from the floor and, hearing none, a motion was made and seconded to accept the slate of officers by acclamation. The motion passed. President Briones thanked the Nominations Committee members: Victor Seghers, Terry Jeanes, Brenda de Alba, Tonya Knauth, and Tina Parks.

Treasurer's Report: Treasurer Jerry Butler reported on the Civic Club's current finances and had copies of the Profit and Loss statement, the Balance Sheet, and the Proposed 2015 Budget available at the meeting. A motion was made and seconded to approve the proposed 2015 budget. The motion passed.

Garden Oaks Montessori Principal Lindsey Pollock welcomed all those attending and reminded residents of the December 19th deadline to apply to the Garden Oaks Montessori Magnet school for fall of 2015. Teachers and community members have provided input concerning the plans for the design and construction of the new school building.

President Briones suspended standing committee reports for tonight's meeting.

A check was presented to Principal Pollock for the Garden Oaks Montessori Magnet School in the amount of \$1000, previously voted on with the approval of the 2014 Garden Oaks Civic Club budget.

Announcements

Harris County Attorney Vince Ryan will be the speaker at the January 6, 2015 Civic Club meeting.

Attendees were reminded to pay 2015 Civic Club and Constable Program dues.

Sadly, President Briones announced the passing earlier today of longtime resident, volunteer, and supporter of Garden Oaks, Mr. Oscar Ochoa. Services will be held on December 10th, 12:00 noon at St. Rose of Lima Catholic Church.

The business meeting adjourned at 7:20 p.m.

Following the meeting, members enjoyed a holiday dinner of Gabby's BBQ and a pot-luck assortment of side dishes and desserts. The Waltrip Ram Band continued to entertain and Santa Claus made a visit, much to the delight of the young and not so young.



CIVIC CLUB WELCOME PACKETS

By Dian Austin, Membership Chair

In several previous years, the Civic Club hand-delivered Welcome Packets to new residents in the neighborhood. These packets contained information regarding the civic club, the constable program, deed restrictions, neighborhood history, helpful contact numbers, and various neighborhood special interest groups.

However, it has been several years since we've updated and delivered the packets, and with the large influx of new neighbors, 2015 would be a good time to start up again.

As currently a committee of one, I need help in thinking through what should be included in the Welcome Packets, and developing the actual information. This is not a plea for help physically stuffing packets, but rather a request for people to identify and develop the information to be included. If any civic club members would like to join the Membership Committee to help with this project, please email membership@gardenoaks.org.

Child Care Offered at Civic Club Meetings

The Civic Club is pleased to offer members an arrangement with the Foster YMCA to provide child care during civic club meetings. YMCA child care specialists, each trained in first aid and CPR, will care for your children from 6:30-8:30 p.m. (the usual duration of civic club meetings) in an area adjacent to the meeting location for a nominal charge of \$1.00 per child. Our hope is that this service will enable more residents to attend our monthly civic club meetings.

High-Speed Rail Town Hall
Monday, January 5th
6:30 p.m.

Lutheran High School
1130 W. 34th Street

We urge you to attend this very important meeting.

Several neighborhood associations are joining the Town Hall effort, including the *Central Northwest Super Neighborhood Council (SN12)*, *Super Neighborhood #51*, *Bayou Bend Community Improvement Association*, *Chateau Forest Community Improvement Association* and *Inwood Forest Community Improvement Association*.

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OSCAR OCHOA 1920-2014

Garden Oaks lost a beloved neighbor on December 2nd. Oscar Ochoa, owner of O.D.'s Printing, was a familiar face and friend for many years to neighborhood residents. Whether it was monetarily sponsoring Civic Club events, providing "in kind" donations, or simply providing donuts for Beautification workdays, Oscar could be counted on to help the Garden Oaks and St. Rose of Lima communities he so dearly loved. He will be remembered for his famous smile and oft-uttered words, "How can I help?"



Oscar and his wife Bea lived in Garden Oaks for many years before relocating to The Woodlands in 2011. He was a veteran of The United States Navy and served his country during the WWII. Oscar pursued a career in the printing business and founded O.D.'s Printing, a family-owned and operated business, in 1969. Oscar's devotion to building and maintaining close, personal relationships with his customers was an embodiment of his charismatic and distinguished character.

Oscar loved music and enjoyed traveling regularly with his wife and daughter Kathy throughout his entire life. He is survived by his beloved wife Bea, cherished daughter Kathy and son-in-law Mark; two close and loving grandsons, Cameron and Forrest, and step-granddaughter Lindsey.

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CITIZENS' PATROL UPDATE

By Carl Waters, Jr., Committee Chair

Many, many thanks to the volunteers who gave their time last year to support the *Citizens' Patrol* program; without their participation this program would not exist. Our program could use more volunteers. If your New Year's resolution is to become more active in the Garden Oaks community, our program could use your help. It takes just a few simple steps to become a member. First, you need to contact me by telephone at 713-864-1992, by email at GOCOP77018@AOL.com or through the Garden Oaks web site GardenOaks.org. Once you have signed up, you will need to complete a one-hour training class and pass a criminal background check conducted by the Houston Police Department. The program is open to all Garden Oaks residents 18 years of age or older.

In November I had a brief conversation with the Captain of HPD's North Division. He informed me that he has some crime reduction plans for the Garden Oaks-Oaks Forest area which include the use of bike patrols as a stealth approach to combat the residential kick-in burglars.

November Crime Statistics (5)

Burglary (3)

700 block of W. 31st on Tuesday, November 4 (residence).
800 block of W. 31st on Tuesday, November 25 (residence).
700 block of W. 43rd on Tuesday, November 25 (residence).

Theft (2)

700 block of W. 42nd on Thursday, November 13 (residence).
3300 block of N. Shepherd on Friday, November 21 (restaurant).

According to the information recorded on the Houston Police Department Website, 56 crimes were reported in the neighborhood for the year through November. Last year 65 crimes had been reported during the same period.

Inquiries about joining the Citizens Patrol Program or about other community safety issues can be directed to me via GardenOaks.org or to the COP email account at GOCOP77018@AOL.com or by phone at 713-864-1992.

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Hours of Operation:
7:30 AM - 5:40 PM, Weekdays

4610 N. Shepherd, Houston, TX 77018
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OAK FOREST VETERINARY HOSPITAL

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GOMO Board of Directors

SECTION 1

Mark Saranie (2015)
235 West 33rd
713-724-1271
msaranie@comcast.net

Wayne Forster (2016)
527 West 34th
713-880-4367
wayneforster1@att.net

Sheila Briones (2017)
412 West 34th
713-861-8091
sbriones@hotmail.com

SECTION 2

Gale Gorman (2015)
742 Sue Barnett
713-870-0282
gale_gorman@mac.com

Ed de Alba (2016)
744 West 43rd
713-628-7008
ferrocem@yahoo.com

Lori Kennedy (2017)
750 Sue Barnett
713-691-6833
lorikgomo@blue-funk.com

SECTION 3

Dea Larson (2015)
823 Lamonte
713-695-3634
dealarson@aol.com

Kathy Silver (2016)
826 Lamonte
713-668-8781
ksilver@jw.com

Vidal Martinez (2017)
1345 Sue Barnett
713-705-1310
vidal@martinez.net

SECTION 5

David Garver (2015)
1563 Sue Barnett
713-252-0880
davidgarverhouston@gmail.com

Teresa Coleman (2016)
1003 Gardenia
713-686-7728
teresa.coleman@pobox.com

Chavonne Slovak (2017)
1035 Althea
713-682-3601
cmslovak@live.com

Each director's term expires in October of year in parentheses.

CONSTABLE PROGRAM UPDATE

By Terry Jeanes, Program Chair

Be Alert

Your attentive eyes and ears make a difference. Several recent arrests have been made due to the prompt calls made by residents who reported suspicious activity. An example of one such arrest involved a culprit (who had numerous prior arrests for burglary of a residence) being caught and the resident's belongings being returned. Also, be advised that a person who had been arrested in Garden Oaks by our deputies and has served time for burglary of a motor vehicle has now been released. The BMVs (burglary of a motor vehicle) dropped to a low number once this party was detained previously. The deputies warn to please remove valuable items from your vehicle.

In addition, please notify Precinct Dispatch when solicitors are in the area. Deputies will check them out for the right credentials. Recent complaints of somewhat aggressive door knockers have resulted in detained individuals.

Precinct One Constable Toy Drive

Thank you to all who provided unwrapped toys for the Precinct One Constable Toy Drive. We greatly appreciate your kindness.

GOMO Review Meetings

take place at 6:30 p.m. prior to Civic Club meetings on the first Tuesday and at 7:00 p.m. on the third Wednesday of each month.

Meetings are open to anyone interested in attending.

Additional information about the **Garden Oaks Maintenance Organization (GOMO)** is available online at GardenOaks.org. Property owners in Sections 1, 2, 3 and 5 are all members of GOMO.

**Precinct One
Constable Dispatch
713-755-7628**

New Year, Renewed Support

PLEASE JOIN TODAY AND SUPPORT OUR PROGRAM via the form in the *Gazette* or the link below. Even if you pay via paypal, please complete the form. You should have received your 2015 Constable Program Supporter Form in the mail by now. Thanks to all who have already sent in their dues for 2015.

Constable Program Contributions and Vacation Watch Forms are available at:

www.gardenoaks.org/constable

Sign up for Precinct One Crime Alerts:

pct1constable.net/signup/crime-alerts

CONNECT YOUR ALARM COMPANY WITH CONSTABLE DISPATCH:

Be sure your alarm monitoring company has Constable Dispatch (713-755-7628) as the first responder on your call list when your home's alarm is triggered. Please also program this number in your cell phone for ready access when you or a neighbor needs it.



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JANUARY 31, 2015

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Location: 3033 Bear Creek Drive, Houston 77084
Time: Plant Sale Preview 8:00 a.m.
Plant Sale 9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Master Gardener volunteers organize plants sales annually as joint educational and fund-raising events. All sales feature plants that do well in our part of Texas.

Trees available will be citrus, apple, peach, pear, avocado, olive, and pecan varieties suitable for our area.

Berries available will include blackberries, blueberries, grapes, and Goji berries.

Multi-graft (trees that grow 2 or more varieties of fruit) offered will include apple, peach, pear, plum, and citrus.

A limited number of wagons will be available; shoppers are encouraged to bring their own.

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2015 GREEN THUMB LECTURES AND WORKSHOPS

Did you realize that one of the benefits you have available from the tax dollars you pay to Harris County is obtaining FREE information and knowledge about a wide range of horticulture, gardening, and environmental sustainability topics?

The Harris County Master Gardeners are trained by the Texas AgriLife Extension Service to bring relevant, research-based information on horticulture to the public.

Master Gardeners answer gardening questions through their **Ask a Master Gardener Helpline** by phone (281-855-5600) or through email (hcmga1@yahoo.com) Monday-Friday 9:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m., and maintain testing and demonstration gardens at the AgriLife Extension office located in Bear Creek Park.

The Harris County Master Gardeners and the Texas AgriLife Extension Service offer the Green Thumb gardening series of lectures from January through October. These lectures are **free** to residents of Harris County and are offered at locations across Houston; the location closest to Garden Oaks is Spring Branch Memorial Library.

If you have a desire to increase your knowledge on vegetable and herb gardening, composting, rainwater harvesting, pests, or a variety of other topics, please see the calendar of lecture topics below.

Any questions? Please email Brenda de Alba at albagarden@yahoo.com.

GREEN THUMB LECTURE SERIES

**Third Tuesdays
January to October
6:30 - 8:30 pm**

**Spring Branch Memorial Library
930 Corbindale
Houston, TX 77024**

January 20	Composting: Why & How
February 17	Spring Vegetables: Harvesting Know-How
March 17	Documenting Your Garden
April 21	Basic Irrigation & Rainwater Harvesting
May 19	Basic Pest Control for Gardeners
June 16	Growing & Using Herbs
July 21	Fall Vegetable Gardening
August 18	Low-Maintenance Landscaping
September 15	Indoor Gardening: Pest Problems & Animal Safety
October 20	Propagation & Seed Saving

MICKEY'S MINUTE

By Mickey Morales

Another year has gone by and a new one is in front of us. The vendors of The Farmstand of Garden Oaks hope your year went well and that you will have a prosperous new one. The end of this month will mark the end of our third year of bringing clean fruits, vegetables, meats and other interesting artisanal items to our faithful supporters. Of course since we will be starting our fourth year and celebrating the third anniversary all at the same time, why not throw a party? To celebrate, on January 31st we will be doing another popup luncheon right after the market closes. The menu is still to be decided and may include a surprise announcement of an existing happening right here in the neighborhood. I'm sorry I can't let the cat out of the bag just yet, but trust me-- y'all will like it.

In the mean time, life at our farms and the market continues to go merrily along. There should still be quite a bit of citrus available and loads of winter greens and vegetables. And with a little luck, the egg producers (the hens) should be through with their molting ways and be back in production, at least for the shorter winter days. When that happens, Farmer Cathy will be able to lift the two dozen per customer limit on egg purchases. And we will have more youngsters in the loop to help increase egg production in this new year and the ducks should kick in as well. With a little more luck there could be baby goats for the third anniversary bash.

Oh! I almost forgot about the most important season of all: the legislative season. Yes indeed, the once every two year session has begun. The Farm and Ranch Freedom Alliance (FARFA) will be sending

weekly updates on both friendly and not so friendly bills making their ways through the process. If you are not a member already, I encourage you to join or at least sign up for their e-mail blasts. This group has done some good work that has improved the lives of farmers and ranchers and has expanded your choices in what you can buy at all farmers markets. So stay tuned to the Facebook page for updates on the market and legislative issues.

As always, "Come soon, come often, and bring your imagination."

Local Farmers' Market
Every Saturday Rain or Shine

9:00 am - 1:00 pm
948 Wakefield

Sustainably-grown produce, eggs, goat cheese, prepared Indian dishes, jams, and jellies

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GAZEBO SANTA RIDES AGAIN!

Santa took time off from his busy schedule to visit the families of Garden Oaks once again this year. On December 9th and 10th, Santa set up shop in the festively decorated Gazebo Park. Over 250 neighbors, including several furry ones, visited Santa, Mrs. Claus and their elves. Amongst a flurry of "Houston Snow" (aka billions of bubbles) guests nibbled on cookies and candy canes, visited with Mrs. Claus and the elves while in line to see jolly ol' St. Nicholas and, of course, were invited up into the gazebo to sit upon Santa's lap and chat with him about their Christmas wishes! Santa was even treated to some cookies, baked especially for him, and several drawings made by the visiting children!

A special thanks goes out to Terry Jeanes, Georgia Lister and Tina Sabuco for sponsoring this merry event; Karen Best and Samhita Sunya for their effervescent elfing; all the neighbors who helped with baking and bringing cookies and who magically turned cardboard boxes into pretty presents that helped set the scene for the hundreds of photos that were taken; everyone who brought toys for the Constables' toy drive to help neighborhood children in need; and, especially to Patrick Kelley for making a "special appearance".

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AIR CONDITIONING TIPS FOR THE WINTER

By Mitch Weigand

“Smart” Thermostats: Run Your Home from Wherever You Want

Last month, we discussed the latest state-of-the-art A/C system for your home, the 20 SEER system. Now let’s review what’s the latest and greatest in thermostats.

The Nexia Home Intelligence thermostat allows you to manage various functions in your home remotely by using web-enabled mobile devices such as smart phones, tablets and laptops. It gives you and your family the advantages of home automation in a simple, accessible way. You can unlock a door, turn lights off or on and adjust the heating or cooling from a distance in order to save energy. You are connected to your home even when you’re not at home.

What the Nexia Offers

- Programmable features for each day of the week with up to six schedules per day
- Digital touch screen display that’s easy to use while in your home
- Automatic switching between heating and cooling in order to maintain a comfortable temperature year-round
- Remote temperature adjustment from your smart device prior to arriving home
- Text and email alerts if your heating and cooling system does not maintain the desired temperature settings
- The ability to view system run time charts and make temperature and schedule adjustments to manage your energy usage
- Wireless communication with other products in your home., including security cameras, lights, dimmers and door locks

How Much Does Nexia Cost?

The average Nexia system costs less than \$200 to get started. You can start small with a couple of products and then expand your system over time. Subscribers pay \$9.99 per month for remote access and can control over 200 products on one account.

BONUS: Superbowl Snacks for a Winning Party

Although there’s not much of a chance of cheering on our Texans, please enjoy these recipes while watching the Superbowl.

Bacon-Jalapeno Dip

Mix 8 ounces cream cheese, 2 cups shredded cheddar, 1/2 cup sour cream, 1/4 cup milk, 4 slices chopped cooked bacon, 1 tablespoon bacon drippings, 1 teaspoon white wine vinegar and 2 thinly sliced jalapenos. Spread in a baking dish and top with buttered bread crumbs. Bake for 30 minutes at 350 degrees F until golden and bubbly. Tastes great when served with pita chips.

Tropical Guacamole

Mash 3 avocados with 1/4 cup minced red onion, 1/4 cup chopped mango, 1/4 cup chopped pineapple, 2 tablespoons chopped cilantro, 1 tablespoon minced jalapenos and the juice of 1 lime. Then salt to taste. Serve with your favorite tortilla chips.

Mitch Weigand is the owner of Air Wise™ and a member of the Garden Oaks Civic Club.

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DESIGNING A WORLD-CLASS MONTESSORI CAMPUS

By Lindsey Pollock, Ed.D.,
Principal, Garden Oaks Montessori

The planning has begun for our campus transformation into a space where world-class Montessori education will be housed in a building designed for our needs. As you may remember, Garden Oaks was a designated recipient of nearly \$27 million in the 2012 bond election. These funds are targeted to create a physical space where our work as a Montessori school will be supported. Currently we have been meeting as a Project Advisory Team (PAT) to discuss the needs of the campus. The team is made up of Garden Oaks' residents, parents and teachers who meet with school district personnel who are coordinating the construction project. So far, the PAT has participated in the selection of the architectural firm and the development of the guiding principles that define the program goals of our school (Montessori education with an emphasis on Environmental Sciences). We have toured schools in Cypress Fairbanks to see some of the new buildings constructed there as well as private Montessori schools in the Houston area.

As we work together in our PAT meetings, our goal is to enhance and enrich the physical structure of our school to ensure that our focus is on the work of our children's academic and social/emotional development. Working with our architects, we will be moving into the next phase of planning which will include decisions regarding the "footprint" of the building. Our firm, Swart and Hill, is comprised of individuals who are very familiar with our community needs and challenges (one is a Garden Oaks resident). As we make progress, I will continue to communicate through the Garden Oaks Civic Club meetings and the *Gazette* to be sure you have opportunities for input and feedback. As we consider our school space, we are especially committed to enhancing connections to the outdoor world and to the inclusion of wonder and excitement about learning.

As such, we are reviewing documents and resources that guide current building and design practices for exemplary school designs such as the following resource from the World Forum Foundation.

Michelle Pratt, author of *Design and Nature: Designing Inspiring and Effective Spaces for Children*, wrote in an article, "The Element of Surprise in Environmental Design":
"The outdoor environment has many places where elements of surprise can be incorporated and developed. The trickling of water, that place to hide and snuggle into, items that blow in the wind, shadows that appear on the ground, the leaves that fall from a tree, these can all surprise. Those spirited places satisfy children's souls. They possess a wholeness that makes the heart sing, the soul rejoice, the body feel safe and at rest. It is the spirit of a place that makes

it memorable, that expands our sense of possibility, and puts us in touch with what is most loving, creative, and human about ourselves.

Elements of surprise are all around us. It's not just about architecture and design; it is also about what we do and what we provide. We are surrounded by natural resources — materials like stone, wood, metal — textured items to name a few. It is about elements that appear to be heavy but are light, items that are soft but are hard. It is in the planning of our environments; all we need to do is to work out how we incorporate these into daily center life. My challenge to you is to think and plan more carefully, reconsidering what it is like to see things from the eyes of the child." Should you have ideas or suggestions to support our work, please feel free to contact me at lpollock@houstonisd.org.



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21ST ANNUAL GARDEN OAKS MONTESSORI PANCAKE BREAKFAST & SILENT AUCTION FEBRUARY 7

On Saturday, February 7, 2015, volunteer dads and granddads will flip thousands of free pancakes, serve up Katz's hot coffee, and auction off donated merchandise worth thousands of dollars. The Garden Oaks Montessori Annual Pancake Breakfast and Silent Auction (PBSA), is now a 21-year tradition. Having the community come together each year to celebrate with free pancakes, fun activities and fellowship has helped set Garden Oaks Montessori Magnet School (GOMM) apart as an exceptional and diverse learning community.

This year's event theme is based on Eric Carle's beloved children's book *A Very Hungry Caterpillar*. The connection to transformation is a nod toward significant changes on campus resulting from a \$3M grant from the U.S. Department of Education in 2011. The grant paved the way for Garden Oaks Elementary to transition to an all-Montessori Magnet with an emphasis on Environmental Sciences. The student body has increased from 550 students in 2011 to a current enrollment of 710 students, from pre-kindergarten starting at 3 years old to 8th grade.

Sponsored by the GOMM Parent Teacher Organization (PTO), the event helps cover funding gaps now that the grant has expired. Key among the school community's needs are scholarships for 3 year old PK students, Montessori teacher training, field trips, and student art and enrichment programs.

"The Pancake Breakfast and Silent Auction (PBSA) is an event that demonstrates what

a community we truly are. We have volunteers that gleefully run the entire event. There are the dads making and serving breakfast, teachers donating time for service auction items, students preparing classroom projects for the auction, and our GO community businesses giving in-kind donations and sponsoring the event wholeheartedly. The event strikes a great balance between a family style breakfast and a fundraising event that can position us for a future rich in opportunities for our students. For the event to be a true success we need pancake suppliers, pancake flippers, and pancake eaters," said Barbie Atkinson, PTO president.

Last year's Pancake Breakfast and Silent Auction raised more than \$29,817. This year's event will take place on Saturday February 7th, from 8:00-10:30 a.m. at Garden Oaks Montessori School, 901 Sue Barnett, Houston, Texas 77018. The call for silent auction donations and event underwriters for the 2015 edition is now well under way.

An orientation session for parents and community members who are interested in Montessori education will be held at 8:30 a.m. Golden-brown pancakes, warm syrup, sausage, Katz's coffee, and juice will be served free to the community. Bidding for the silent auction closes at 10:00 a.m.

To underwrite a portion of the annual breakfast or to donate auction items, please visit the website at <https://houstonisd.ejoinme.org/pancake2015> or contact the silent auction coordinators: Michelle Ray at michelle@michellerayproperties.com or Amabelle Cowan at amabelle.cowan@yahoo.com. For more information about Garden Oaks Montessori School, call (713) 696-2930.



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GO KIDS UPDATE

By Jenny Odinet, Coordinator

The 2014 GO Kids Leadership Team has done an outstanding job in leading and growing the GO Kids group this past year. As we plan for 2015, we are reaching out to you in hopes you will too become more involved. See below for a listing of the existing leadership positions and a brief description of each:

- GO Kids Coordinator** – Plans and leads meetings, oversees budget
- Membership** – Helps to manage membership requests
- Treasurer** – Maintains budget, dues and expenditures
- Fundraising** – Coordinates corporate fundraising efforts
- Communication** (BT, Web, FB, G) – Updates Big Tent, Webpage, Facebook and monthly *Gazette* submission
- Events** – Helps to schedule and oversee events

- Dinner Drops** – Coordinates dinner drops for new moms
- GO Babies** – Plans play dates for younger children
- GO Kids** – Plans play dates for older children
- MNO** – Schedules and attends MNOs
- Bouncy House** – Stores bouncy houses and coordinates pick-ups and drop-offs
- Welcoming Committee** – Hosts welcome table at events and works with Civic Club for welcome packet

While some of the existing Leadership Team members are happy to maintain their current positions for the upcoming year, many of these lovely ladies are happy to also either co-chair their position or provide someone else with the opportunity for that position should they be interested. Please indicate your interest by emailing jenny.odinet@yahoo.com.

Please save the date for the 2015 GO Kids Leadership Team Kick-off Meeting on **Sunday, January 11 at 7:30 p.m.** At this meeting we will determine the 2015 Leadership Team positions and start discussing a plan for 2015. Even if you don't have interest in an official "position," your input is welcomed and we hope you'll join us. For the new members of the leadership team, there will be a subsequent "transition" meeting in late January/early February.

As Coordinator, I cannot thank the existing LT members enough. Many of these ladies have served on the LT team for several years. I have been on the LT team for 4 years and it's been an honor and a pleasure to be part of such a wonderful group that does so much for our kids' community. I look forward to remaining involved in GO Kids.

Thank you to all of our members for your continued support.



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HIGH-SPEED RAIL

Continued from Page 1

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Texas Central Railway would move the BNSF tracks over, then build an 18-foot tall rail structure, topped by another 18 feet or more of power lines.

This BNSF route is preferred for a couple of reasons. First, it would require very little "taking" of property, using existing BNSF easements. Second, it provides a route into downtown Houston.

Robert Eckels, president of Central Texas Railway, told the Central Northwest Super Neighborhood Council (CNWSN) on November 19 that Mayor Annise Parker wants the bullet train coming downtown. There are far greater reasons to support a rail terminus outside of IH-610, within reach of Houston's large employment centers including The Energy Corridor, Uptown, Westchase, and Memorial City.

The passengers who would take the bullet train now go to Hobby Airport or Bush Intercontinental for flights; traveling to a station near IH-10 and 610 or along 290 would be little different – and could impact urban neighborhoods far less.

CNWSN Council Members have been working with Council Member Ellen Cohen's office, who attended the CNWSN Council meeting, and contacting political state representatives, as well as the FRA, about the high-speed rail and its effect on neighborhoods. Council Member Cohen says while she supports high-speed rail as a transit

option, she opposes locating the route withing close proximity to residential neighborhoods.

The Houston Chronicle has come out in support of the project, as have some City of Houston Council Members.

The Federal Railway Administration (FRA) and the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) are taking comments through January 9, 2015.

According to the FRA, comments should be specific, explaining "the why." Detailed concerns could include: harming the character of long-established neighborhoods; taking of property; impact on property values; long-term survivability of the project (what happens to the elevated tracks if the bullet train goes under); running next to schools, churches and parks; concerns with noise and vibration; cutting off access to streets, neighborhood services and emergency vehicles, etc. In addition, comments on alternate routes will be taken into consideration.

Because so few public scoping meetings were held in Houston, **the CNWSN Council is hosting a Town Hall Forum.** Texas Central Railway officials are expected to attend and invitations have been sent to area government representatives. Guidance will be provided on making comments to the FRA.

We urge you to attend this very important meeting:

**High-Speed Rail Town Hall
Monday, January 5, 2015
6:30 p.m.
Lutheran High School
1130 W. 34th Street**

Several neighborhood associations are joining the Town Hall effort, including the *Central Northwest Super Neighborhood Council (SN12), Super Neighborhood #51, Bayou Bend Community Improvement Association, Chateau Forest Community Improvement Association and Inwood Forest Community Improvement Association.*

For more information about the Central Texas Railway bullet train, its routes and to comment, visit dallashoustonhsr.com.

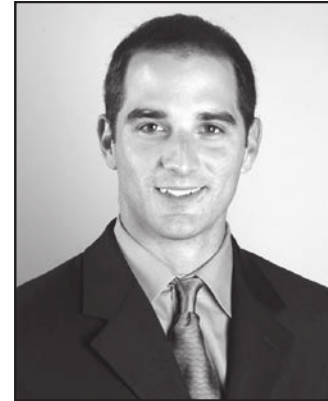
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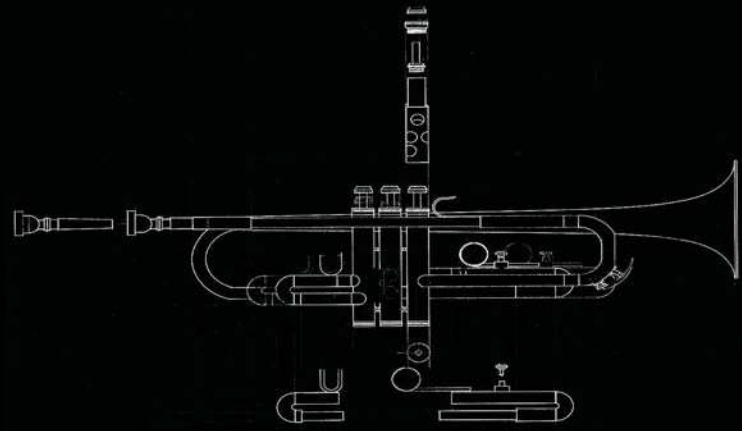
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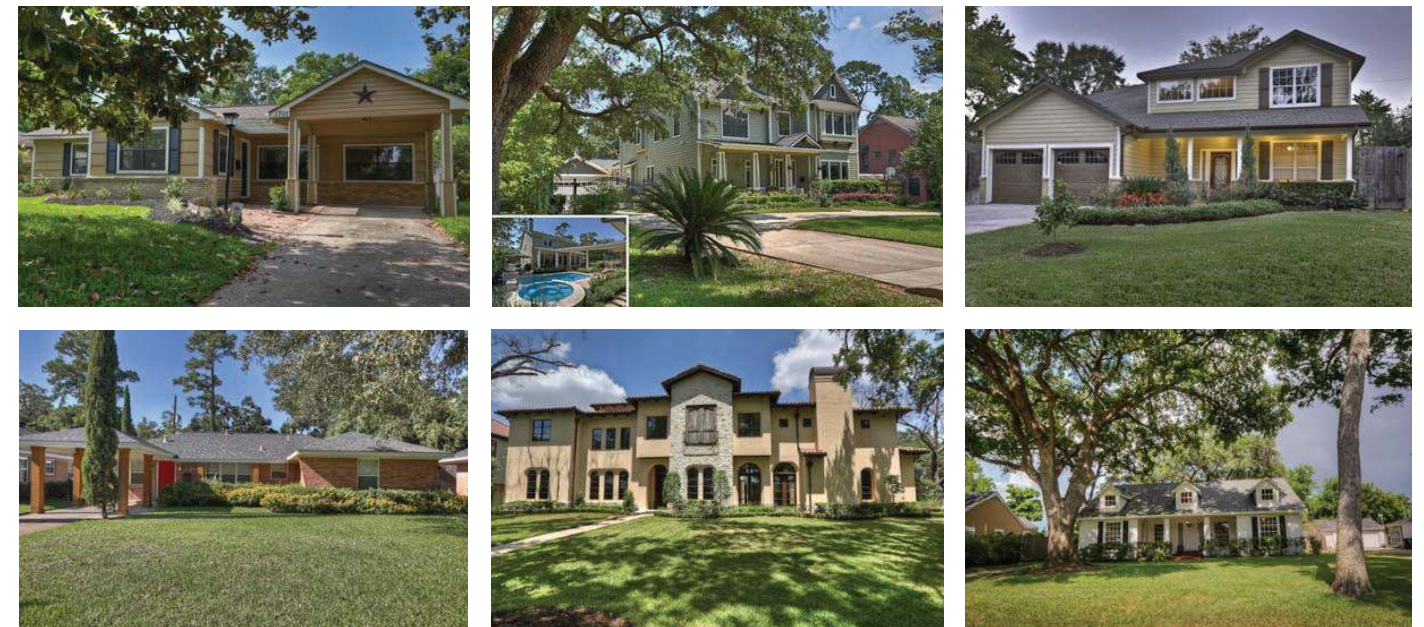
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4	5 High-Speed Rail Town Hall Meeting 6:30PM @ LHN	6  Civic Club Meeting ¹ 7PM @ GOMM	7 GOMM Night at Becks Prime ² 5-10PM @ Heights location 115 West 19th	8	9	10 Farmers Market (GF) 9AM-1PM 948 Wakefield
11	12	13	14	15 Heavy Trash Pick-Up (Tree Waste)	16	17 Farmers Market 9AM-1PM 948 Wakefield
18	19 Martin Luther King, Jr. Day	25 Trash & Recycling Picked Up Wednesday due to MLK Holiday	21  GOMO Meeting 7PM @ GOPB	22	23	24 Farmers Market (GF) 9AM-1PM 948 Wakefield
25	26	27	28	29	30	31 Farmers Market 9AM-1PM 948 Wakefield Master Gardeners Fruit Tree Sale 9AM-1PM 3033 Bear Creek Drive Houston, TX 77084

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