

MAY 2020 | VOLUME 26 | NUMBER 2 // NEWSLETTER OF THE CHERRYWOOD NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

# Life in Times of Coronavirus

e were less than twelve hours into self-quarantine when we decided to purchase Disney+. With two kids at home for the indefinite future, we were never going to make it without baby Yoda.

It has now been more than forty days since UT staff were told to not return to work due to COVID-19 and to move our classes online. For me, that meant figuring out how to teach skills-based art classes online, which has not been easy but it has been rewarding. More so, maintaining a schedule of meeting with my students has given us all a sense of connection in this strange and uncertain time.

The early days of this transition were rough, as my spouse and I regrouped to teach online while attempting to handle the full load of our administrative work, plan upcoming productions, continue art studio practice, and support our students. Our challenge was compounded by the reality of navigating our professional responsibilities at home while also caring for our kids. Our worry about the virus, the stress of a new working routine, and our concern for the

continued education of our children was relentless. Tears all around were common.

As the days unfolded, however, we were able to discover new ways to approach our work, life, and time together. We now have a tightly run weekly family calendar to navigate our multitude of meetings Zoom for every member of our family. We love to explore and renew ourselves in the green spaces of the Willowbrook Reach, Patterson Park, and the Mueller walking paths to break up the repetitive days. Bike riding allows for occasional socially distanced visits with friends and neighbors. Long family walks have resulted in deeper family connections and a renewed love for nature. It is thrilling to watch the fireflies emerge as we

stroll through the neighborhood. We have become grateful for the slowness of the days and the time to connect as a family. We recognize that our ability to work from home is a tremendous and not universal privilege.

The pause in the life that we knew before

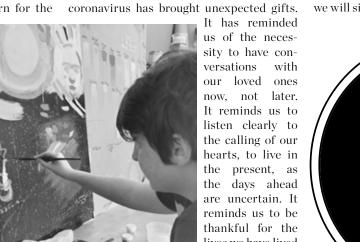
It has reminded us of the necessity to have conversations with our loved ones listen clearly to lives we have lived and the community in which we live. And, it has



given us a new and immense gratitude for those who are working and giving everything on the front lines of the pandemic.

We still cry, but we have also learned to dance boldly, laugh, paint, draw, cook, and play together. We have come to accept that we will simply do the best that we can.





# CITY WATCH

## Leaving the House? Wear a Cloth Mask

by Alyssa Harad

ne of the biggest challenges to containing COVID-19 is that adults and children can carry the coronavirus that causes the disease without knowing it. Some may have no symptoms at all, others may have very mild symptoms that are dismissed as Austin allergies. Until mass testing is available, everyone must assume that they are infectious and avoid infecting others by maintaining a six-foot distance from others in public and wearing a cloth mask every time they leave the house. (Yes, even for walks and exercise! Moreon that in a moment.)

Cloth masks are designed to stop the wearer from spreading infectious particles into the air. One study suggests a simple cloth mask (without a special ventilator) can contain up to 99 percent of infectious particles. If we all wear cloth masks, we will make a dramatic impact on slowing the infection rate. For example, in Hong Kong, with a density and reliance on public transit similar to New York City, there have been only four confirmed COVID-19 deaths. Health officials there credit Hong Kongers' nearly 100 percent mask compliance.

Austin City officials have asked all residents above the age of two to wear cloth masks outside their households when

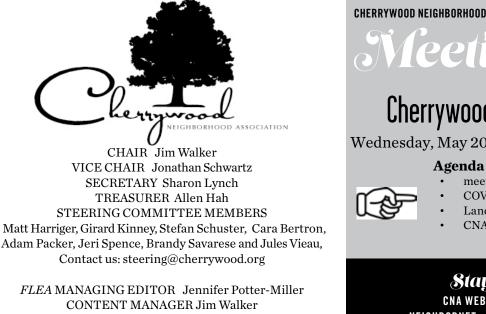
running essential errands. The guidelines state masks are also necessary outside "when six feet distance cannot be maintained." I choose to wear a mask when out and about in the neighborhood for two reasons: 1) life is unpredictable! I can't be sure I won't need to pass closer than six feet to someone. This is doubly true if I'm on a bike and have to navigate cars; and 2) the science is unclear on how long particles from breath can hang in the air and infect others. A recent study suggests the virus can remain infectious in the air for up to thirty minutes. I can't know who will walk into my airspace five, ten, or twenty minutes later.

I encourage all Flea readers to wear masks when they're strolling or out for a run in the neighborhood. I wear a mask to protect you, and I hope you will wear one to protect me. Together we can continue to flatten. and even smash the curve.

them on Etsy and from friends who sew. You you-and-your-family



WHERE TO GET A MASK: A good mask can find a PDF with simple instructions for fits tightly, allows you to breathe comfort- a no-sew mask at http://www.austintexas. ably and is machine washable. You can buy gov/department/covid-19-information/



PHOTOGRAPHER Jennifer Potter-Miller LAYOUT EDITOR Brandy Savarese AD MANAGER Allen Hah Contact The FLEA: flea@cherrywood.org



- meeting ID 254-172-8972
- COVID updates
- Land Development Code updates
- CNA events reimagined

## **Stay Connected**

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# **BUSINESS PROFILE**

## COVID-19 Forces Cherrywood Businesses to Adjust

#### by Jeri Spence

ike neighborhood businesses Cherrywood-area businesses have

had to adjust and reinvent themselves in response to COVID-19 shelter-in-place and closure orders. The Flea spoke with the proprietors of a few Cherrywood icons to see how they have pivoted in the time of pandemic.

Dai Due, which opened on Manor Road in 2014, was uniquely positioned to respond to changing demand. Before the pandemic, the restaurant/butcher shop sold a small selection of bakery and specialty pantry items. Following the shelter-in-place order, they've expanded their grocery offerings to include staples like flour, rice, and milk. In addition to take-out menu items, sandwiches, and salads, they are now offering heatand-serve meals. The butcher shop remains stocked with locally sourced meats, poultry, and gourmet sausages with selections changing daily.

Mi Madre's, the East Austin icon that celebrated its thirtieth anniversary in April, has

always had a busy takeout business. They've enhanced it by offering family-sized meals and--thanks to relaxed TABC rules!--margaritas and other alcoholic beverages for delivery and curbside customers.



is best known for live performances, she has leaned into the challenge presented by the shelter-in-place order. "We are reinventing ourselves every day," she said.

"We're embracing new technology and expanding our digital platform to bring innovative programming [and] provide an outlet for our artists and also help create a sense of community for the rest of us." The Vortex's digital programming now includes live streams of new theatrical work, yoga classes, storytimes, a nationwide virtual poetry slam contest, and

-3-

Melissa Vogt, Managing Director of archival footage. Melissa expects the work across Austin and the country, the nonprofit Vortex Repertory Co. on she's doing now to continue and grow past Manor Road, says that although the Vortex COVID. "We want the community to be

> able to come to the site, relax, take a deep breath, and engage with our artists and teachers."

Chef Pascal Simon. Cherrywood resident, teaches baking classes for children and adults through her business Bake Austin. You may have seen her on KXAN's Studio 512 or you may have bought her delicious German cookies at the Cherrywood Art Fair. Chef Pascal's pandemic reinvention included teachhas ing online. Instead of welcoming small groups into her baking and cooking school on E. 38th 1/2 Street, she offers daily Zoom classes from her kitchen and has even hosted virtual birthday parties. So far she's taught kids Apple cake by Maya. Photo by Julie Mowad. how to make jelly-filled donuts, enchiladas, bread

rolls, marble cake, and more. With the uncertainty about summer camps--a significant part of her business--she's investigating new offerings, such as dinner club, teen club and her popular cookie and food impostor camps. Chef Pascal says she is "happy to share what I love with so many families and [feels] lucky to spend time with kids doing what I love."

So many Cherrywood businesses have had long tenures in the neighborhood. Their creative responses and commitment to serve neighbors during this uncertain and challenging time show them to be good neighbors. Jesse Griffiths and Tamara Mayfield, Dai Due co-owners, expressed the sentiments of many neighborhood establishments: "Although this is a very difficult time for everyone, we love being part of the neighborhood and are grateful for the neighborhood's support." The Flea encourages readers to support neighborhood businesses with take-out orders, virtual attendance, and online shopping.



# GREEN SPACES

### **Planting a Resilience Garden**

by Sully Sillivan

uring World War II Americans planted Victory Gardens, and today many are planting Resilience Gardens. My advice to the first-time gardener is to keep it simple. The level of initial success in gardening often makes all the difference in converting someone to gardening long-term. Keep the garden small, say a 5' x 5' area. Clean off any vegetation

garden pays off shortly after planting, since fresh herbs can be an immediate and healthy addition to any diet. Single starter plants are available in all major nurseries. I suggest one each of the following: parsley, oregano, thyme, sage, and rosemary. Each of these plants will take up more space when mature, so one plant can usually supply a family with the needed herb. Tarragon and lem-

ongrass are two herbs to add if you

varieties such as cherry and roma. I

leave the heirlooms and beefsteak

tomatoes to the pros (Boggy Creek

Farm grows excellent tomatoes).

Four small-variety tomato plants,

accompanied by four basil plants

gold plants around the tomatoes

You could plant them in the concrete

blocks!). Marigolds are a natural

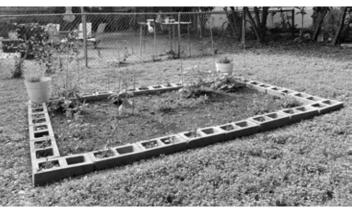
Finally, I suggest adding mari-

can complete the 4' x 4' garden.

I plant tomatoes, but only smaller

enjoy using them in your kitchen.

(grass), and try to pull it out by the roots. Add cardboard to the entire plot to minimize weed growth. Construct a 4' x 4' perimeter of stone, concrete blocks, or other suitable material. Add garden soil inside the perimeter to a depth of 6" or more. This construction can last for years. Visit the Patterson Park Community Garden to see examples of this and other possible constructions (note how many



gardeners have used the holes in the concrete blocks as extra pots). Keep your plant selection simple when just starting. An herb repellent of some tomato bugs and also provide a bit of color to your garden. Enjoy your time outdoors and the fresh food!

### **Cleaning up Cherrywood Green**

#### by Mike Damal

I am finding myself with an excess of time now, so I am "inventing" tasks for myself at Cherrywood Green. One of them has been to cut the fronds from the large Mexican Fan Palm. It has always bothered me that the dead fronds covered the sign facing Cherrywood Road. It took me three separate visits, but I finally cleaned up the tree to my satisfaction. It is primarily a cosmetic clean up; the only functional benefits of trimming is to prevent rats from roosting in the dead fronds and to prevent fronds falling from the tree and hitting a passerby.

It took me a number of times to figure out the best way to cut them. I finally settled on using a combination of small cordless electric saw and a manual pruning saw. Wasps tend to nest on the underside of the dead fronds so I had to shake the fronds repeatedly to scare out any wasps. Now, a big pile of fronds are in the compost pile to the north of the trail, it will probably take all summer before they compost down.

There are always plenty of projects to do in the neighborhood, from rescuing lost pets, volunteering at Maplewood school, and helping out at Cherrywood Green, Patterson Park, or Willowbrook Reach. For me, trimming the palm in Cherrywood Green was a great way to keep active, get some exercise, and do some good for the community. I felt great when it was completed!



## Spring Scavenger Hunt at Willowbrook Reach

#### by Liza Colucci

Late in the morning on the first Sunday of March, several Cherrywood families gathered at Willowbrook Reach to explore the first signs of spring, share ice cream sandwiches, and



enjoy the enthusiasm of our budding naturalists. The walk started as a game of "What can you find that is blue?" followed by searching out the rest of the rainbow colors. Kids and adults explored the creekbed and greenbelt. We found aquatic dragonfly larvae under a rock, a Mexican Plum tree in bloom, Beautyberry, and many other plants and animals. The iNaturalist app helped to identify species and record our observations. We look forward to exploring together again soon!



# GREEN SPACES

## Vitamin N(ature)

#### by Sharon Lynch

t is so easy to fall into a rut in this strange time in which we live. With my usual activities cancelled and without children or a job to structure my time, my life quickly became a circuit of sitting on the couch watching Netflix, moving to the computer to read scary news articles, and moseying to the fridge for snacks. Rinse and repeat. After many days of this routine I felt very disoriented and kind of, well, depressed.

Then I opened the front door and I looked out at my yard. Wow, there is still a world outside my walls. So, I stepped out and I went for a wander. An hour later I was back home with a totally changed attitude, feeling refreshed and energetic for the first time in days.

What I saw on my walk-about was a neighborhood that was both the same as it has been and also very different. I usually see people walking in the neighborhood, but now we looked at each other and smiled and waved. "How are you?" "Are you holding up okay?" Strangers with a new connection and genuine concern for each other.

The shelter-in-place order in Austin is in effect into May but walking outside for recreation, health, and pet care is permitted as long as social distancing guidelines are followed. You may walk with people in your household but you should stay at least six feet away from others. Walking on park trails is permitted but congregating at picnic tables or playscapes is not. Masks are not required outdoors if social distancing is practiced but it is a good idea to wear one, just in case.

The health benefits of connecting with nature have been well documented (for an accessible review of the science read anything by Richard Louv). Even a short time outside reduces the level of stress hormones. Just twenty minutes in nature can reduce blood pressure. It can calm us and help to alleviate pain, anxiety, and symptoms of ADHD and depression. The CDC recommends, even during this pandemic, that people find ways to get outside for a nature fix. So step outside!

Nature is abundant in our neighborhood with its beautiful old trees, lovely gardens, creeks, and green spaces. Take it slow as you stroll. Stop to admire the flowers and trees in bloom. Maybe download an app on your phone to help you identify what you see (iNaturalist and Seek are two good, free apps.) Take a magnifying glass along to see flowers in a new way and look for the pollinators attracted to the flowers. Enjoy the quiet that comes with the lack of traffic; listen to the birdsong that is so much more noticeable now; and, take deep breaths of the air that is more fresh and fragrant. Look for the messages of encouragement and solidarity that neighbors have written on sidewalks, driveways, and yard signs. Smile and wave at each other and know we will get through this, together.



# NEIGHBORHOOD KIDS CELEBRATE EARTH DAY WITH ART





# HAPPENINGS

### LEVI'S BIRTHDAY PARADE



On April 5, after making his own birthday cupcakes, our youngest son, Levi, headed outside to his surprise fourth birthday party, quarantine style. Friends, family, and neighbors (who Levi adoringly calls his "street cousins") lined up to honk horns, bang pots and pans, hold signs, play musical instruments, pass out balloons, and sing Happy Birthday. This may not have been the birthday party he had expected but, it turns out, it was all that he needed. When asked about his day, Levi said that his favorite part was "opening my presents," which is a nice reminder that although things are upside down around us, a child who is turning four still just wants to rip open a present. -Kim Lindauer

### TIME TO DRESS UP!

The "Getty Museum Challenge" has people all over the world recreating famous works of art during self-isolation with objects found around the house. Maplewood second grader Arden Hansen posed as *Portrait of a Young Man with a Skull* (Frans Hals, 1626).



### COMMUNITY KITCHEN BY PATRIZI

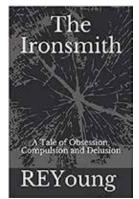
Vic and Al's restaurant was supposed to open this spring at 2406 Manor Road (the space formerly occupied by Unit D Pizzeria). Instead, the owners have turned the space into a community kitchen run by Nic Patrizi and serving a free meal to those in the neighborhood who need it. Using the Calendly app, you can sign up for a free meal and even purchase a bottle of wine to go with it when you pick it up. For more info, vist www.vicandals.com.

#### SPOT THE STARLIGHT FAIRY



French Place neighbor Rebecca Evans has dressed as a fairy for several evening walks this spring, wearing wings laced with LED lights. She's become known as Starlight Fairy and kids gather in their yards awaiting her appearance. It's yet another reason we feel blessed to be quarantined in Cherrywood. Thank you Starlight Fairy for the sweet gesture in this trying time! – Reagan Wilson

#### **PUBLISHING NEWS**



Neighbor REYoung just published a new novel, *The Ironsmith, A Tale of Obsession, Compulsion and Delusion* (Bowker, 2020). Born out of myth and fairytale. *The Ironsmith* evolves into a surreal Bildungsroman of a self-perceived "monster," a painfully introverted young man whose obsession with the ancient sport of weightlifting causes him to withdraw into an increasingly delusional world that anachronistically intersects classical Greece, the Middle Ages, the Industrial Age, WWI and II, the tumultuous sixties, and the age of the Internet.

### **ADVENTURE AHEAD**

I wrote a *Choose Your Own Adventure*-esque story in seven parts that I have posted on utility poles around Lafayette and French Place. I call it, "Navigate the Narrative: When Monsters Attack." The story pits you, as a delinquent middle-grade student, against alien monsters descending on your school. You go to different spots based on your decisions about how to fight or avoid the creatures. I wanted to help keep the momentum going for all the socially distant strolling people who have been trying to keep from going stir crazy. – Steve Wilson

### MAPLEWOOD FIFTH GRADE READING CLUB

When I realized that my kids would not be returning to school this year, I wanted to keep my son inspired to read. Although he loves to read graphic novels and comic books on his own, he has been motivated by Ms. Wozniak's literature circle to read beyond that genre. So I asked her, his Maplewood Elementary teacher, for book recommendations and decided to start a fifth grade reading club. I posted the idea on the Maplewood Facebook group and many of his classmates joined. Each week, I assign several chapters and we meet on Zoom to discuss the reading. I try to make it fun and accept that there will be MANY distractions. I just roll with it. We just finished our first book and are well on our way into the next selection! There are currently six kids and soon to be seven. The funny thing is that I have never been in a book club myself. As a graduate student for many years, I never had any desire beyond that to discuss books, so the fifth grade reading club is my own first book club. I think it may be just my speed! – Jennifer Balkan

# NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS

# Neighbors Helping Neighbors

By Jim Walker

herrywood is a great neighborhood, one where neighbors enjoy a wide range of fun gatherings throughout the year that build positive social capital. Times like this, as we navigate a global pandemic, are when that social capital really matters. Even before the City of Austin stay-at-home ordinance was first enacted, Cherrywood neighbors began stepping up to help neighbors. The Cherrywood Steering Committee (CSC) is keeping track of the many efforts at www.cherrywood.org/covid19, but we wanted to celebrate a few in The *Flea*.

Just as the mandatory face covering directive came out from the City of Austin, several neighbors, including Amy Barber, Amy Averett, and Kathleen Houlihan, began mask-making in their living rooms. Averett started making masks "as a small way to help friends and neighbors stay safe, and make a dent in my fabric hoard." She has even embraced a barter system. Averett says, "I've been paid in kid art, glitter, matzoh ball soup, and now-priceless disinfectant wipes." If you don't yet have a mask, check out recent posts on NeighborNet for contact information or send a request to buddysystem@cherrywood.org.

Wilshire Wood neighbors Libbey Goldberg and Sarah Stevens launched Bread for the People on Facebook and Instagram. They take orders for sourdough bread as a fundraiser for those hardest hit by coronavirus. Sarah, a professional baker, says, "I just felt inspired. Hearing that people needed bread, this felt like an important way we could do something we love while also helping others." Bread lovers make a donation in exchange for a loaf then Libbey and Sarah pass it on to three non-profits each week. Order your own by email: bread-

4thepeople@gmail.com.



Council Member Kathie Tovo's office is looking for volunteers to call residents ages seventy-five and older to offer support, personal connection, and access to resources. If you are able to make calls, email Nicole.Golden@austintexas.gov. We also recommend subscribing to CM Tovo's e-newsletter.

The CSC made a call in March for volunteers willing to contact and potentially buddy-up with elderly, isolated, or otherwise high-risk residents across the neighborhood. More than twenty-five

**Bread for the People** 

people volunteered and more than 150 households with elderly or disabled residents were contacted within a



# Grackle Green Pocket Park Installation

The new playground, picnic area, sidewalks, rubber safety flooring, and gratitude bricks have been installed at Grackle Green! Next steps include installing in fencing and art-work featured in the last issue of the *Flea*. A pollinator garden and trees will be planted in the fall. Sadly, the playground will remain closed until the city deems it safe to open play equipment around the city, but we are so happy to see this project coming together!

Funding for the improvements have been provided by a Neighborhood Partnering Program Grant to the Cherrywood Neighborhood Association from the City of Austin's Public Works Department.



couple weeks. In the process, we learned how many people are already supporting their high-risk neighbors.

One of the volunteer buddies, Jeri Spence, says "connecting and reconnecting with neighbors during our buddy outreach has been such a positive experience. We have so many amazing, talented folks who live here. It's been a great reminder to practice gratitude for what's right here, right now during this crazy time of uncertainty."

Although the shelter-in-place order may be relaxing in coming weeks, it is still important to check-in with folks who live around you. The stress of the situation may not be visible, but extending an offer of support or just a friendly connection could be exactly what someone needs but isn't sure how to ask for it. Another way to make a meaningful impact, if you have the means, is to consider making monetary donations to non-profits trying to keep up with the sudden increased demand for services.

If you are interested in volunteering, think someone living near you might need support, or you need support yourself, contact buddysystem@cherrywood.org or call 512-499-0526. There is useful information posted regularly on the Cherrywood listservs, neighbornet@yahoogroups.com and swna-neighborlynet@googlegroups.com. In the Scheiffer-Willowbrook area, contact Steve Dock at sdock99@gmail.com. Lastly, we want to acknowledget those who have been tireless in their response. If you are an essential worker, thank you for what you do! If you have been able to help others with your time or resources, thank you! I live in the neighborhood I work in the neighborhood



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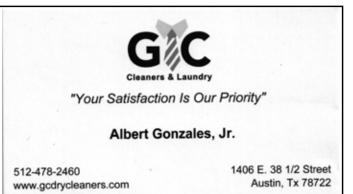
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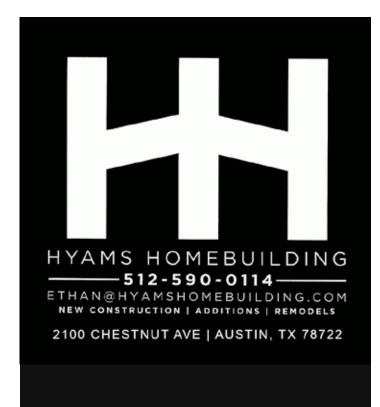
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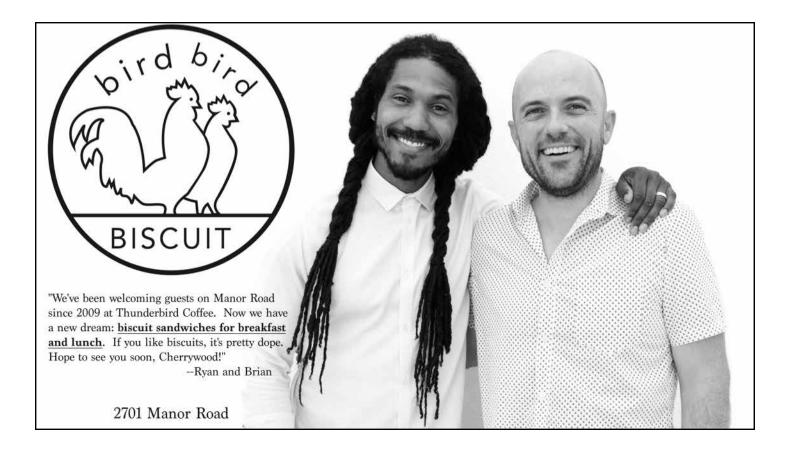
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