



**Laurel Oaks Neighborhood
Association
LONA**

**September 2003
Newsletter**

September 2003

Mailed to approx. 1900+ homes September 1, 2003

The Laurel Oaks Neighborhood Association includes the area bounded by Jollyville, Oak Knoll, Raincreek Parkway, Yaupon and Spicewood Springs.

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**Join Us!
General Meeting
Thursday Sept. 18th 7:00 pm
Spicewood Springs Library Meeting Room**

Vote for President, Vote on Parking Ordinance, Entrance sign project update, Fundraising projects, Treasurers Report, Neighborhood Watch, LONA Communications, Officer John Nelson to discuss neighborhood issues, Questions/Answers

To My Neighbors

One of the main purposes of the Laurel Oaks Neighborhood Association (LONA) is to provide a clearinghouse of information that our residents can use to work through problems that may arise. Our non-profit association was not set up for the purpose of telling people what they can and cannot do with their

property. We are concerned with the improvement of our neighborhood, and a perfect example of that is our drive to rebuild the aging neighborhood entrance signs at Jollyville and Oak Knoll.

Our April General Meeting went well with the formation of committees focused on replacing these entrance signs. **Rod Busfield** will be leading the sign design committee while **Shari Ryan** and **Carl Noble** will be leading the fundraising efforts. We are well on our way to rebuilding these signs but still need help. I urge you to contact us if you would like to either donate your time or money towards the rebuilding efforts.

The Eighth Annual Egg Hunt was held on Sunday, April 6 at the North Oaks Elementary School. We had approximately 100 adults and children attend the event. We hope everyone enjoyed the hunt as much as we did organizing it. Come join us next year.

I plan to leave the presidency of the Laurel Oaks Neighborhood Association this year. We have a fine candidate in **Rob Guthrie** to take this position. I plan to stay on as Crime Watch Captain. We will hold elections during our next General Meeting, Thursday, September 18, 2003. I urge you to join our Yahoo email group list as this is our primary communication tool.

Gary Shaw
LONA President

Oak Forest Entrance Sign Update **By Rodney W. Busfield**

The Laurel Oaks Neighborhood Association has begun the process of replacing the entrance signs at Jollyville and Oak Knoll. The Entrance Sign Committee was formed at the last general meeting in April, 2003. This is an open committee and if you are interested in attending the meetings, please contact me at rodbusfield-lona@austin.rr.com.

This project has many challenges, not least of which is funding. You have probably noticed that the yellow banner on the northwest corner of Oak Knoll and Jollyville does not have a dollar amount. This was intentionally left off until we have a good idea of how much money we will need to complete the entire project. With ongoing discussions between LONA and contractors, the initial target dollar amount has recently been set at roughly \$10,000. The project will include a new sign, some replacement fencing and landscaping for both sides of Oak Knoll.

We have collected approximately \$4,000 earmarked for the signs from neighbors and various fund raisers. I would like to urge every family in the neighborhood to donate \$10 or more. With this, we should be able to fully fund the sign project and keep a little in the bank for the next project.

The LONA Sign Committee has agreed upon a preliminary entrance sign design. The design considerations were as follows:

- The design must reflect the look and feel of the neighborhood.
- The construction must be designed for a 20 year lifespan.
- The construction must be designed for minimal maintenance.
- The landscaping must be chosen for water conservation and minimal maintenance

www.cityofaustin.org/greengarden

With this, the committee started looking at different design ideas that would fit the requirements. All ideas were on the table for review. An engineering report by W.H. Balzen of B&B Engineering concluded that

any replacement of the existing wooden structure could not rely on the rock pillars for structural integrity. The poor condition of the existing structures forced us to start looking at a complete replacement of both structures. The deterioration includes wood rot, cracked mortar, and shifting concrete footings.

The current rock and wood structures are actually owned by the respective property owners, whereby LONA must be granted explicit permission for all work prior to activity. This includes surveys, demolition, construction and routine maintenance. A very productive meeting with one property owner revealed that a rock/concrete structure is his preference. He feels this serves as a safety and noise barrier for the property. For this reason, we have chosen to replace the existing fence with a more permanent stone/concrete design. This will provide the uniform appearance for the neighborhood while providing the required security and sound barrier for the property owners. We will be working directly with the property owners to finalize the details of the design and implementation.

The committee has decided on a 4'x10' cut/cast stone sign face with sandblasted/engraved lettering. This sign will sit on a limestone foundation to elevate the sign face above landscaping. The sign will sit forward of the existing structure with space for tall landscape elements between the sign and the replacement fence. The sign will be surrounded by plants, yet to be chosen. The plan is to use drought tolerant landscaping throughout.

We have begun the process of requesting formal bids for the sign structure. We have had discussions with the following contractors:

- Life After Art
- Southwest Monument
- Fencecrete

If you know of anyone in the neighborhood that would be interested in submitting a bid, please contact me or anyone on the LONA Board. For more information on the sign committee progress and sign bid requirements, please see the LONA Web site at www.laurel-oaks.org/entrance. We will post all bids from contractors as they are received.

I want to conclude with a special thanks to all that have had an active role in the Sign Committee:

Barry Broeckelmann
Lesley and Rob Guthrie
Darin and Melissa Hathcock
Elena Hossain
Margaret Jenna
Shari Ryan
Allison and Rob Scott
Sherry Vance

Last, but not least, my wife **Tammy** for putting up with my volunteer work. Your ongoing efforts have made a big difference.

Prostitution Network in Oak Forest **by Rob Guthrie**

How well do you know your neighborhood? Would it surprise you to know that our neighborhood had a brothel?

In June 2003, the Austin Police Department cracked a Chinese prostitution ring involving six local area

brothels. One of the brothels was located at 6600 Danwood Drive (at the corner of Oak Knoll Drive).

Unsuspecting Chinese women were lured to the United States with the understanding that jobs would be provided to them. "Once the women arrive, however, they are held captive and not allowed to go free until they have worked off the cost of their passage, which police said the captors set at between \$50,000 and \$60,000." *

"[Austin Police Cmdr. **Howard**] **Williams** said the people running the operation [were] also laundering money to be sent back to China." Federal law enforcement investigators are also involved to determine if money laundering and crimes were committed across state lines. "It is believed that the national organization still has powerful ring leaders whom they hope to find."

If you are appalled that this type of criminal activity could occur in the Oak Forest Neighborhood, the Laurel Oaks Neighborhood Association invites you to get involved. Membership is free and you will receive periodic e-mail updates on neighborhood activity. Visit the LONA Web site www.laurel-oaks.org to sign up on the Yahoo email Group and for more information. Help us protect the community we call home.

* Quotations cited from the Austin American Statesman.

Why Park on Your Front Lawn? **by Heather Werhane**

What's your home worth? Did you know that the perceived value of your property decreases substantially if your neighbors park their car(s) on their front lawn? Austin is among a minority of major cities in the U.S. which allows residents to park vehicles on their front lawns. As of March 11th, the draft of the Austin City ordinance has been changed to allow individual neighborhoods to CHOOSE whether they wish to be covered by the ordinance. Under the current draft, which can be found at www.ci.austin.tx.us/council/downloads/thomas_parkingordfinal.pdf, only neighborhood associations which make an explicit request to the City Council to opt in will be covered. All others are assumed by default to have opted out.

LONA is currently taking votes via email (lonaparking@yahoo.com), U.S. mail (LONA P.O. Box 201454, Austin, Texas 78720-1454) or via the on-line form on the LONA Web site (www.laurel-oaks.org) to determine whether its members wish to be included on the list of neighborhoods covered by this city ordinance. We will also be voting on this ordinance at the September General Meeting. All information collected will be utilized solely for the purpose of determining the desire of LONA members regarding this ordinance. If sending vote via U.S. mail or email, please include: name, address and stated desire to be included or excluded from coverage by this ordinance.

Additional information regarding this ordinance can be obtained by contacting **Linda Dailey**, Aide to Council Member **Danny Thomas** (ordinance sponsor) at 974-2266.

Treasurer's Report **By Heather Werhane**

The Laurel Oaks Neighborhood Association (LONA) is a voluntary non-profit association. Thanks to the generous support of LONA residents, our account balance as of 7/31/03 is \$5,541.19 with \$4,013.40 specifically designated to rebuilding the neighborhood entrance signs located at the corner of Jollyville and Oak Knoll.

Thanks so much to all of you who have contributed your time and/or money to this much-needed neighborhood improvement.

Fund Raising Update **By Shari Ryan**

I want to thank **EVERYONE** for their fund raising efforts on the Entrance Sign Project. We are making excellent strides and thus far have collected approximately \$4,000 from individual donations and fund raising events. The Street Collection on June 7th raised over \$1,100 and the Garage/Bake Sale on July 12 raised over \$900!

Our next efforts will be to concentrate to the local businesses around our neighborhood for monetary donations. However, we will continue to have neighborhood fundraisers, so watch for signs announcing future events. And don't forget, we can always use extra volunteers and monetary donations so please visit www.laurel-oaks.org for information on how **YOU** can help.

Again, thank you for your support. We will all be proud of our hard work when we see two beautiful signs to greet us into the neighborhood!

Special Thank-You's

- **Mary "B" Battaglia** and **Deanna** from Coldwell Banker - provided mailing labels and garage sale signs www.maryb.com/maryb
 - **Buck's Bike SuperStores** - donated \$100 to the sign project
 - **Children's World** - provided location for the July garage sale
 - **Pizza Hut** (Jollyville) - provided half price pizza for garage sale volunteers
 - **HEB #17** (Braker and 183) - \$50 gift card
 - **Randall's** (Jollyville and Braker) - \$25 gift card
 - **River City Survey** - pro-bono survey from **Charles Malone**
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Neighborhood Tidbits

Fire Station

You may have heard of plans for a fire station at Four Iron Road and Spicewood Springs. It is in the City of Austin Plan for 2005, however, it has not been funded yet. If neighbors would like to know more, they may contact Battalion Chief, Bruce Taylor, at 477-9982.

Spicewood Springs Library (Closing or Not?)

The Austin City Council will determine the funding for the Library construction and operations in the next of couple months. There should be information/decisions made by the end of September. We do not know if the Library will be closing during construction - because it depends on whether the City Council approves operating funds. No architectural plans or dates have been approved or published.

Advertising Rates

The LONA newsletter is distributed to approximately 1900+ homes within the LONA boundaries. It is

published twice a year, March and September.

The **deadline** to place neighborhood related articles or advertisements for the March newsletter will be **February 1, 2004**. The LONA board will have final approval for all content and ads placed in this newsletter.

The advertising rates are as follows:

1/2 page \$200 (1x) \$180 (2x)
1/4 page \$120 (1x) \$108 (2x)
Business Card \$60 (1x) \$54 (2x)
8 1/2 x 11 ad inserted into the newsletter for \$300

Camera ready artwork of appropriate size is needed. Computer generated image is preferred. Coupons with a limited time offer can increase your response.

Please contact the [LONA Board](#) for any questions regarding the newsletter content or advertising for the LONA newsletter.

Women We Miss **By Marilyn Hunt**

Two remarkable women from our neighborhood have recently passed away. My family and other neighbors miss them already. Both in their 70s. Both spry with smiles that will be long remembered.

I met **Avon Chavez** in my work to give the creek that runs between Danwood and Vallecito Drive (under Oak View) an official name. (It's now Laurel Oaks Creek.) We shared stories of creek critters that have come to visit. Avon had even better stories though. She and husband Jack had been married for 54 years and lived in Bolivia for many years. While in the Canal Zone, Avon was part of the 470th Military Intelligence Group and worked for the IRS for 13 years also. But my husband Russell and I will just remember what a genuine and kind person she was. Very frail, but with a definite sparkle in her eyes.

Dottie Pemberton lived just 3 doors up and was a gardener extraordinaire. She died last month. After living in the neighborhood for a few years, I took my young girls, Rita and Tessa for a walk in the creek. We found this incredible enchanted creekside garden. A little white haired lady with bright blue eyes appeared. She introduced herself with a voice that seemed to sing when she spoke. She knew my little ones would have a difficult time saying her last name so she said, "Just call me Mrs. P" which we did for the next 6 years. She so kindly invited us to visit her garden any time we wanted, "Just don't step on the plants." At least 20 of my kids' friends have traveled to the creek just to play in Mrs. P's rock garden over and over. They will miss her as well. I know one neighbor that bought their house primarily because of their view of Mrs. P's garden. I was so thankful for her friendship that I gave her a photo album of her garden walkways, plants and visitors.

Mrs. P often gave out cuttings from her garden so we all have a little bit of her love with us. Thank you, Mrs. P.

Officer Information

Are you tired of looking at the run down Oak Forest entry sign at the corner of Oak Knoll and Jollyville?

The entrance to the subdivision is not structurally sound and is unattractive.

Please join your neighbors in an effort to construct 2 new entry signs.

Please make checks payable to:
Laurel Oaks Neighborhood Association
P.O. Box 201454
Austin, Texas 78720-1454

The Laurel Oaks Newsletter is produced by:

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