

THE
FRONT
PORCH
News



News and Information from the City of Bulverde and our Neighbors
Issue 2 ☆ February 2015

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THE
FRONT PORCH
News

CITY OF BULVERDE

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FRONT PORCH NEWS

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As a City publication, the Front Porch News strives to maintain objectivity and accuracy in all published content. The newsletter must remain neutral in the publication of content that may be considered controversial, biased, or inflammatory within the community (e.g., political content or opinions, religious material, etc.). The newsletter differs from a newspaper in that opinion pieces are typically not included. Publication of contributing partner content is subject to review for applicability and appropriateness of a publicly funded communication initiative. The newsletter is produced in part through public funding, and is accordingly governed by the regulations set forth in Texas State Law.

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Mayor's Point



Bill Krawietz
Mayor of Bulverde, TX

Recently, there was an article published in a local entertainment magazine entitled "The Death of Bulverde." It talks of fond memories of the days

when our community was a lot slower paced, had less traffic and fewer rooftops.

With San Antonio's near-term plans to annex all the way up to Bulverde's southern border being recently announced, there is no doubt urban sprawl is knocking at our door. Just a few years ago, there was quite a bit of open land between Loop 1604 and FM 1863. Today that is not the case.

One major reason why Bulverde incorporated back in 1997 was to have a local say in how our community develops. Just look at any of the City's stringent development ordinances and the 2025 Sunrise Comprehensive Master Plan we have put in place, and the message is clear, "Our community doesn't want to look or feel like our neighbor to the south." That would truly be the "death of Bulverde."

However, developers have strong lobbies in Austin. **Texas is a strong property rights state.** Cities are limited in many ways when it comes to managing growth, especially cities without Home Rule like Bulverde.

It has been said many times before in this column that the new guys needs to pay their own way and not destroy or jeopardize the lifestyle and well-being of those who have come before them. However, it's not easy to keep good on that promise when you're up against such powerful forces.

The City recently finalized a development agreement with 4S Ranch, which will be located off of Stahl Lane just north of Oak Village North and east of the new Johnson Ranch development. The property is about 1.6 square miles in size versus the City of Bulverde, which is 10 square miles in size. At full build out, the development will have about 5,000 residents, basically equal to the population currently within our City limits. The project is located entirely outside of the City limits, and the City will not receive any property taxes from the development.

Prior to their approval, the City launched forward with an engineering study analyzing hydrology and hydraulics of the entire Lewis Creek Watershed, where the development is located, which drains directly thru Oak Village North. With

(Continued on page 4)



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(Mayor, continued from page 3)

this new best-available engineering data and the City's recently adopted Storm Water and Drainage Manual, there will be an increased level of protection from flooding downstream. The developer will be required to use both of these enhanced regulations in designing their subdivision, rather than the less comprehensive County drainage standards.

There are still many variables in storm water drainage that are difficult to account for or enforce. It seems like we have either a 100 or 500 year storm event in some part of our community every couple of years. While we can make developers design for 100 year storm events, doing so for 500 year events is usually considered arbitrary and capricious by the courts.

This was a considerable sticking point in our negotiations. The health, safety, and welfare of our citizens are the City's top priorities. We have been told by so many over the years that "this is how it's done everywhere else." Who cares, we are Bulverde and we do it differently here. We expect more than just the standard.

Long story short, the developer has agreed to utilize the new best-available drainage engineering data, comply with the City's enhanced Drainage Manual, ensure that post-development drainage flows match pre-development flows, and ensure that all levels of storm events up to the 100-year flood are accounted for. In addition, they were also willing to write the community a check for \$500,000 to be used for storm water drainage improvements anywhere in the Lewis Creek Watershed.

While this will not entirely fix our existing drainage and flooding issues by a long shot, it's a nice start; and with the enhanced regulations put in place, we can be better assured they won't be making the situation worse.



Winter in south Texas is usually not much to worry about, but occasionally old man winter unleashes his wrath. Travel can often be quite hazardous during winter storm conditions, especially when folks in the area are not used to traveling in wintry conditions. Freezing rain is the most common weather issue facing motorists in the Bulverde area, as temperatures are usually only at or below freezing closer to the surface. Cold air masses modify as they come from the north with usually only a shallow level of cold air remaining once it makes it to south Texas. Rain falls from above in liquid form and freezes on the roadways, with bridges and overpasses freezing first. With even a thin layer of ice on the road, travel becomes very difficult even for those experienced in driving in wintry conditions. Plan ahead. Avoid travel during bad conditions. If you must drive, slow down, stick to daylight hours when visibility is better and more resources are available in case you get stuck. Always check on weather and road conditions before you get on the road. Charge your cell phone in advance, in case you have to call for help. Be aware that overpasses and bridges freeze well before other road surfaces. Have an emergency winter kit in your vehicle which includes blankets, extra jackets, flashlight, nonperishable foods, water, and matches. Make sure you keep the fuel tank full in case you do become stranded. Stay in your car if possible, some shelter is better than none. If there's ice on the roads, the best advice is simply not to travel if you can avoid it.

construction projects currently happening in the Bulverde area. The largest project with the most traffic impact is a Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) project occurring on Hwy 46 near the intersection of Hwy 281. The turnaround lanes for Hwy 281 at this intersection were originally scheduled to be completed in the fall of 2014, but were unfortunately delayed due to adverse soil conditions that required reengineering the construction plans. With the proper plans in place crews are now expected to complete the project by mid-2015. Additionally, work has begun on Hwy 46 west of Hwy 281, where crews will begin Hwy 46 improvements tied to the Singing Hills project. City officials are working with Singing Hills and the Texas Department of Transportation to minimize travel inconveniences and maximize safety for motorists. Unfortunately, detours and lane changes can be expected for the next few months as the Hwy 46 project is expected to also be completed sometime in mid-2015.

On a positive note, the Alamo Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) has included Hwy 46 lane expansions and intersection improvements from Bulverde Road to FM 3159 in their recently adopted Mobility 2040 Plan. These improvements are scheduled for funding by the MPO and eventual construction in 2019. These improvements will help alleviate many of the traffic concerns on Hwy 46 in our area. TxDOT will begin doing preliminary engineering and environmental clearance work in the near future so construction can begin in January 2019 as indicated in the mobility plan.

Coupled with the winter weather, Bulverde commuters are also faced with multiple road

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Getting to Know



Ginger Hofstetter

In many ways, the City of Bulverde is a collection of enterprises responsible for the provision of various public services such as public safety, road maintenance, public planning, land use management, code enforcement, and parks and recreation. With this wide variety of functions, it is critical that the City maintains a strong financial position so that taxpayer resources can be utilized efficiently to provide these services.

This month we highlight Ginger Hofstetter, Finance Director for the City of Bulverde, who is responsible for many of the internal administrative functions that keep the City running well. Ginger has worked in municipal government for more than 36 years, performing various functions including accounting, billing & receiving, accounts payable, payroll, purchasing, budgeting, investment management, human

resources, and municipal court. Ginger was born and raised in San Antonio, and graduated from UTSA with a Bachelor's degree in Accounting. She has worked for several San Antonio-area cities, including the City of Leon Valley, Town of Hollywood Park, and now the City of Bulverde. She has been with the City of Bulverde for 12 years—2 years part time and 10 years full time.

One of the most critical functions that Ginger assists the City with is the annual audit. After each fiscal year, the City of Bulverde has an annual audit performed by an independent, outside auditing firm. The audit firm ensures that all applicable State Laws were followed with regards to the financial management of the City. They present their findings each year to the City Council; this year's audit report will be presented at the February Council meeting. The State of Texas also regulates the type of investments the City can invest reserve funds in, such as bonds and certificates of deposit. Ginger is a Certified Government Finance Officer, and also serves as an Investment Officer for the City of Bulverde. Although Ginger's role with the City of Bulverde is not as publicly visible as those who serve in our police department or public works area, she plays a critical role in ensuring that the City remains financially strong and the provision of our public services runs efficiently and under budget.

Ginger is married to her husband, John, and enjoys spending time with her parents and family.

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Home Rule Charter UPDATE

In October 2014, a group of citizens was appointed by the Bulverde City Council to draft a Home Rule Charter that will be submitted to the citizens of Bulverde for future approval via ballot election. After several months of intense deliberation, the independent Home Rule Charter Commission submitted a draft Charter to the citizens of Bulverde for public review at a December 11th Community Forum and again at a January 7th Community Forum. On January 7th the Commission unanimously approved the proposed Charter language, and placed the item on the May 2015 General Election Ballot for the citizens of Bulverde to vote upon. To assist in explaining the key tenants of what has been drafted by the Commission, the following overview was produced. In addition, to better explain what a Home Rule Charter is, a list of frequently asked questions has also been included. To view the full Home Rule Charter as proposed, please visit the City of Bulverde home page: <http://www.ci.bulverde.tx.us>

What's New?

Changes to the Mayor and City Council

- The Mayor's position will become primarily policy oriented by giving it a full vote on the City Council and transferring the remaining administrative duties to the City Manager.
- The number of elected Council Members will be increased from 5 to 6 in order to provide more representation.
- The terms of office for the Mayor and City Council Member positions will be increased from 2 years to 3 years. This change will only take effect after the election of new members under the Charter, and no current incumbent's term will be extended under this provision. Term limits will be implemented.
- The Members of City Council will be elected by place, meaning that candidates will run for specific seats on the Council. However, Council Members will continue to be elected City-wide.
- The Members of the City Council will be elected by majority vote, and any election in which no candidate receives a majority will be settled in a runoff election between the top two vote getters.

Changes to Governmental Accountability and Direct Democracy

- The Citizens will gain the right to remove any elected official from office by filing a recall petition.
- The Citizens will gain the right to require Council-passed ordinances to be ratified by the voters by filing a referendum petition.
- The Citizens will gain the right the right to enact ordinances directly by filing an initiative petition.
- Vacancies in the office of Mayor or City Council member will generally be filled by special election instead of Council appointment.

Changes to Municipal Boundaries & Regulation

- The City will gain the ability to expand the City Limits up to 10% in any given year, subject to state law and procedures.
- The City will gain the ability to prohibit certain nuisances, such as illegal dumping grounds or illicit junk yards, within certain portions of the ETJ.

Changes to City Administration

- The City Administrator's position will be renamed "City Manager", but will continue to serve as the City's chief administrative official.

What's Staying the Same?

- Members of the City Council will continue to be elected from the City at large and to represent the City at large. (The City of Bulverde has never elected Council Members from geographic districts)
- The City's authority to tax, per the Texas Constitution, is based on population, not form of government. Therefore, the City's taxing authority is the same under General Law or Home Rule.
- The City's extra-territorial jurisdiction is also based on population, not form of government. The extent of the City's ETJ will not be changed if a Home Rule Charter is adopted.
- The City's power of eminent domain is granted and restricted by state law and the state Constitution, and is the same regardless of whether the City has a Home Rule Charter.
- The City's options for the issuance of debt are the same under both Home Rule and General Law.
- The City's zoning authority is derived from state law, not the Home Rule Charter. Therefore, the City will have the same zoning authority under Home Rule that it currently has under General Law.

FAQs

Question: What is a Home Rule Charter?

Answer: The home rule charter is the "constitution" of Bulverde. The charter was drafted by an independent group of fifteen Bulverde residents who were appointed by the Mayor and City Council. The charter goes into effect only after a majority of Bulverde citizens have approved it in an election, scheduled for May 9th 2015.

Texas cities become eligible to adopt home rule charters if they have a population of 5,000 or more. 93.6% of eligible cities in Texas have adopted home rule charters (as of 2010).

Question: In a nutshell, what are the inherent powers of home rule cities?

Answer: In a nutshell the powers are: Municipal Organization; Annexation; Initiative, Referendum, and Recall; Charter Amendments; Limitation on Home Rule Powers.

Question: Who is behind the effort to get a Home Rule Charter approved?

Answer: Bulverde citizens. Home Rule is the right of citizens at the grassroots level to manage their own affairs with minimum interference from the State. Home Rule assumes that community challenges should be solved at the lowest possible level, closest to the people.

Question: Will my property taxes increase if a Home Rule Charter is approved?

Answer: No. Home Rule charters do not change the current laws

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(Cont'd from page 6)

and requirements regarding the ability and authority of the City regarding taxes. The city council currently has the authority and responsibility to set the property tax rate each year in accordance with state law.

The Comal County Appraisal District sets property values each year. The adoption of a Charter does not change the current process for setting tax rates or appraising property.

Question: How will approving a Home Rule Charter affect me?

Answer: Approving a Charter will allow the citizens to govern themselves by establishing rights, responsibilities, and privileges for all Bulverde residents, so long as content in the Charter is not superseded by State or Federal laws. Charters allow for citizens to:

- Determine the number of council members to represent the citizens.
- Determine how long terms of office are for the Mayor and Council Members.
- Determine how the Mayor and Council Members are elected.
- Determine how long the Mayor and Council Members stay in office, and how many times the Mayor and Council Members can run for office.
- Determine which form of government will be utilized. It can only be changed by citizens voting to amend the charter.
- Determine if citizens should have the right to request a binding initiative on the ballot; an initiative allows the citizenry to propose new laws or change the charter through a general election ballot measure.
- Determine if citizens should have the right to recall the Mayor or Council Member.
- Determine if citizens should have the right to call for a referendum, which is the method by which a measure adopted by the City Council may be submitted to the electorate for a vote.

Question: What will home rule chartering provide for residents of Bulverde in terms of services?

Answer: No matter whether Bulverde is a General Law city or Home Rule city, the City has wide authority to provide services directly to citizens. Cities provide police, public works, parks, recreation, health, and other services. Some services are franchised to private companies to provide services in the city,

such as waste management. Home rule cities typically have broader local control to protect the health, safety and welfare of their citizens.

Question: Who can vote on the proposed Home Rule Charter?

Answer: Per State Law, only registered voters of the City of Bulverde may vote on the home rule charter.

Question: How do I find out if I am in the City or the ETJ?

Answer: If you have a question as to whether your property is within the City or ETJ, you may visit the maps on the City's web site or contact the City at 830-438-3612. You may also visit the GIS page at: www.cceo.org

Question: I've heard that Home Rule will give the citizens of Bulverde more authority. How is that?

Answer: The Home Rule Charter as proposed will provide for Recall, Initiative, and Referendum rights for citizens.

- Recall allows citizens to vote to remove a city council member (including the mayor) from elected office, if the member knowingly violates a provision of the charter, engages in official misconduct, or demonstrates incompetence.
- Initiative is the process that allows citizens, through a petition, to initiate legislation (through ordinances).
- Referendum is the process that allows citizens, through a petition and election, to overturn ordinances passed by the city council.
- Recall, Initiative, and Referendum are not legally permitted in General Law cities.

Question: How will a Charter affect the annexation authority of Bulverde?

Answer: Home Rule cities can extend city boundaries (annex) unilaterally while general law cities can generally annex only with permission of property owners or with approval of a majority of the residents of an annexed area. However, annexation by Texas home rule cities is limited in various ways, including the following:

- Cities can annex no more than ten percent (10%) of their area in any given year.
- When annexing existing residential areas containing more than 100 housing units, cities must file an annexation plan;

(Continued on page 8)

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- ✓ Wiper blades skipping?
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(Cont'd from page 7)

annexation cannot occur until three years after the filing of the plan. The territory to be annexed must be adjacent to existing city limits.

- A service plan must be attached to all annexations, indicating what services will be provided to the annexed area and under what conditions the services will be provided. Under Texas law some services such as police protection must be provided immediately upon annexation.

Question: Isn't annexation involuntary?

Answer: There are more options for unilateral annexation of property for a Home Rule city under state law than the authority for a general law city. Creating annexation plans is a right and responsibility of a home rule charter city which wishes to annex. General Law cities may only take in land per requests of landowners, or under very limited circumstances.

Question: I own property within the city limits of Bulverde, but live elsewhere. Can I vote on the Charter?

Answer: No, per State Law, you must be a resident of the City and a registered voter in order to vote on the Charter.

Question: Will the City Council determine the language included in the Bulverde Charter?

Answer: No. The City Council's only role has simply been to appoint the Charter Commission members, who have independently drafted the Charter, and have now submitted the proposed language to Bulverde citizens for approval in May 2015. The City Council cannot

edit the proposed charter or amend it in the future in any way. The Charter will be on the May election ballot as it has been currently written and approved by the Home Rule Charter Commission.

Question: What is the ETJ and how does it affect me?

Answer: The "ETJ" stands for Extraterritorial Jurisdiction, and is the area within one mile of the City Limits of Bulverde. The City enforces its Subdivision Ordinance and Sign Regulations within the ETJ. This is the same whether you are a home rule city or a general law city.

Question: How will people living in the ETJ be affected if Home Rule is approved for the City of Bulverde?

Answer: As areas are annexed, the City will have a greater ability to manage development intensity, quality building standards, dark sky ordinances, and other ordinances adopted by the City Council. The city may also be able to better protect residential and commercial properties and citizens that live adjacent to the unincorporated county area, through proper ordinances and zoning.

Question: Will the status of my agriculture tax exemption change with the passage of the Home Rule Charter?

Answer: No. Home Rule will not affect that status.

Question: Is the City Council able to make changes to the Charter in the future?

Answer: No, any changes to the Charter must be approved by an election of the voters.

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SVHS Senior Receives Navy ROTC Scholarship

~article and photo courtesy of Comal ISD

Smithson Valley High School senior Natasha Chick was formally awarded a Navy ROTC scholarship worth \$180,000 recently in a presentation held in front of the SVHS campus.

Flanked by her father Ken and grandmother Mila, Chick received the check from Commanding Officer Mike Briggs of the Navy Recruiting District San Antonio in front of faculty, friends, and the school's Navy JROTC cadets. Chick plans to study bioengineering at the University of California at San Diego.

Since early 2014, nine Smithson Valley High seniors have earned Navy ROTC scholarship worth \$180,000 each. Since



Pictured are (l-r) father Ken Chick, Natasha Chick, SVHS math teacher Richard Rathburn, SVHS principal Michael Wahl, SVHS math teacher Kathryn Rutledge, and grandmother Mila Chick.

January 2010, SVHS students have earned a total of 35 Navy and Army ROTC scholarships. Commander Retired Vince Quidachay is the head Navy JROTC Instructor at SVHS.

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THE THREE CHIEFS AND THEIR CIRCLE

Bulverde Spring Branch Emergency Services has three Chiefs—Scotty Bolleter, Dustin Beaudoin, and Mark Southwell—who are responsible for the daily operations regarding 911 calls and education.

Scotty Bolleter was born in Jourdanton, Texas but grew up overseas. His father was a geologist and his mother was a rancher. Scotty now spends a great deal of each year traveling the world to teach and lecture. Scotty is married to Sandy and they have four children. He enjoys boat ownership and to fish and dive in the Gulf of Mexico. Scotty said the best thing about working for Bulverde Spring Branch Emergency Services is the fact that it draws people from all over the world for education, training, and to do research.



Scotty Bolleter

GRACED WITH ONE WISH: If given one wish, Scotty would ask for more space and more facilities.

Dustin Beaudoin was born in San Antonio and was raised in Houston, Denver, and Blanco. His father worked for Union Pacific in dispatch management, and his mother worked in investment firms. Dustin is married to Jenese and they have two children younger than 5 years of age. His hobbies include hunting, fishing, and ranching. Dustin said the best thing about working for Bulverde Spring Branch Emergency Services is the family environment.



Dustin Beaudoin

GRACED WITH ONE WISH: If given one wish, Dustin would ask for more stations, personnel and equipment.



Mark Southwell

Mark Southwell was born and raised in San Antonio. His father was an operations manager for a pharmaceutical company, and his mother was a nurse. Mark is married to Jill and they have four children and five grandchildren. He enjoys hunting, fishing, and chasing after grandkids.

Mark said the best thing about working for Bulverde Spring Branch Emergency Services is that the concerns of the people in the community are put before the dollar bill.

GRACED WITH ONE WISH: If given one wish, Mark would ask for new stations and extra staff.

THE CHIEF'S CIRCLE

Bulverde Spring Branch Fire & EMS recently introduced the Chief's Circle as a way for a good-hearted woman or a good-timing man to make a measureable and positive difference in their community. There are nine ways to become a member of the Chief's Circle, a bequest in a will giving a donation to Fire & EMS is just one way. Donations support medical research and advances, the medical clinic for the uninsured and the underinsured, career path internships for teens in Emergency Services, and a mobile clinic for the underserved, to name just a few programs.



A gift of any size will positively impact Fire & EMS for years to come. We honestly hope that you have a grand life and live a lot. We also hope you'll remember the medics and firefighters of Bulverde Spring Branch Fire & EMS, and leave a little or whatever best represents your heart. The Chief's Circle is a lasting legacy of giving. If you would like more information on the nine ways to join the Chief's Circle, contact Development Director Judy Millspaugh 830-228-4206 Judy.Millspaugh@bsb911.com

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WHY FIRE & EMS STATION LOCATIONS ARE CRUCIAL

In an area as large as our rural District, station placement is a critical part of our Strategic Planning. Emergency (911) calls for medical help are often life-threatening incidents, and time is of the essence to save a life. The farther the medical personnel are stationed from the 911 caller, the greater the challenge for a successful outcome once the patient is reached. Structure fires also require fast action to save occupants and their pets, and limit damage. Likewise, in the Hill Country, if brush fires are not contained immediately, the fuel from underbrush and the fast igniting Cedar trees can consume acres and threaten structures.

The best tool Bulverde Spring Branch Fire & EMS has in the fight against time is station placement. To understand our challenges, understand the District we serve which is 216 square miles.

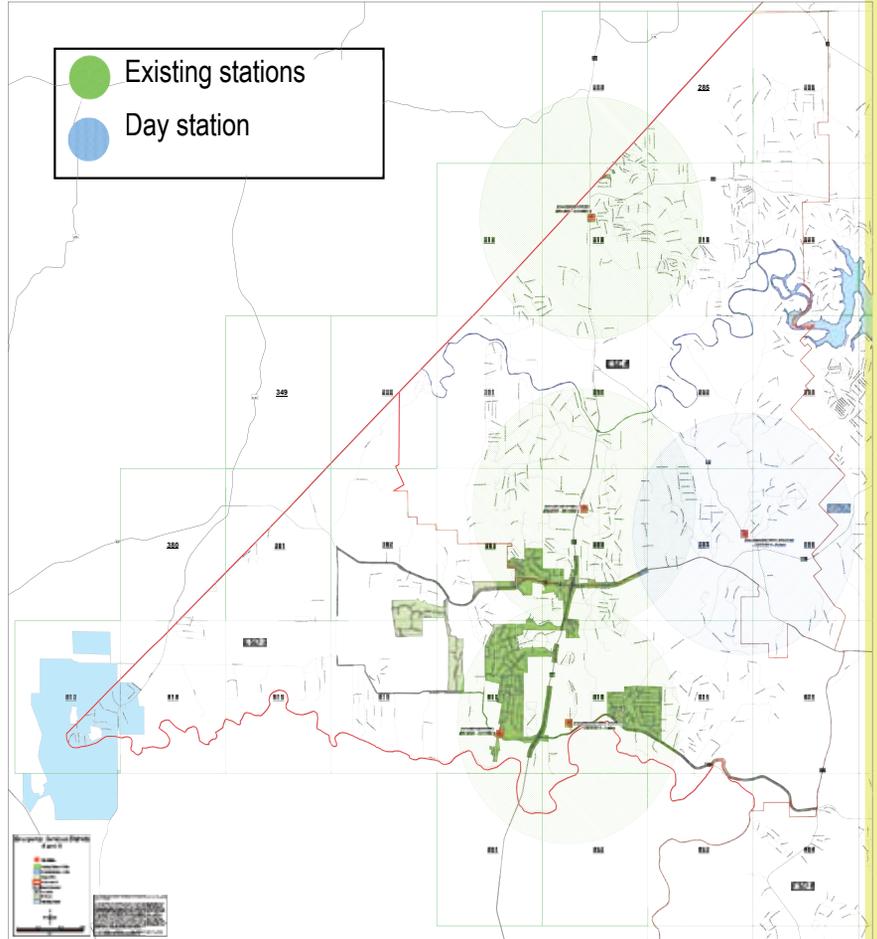
216 square mile area is:

- 1/4 the size of Rhode Island
- 9.5 times larger than Manhattan, NY (22.7 square miles)
- Almost the size of New York City (3/4 of it)
- Over half the size of Dallas, TX (Dallas = 385 sq mi)
- Larger than Ft. Worth, TX
- Two times larger than Las Vegas, NV
- Larger than New Orleans, LA



Right now we have three stations as shown on the map in green. We have just opened a fourth station at the corner of FM 311 and Rebecca Creek Road to provide faster response times to the adjoining neighborhoods. This station is shown in blue because for the immediate future, it will be manned only as a day-station. We have a need for four more stations to provide all neighborhoods in our District with appropriate response times. The locations for the stations that are needed within the next 1 to 3 years: 1) far west on Hwy 46; 2) far east on Hwy 46; 3) mid-District on FM 311; and 4) in the northern part of the District in Mystic Shores.

SO HOW CAN ALL THESE CRUCIAL STATIONS BE BUILT? The first thing that needs to happen is the removal of a ceiling of 6 cents per \$100 of taxable value for residents living north of Hwy. 46. Comal County Emergency Services District #4 will be asking voters in May to approve a 4-cent property tax cap increase (up to the state cap of 10 cents). This will not mean a 4-cent increase on next year's tax bill; it simply raises the cap to 10 cents which is the same level as folks living south of Hwy 46 in ESD #5. Community leaders of ESD #4 do



not expect an immediate tax increase. This would be the first property cap increase for ESD #4 since the cap was established in 2004. Although there will be no tax increase in 2015, a future 1-cent increase translates to an additional \$20 per year on a \$200,000 property.

If approved by our community, this will put us one step closer to improved emergency service coverage in our 216 square mile District.

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ANIMAL RESCUE CONNECTIONS

Got Time?

By Pam Parmer, Animal Rescue Connections

Are you looking for ways to help in the community? Do you or your high-school children need volunteer hours? YOUR efforts can make a huge impact in the community, and satisfaction in a job well-done is the best reward.

You can make a difference in your local community by volunteering with Animal Rescue Connections. You don't have to make a big commitment of time or energy—even a little bit goes a long way. Animal Rescue Connections serves the Bulverde/Spring Branch area by helping rescue cats and dogs, finding them loving homes; conducting Trap-Neuter-Return projects to help reduce the number of outside cats being born; and providing education on animal welfare issues.

We need volunteers to help with:

- ✿ adoption efforts by fostering animals, helping out at the PetSmart adoption center, and entering information in online databases and sites such as Petfinder,
- ✿ taking pictures and videos of adoptable animals in foster care,
- ✿ creating courtesy posts for lost/found animals,
- ✿ fundraising events such as Bulverde Market Days, Garden Ridge rummage sale, and Goodwill collection,
- ✿ loading new bags of pine pellets we use for litter every 1–2 months and taking them to our storage unit,
- ✿ feeding feral/community cat colonies in the area,
- ✿ helping at our monthly TNR class in Spring Branch,
- ✿ distributing flyers,
- ✿ transporting cats in traps to the low-cost clinic (Boerne) for spay/neuter surgeries, and/or
- ✿ creating marketing materials to help others learn about Animal Rescue Connections and the animals we support.

These are just a few of the ways in which YOU can make a BIG DIFFERENCE in the community and in the lives of animals. If you are interested in volunteering, please email info@animalrescueconnections.vpweb.com



New Playground Equipment at the Bulverde Community Park

The Bulverde City Council and the Friends of the Park recognized late last year that the new Bulverde Community Park provides tremendous park and recreation assets to the citizens of the greater Bulverde area, but also identified a gap in age appropriate playground equipment to accommodate the 5–12 year old age group.

Fortunately, this issue was resolved with a generous donation of \$30,000 from an anonymous donor in our community for the purchase of a new playground structure that is well suited to 5–12 year olds. The City matched the donated funds to cover the cost of the equipment installation and also the installation of a long-lasting rubber playground safety surface. At the time of this newsletter's publishing, the equipment installation was well underway and was anticipated to be complete by the end of January. The Bulverde City Council and the Friends of the Park invite you to come out to the Bulverde Community Park to enjoy the new playground equipment and the other many wonderful assets the Park has to offer.

If you are interested in making a donation to the Friends of the Park towards the purchase of future equipment, contact Merri Harrison at 210-387-9332. The Friends of the Park, through the Bulverde Community Parks Association, is a 501 c (3) corporation; your donations are fully tax deductible as allowed by law. Consult your tax advisor for more information.



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Forever for Everyone



by Tom Blacklock

This holiday season was an emotional roller coaster ride for the volunteers and staff of the Bulverde Area Humane Society (BAHS) with the adoption of two of its furry residents that were considered...uh, let's just say that these two dogs were proving to be difficult to adopt...and then their subsequent return. Adopted by well-intentioned and pet-experienced families who were warned that these two dogs each had a challenging history, they both proved to be more than the adopters could accept. The mood at the shelter went from happy to sad when both were returned within days of one another.

Added to this up and down ride was the proposed adoption of Lucas, a brown Shepherd mix with the dubious distinction of having been a resident at the shelter longer than any other dog—over 4 years. It wasn't that Lucas was a mean or aggressive dog, but instead, because of apparent abuse (possibly by a male), it took him a long while to become friendly with staff, volunteers, and visitors. Spirits once again rose when a prospective adopter was willing to take Lucas into her home and work with him to make him part of her family. However, Lucas had other ideas and refused to warm up to the adopter at the shelter. Sadly, the prospective adopter decided Lucas was too frightened to leave a place he was accustomed to, and departed without him.

While finding forever homes for these three dogs has not yet met with success, not all the adoptions of dogs who were "adoption challenged" were unsuccessful. One success was Buster, a white bull dog mix who gave the appearance when you approached his pen that he would rather chew on you than on his rawhide bone. However, Buster had one weakness and that was chasing and retrieving a tennis ball. He would chase the ball for hours on end both on level ground and into a large water tank that was in a play field area. And he did not seem to care who was willing to throw the ball. Buster was adopted by a gentleman who was looking to replace a constant companion that had recently crossed the rainbow bridge. This gentleman determined that Buster would be the one and worked with him at the shelter for several weeks before taking him home. Continual reports about Buster (now Bronson) are heart-warming, and he has found the perfect forever home.

Another success was the adoption of Wendell, a deaf dog who allegedly had little tolerance for cats. A people-friendly white and brown boxer mix, Wendell played with other dogs and generally enjoyed life even though in a world without sound. Adopted by a family who was aware of his disability, he is doing fine in his new forever home.

These two recent successful adoptions continued a trend that started earlier this year when Cara, a lab mix who had never met a fence that could prevent her from exploring the other side, and Peate, a short-legged, barrel-chested pug, who had the attitude of a Rottweiler, both found forever homes after extended stays at the BAHS shelter.

The finding of forever homes has not been limited to our doggie residents. May, an older cat who had a litter of kittens at the shelter, is now sunning herself in a window of her new forever home.

While the return of some of our former occupants have dampened our spirits, we are encouraged by the successful adoption of several hard-to-adopt furry residents that have found forever homes, and it verifies the prevailing attitude of the BAHS staff and volunteers that there is a perfect home for every one of our charges. It also gives us hope that some of the dogs and cats who have been with us for an extended time will ultimately find the perfect forever home. Because of this belief, the BAHS staff and volunteers are committed to caring for a dog or cat for as long as it takes to find them the right home.

Go Rangers!

Chris, Class of 2005 Corey, Class of 2016
Casey, Class of 2009 Clay, Class of 2021

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Annual Chamber Award Winners are Honored

The Bulverde Spring Branch Chamber honored the recipients of the 2014 Annual Chamber Awards on January 15, 2015 at The Lodge at Bridal Veil Falls. Congratulations to Robert Evans – Community Volunteer of the Year, Mike Johnson – Chamber Volunteer of the Year and Singing Hills/DJL Ventures the 2014 Chamber Business of the Year. The attendees enjoyed a delicious meal by The Reel Seafood House, listened to the Smithson Valley High School Jazz Band and were served by the Canyon Lake High School Jr ROTC and Smithson Valley High School Culinary Arts Students.

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Local Nonprofit News

St. Jude's Ranch for Children has a couple of exciting events to report!

- First, St. Jude's Ranch for Children is proud to announce their new Director of Development, Michael Newhouse. Michael has over 10 years of experience in helping nonprofit organizations grow their missions, and he is excited to be joining the St. Jude's Ranch team. St. Jude's Ranch serves over 100 abused, abandoned and neglected children each year in Bulverde and New Braunfels as well as foster and adopt placements throughout the area.
- The 22nd annual Jingle Bell 5k Run at Gruene Hall in December was a huge success! Almost 2,000 people braved the foggy morning to show their Christmas spirit and support St. Jude's Ranch for Children. Thank you for helping our kids!

St. Jude's offers a BIG thank you to the **presenting sponsor, Comal ISD Community Education**, for their generous and enthusiastic support and partnership to make the Jingle Bell Run such a success. Thank you to these sponsors as well: the GVTC Foundation, The Burton family, Frost Bank, HEB, U-Run, Athlete Guild and Airrosti Rehab Centers.

Thank you also to Starbucks for the coffee, Rudy's BBQ for the sausage wraps, New Braunfels Brewing Company for the post-race beer for the runners, Revolucion Coffee and Juice for providing juice, KIND Bars for their delicious snack bars, Camp Gladiator for their boot camp classes and providing the pre-race warm-up, Yoga on Bulverde for providing post-race stretching for everyone, and Comal FIT for organizing the Health Fair.

Thank you to our Race Director, Scott Wood with Athlete Guild, for his expert service and thank you to Santa and Mrs. Claus for bringing Christmas Cheer! Also, a big thank you to New Braunfels Police Chief Tom Wibert for coming out bright and early start the race, and to the Comal County Sheriff's Department for providing security along the course to keep everyone safe! Thank you to all of our amazing volunteers who helped to make the race happen!



First Chance Foundation Honored as 2014 Top-Rated Nonprofit

Bulverde-based nonprofit First Chance Foundation was honored with a prestigious 2014 Top-Rated Award by GreatNonprofits, the leading provider of user reviews about nonprofit organizations. The new GreatNonprofits.org Award is based on positive online reviews.

"We are excited to be named a Top-Rated 2014 Nonprofit," says Heather Swindall, Executive Director, First Chance Foundation. "We are proud of our 2014 accomplishments, including directly providing 90 brand new coats to children in the foster care system, 100 new sets of hats, scarves, and gloves to homeless children and children in local shelters, prepared 500 comfort packages for children removed from their homes, provided 250 meal bags to homeless teens, as well as giving financial and in-kind donations to multiple children's organizations."

The Top-Rated Nonprofit award was based on the large number of positive reviews that First Chance Foundation received—reviews written by volunteers, donors, and clients. People posted their personal experience with the nonprofit. For example, one person wrote, "What a wonderful and meaningful organization of caring people who are making a difference to the littlest of souls whose depth of struggles we may never fully know."

About First Chance Foundation

The First Chance Foundation's mission is to financially and physically assist other nonprofit organizations with the nurturing and development of disadvantaged children. www.firstchancefoundation.org



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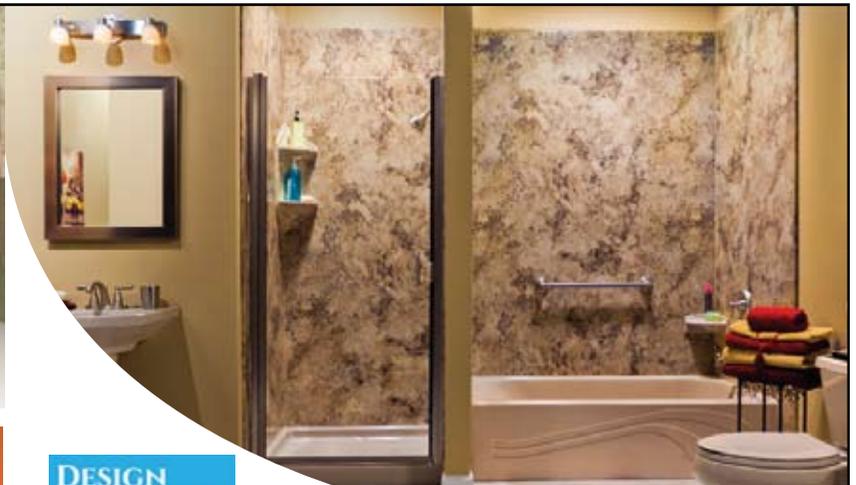
When preparing for the February edition, we sent out a request to readers and local photographers for their best rodeo-themed photos. Talk about an overwhelming response! We received photos of such varied composition and genre, but still, all were rodeo- or western-themed. It was so hard to choose for a cover, so we're including some of the other fabulous photos for your viewing pleasure. Included here are photos by Jennifer Hamlett-Wilkerson (Hamlett Photography), John Mohar (JMohar on SmugMug), Richard Clark (CatchIt Photos), and Michelle Grizzell (Seize the Light Photography). Many thanks to everyone who submitted their art.



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Angie's list



Customer Service and Work Ethic... Where Did They Go?

Sherry Mosier, President

A frequent comment I hear from the general public is frustration with lack of good customer service. More often than not, employees do not have positive attitudes, are not cordial to the customer, and are not willing to go above and beyond to answer questions, take care of customer concerns, or make the customer feel special. This attitude can put any business “out of business,” and it often does. In fact, when I was the Director for the City of Windcrest Economic Development Corporation, the employees at Rackspace stated that if they don’t receive good customer service the first time they visited a new restaurant or business there were no second chances. Ouch! Customer service is the foundation of a successful business, and it is all tied to work ethic and pride in one’s performance.

Along that same concept, a comment most often heard by economic developers from businesses is their challenges in finding quality employees with good work ethic and customer service skills. It seems that everyone wants that paycheck, but more often than not they are not really willing to work for it. These days there appears to be this unjustified sense of entitlement amongst many in our workforce...I put in my hours, but only do the minimum, and because I put in my time “they owe me.” I must be old fashioned, but I was raised with the value that if you want something, you have to work hard for it because nothing in life is accomplished without hard work. A wise person once told me that you have to kiss a lot of frogs to advance in your career, and even if you are only a ditch digger, you need to be the best ditch digger to stand out from the rest. Just because you graduated from high school or may have earned a college degree doesn’t mean that you will automatically step into a high paying job right out of school. Especially, if you have no real skills or work experience to hang your hat on or, as in a lot of cases, are lacking in your work ethic.

I’ve approached a few very unique businesses about opening up another location in our area, but I am often told they can’t even consider opening another location because they just can’t find good employees anymore, and are working many long hours themselves just to keep the business going. In fact, several have indicated they can’t even take a vacation because they can’t trust anyone to take care of things while they’re gone. Now that’s a problem! This is real issue and appears to be a national epidemic.

I’m not saying all employees have this lack of work ethic and customer service skills, but a fair amount do, and it’s really hitting our small businesses hard. You’ve heard me say it before—small businesses are the backbone of

our economy—about 75% to 80% worth; and if these businesses can’t find good employees, what does that do to our economy? Hmm...

I remember years ago when I was in my early 20s, I worked as a server at Tom’s Ribs in San Antonio. Tom was a great boss in many respects, but was hardnosed in his expectations for performance, and if you wanted to keep your job, you had to perform. If you didn’t show up for work on time...you were sent home, if you didn’t do your side work and clean your section at the end of your shift to his standards...you were taken off the schedule for a few days. If you didn’t provide excellent customer service...you were taken off the schedule permanently. Tom’s attitude was ‘if you weren’t willing to do those necessary things that kept his restaurant clean and made it run effectively to satisfy his customers, that in turn yielded decent profits to provide you a paycheck, then you must not really want the job too bad.’ I challenge employers to mimic Tom’s attitude, but I also challenge more employees to improve their work ethic and aspire to provide good customer service. Imagine what this could do for our local economy. Please help Bulverde/Spring Branch earn the reputation as the place to find good employees and a place known for its incredible customer service.

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Meet Laurie Wilson

Executive Director of the Bulverde Spring Branch Activity Center



Laurie Wilson is the executive director at the Bulverde Spring Branch Activity Center. She has been at the center for the past 5 years. Laurie is a wife, mom, and savvy businesswoman.

Laurie has been in Bulverde area since her elementary school days. She is a proud graduate of SVHS. She attended college in Houston, married her high school sweetheart, and moved back to the area.

In 2009, Laurie was running a very successful business. She decided it was taking too much time away from her family and closed that business. She still needed something to do while her children were in school and took a part-time job at the Activity Center. A short time later the director position became open and Laurie was asked to become the director.

One of the first things on her to-do-list was to freshen up the appearance of the center. Laurie contacted some middle and

high school students, and soon a new color of paint was put on the inside walls. With that one change, rentals began to pick up and more activity started happening. Laurie made it her goal to make at least one change every year to keep the Activity Center fresh and modern.

Under Laurie Wilson's direction, community involvement and services offered have increased. The Meals on Wheels program has grown from 5 to 50+ households. Her biggest accomplishment to date was raising the money to add on the new addition in 2013 that doubled the square footage of the building.

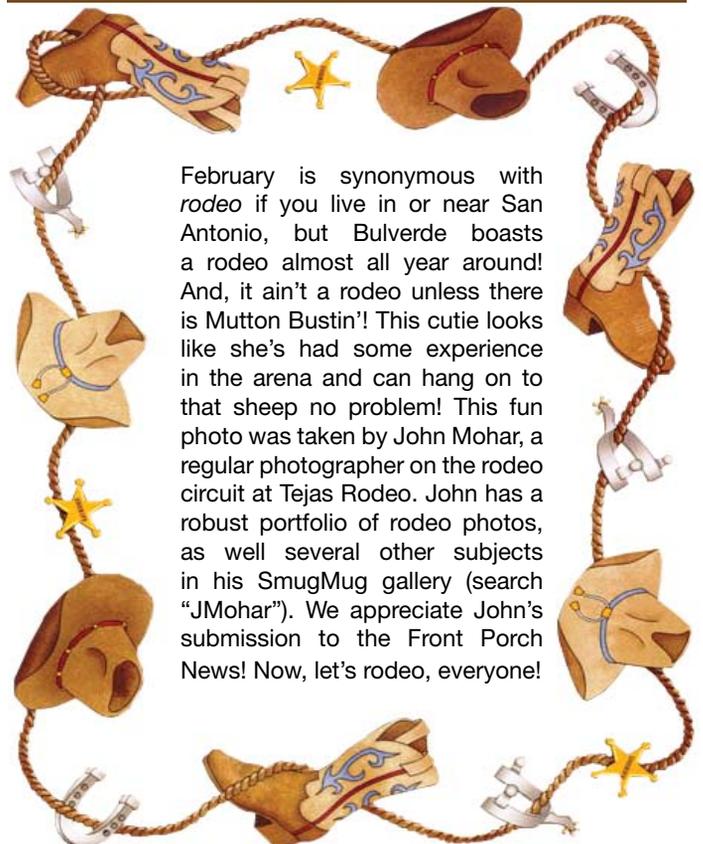
Claudia Selko, one of the members, described Laurie as having "a brain that has a million rooms in it and an unbelievable capacity. She never forgets anything and has unlimited ideas." When asked "what keeps you coming back?" Laurie very quickly responds, "My seniors and my staff. They are so very special to me." And there is no doubt that the feeling is mutual.

If you have not visited the Bulverde Spring Branch Activity Center lately stop by, take a tour and meet Laurie Wilson. We are located at 30280 Cougar Bend.



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ON THE COVER



February is synonymous with *rodeo* if you live in or near San Antonio, but Bulverde boasts a rodeo almost all year around! And, it ain't a rodeo unless there is Mutton Bustin'! This cutie looks like she's had some experience in the arena and can hang on to that sheep no problem! This fun photo was taken by John Mohar, a regular photographer on the rodeo circuit at Tejas Rodeo. John has a robust portfolio of rodeo photos, as well several other subjects in his SmugMug gallery (search "JMohar"). We appreciate John's submission to the Front Porch News! Now, let's rodeo, everyone!

The Buzz

From the Garden

by Joanne Hall, Chair,
Bulverde Community Garden

February is a slower time in the garden, but peas are a big hit this month. Nathan Summar has planted open pollinated Oregon Sugar Pod 2 seeds along the fence line. David Eastman has also planted this variety of peas, as well as Broccoli Raab, in the Bulverde Activity Center's plot. After working compost into the soil in his trellis plot, David has planted Wando shelling peas on one side of the trellis and Cascadia snap peas on the other side. We are expecting a bumper crop of peas in the Garden later in the season. He has also planted a full row of Danvers 126 carrots.

The Bulverde Community Garden Committee wants to thank David Eastman for his presentation, "Planning Your Spring Vegetable Garden" which took place on Saturday, January 24 at the Bulverde Activity Center. David is a member of the Gardening Volunteers of South Texas, a life-long gardener and tomato aficionado. He has been gardening since he was a young boy helping his grandparents on the family farm. He has grown multiple "Top Tomato" contest winners (pictured). The presentation was well attended by garden plot holders and the general public. The Bulverde Community Garden Committee holds quarterly workshops on various gardening topics; the next one will be held in April. There is no cost, and the workshops are open to the public.

Broccoli has flourished this season and continues to be harvested in the Garden. Broccoli Bread has been selected for this month's featured recipe.

"WHAT'S IN THE GARDENER'S KITCHEN?"

BROCCOLI BREAD

From the kitchen of Jan Coleman, Memphis, TN

- 1 tsp salt
- 1 box Jiffy cornbread mix
- 1 stick margarine, melted
- 4 eggs
- 2 cups grated cheddar cheese
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 1 can Mexican-style corn, drained well
- 2 to 3 cups chopped broccoli florets

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Grease a 9x13-inch baking dish. In a bowl mix together all ingredients until just blended. Pour into prepared baking dish. Bake for 45 minutes or until set and lightly browned. Serves 12

If you or your business would like to secure a plot (at no cost) or make a donation, please visit the garden website at www.bulverdecommunitygarden.com or contact Joanne Hall at johall@gvvc.com. The Bulverde Community Garden Committee meets the third Monday of the month at the Bulverde Activity Center at 5:15pm. The meeting is open to the public.



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BSB Library Challenges You to the **BOOK RIOT 2015** Read Harder Challenge



by Susan Herr, BSB Library Director

Our favorite Youth Services Librarian, Elizabeth Hoff, posted the Book Riot 2015 Read Harder Challenge link (<http://bookriot.com/2014/12/15/book-riot-2015-read-harder-challenge>) on our BSB Library's Facebook page just as I was debating what my New Year's resolutions should be, besides the usual ones that I rarely complete (lose weight, etc.). As I haven't done anything like this before, I decided to take up the challenge! I would like to challenge you to Read Harder with me this year!

Some of the categories listed for the challenge include "A book written by someone when he or she was over the age of 65 or under the age of 25," "a book published by an indie press," and "a book that takes place in Asia," just to name a few. The library staff will be adding some of our own categories as well on our website challenge page. Book Riot very nicely links to ideas for the categories on their website. To help you with this challenge, our website will link to those books we have access to in our library—either book, audiobook, or ebook. You decide how many books you will read (I chose 24).

I also recently read a statistic from the Pew Research Center's *Internet & American Life Project* that stated that

Americans younger than the age of 30 were significantly more likely than older adults to read a book in print in the last year. This year I want to test that statistic by taking a count of readers using our library to find out what age group they are in. We will post a box in the library and put a survey on our website where you can be counted when you read a book and be categorized into your age. Then we'll see who read more print books in our community!

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NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY OF TEXAS

Lindheimer Chapter

PLANT OF THE MONTH

Anacacho Orchid Tree, *Bauhinia lunarioides*

Text by John Siemssen. Photos by Sally & Andy Wasowski, Annie Paulson Gillespie and Bruce Leander, Wildflower Center

The Anacacho Orchid Tree is a small tree or multi-trunked shrub, 6' to 12' tall. Although uncommon in the wild, it can generally be found at nurseries that carry native plants. Its common name stems from the area where it is found growing naturally: the Anacacho Mountains of the western Edwards Plateau, where it is found growing in canyons and arroyos, primarily in Kinney County and a few other spots in Texas and northeast Mexico.

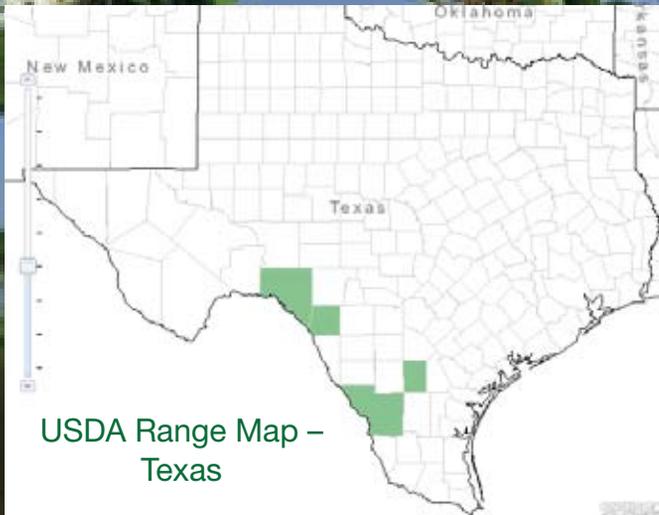
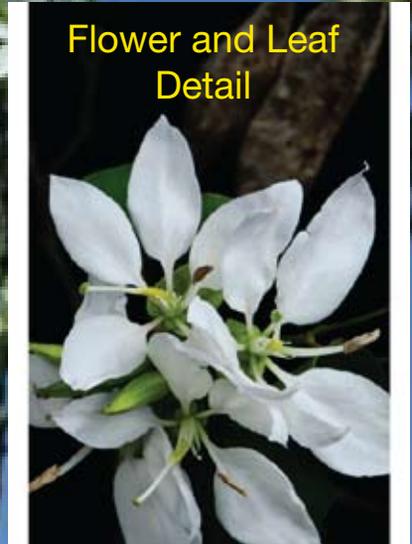
The other part of its name, Orchid Tree, refers to the attractive, fragrant white or pink orchid-like flowers, which appear in the spring, from March to May, and sometimes in the fall after heavy rains. The nectar in the flowers attracts butterflies and bees. Seeds occur in flattened pods, indicative of the fact that this plant is in the Pea Family (*Fabaceae*). When not in bloom, its unique leaves, resembling a cloven hoof, provide interest.

As would be expected from its native locations, Anacacho Orchid Tree does best in rocky, limestone soils. Good drainage is essential. Give it full sun to part shade. Locations on the south side of a building will offer protection from

cold damage in severe winters. Although it is considered deer resistant, any new plant should be given protection. Small trees may need additional protection during the fall rutting season.

Note. Anacacho Orchid Tree is a NPSOT NICE!™ selection for Spring 2015. Previous Plants of the Month can be found on the NPSOT Lindheimer Chapter Website: <http://npsot.org/wp/lindheimer/plant-of-the-month/>

Flower and Leaf Detail



Anacacho Orchid Tree

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Odds 'n' Ends

Spend Valentine's Evening at Mimi Goodtime's Speakeasy!

The BSB Activity Center invites everyone to attend their Valentine's dance on Saturday, February 14th. The doors open at 5:30 for cocktails, hors d'oeuvres, dinner, and dancing! Mimi's Speakeasy will offer a roaring good time! Call the Activity Center for more details: 830.438.3111

Enjoy Another Great Performance at S.T.A.G.E.

S.T.A.G.E., Inc. is honored to present **Second Samuel**, a comedy/drama by Pamela Parker, on February 19 through March 8.

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Protecting Your Home and Property from

WILDFIRE

By Larry Sunn

Given the winds, tall dead grass, and dry winter days, wildfires in our area are always a threat. However, a wildfire doesn't have to burn everything in its path. In fact, cleaning your property of debris and maintaining your landscaping are important first steps to helping minimize damage and loss. The work you do today can make an important difference. Follow these simple action steps now and throughout the year to prepare and help reduce the risk of your home and property becoming fuel for a wildfire:

- Clear leaves and other debris from gutters, eaves, porches and decks. This prevents embers from igniting your home.
- Remove dead vegetation from under your deck and within 10 feet of the house.
- Remove anything stored underneath decks or porches.
- Screen or box in areas below patios and decks with wire mesh to prevent debris and combustible materials from accumulating.
- Remove flammable materials (firewood stacks, propane tanks, dry vegetation) within 30 feet of your home's foundation and outbuildings, including garages and sheds. If it can catch on fire, don't let it touch your house, deck, or porch.
- Wildfire can spread to tree tops. If you have trees on your property, prune so the lowest branches are 6 to 10 feet from the ground.
- Keep your lawn hydrated and maintained. If it is brown, cut it down to reduce fire intensity. Dry grass and shrubs are fuel for wildfire.
- Don't let debris and lawn cuttings linger. Dispose of these items quickly to reduce fuel for fire.
- Inspect shingles or roof tiles. Replace or repair those that are loose or missing to prevent ember penetration.
- Cover exterior attic vents with metal wire mesh no larger than 1/8 inch to prevent sparks from entering the home.
- Enclose under-eave and soffit vents or screen with metal mesh to prevent ember entry.



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FEBRUARY 2015

Bulverde
and other local events

MARCH 2015

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2 Groundhog Day	3 Wellness on Wheels 9:00a (Provisions) City Council/P&Z joint meeting (Transportation plan) 5:30p	4 SBB Family Lions 7:30p (Activity Center) BAAC Mtg. 6:30p (Art Ctr.)	5 FREE CPR/ First Aid Class 6:00p (353 Rodeo Dr.)	6 Chamber Rodeo 7:30p (Tejas Rodeo)	7 Chamber Rodeo 7:30p (Tejas Rodeo)	1 Second Samuel (S.T.A.G.E.)	2	3 Wellness on Wheels 9:00a (Provisions) Planning & Zoning 6:30p	4 SBB Family Lions 7:30p (Activity Center) BAAC Mtg. 6:30p (Art Ctr.)	5 FREE CPR/ First Aid Class 6:00p (353 Rodeo Dr.) Second Samuel (S.T.A.G.E.)	6 Second Samuel (S.T.A.G.E.)	7 Second Samuel (S.T.A.G.E.)
8	9 Friends of the Library Board 1:30p (Library) Library District Board 4:00p (Library)	10 City Council 6:30p	11	12 Lincoln's Birthday Wine & Art 6:00p (Art Center) Bulverde Lions 7:00p (Bulv. Comm. Ctr.)	13 CISD Holiday	14 St. Valentine's Day Mimi Goodtime's Speakeasy Dance 5:30p (Activity Center)	8 Second Samuel (S.T.A.G.E.)	9 Friends of the Library Board 1:30p (Library) Library District Board 4:00p (Library)	10 City Council 6:30p	11	12 Wine & Art 6:00p (Art Center) Bulverde Lions 7:00p (Bulv. Comm. Ctr.)	13	14
15	16 President's Day Community Garden Mtg. 5:15p (Activity Center) CISD Holiday	17 Native Plant Soc. 7:00p (GVTC)	18 Ash Wednesday SBB Family Lions 7:30p (Activity Center)	19 Chinese New Year BSBES 6:00p (353 Rodeo Dr.) ESD #1, 4, & 5 7:00p (353 Rodeo Dr.) Second Samuel (S.T.A.G.E.)	20 Second Samuel (S.T.A.G.E.)	21 Second Samuel (S.T.A.G.E.)	15	16 Community Garden Mtg. 5:15p (Activity Center) CISD Spring Break	17 St. Patrick's Day Native Plant Soc. 7:00p (GVTC) CISD Spring Break	18 SBB Family Lions 7:30p (Activity Center) CISD Spring Break	19 BSBES 6:00p (353 Rodeo Dr.) ESD #1, 4, & 5 7:00p (353 Rodeo Dr.) CISD Spring Break	20 First Day of Spring CISD Spring Break	21
22 Free Outdoor Cat Control Class 2:00p (353 Rodeo Dr.)	23	24 Friends of the Park 6:00p Bracken Christian School Preview 6:00p	25	26 Bulverde Lions 7:00p (Bulv. Comm. Ctr.) Second Samuel (S.T.A.G.E.)	27 P.O.E.T. Program 6:00p (City Hall) Second Samuel (S.T.A.G.E.)	28 Second Samuel (S.T.A.G.E.)	22 Free Outdoor Cat Control Class 2:00p (353 Rodeo Dr.)	23	24 Friends of the Park 6:00p	25	26 Bulverde Lions 7:00p (Bulv. Comm. Ctr.)	27 P.O.E.T. Program 6:00p (City Hall)	28
NOTES: Bulverde City Council, Bulverde Planning and Zoning Commission, and Friends of the Park meetings are held at Bulverde City Hall (30360 Cougar Bend)							NOTES: Bulverde City Council, Bulverde Planning and Zoning Commission, and Friends of the Park meetings are held at Bulverde City Hall (30360 Cougar Bend)						