

## Volunteers Construct Educational Gardens at Ridgetop Elementary School

Students and volunteers at Ridgetop Elementary School are working to create raised beds for gardens in the front of the school. The gardens are not only fun and exciting for the children, but they are also very educational. Students learn about science and math and practice their scientific observation and writing skills while working in the garden. They also learn about health and nutrition as many of the plants that will be grown in this garden will be edible.



Creating this garden is just one of the many exciting, educational initiatives underway at Ridgetop, and all of the hard work is paying off for the students. Preliminary data from the 2009 TAKS tests indicate significant gains in science achievement for students at Ridgetop, and it is expected that Ridgetop will be designated a "Recognized" school by the Texas Education Agency this year.



### ~ WANTED ~ NEWSLETTER EDITOR

Currently there is no official editor for this newsletter. A volunteer is needed to ensure continued publication of this newsletter which currently comes out three times per year. Please contact Sebastian Wren at 459-4144 or [swren@balancedreading.com](mailto:swren@balancedreading.com)

## Mark your calendars for National Night Out

National Night Out in Northfield will be in Bruning Green (near 51st & Duval) on Tuesday, October 6th, from 6:00 to 8:00. Come meet your neighbors and show appreciation for our local police, EMS, and firefighters.

## Summer Play Dates for Neighborhood Toddlers

The Northfield Neighborhood Association and Ridgetop Elementary School will be hosting three 'Beat the Heat' play-dates for neighborhood parents and their toddlers this summer! The Ridgetop gymnasium will be open for the dates & times listed below. It will be a great opportunity for parents in the area to meet each other and for the children to play in an air-conditioned, fun-filled space.

### Play Times:

Monday, July 27th 9am-noon  
Monday, Aug 3rd 9am-noon  
Monday, Aug 10th 9am-noon

### Fun Stuff:

- Please bring a bouncy ball to share with the group
- Feel free to bring any other fun stuff - play parachutes, soft ramps, scooters or tricycles

- We will have a music box set up, so bring any cool kid's CDs if you have them
- We may try to invite a singer or set up a storytime, if the kids are so inclined

### General Guidelines:

- For children age 3 and under, accompanied by a parent
- We have a sign-in sheet with a waiver in case of accidents or injuries
- Snacks & drinks should be kept in the cafeteria (it is adjacent to the gym and will be open for our use)

### Location:

Ridgetop Elementary is at 5005 Caswell Ave in 78751. Enter through the main front door, go down the hall and take a right to find the gym.

Please direct any questions to Cindy Black at [keeper@northfieldna.org](mailto:keeper@northfieldna.org). We hope to see you, and don't forget to spread the word!

## Ridgetop Elementary Celebrates 70 Years

by Sebastian Wren

Did you know that Ridgetop Elementary School was once Ridgetop Independent School District? Over 70 years ago, the Ridgetop community was well outside of Austin, and the community school was well outside the Austin School District. But in 1939, a new brick school building was constructed, and Ridgetop became a part of the Austin Independent School District.

To celebrate the 70th anniversary of the brick building and the 75th anniversary of the Ridgetop Parent Teacher Association, Joaquin Gloria III (Principal), Laura Rice (Librarian), and Goanna Vaughn (Art Teacher) are organizing a reception to take place on November 6, 2009. All are invited to attend.

They are asking that neighbors who have memories or mementos of Ridgetop's past that they are willing to share please contact them before November 6th at either 414-4469 or 414-2000. Surprisingly little is known about the history of Ridgetop, and they are very eager to learn as much as they can. Photographs (which will be very carefully copied and returned) are especially welcome.

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## Stray Cats Strut

by Lotte Vehko

You may have noticed that Northfield is blessed with an abundance of cats, some of which seem to be suffering from an odd affliction that causes one ear to be shorter than the other. Are they mutants from another planet? No! They're our neighborhood TNR cats!

TNR is an acronym for "trap-neuter-release," a form of animal control that regulates the population of stray and feral cats. Volunteers humanely trap and neuter the cats, then release them at their original location, where they are fed and monitored in a permanent colony. While the cats are under anesthesia being neutered, about ¼" of one ear tip is removed so that they can be recognized from a distance. This alerts city animal control workers that the cat is part of a maintained colony and should not be picked up.

Studies have proven that TNR is a more effective and less expensive means of stabilizing and ultimately reducing stray and feral cat populations than traditional trap and kill methods. A recent Austin American-Statesman article reports that since TNR has been implemented in Austin, the population of cats coming into the city shelter has dropped by more than 50%.

Once neutered, much of the inconvenience caused by stray cats is greatly mitigated. Neutered cats fight and roam less, and the TNR colony tends to prevent other cats from moving in.

Northfield currently has two successful TNR colonies -- one near 55th and Avenue F, and one near Link and Nelray -- that are managed by local volunteers. If you would like to learn more about the colonies, or would like to start one on your block, please contact Lotte at [minerva@io.com](mailto:minerva@io.com), or more information about TNR is available at [www.alleycat.org](http://www.alleycat.org).



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# Sharing Half a Century of Neighborhood Memories

By Brenda Benner

As our neighborhood transforms from decades-long residents to short-term inhabitants, finding neighbors who have 50 years or more of memories here is increasingly difficult. I consider myself lucky. I've known my neighbors since I was in kindergarten.

This year, seventy-eight year-old retired auto mechanic Archie and his wife, Gladys, marked their 50th year on Ave. H. They live in the same home where they raised three sons and have recently watched the neighborhood expand outward and upward all around them.

To hear their memories is to realize just how different a small area of town can become in just one lifetime.

"We had a 50-foot CB radio tower in our back yard that the boys would climb on to watch the movies at the Chief Drive-in (at the current 5555 N. Lamar business complex)," Archie recalled. "The trees were much smaller then."

During the 1960s Archie owned and practically lived at S & S Automotive at 102 E. North Loop which was at the current location of the sign and graphics shop. "We were super service men," Archie said. "I was the super."

He and his wife vividly remember their North Loop business neighbors which included Chestnut Cleaners, Betty's Jewelry, Clyde's Shoe Shop, Mrs. Johnson's day-old bakery, Ol-Bossy Milk, Par Burger and a barber shop.

His favorite was White's Café which was located within the North Loop Pharmacy. There was also a Gulf Service Station where the car wash is now and across the street was a Sinclair station.

Of all the years at the North Loop district with friends and family, Archie never took photos, not even for the opening day of his repair shop. "That was before the time of cameras," Archie joked with wink and a chuckle.

Archie and Gladys don't need any photos for their own benefit; for their memories are as vivid as if everything occurred yesterday. "The changes have been so slow, that sometimes it's hard to notice ... until you get old, then everything goes real fast," said Archie.

Time marches on ...

Archie and his wife said decades ago they used to know at least a dozen households of their neighbors on Ave. H, but now that is no longer the case. The times have certainly changed. "There are so many younger families and college kids now," they said. "Now-a-days you gotta have money to buy a house here. Now I see Mercedes, Lexus and BMWs in the driveways."

Archie's North Loop memories are special, but his memories of the old sheet metal airplane hanger behind what was once Howard's Nursery are his most cherished.

(Continued on Page 5)

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## Fifty Years of Memories

(Continued from page 4)

Finding that hanger was a personal quest for Archie during his teen years of the 1940s when he dreamed of getting his feet off of the ground. In those days, this neighborhood didn't exist. Archie remembers the area as nothing but flat empty land.

"I've been fascinated with flying all of my life and back in those days Doc Haile's Flying Service (established in 1939) was an icon," Archie explained with enthusiasm. "I paid five dollars for a fifteen minute flight that ended up being forty-five minutes in a J-3 Piper Cub. We flew around Austin ... back then there wasn't much to see except the capitol, the UT tower and Lake Austin. IH 35 didn't exist back then either, it was called East Avenue -- a dirt road that stopped at the north bank of the river."

That initial flight was enough to get him hooked. He earned his private pilot's license during the 1970s.

Every time Archie drives past the old neglected airplane hangar he thinks about that first plane ride. "I think there should be a preservation of that building," Archie stressed. "Paint it silver and put (paint) the old sign right back on the front of it ... it's historical. "That's my favorite building in the world. To me, it's beautiful. You can still see part of the faded sign painting to spell Haile's."

Archie joked that in a perfect world it could be a small museum with a J-3 Piper Cub inside and he could tell all of the visitors about the old days. "I could be just like those Wal-Mart greeters," Archie exclaimed. "Welcome and hello, hello, hello."

"Hello and welcome" indeed. Welcome to the memories of old Austin.



Scenes from the Crestview mosaic memory wall at the shopping center at 7101 Woodrow Avenue feature memories of a life gone by in this part of Austin.

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# Neighborhood Watch Report

by Scott Johnson

The mission of the Neighborhood Watch Program is to make Northfield a safer place to live by fostering a greater sense of awareness and community among our neighbors. Community efforts are helping to reduce crime and to catch criminals, but every week, there are still reports of criminal behavior in our neighborhood. Often, the criminals are taking advantage of the carelessness or overly-trusting nature of their victims.

To protect yourself against becoming a victim,

- Remove or at least hide valuables in your vehicle. Close your windows & lock the doors.
- Draw your curtains or close you blinds at night, particularly if your TV is visible from the street.
- Close/lock your windows and doors. Install heavy-duty strike plates along with dead bolt locks that are at least 1" long on your doors. This will help prevent door kick-ins. Please be certain to use 2"-3" screws for the dead bolt.
- Don't leave bicycles outside and unlocked. Even locked bicycles can be stolen. Bring them in your home or lock them in an outside shed.
- Leave outside and inside lights on while you are away. Timers for inside lights and a motion sensor for outside lights help.
- Leave music on while you are away.

- Install an alarm system and consider not setting the 30-second delay system.

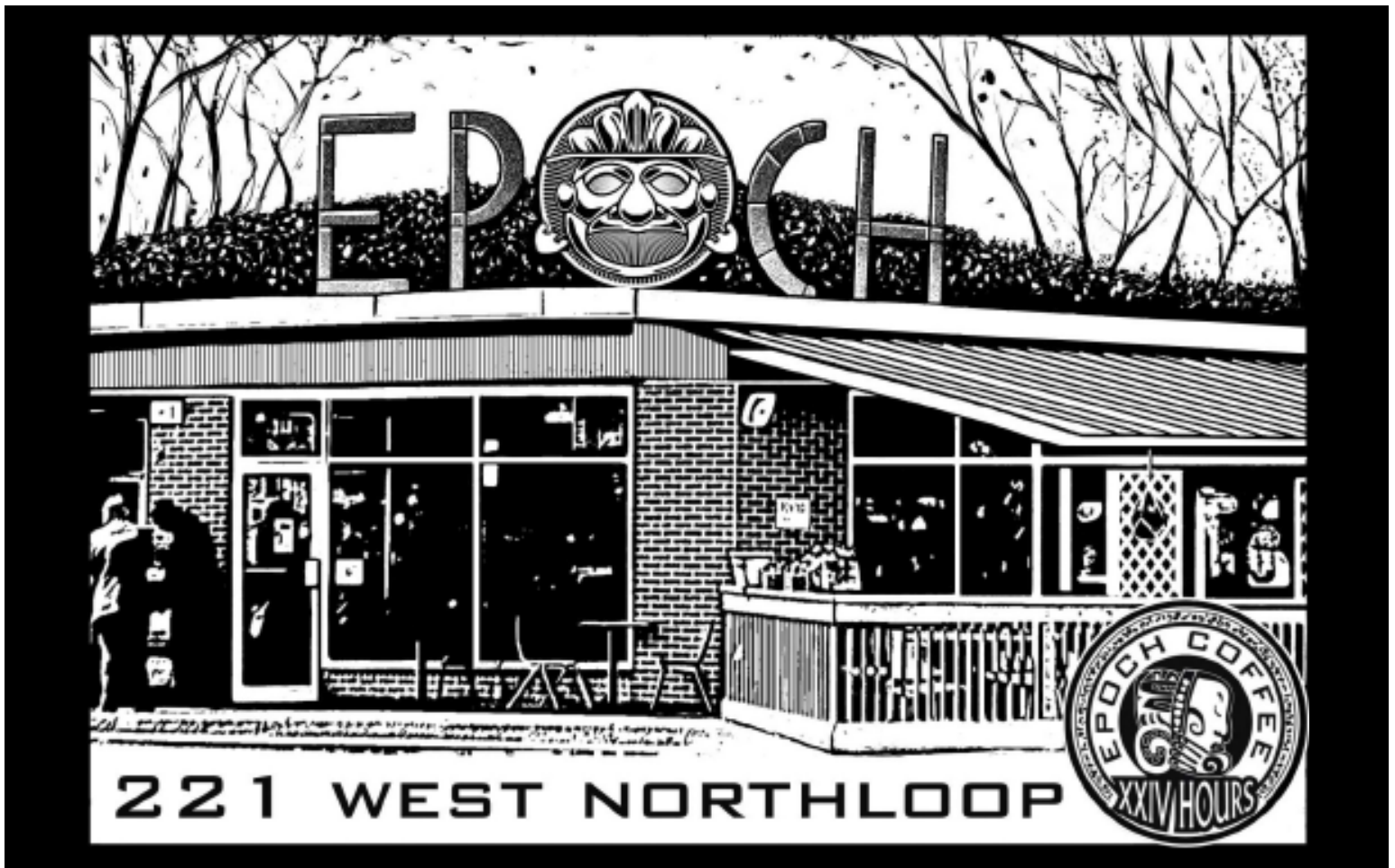
- Install and use a peep hole, and ask who is there before opening the door.

To further help prevent crime in the neighborhood, take your cell phone and go out for a short walk every day, especially in the middle of the day. It's good for you to stretch your legs, and you're doing the whole neighborhood a favor. Burglars love quiet streets where nobody is watching them. Criminals are very discouraged when a lot of pedestrians are walking around. Be aware that some criminals are now wearing costumes (such as reflective vests) to make people believe they are official workers.

Do not hesitate to call 9-1-1 if

- You see somebody with no apparent destination moving through the neighborhood looking closely at houses (make note of license number and detailed description of person and vehicle).
- You hear a loud bang like somebody kicking in a door or the sound of breaking glass.
- You see signs of drug or prostitution activity.

For more information on Northfield's NWP and / or to join our Yahoo E-Mail Discussion Group site please go to: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/northfieldwatch> or call Scott Johnson at 389-2250. For crime data citywide go to: <http://www.krimelabb.com>.



## NLNPT Forms Highland Mall Discussion Group

by Lisa Wright

You may know that Highland Mall has been losing tenants over the last several years, and its future is looking rather grim. U.S. News and World Report recently listed Highland Mall as one of "America's most endangered malls." It seems likely that Highland Mall will be redeveloped in the near future.

Austin has seen other redevelopment efforts around the city that have raised fears and generated unpleasant conflict in surrounding neighborhoods. Northfield and other neighborhoods close to Highland Mall hope to work collaboratively and proactively to avoid such conflict when the Highland Mall property is redeveloped.

The North Loop Neighborhood Planning Team (NLNPT) has joined with the Highland Neighborhood Planning Team to start discussions about a new vision for the property that can substantially improve the quality of life in this part of Austin, meet city goals, and encourage developers to invest in the property.

The potential for redevelopment efforts of this scale do not come along often. The Highland Mall team has set up an online discussion group to bring neighbors together to share ideas and desires for the future of the Highland Mall property. If you would like to participate, please join the discussion at the Highland Mall Renewal discussion site: <http://hmr.groupsites.com>.

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## IS MOVING!

One of our neighborhood bicycle shops is moving this summer, but not far. The Peddler is currently located on North Loop in a small space in the business district. But in early September, they will be opening the doors of their new, much larger shop at the corner of 51st and Duval (next to Flightpath Coffee). Drop by in September, check out the new shop, and buy a bicycle!



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## Don't Neglect Trees During Drought

by Louis Redden

We are in an extreme drought which means the deep moisture tree roots need is absent. This will ultimately kill off many of our major shade trees unless we do something to help them.

Even in mild droughts, trees conserve their energy, growing more slowly and sometimes shedding leaves earlier in the year. Less water means thinner tree rings, a permanent record of the lack of adequate water in a given year. And in drought conditions, trees are also more vulnerable to disease and parasites.

The current drought is an extreme drought, and while many trees may still look good, their health may be in jeopardy. Those that survive will be more prone to lose branches in the years to come, and the growth of their canopies will be stunted. This is important because shade canopy actually keeps the area cooler, and to the extent the tree grows over your house, the shade from trees can keep your energy consumption costs down.

In a normal drought, arborist Guy LeBlanc recommends an inch of water every two weeks for the trees you care about, even for indigenous, drought-tolerant specimens like Live Oaks. During an extreme drought, like the one we are experiencing now, extra watering is essential.

Don't be fooled by the current appearance of your trees -- they may look pretty good right now, but they are stressed and may be over-committing their energy to photosynthesis. They need water. Help keep the neighborhood cool and beautiful by giving your trees at least an inch of water 2-3 times per month.

## Sunflower Lighting Ceremony

The "SunFlowers--An Electric Garden" public art project behind the Home Depot at 51st and I-35 is complete. The project will be illuminated at night using the solar power it captures during the day. Artists Mags Harries and Lajos Héder will be present at a lighting ceremony on Thursday, July 30 beginning at 7:30 p.m.

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## NORTHFIELD NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

### MEETING DATES

The NNA meets on the First Monday of each month (except holidays) at 7:00 p.m. at the the Dayspring Chapel, Corner of Ave. G & 55th

Monday August 3

Monday September 14

Tuesday October 6 - National Night Out in Bruning Green

Monday November 2

### ASSOCIATION OFFICERS

**President:** Will Bown

**Vice-President:** Angus Tilney

**Treasurer:** Annie Ervin

**Co-Secretaries:** Mary Patrick & Jan Seward

**Web Master:** Lisa Wright

**Keeper of the Green:** Cindy Black

**Newsletter Distribution:** Brenda Benner

**Reluctant Newsletter Editor:** Sebastian Wren

### WEBSITE

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