



MERRY CHRISTMAS FOUR POINTS NEWS

SERVING STEINER RANCH, RIVER PLACE, GRANDVIEW HILLS, WESTMINSTER GLEN AND COMANCHE TRAIL

Volume 8, Issue 49 • 8 pages

Wednesday, December 19, 2012 • 50 cents

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Lake Travis Level

Full at.....681.5 ft.
Current level631.56 ft.
Percentage full..... 40%

Source: LCRA Updated: Dec. 18, 2012

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LISD Christmas Break
Dec. 24 - Jan. 4

LISD to review security following Newtown tragedy

Pct. 2 Constable's office steps up police presence in wake of shooting

By LESLEE BASSMAN
Four Points News

Following last week's tragic shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, CT, the LISD Board of Trustees is anticipated to amend its agenda for Thursday's meeting to include a preliminary discussion on security, said Veronica Sopher, LISD Executive Director of School/Community Relations.

"We are going to be looking at all of our (security) processes and procedures," Sopher said on Monday morning. "New standards are outlined after (there's been) a tragedy on a national level."

Sopher stated that LISD was working with various task forces and law enforcement agencies on the issue of security in the schools and anticipates new assessments and recommendations as a result of this col-

laboration.

"We are immediately looking at our policies and procedures to see if there's something we can do to address (security)," said Sopher.

Sopher confirmed that the district does use cameras along with other security measures in varying degrees at its campuses.

"We take student safety seriously and we want to provide a safe learning environment for all of our students and staff," Sopher said.

Travis County Constable presence in Four Points schools

The Four Points area campuses rotate two School Resource Officers (SROs) who are members of the Precinct 2 Travis County Constable's Office. The officers are armed with guns and tasers.

According to Chief Deputy George Morales, the two SROs move around the Four Points' public

schools all day and are in each school at least once per day. Vandegrift High School, with its teen population, receives "a little more attention" than the other schools in the area.

"You might see a little more patrolling in the schools and in the area," said Morales in the wake of Friday's shooting. The officers will be in marked cars and uniforms to create a presence and deter activity.

Morales stated that the SROs response, in the case of an emergency, is "to protect civilians as quickly as possible." After the Newtown incident, the SROs, who receive first responder training and continuing education for their specialized jobs, may get additional coursework. The Four Points area also has officers from nearby Travis County, Lake Travis and other jurisdictions who can respond to an emergency.

"We will continue to provide our services to



Group of solicitors stopped in Steiner

TCSO gives advice

By LYNETTE HAALAND
Four Points News

Travis County Sheriff's Office investigated a group of kids soliciting door to door in Steiner Ranch last week.

Several TCSO officers went to Flat Top Ranch Road in the evening on Dec. 13 where the group of kids were, said Roger Wade, TCSO Senior Public Information Officer.

"It looks as if they were just asking for donations. Not sure if they were from the neighborhood or from the general area," Wade said.

Residents in other

SOLICITORS, 5



Veronica Sopher, LISD Executive Director of School/Community Relations.

make it (school) as safe as possible," said Morales. Elementary school staffers address Four Points parents

Many parents of young LISD students recently received emails from the principals of their local schools addressing the Newtown events.

In her letter, Steiner Ranch Elementary School Principal Susan Fambrough stated that administrators in the school did not impart the devastating news to their students and that should some children

SAFETY, 6

Holidays Around the World

Right: Preston Anderson, Mandy Wang and Erica Freer with Santa at Grandview Hills Elementary's Holidays Around the World celebration on Dec. 10.

See more photos on page 2.

Grandview Hills Elementary hosted its fourth annual Holidays Around the World on Dec. 10. Nearly a dozen countries were represented:

- Cambodia
- China
- Eid (Islamic Holidays)
- Germany
- India
- Iran
- Israel
- Mexico
- Poland
- Syria
- US

Santa was the guest of honor and headed up the parade.



Photos by Ray Freer

Steiner families help SafePlace families

By VAL OLIVAS
Four Points News

Steiner Ranch neighbors are helping SafePlace families again this Christmas holiday season.

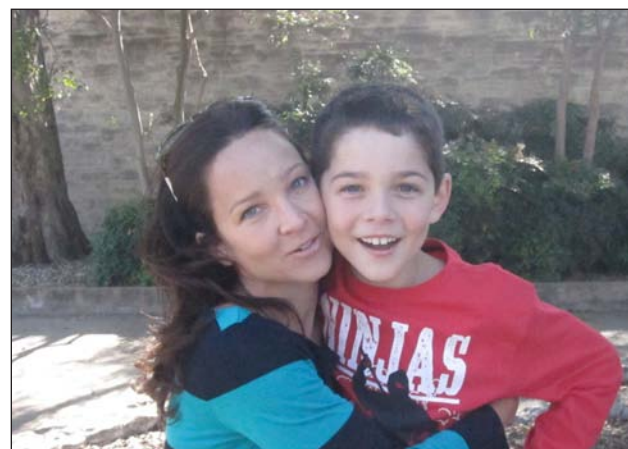
Over the past seven years, Kristin McCullar has encouraged her Summer Vista neighbors in Steiner to become involved with volunteer efforts that are

making an impact to those who don't have the extra resources to spend on Christmas.

Once she became a mother, McCullar was motivated to help less fortunate mothers.

"I couldn't wrap my brain around the idea that there were women in the world, let alone Austin, who had to

SAFEPLACE, 6



Kristin McCullar, photoed here with her son Ryan, rallied the support of 20 Summer Vista neighbors to help make the Christmas season more special to Austin families at SafePlace.

Traffic accidents on the rise along RM 2222

Sunday's collision sends drivers to hospitals

By LESLEE BASSMAN
Four Points News

A serious collision on RM 2222, just outside of the Riverlodge Apartments, sent two drivers to area hospitals, with one listed by APD as having sustained "life-threatening injuries."

According to APD Senior Public Information Specialist Lisa Cortinas, around 7:50 a.m., a female driver living in the complex in the 10300 block of RM 2222 was turning onto

the popular route when she lost control of her vehicle and collided with another vehicle on the road. The road was wet at the time of the accident. The Riverlodge Apartments driver was transported to St. David's Round Rock Medical Center with life-threatening injuries. The driver of the other vehicle in the collision was taken to an area hospital with non-life-threatening injuries.

APD closed the roadway shortly after the crash and reopened it around 2:00 p.m., Cortinas said. The APD Vehicular Ho-



ACCIDENTS, 5



Lynette Haaland



Ray Freer

Read all about it!

Read the letters to Santa from River Ridge Elementary first-graders on page 2.

Dear Santa Claus,
How are you doing in the North Pole? Do you like gingerbread cookies Santa? Do you like dark chocolate Santa? I would

like our generation doll camping set. Also some clothes for doll. May I have a Horrible Harry Book to read.

Love Cecilia

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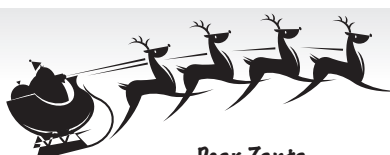
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Claudia Legere, MD Li-Tai Chuo, MD

LETTERS TO SANTA

FROM RIVER RIDGE ELEMENTARY STUDENTS



Dear Santa Claus,
I love Christmas! Is the North Pole cold? Do you like egg nog with cookies. Now I'm going to tell you what I want for Christmas. I want a touch with a cover. Than I want a Crayon air painter. By the way is hard making presents?
From Shawn

Dear Santa,
I was pretty good this year. Couse I helped my parints do the londrey. Dear Santa, may I please have a doll house and some shoes? Dear Santa, how are you magic? Thank you for everything
Love Vaishait

Dear Santa,
I tried to be good girl. Can I please have a barbe car. Be cus I do not have one. Wer do You live. Is Kudolph rel? Thank You for Christmas.
Love Reese.

Dear Zanta
I hope you and Mrs. Claus are doing well. do you like eating helthy snacks? I hope I get an iPodetooch for Christmas. I love you.
Love hailey.

Dear Santa,
I would like Ninjagos for Christmas. How is it gowing in the North Pole? I know giving presents to all the boys and grils is hard for you. How do you break the glass for the chimney? How do youer raindeer fly? I know you like cookies and milk. Are you excited for Christmas? How meny elfs do you have? How meny pepel on youer good list?
Love Noah

Dear Santa, I have been prity good this year. And I help my mom at home. May I ples have a Barbie, and a TV and a Toy puppy and a toy cat? I love you!
Love Kiana.

I have ben a good boy. Can I have a ituch and a wii? Did you have a good day? Is Kudolph rel Thank you for the toys.
Luove Ryan

I thenck you and misis claus are the Best. My elfs name is Edde. I love Santa!
Love Nathalie



Alexis Barlow, 3rd Grader at Grandview Hills Elementary, shows her giving spirit during the holiday season. Barlow was diagnosed with Juvenile Diabetes when she was 3-years-old. After receiving her new insulin pump, she decided to donate her previous pump and supplies (although it could have been sold for quite a sum of money) to a newly diagnosed student in need of equipment. During this season, Barlow shows the giving spirit in the purest of ways.

Dear Santa Claus,
Can I have a puppy Dog? A girl please, Santa? My ELF nos what I want for Christmas. OK? You got that Santa? I love you!
Love Madison.



Dear Santa,
Haw are you doing. I have a fue qwesntens. Can elves fly when they are one? I wudr if I am on the nice list? Fof christams I wut the move sole srfr. And dsi dsi games. I love you Santa. I am happy for christams.
Love Sophie

Dear Santa Claus,
I want a bunny or a puppy. I want a white bunny that is cute and nice and it will be a girl or a brown girl puppy. Or a baby pig that is a girl and cute, and I want a raindeer.
Love, Savannah

Dear Santa,
Can your reindeer talk? Also Can your reindeer write? How bright is Rudolphs nose? How are you? Do you take care of the reindeer? How old is Fred? Am I on the good list? Do you like the cookies people make for you? How are you doing?
Love Gabi

Dear Santa, Iv sort of been bad and sort of been good. I wot to grit a Ninjago set. Please. Howdo you get around the world in one inight? I love you Santa Cloeas
Love Karie

Dear Santa,
I am sooo excited! How are you? Santa please can I have Doe miestufins, Teler swift book an a mikrephone? I Love you Santa! You are sweet, kind, jolly and funny!
Love Sebastian.

Dear Santa,
I have been good. Thank you for the presents. I like you. You are the best! I wish I can go on your sled! I hope you have puppys. Merry Christmas!
Love Audrey

Dear Santa How are you this year? Doing I like you. Are you really busy- How do you get mr. C ready for Christmas Ms. C? Is Fed a new elf Mr. C How do you eat hundreds of cookies in a night?
Love Dylan

Dear Santa,
I've tried to be good this whlo year. Mey I Please have a lane coat for Christmas. How do you deliver all those presents in one night. You're the best man for the job.
Love Annabel

Dear Saete.
Hoy are you do yen? Do you git sic win you eat all fo the coke? Wut I wot for chistmas isa des and a chr. I fel hoppy ydut chistmas.
Love Kaylee

Dear Santa,
I like the elf. Do you like my cookis? I wold like anything. I am exided for you to come!
From Ben

hmet becos my ather hmet is to smoll. Can I please have earings becos I don't rilly have much earings. I hnt a pink bike light so I can see in the dark. Santa how do your reindeer have magic? Win you go down the chimney do you get small? How do your elfs make so much persinsts? Thank you for the presents!
Love Kayla

Dear Santa,
This year Im tring not to tell lies or tell storys but I am tring to be honesty. How cold is it at the Noth Pole? Hows Mrs. Claus? How is Rudeoff? I would like a lite blue bike and a Amercin girl doll bike and a lockit. Takn you for your very had work
Love Kelsey



Dear Santa, How do you get to eveny house in one night? How does the factory work? Do elves help you? How do you mak cookies? (no name)

Dear Santa,
I have tried to be good. Can I please have a Amarciangirl for Christmas? How do you make so many toys for Kids? I love you!
Love Annabel

Dear Santa,
This year I've ben good. How cold is it at the North Pole? For Christmas I would like a dollsbed. I can't watintil you come
Love, Reese

Santa,
My elf hides good! Your berd looks good I have ben a good girl this year. Can I have a bike hmet? I want anater

It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas, everywhere you go....



Leslee Bassman

This decorated cedar in River Place is one example of how Four Points is catching on to the bigger Austin trend that started a few decades ago along Loop 360.

LISD Volunteer Holiday Social

Earlier this month, Leander ISD hosted its Volunteer Holiday Social at Cedar Park HS. Santa spoke with many at the Dec. 7 event.

Right: Haihai Thompson of Steiner Ranch and her mom Cailian Ju get a photo with Santa. Thompson has been a LISD volunteer for the past decade, starting at Naumann Elementary, then at Steiner Ranch Elementary and then at Canyon Ridge Middle school. Her mom, 78, is from China and has lived with the Thompsons for 15 years, ever since their older daughter was born.



Photo courtesy LISD

Four Points News writer Rich Keith visited with other LISD volunteers at the recent event.



Photo courtesy LISD



Photo courtesy LISD

Grandview Hills Elementary Administrative Assistant Suzy Rails and Principal Brenda Cruz told Santa what they wanted for Christmas. (They didn't share with the rest of us though.)

River Ridge Elementary Giving Tree

The River Ridge Elementary community supported the Hill Country Christmas Bureau this year in a big way. Photoed here is Principal Jim Rose in the middle of the outpouring of gifts. "Many of our students

took their own money to buy gifts for these kids. This was the best part of all. It was really cool to see the extraordinary generosity," said Monica Rosenberg, RRE parent and volunteer. Viviane Peterka spear-

headed this campaign with the help of Olga Del Valle, Kathleen Martinez and So-nya Dickson.

Leander ISD is partnering with the Hill Country Christmas Bureau, a nonprofit, charitable or-

ganization that focuses on providing families in the northwest Austin, Cedar Park, Leander and Liberty Hill area with food staples, toys, blankets and space heaters.



Viviane Peterka

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10:00 pm The Holy Eucharist with Sermon, Christmas Hymns led by the Adult Choir (No nursery)

Dec. 25 Christmas Day
10:00 am The Holy Eucharist with Sermon, Christmas Hymns (No nursery)

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Student safety top priority in Leander ISD



BRET CHAMPION
Leander ISD Superintendent

We are all deeply saddened by the events that took place in the early hours of Friday, December 14 at Sandy Hook Elementary in Newtown, Connecticut. With the nation, we are mourning the tragic loss of innocent lives. Our deepest sympathies go out to the victims, their families and friends.

The events of last week remind us that it takes a community to protect the well-being of our students. Practice drills, well-rehearsed crisis management

plans, along with the guidance and collaboration with police and fire authorities, help ensure that students are protected. With every drill and false alarm, we learn how best to move our students out of harm's way. LISD will always err on the side of caution and use every situation as a learning opportunity. We will learn from the incident in Newtown, as well. When more information is available on this most recent tragedy, LISD Board members and administrators will discuss and debrief accordingly and determine if improvements need to be made to our processes.

Make sure your child's campus registrar has your current contact information on file so you can receive automated phone calls and email messages during

an emergency. If there is ever a need for you to pick up your student, or if the students are being moved to another location, we will communicate to you at the earliest opportunity after students have been taken care of. During an emergency, check our websites, Facebook and Twitter pages for up-to-date information. Also know that, while federal law prohibits the district from violating student privacy and releasing identifiable information, as a matter of transparency, LISD strives to keep parents informed of issues or situations that arise that might impact the learning day.

Parents play a major role in protecting our schools and students. Our fantastic parent and community volunteers offer watchful eyes that add to our cam-

pus security. When visiting a school, we ask that all guests follow protocol and enter buildings by signing in at the front office of the school. Our elementary campuses have limited access during the school day so that no unannounced person has unauthorized access.

Even though this was an isolated incident far away from LISD, emotionally we are hurting. As we learn more details about this tragic incident in the days ahead, it will be important for parents to spend time talking with their child and help him or her cope with this news. The National Association of School Psychologists has made resources available for families to assist in talking with children at <http://www.nasponline.org/resources/>

crisis_safety/talkingviolence.pdf. If your children are young, you may want to respond to questions by acknowledging the truth of the event with sympathy (it's ok to be sad) but without details.

Our classroom teachers are being given resources and guidance on how to appropriately respond to students' questions, and principals have advised teachers to closely monitor questions and conversations about the incident. If you believe your child is experiencing an increased level of concern, anxiety or depression, please contact your school's counselor. These trained professionals are prepared to help children in times like these. If you would like resources to help you and your child deal with the Newtown tragedy,

please contact LISD counseling coordinator Adriann Ivey at 570-0212.

As superintendent of schools for Leander ISD, I go to work each day knowing that it is a blessing to be able to teach your children each day. You trust us with your most valuable treasures, your sweet children, and we never take your trust for granted. LISD teachers and staff will take every step necessary to ensure your child's safety while he or she is in our care. Their safety is our highest priority at all times.

My heart breaks for those impacted by this horrible tragedy. There are no words to express the depths of our sorrow. Please continue to remember the Newtown community in your thoughts and prayers.

CRMS Principal, Assistant deliver 100 coats to Decker Elementary

Two staff members from Canyon Ridge Middle School Principal Susan Sullivan and Administrative Assistant Sue Floyd have been sewing coats for others for the last seven years.

They sew all year long and each December they distribute the coats to those who can use a little extra warmth during the winter. This year they delivered their handmade coats to students at Decker Elementary.

Since they have been doing this they have given out approximately 600 coats. This year they provided warmth to over 100 students.



Cheryl Kleffner

UIL One-Act Play Contest



Cheryl Kleffner

Middle School students from LISD participated in the LISD Middle School UIL One-Act Play Contest at Vista Ridge High School. Three students from Canyon Ridge Middle School were recognized. (L-R) Alaina Laplace (7th Grade) and Nastya Rundels (8th Grade) received awards for All Star Cast. While Erica Corinaldi (7th Grade) received an award for Best Tech.

AROUND THE WORLD, FROM 1



Above: The boy with the full size flag is Avinash Alamgari along with his friend Ace Kolecki.

Left: Brother and sister Faris and Sarah Badran show international spirit in the Grandview Hills Elementary Holidays Around the World parade.

Photos by Ray Freer

Preparing for VHS and beyond

Counselors from Vandegrift High School and Canyon Ridge Middle School recently gave parents at CRMS the opportunity to learn about VHS and beyond. The counselors were there to help bridge the gap from middle school to high school with the big picture of college in the background. Their presentation educated, relieved and prepared parents to be an informed consultant in their student's life. The feedback from parents was that the experience was very insightful and let them have an awareness of what is in their students' very near future.



Cheryl Kleffner

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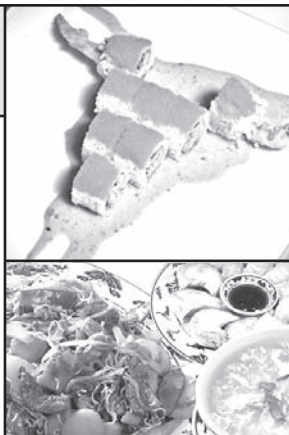
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PUBLISHER'S POINT OF VIEW



LYNETTE HAALAND

Salvation Army bell ringers help Austin

I haven't seen as many Kettle Drive Bell Ringers this year in Four Points. In an unofficial poll, others have not seen them either.

In years past, they've been at Walmart and other local locations collecting coins for people in need in Austin.

The Salvation Army hosts this Kettle Drive each year but little did I know what an impact small change can have on our greater Austin community.

Earlier this month I had lunch at the Boat House Grill with Randy Allen, the Communications Director who lives in the neighboring Canyon Creek area.

Allen pointed out that the local Salvation Army, in fiscal 2012, served thousands in Austin with food, shelter and services.

- People sheltered: 110,990
- Downtown Center: 88,506
- Women & Children's Center: 22,484
- Meals served: 332,918 (27,743/month)
- Employment services: 416
- Case management: 787

Case management helps clients to leave the shelters with a safe and stable place to live. Employment services helps clients improve employment status with additional training, education and a better wardrobe.

The Salvation Army has been helping people since 1852 when William Booth abandoned the conventional concept of a church and a pulpit and walked the streets of London, England to preach the gospel of Christ to

poor, homeless, hungry and destitute people.

In Feb. 1889, the Salvation Army was started in Austin. The first street meeting was held in front of the old Iron Front Saloon located on Congress and 6th Street where the Littlefield Building now stands.

"These early workers were quite surprised at the good reception given them in Austin, as most of the other cities in the early days of its organization greeted the Salvation Army with sticks, mud and other missiles. In Austin, however, great crowds attended the outdoor meetings and cooperation was given them by the people of the city," states the website.

In Sept. 1891 the American Statesman reported:

"It is rumored that The Salvation Army is going to fight the city ordinance which was passed last Monday prohibiting the banging of their big drum. The law will go into effect in a couple of days and some lively times may be expected if the vociferous promulgators of salvation persist in their drum beating."

Through the decades, the local Salvation Army chapter has grown to include the Adult Rehabilitation Center, the Social Service Center and the Austin Women's and Children's Shelter.

Donations collected during their Kettle Drive help keep these places going which help thousands each year.

I hope to see more local Bell Ringers in the days ahead and will not hesitate to give to the greater good.

FOUR POINTS OF VIEW

What do you want for Christmas?



Hannah Trinh
Steiner Ranch

Easy Bake Oven.



Kira Deelstra
Steiner Ranch

Princess castle with Ariel.



Zackary Carrubba
Steiner Ranch

A helicopter with wheels with side pockets for bullets.



Jake Friedman
Steiner Ranch

A DS, electric scooter, a piece of coal... so I can make a torch.

FOUR POINTS NEWS

Your Community Newspaper

Locally owned and operated, we are published weekly by Four Points News LLC.
TELEPHONE: 512-380-1405 FAX: 512-355-1774
WWW.FOURPOINTSNEWS.COM

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Community activities could deter vandalism

There are occasional reports of vandalism and theft around Steiner Ranch on various Facebook groups.

The same sort of stuff that happens anywhere, but maybe we could limit or eliminate malicious activity by being proactive, instead of reactive.

Based on my expert experience of having once been a jerky teenager, I have deduced that some of these pranks and crimes are being committed by local kids.

I know y'all have the most wonderful children, but bear with me for a minute. Kids get bored. Even your kids. This is something worth addressing.

How about if we started utilizing the community centers for various social activities in the neighborhoods? There is so much great space at Bella Mar, John Simpson, the Lake

Club and Towne Square.

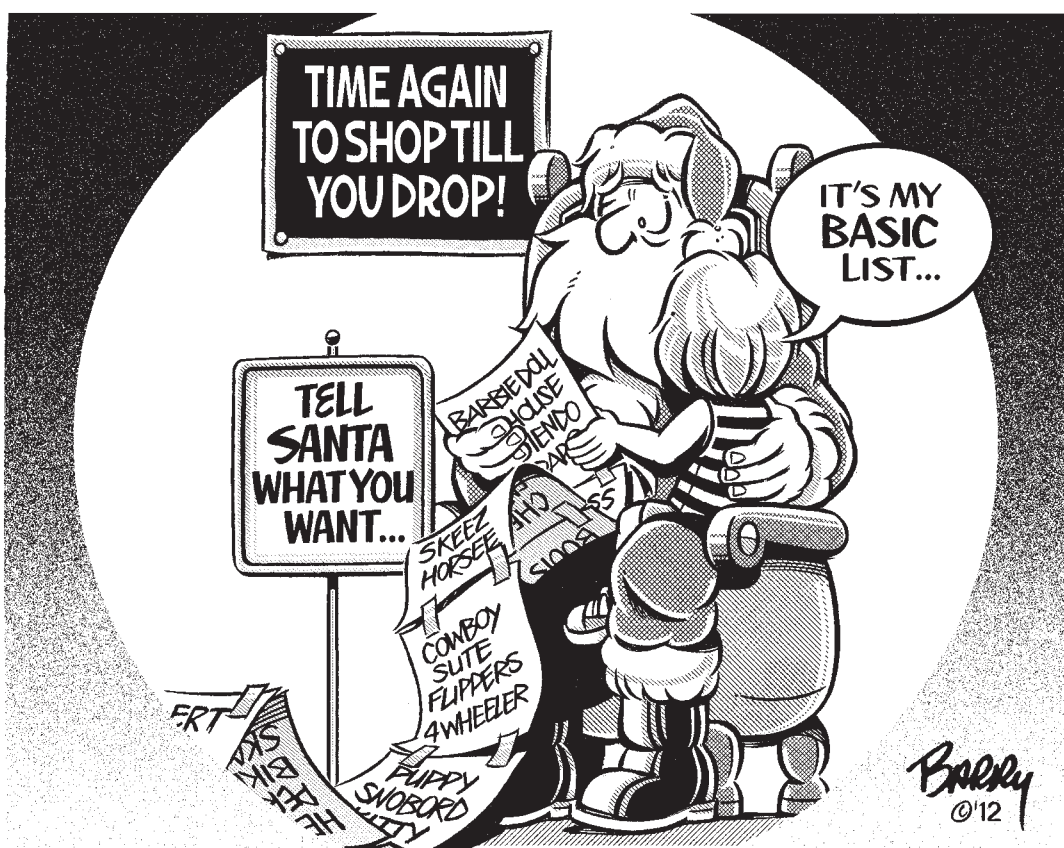
It could be anything... movie nights, karaoke, video game tournaments, guest speakers, and Photoshop classes. We could reach out to local businesses to sponsor food, drinks, etc.

This sort of outreach won't appeal to all of the kids, but I think it's worth a shot to provide some evening community activities as an option.

I'd be happy to get the ball rolling with a movie night during Christmas break. Anybody else interested?

Let's focus on productive prevention. The Facebook rants are informative, and sometimes entertaining, but they're not addressing the fact that kids are bored in suburbia.

Shawn Collins
Steiner Ranch



Twelve days of Christmas savings



JAY SABZEVARI
RBFUCU Branch Manager

What ever happened to the Twelve Days of Christmas? Well, for one thing, all those drummers drumming and partridges in pear trees would now cost more than \$100,000, according to the PNC Wealth Management Christmas Price Index! That's a lot of money for a whole, whole lot of birds (swans a-swimming, geese a-laying, French hens

and all that).

While you're probably not spending six figures on poultry this holiday season, you can't help noticing that the cost of everything from the traditional turkey dinner to Angry Birds pajamas has increased rapidly. How can you save on your typical holiday expenditures while still enjoying the season with all the cheer of ten lords a-leaping?

Check out these tips for a frugal but fun holiday season.

- A handmade touch makes gifts extra-special. Bake homemade goodies for friends and family, or make homemade projects and let your kids add their own special flair.

- Give yourself a special gift of joy. Donate your time (or money) to those that are less fortunate - provide food to a hungry family, send cards to military service members or buy toys to give needy children a happy holiday. You'll feel rewarded when you help and serve others.

- If you have a spending limit, don't feel like you HAVE to spend every penny. For example, if your family typically allots \$50 per person and you find a great jewelry set your sister will love marked down from \$60 to \$20, that's a win. You don't have to go and spend \$30 more just to meet the quota.
- As a family, share in an

"experience" that is free or low cost - such as attending a choir concert, making inexpensive holiday ornaments or crafts, or driving to see decorated lawns around the city together. Memories last longer than "stuff" and you can take pictures to commemorate the occasion.

- Check regularly for discounts or sales. Window shop either at stores or online to find the best deals. Discount sites may also help you to find great bargains on discounted products.
- Take that extra change you've accumulated around the house to a coin machine. If you can find a free coin machine (like

RBFUCU's free-to-members one), you can use that money to help finance your shopping expedition.

- Make a budget and list of your holiday gifts and recipients before shopping. Planning ahead can prevent you from overspending.
- Refinance your auto loan to a lower percentage and use the savings to finance your purchases. Refinancing can literally save hundred or thousands of dollars over the life of the loan.
- Recycle last year's Christmas Cards by using them as gift tags.

Whatever you're buying for the holidays, from golden rings to pear trees, you'll feel better when the season's over if you manage

your money wisely. And, you won't have to stress when it comes time to pay the piper (and his 10 closest piping friends).

Contributed by Jay Sabzevari, Randolph-Brooks Federal Credit Union Steiner Ranch branch. RBFUCU provides financial services to more than 400,000 members and is committed to improving members' economic well-being and quality of life. This information is general and you may wish to consult a financial advisor in regard to your circumstances. For more information, visit www.rbfuc.org.

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ACF's Nicaragua mission trip

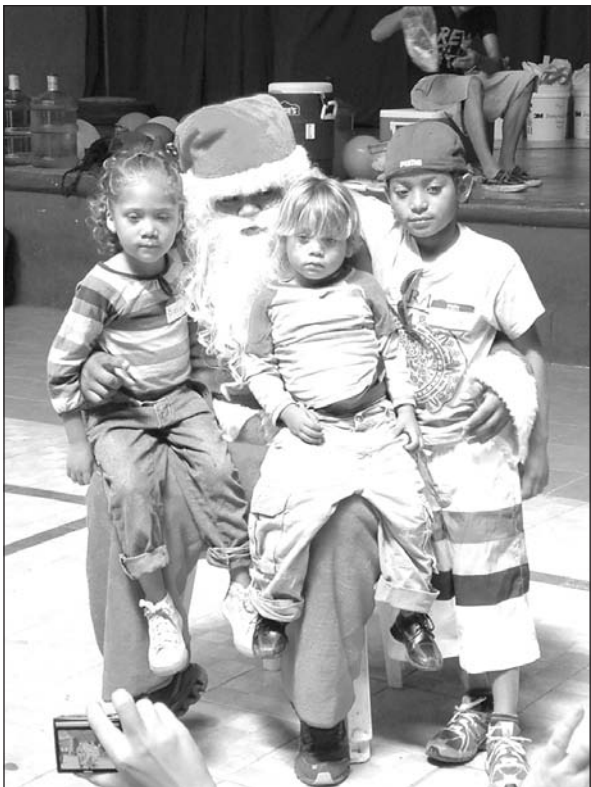
Fourteen women from Austin Christian Fellowship went to Nicaragua recently on a mission trip to share Christmas with many children and impoverished families.

ACF served various groups of children in an orphanage, two Christian schools and the La Luz part of Nicaragua, with the children of the workers of the coffee fields.

"At (one) party, the children were given a 5-gallon bucket to put their gifts in and bring home - as well as use the bucket for daily needs... like hauling things in," said Carol Killgore of Steiner Ranch. The kids got to decorate their "family bucket" with permanent markers all leaving with very colorful work buckets.

Eleven of the ladies who went on the mission trip were from Four Points and most were part of the children's ministry department of the River Place church. The week-long trip was Nov. 29 through Dec. 5.

ACF takes many mis-



Carol Killgore

These children live in the La Luz area of Nicaragua where River Place-based Austin Christian Fellowship donated gifts on a recent mission trip. Manuel (little one), Josue (older boy) and Deysha (girl) received Christmas presents and their parents did too.

sion trips throughout the Nicaragua scheduled in year and has five more to 2013.

Festive Christmas sweater party

A local Austin Christian Fellowship small group hosted its 3rd annual Christmas Sweater party recently.



Men (L-R) Brian Pitstick, Craig Rich, Jason Parchman, James McSpadden, Derek Wright, David Hawes (kneeling) and Bobby Collins.



Ladies (L-R) Heather Rich, Michelle Parchman, Meredith McSpadden, Jeanne Hawes, Brandi Wright and Stephanie Collins.

St. Luke's Longest Night service Dec. 21

St. Luke's on the Lake Episcopal welcomes the community to a Longest Night worship service on the night of the winter solstice, Dec. 21, the longest night of the year.

This service is a time to honor true feelings, to grieve the loss of loved ones, and find a safe place to bring those prayers and cares to Christ. It is a night to find rest and care in the midst of community and neighbors with faith that even on the darkest night, a light is shining. St. Luke's organizers say.

Those seeking a respite from the rush and demands the secular world has placed on them in the midst of shopping and singing and celebrating will find here an observance of the real reason for this season—the love of God poured out to all people through Jesus Christ.

Every person, no matter the circumstances, is welcome at this service. The service begins at 6:30 p.m. at 5600 RR 620 N. and it will include Eucharist and a time for honoring those who are being missed or grieved this year. A reception will follow.

Hispanic Christmas celebration

The second annual Hispanic Christmas celebration will be held on Dec. 21 in Steiner Ranch.

Last year, around 40 families participated and this year more than 70 families are involved as the Latino community continues to grow in the area.

"The purpose of our party is to maintain our roots and to pass down our traditions to our own kids.

We mix different cultures and nationalities that include Colombian, Ecuadorian, Mexican, Argentinian and many others," said Matte Gama Hudson, organizer.

The group will start this year's celebration off by praying the traditional Colombian Novena, then they will do the Mexican Posada. Then they will enjoy traditional dishes like ta-

males, empanadas and rice with chicken. To end the night, there will be dancing to the rhythm of salsa and merengue music.

"We hope to keep this tradition alive for the next coming years and keep the Latin community united," Hudson said.

For more information about the group, email matehudson@yahoo.com.

ACCIDENTS, FROM 1

micide Department was at the scene of the accident to conduct an investigation.

Since 2008, in the stretch of RM 2222, between FM 620 and MoPac, APD's Vehicular Homicide Department reports nine fatalities and 14 serious injury accidents.

"There is no other stretch

of road like 2222," said Lt. Troy Officer of the APD Vehicular Homicide Unit. "It is a very unforgiving road. When you take into consideration the speed of the cars and the combination of curves and hills, it's just a very dangerous stretch of roadway."

According to Officer,

there have been 76 traffic fatalities in Austin so far this year with the most dangerous two weeks to come. Last year, Austin claimed 54 traffic fatalities total. Since 1985, the highest year for traffic fatalities was 1986 with 81 vehicular deaths.

SOLICITORS, FROM 1

parts of Steiner also said there were solicitors going around last week.

"My suggestion to anyone is to not give money or personal information to anyone soliciting either door to door, by phone or mail," Wade said.

He also says not to open a door to a stranger.

"Be polite and say 'no thank you,' and if the people refuse to leave or are aggressive then call 911. Don't announce that you are calling, just call," Wade said.

He suggests getting a description of the person but doing so only staying safe. Report the description to the dispatcher. Do not confront the person or try to hold them for the TCSO Deputies.

"During the holiday season some people take advantage of the giving spirit so we see a few more calls this time of year," Wade said.



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APD warnings for holiday shoppers

The Austin Police Department's Auto Theft Interdiction Project is working to increase awareness in the community and reduce auto thefts and burglary of vehicles this holiday season.

Throughout the rest of the year, APD Officers will be walking the malls and shopping centers and placing a crime prevention notice on windshields as a reminder to take precautions.

Here are some tips to help protect your vehicle and purchases during this busy holiday season:

- Lock your car and take your keys
- Park in well-lit areas; over half of all vehicle thefts occur at night
- Don't leave valuables in plain view
- Stay alert and be aware of your surroundings
- Avoid carrying a large amount of cash or credit cards

Steiner Serves RMHC room makeover

By VAL OLIVAS
Four Points News

About 25 members of the Steiner Serves group banded together to complete a room makeover of Guest Room #6 at the Ronald McDonald House Charities of Central Texas (RMHC), located at Dell Children's Medical Center of Central Texas.

The makeover project—costing approximately \$6,000—was completed on Dec. 1 with many Steiner Serves children pitching in to make cookies for house guests as well.

Steiner resident, Jana Stokes, led the group in design efforts, resulting in what the group believes is a much warmer and more comfortable living space for those utilizing the space—the families of critically ill children who are admitted to Dell Children's.

On Dec. 16, RMHC hosted an open house of the facilities highlighting all of the 28 rooms post-makeover.

For additional photos of Guest Room #6, please visit the Steiner Serves Facebook page.



Jana Stokes

SAFEPLACE, FROM 1

raise babies in homes where they or their children were in danger," she said.

Austin-based SafePlace provides safety for individuals and families affected by sexual and domestic violence. It helps victims in their healing, promotes safe and healthy relationships, and works toward social change.

After McCullar adopted a SafePlace family on her own a few times, she discovered how much added value could be realized by including others in the effort, positively impacting an even larger number of families. She was able to

broadcast her request for help using social media.

Neighbors responded with specific goods requested, gift cards or stocking-stuffer sized presents. McCullar collects any cash and completes the shopping herself, supplying the donor with receipts highlighting where their money was spent.

McCullar begins the donation drive each season by adopting one family initially.

"I adopt as I go. I start with one family of four. As soon as I hit a specific dollar amount, I go ahead and ask (SafePlace) for another

family and so on. I always make sure every family has more than enough," she said.

McCullar will continue this process until her donations are exhausted.

This year, 20 Steiner families have donated and the drive has yielded about \$1,000 in cash so far, which McCullar states can stretch a very long way. In fact, she hopes to be able to help five different SafePlace families with donations this year.

There is still time to participate. McCullar can be reached at kristinmccullar@gmail.com.



Photos contributed by Steiner Serves

Steiner Serves raised thousands and volunteered earlier this month to makeover a RMHC room.

SAFETY, FROM 1

experience anxiety about the tragedy, school counselor Sherry Betts will be available.

Fambrough stated that her school conducts regular emergency drills to ready the students in case of an emergency and restrictions are in place to monitor visitors entering the building. The school also has a Watchdog dad and volunteer program to help safeguard against such tragedies occurring locally. She asked parents to call the

front office at 512-570-5700 if they would like to join either of these programs.

Similarly, Brenda Cruz, Principal of Grandview Hills Elementary School, did not share Friday's events with her students and gave parents a resource available for help in talking with their kids about what happened in Newtown, www.nasponline.org/resources/crisis_safety.pdf. Cruz stated that "the most important thing (in the case of an emergency) is

to be sure students are following teacher directions." She reminded parents that "all parents and visitors must check in and receive a badge to enter the building" and "at no time should a parent enter a classroom without the teacher present or without permission."

"I cannot find the words to express how clearly we understand what role we play in keeping your child safe," wrote Cruz. "Thank you for trusting us with your precious children."

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BASKETBALL



Sophia Duffield - Senior #3 (Point Guard)

Favorite part about being involved in Viper Basketball: My favorite part of being involved with Lady Viper Basketball is being on a team and being able to create good memories with my teammates. I also enjoy traveling with the team because we build on our relationships and team dynamic.

BASKETBALL



Jamie Hudson - Sophomore #21 - Position Guard

Favorite part about being involved in Viper Basketball: My favorite part is being able to play ball every day with my friends.

WRESTLING



Adrian Barraza

What do you like about the sport of wrestling? It builds great character and pushes yourself to the limit.
What is your goal this year? To go undefeated and win State.
Favorite quote: It's not the size of the dog in the fight; it's the size of the fight in the dog!

FCCLA



Julia Ribeiro - Senior (FCCLA)

Favorite part about being involved in the Viper Family, Career and Community Leaders of America program: I just like to meet new people and have opportunities to learn more during competition.

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Viper Wrestling placed 3rd in Rough Rider

By Nathasha Collmann
Four Points Contributor

The Vandegrift HS Varsity Black Wrestling team traveled to San Antonio to compete at the Rough Rider Invitational Tournament. The team placed 3rd overall.

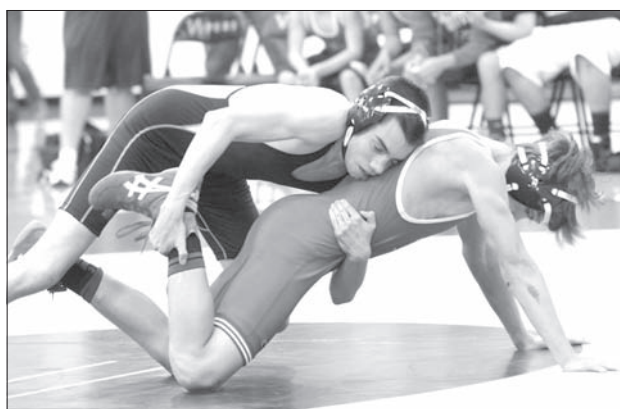
Brent Peterson (Junior, 145lbs) won first place, Adrian Barraza (Junior, 113lbs) won first place, and Jake Spasaro (Senior, 160lbs) earned third place.

On Friday, JV wrestlers competed in the Rough

Rider Tournament. Blane Tamez and Matthew Rothschild won third place.

The Vipers hosted JV and a few varsity wrestlers from Dripping Springs and Georgetown Eastview last week on Dec. 12 for a scrimmage.

This Saturday the Varsity Black team will head to Vista Ridge HS for the Hill Country Classic and Varsity Silver and JV team will compete at the JV side of the HCC which will be hosted by Vandegrift.



Zach Becker (Junior, 120lbs) has the Georgetown Eastview wrestler in an ankle pick during his match on Wednesday.

VHS band students make District, Region

Participation nearly doubles over previous year

By RICH KEITH
Four Points News

Over 100 students from the Vandegrift High School band program participated in the Texas Music Educators Association (TMEA) Region Band competition on Dec. 8.

The VHS band program placed seven students to the District Band: Sarah Hassall, Lane Chipman, Craig Wolf, Graham Scott, Jenni Abbarno, Heather Sundar and Rachael Klein.

These seven students have qualified to the Area round and will have the opportunity to earn a chair in the TMEA All-State Band.

"This next step will take an unbelievable amount of hard work and dedication...dig deep, we know you can do it," said VHS Director of Bands Jeremy Spicer of the Area qualifiers. The TMEA Area audition will take place Jan. 12. VHS also placed 30 stu-

dents in the two Region bands - symphonic and concert.

Region is an extensive process that begins in August with several auditions along the way and culminated for many recently at Cedar Ridge High School in Round Rock.

This is nearly double the number of placements from last year advancing. In fact the band program has nearly doubled its Region Band participants every year since the VHS program opened in 2009.

Region band members earned the opportunity to rehearse and perform together with other students in Region 26.

The following students earned a chair in the 2012 TMEA Region 26 Bands:

- Region Symphonic Band (top band)
Olivia Schmitz - Flute 10th chair
Amulya Angajala - Flute 11th chair
Lienne Ng - Flute 12th chair
Sean Flaherty - Clarinet 14th chair

- Taylor Gaskins - Clarinet 18th chair
Lane Chipman - Contra Bass Clarinet 1st chair (AREA QUALIFIER)
Ryan Hill - Tenor Sax 3rd chair
Craig Wolf - Trumpet 8th chair (AREA QUALIFIER)
Miles Bentley - Trumpet 14th chair
Graham Scott - French Horn 5th chair (AREA QUALIFIER)
Jenni Abbarno - French Horn 6th chair (AREA QUALIFIER)
Heather Sundar - Trombone 2nd chair (AREA QUALIFIER)
Calvin Geng - Euphonium 6th chair
Forrest Keith - Tuba 6th chair

- Region Concert Band**
Sarah Hassall - Piccolo 1st chair (AREA QUALIFIER - ORCHESTRA)
Austin Isburgh - Flute 2nd chair
Rhea Adhikary - Flute 5th chair
Kelly Schriener - Eb Clarinet 1st chair
Kyle Barth - Clarinet 14th chair

- Jordan Sekiya - Clarinet 17th chair
Luis Perales - Bass Clarinet 1st chair
Sabrina Cheshire - Tenor Sax 3rd chair
Cale Howard - Baritone Sax 1st chair
Luke Hill - Trumpet 2nd chair
Brian Wolf - Trumpet 8th chair
Dustin Hoang - Trumpet 10th chair
Emily Jensen - French Horn 6th chair
Max Bernhardt - Euphonium 3rd chair
Mark Peterman - Tuba 3rd chair
Kyle Richardson - Percussion 13th chair

- District Band**
Sara Gravely - Flute
Evan Yu - Alto Saxophone
Matt Carpenter - Trumpet
Darren Castrillon - Trumpet
Caroline Slater - French Horn
Conor Stuart - Tuba
Rachael Klein - Percussion (AREA QUALIFIER - ORCHESTRA)

VHS Boys Soccer outlook

Games start in Jan.

The Vandegrift High School Boys Soccer program is in full swing in preparation of their upcoming season.

There is a strong showing of young talent even though the Vipers lost nine seniors from last year's regional semi-finalist squad. They are looking to fill the holes and make a name for themselves during the 2013 season. They return with seven players from the playoff team last year, all of which were starters. These men have shown their commitment to work hard for their school's program, as well as for the community they represent.

"We are young and have to modify the way we played last year, but the goals haven't changed and the expectations have only

risen higher," said Chad Aldrich, VHS Boys Soccer Head Coach.

"We know we have a ways to go and no game is a guaranteed win. Our district is brutally tough and produces a ton of great players. We look forward to the challenges ahead of us and will be ready to compete," Aldrich said.

Starting at 6:30 a.m. every morning, both the junior varsity and varsity teams are working hard to build the chemistry needed for a young team to excel when the season begins. This will be Vandegrift's fourth year competing since the school opened and they look to continue building upon last year's success.

The season kicks off Jan. 4 with the alumni/intersquad game and then on to the first game versus Anderson on Jan. 8.

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