Multifamily affordable housing interest grows

Georgetown Housing Advisory Board study showed gaps in residential options, possible deficit by 2018

By Beth Wade

After more than two years since the last proposed affordable housing complex lost funding, the Texas Housing Foundation, a regional public housing authority, is moving forward with plans to build an income-restricted multifamily residential complex in Georgetown.

In March, the planning and zoning commission and City Council are expected to consider rezoning the Gateway Northwest Apartments’ site, which will be located off Northwest Boulevard and Washam Drive.

“From the citizenry standpoint, it will be 180 new units of quality, affordable housing to meet the ever-growing demand for quality housing within a very affluent area—and I don’t mean affluent in the number of dollars, but affluent in a sense of growth potential,” Texas Housing Foundation CEO Mark Mayfield said.

Other affordable housing complexes, including a rehabilitation project for San Gabriel Apartments, as well as a proposed senior living complex and another income-restricted development, are also expected to come before City Council in February seeking resolutions of support.

Demand

Georgetown’s growth has added to the demand for affordable, multifamily living spaces, Georgetown Housing Coordinator Jennifer Bills said.

“We’ve gone from being Georgetown small town to Georgetown with major shopping centers and employment centers,” she said. “You have a real mix of incomes when you do that.”

A 2008 housing study by the Georgetown Housing Advisory Board, which is being updated and is expected to go to City Council in April, found that the city could have a deficit of about 1,300 affordable multifamily units by 2018.

“Going forward from now, there will be a deficit,” Bills said. “None of the assumptions have changed nearly as much in the last three years.”

The study looked at who was living in Georgetown and how much rent they were paying and compared it to the trends of who was moving into Georgetown and what was being developed. What was identified was a need for a range of multifamily housing options on an affordable level, Bills said.

Williamson County expands propane fleet

Fueling stations open to support vehicles

By Samantha Bryant

Jerry Jansen travels about 18,000 miles a year performing his job as a construction inspector with the Infrastructure Department of Williamson County. In September, the county converted his 2009 Chevrolet Silverado pickup truck to run on both propane and gasoline.

Jansen said initially he was skeptical about using the bi-fuel vehicle, but soon found its performance was comparable to using just gasoline.

“Performance-wise, I don’t see any difference in them,” he said. “In fact, I get a little more power from the propane.”

Jansen is not the only one experiencing the benefits of propane vehicles. The county now has 31 vehicles that run on propane and estimates it will save $61,000 on fuel costs yearly.

Since November 2011, the county has opened a network of six fueling stations to support its propane vehicles. The stations addressed concerns that the vehicles that run solely on fuel oil, but soon found its performance was competitive with gasoline.

The county now has 31 vehicles that run on propane and estimates it will save $61,000 on fuel costs yearly.

Propane

Vehicle life: 10–11 years or 140,000–154,000 miles

Market-rate multifamily housing

Two Rivers apartment complex

103. N. Austin Ave.

327-3333, www.larrypeel.com

Developer: Larry Peel & Co. Inc.

Number of units: 179

Building sizes: Two and three stories

Amenities: Granite countertops, clubhouse, pool and spa, fitness center, business center

Price range: Pricing structure to be determined by market rates and will not be available until closer to opening

Project timeline: Rental agreements expected to start in the first quarter of 2013

Multifamily affordable housing options sprout up in Georgetown

Proposed affordable housing

Gateway Northwest Apartments

Located off of Northwest Boulevard and Washam Drive

830-693-4521, www.bfh.org

Developer: Texas Housing Foundation

Number of units: 180

Building sizes: One, two and three stories

Amenities: Crown molding, granite countertops, clubhouse, fitness center, business center, pool

Price range: Income-restricted; rents from $360-$1,000 per month depending on income level and apartment size

Project timeline: Groundbreaking expected in September 2012, leasing beginning in spring 2013

City announces Georgetown Grand criterium cycling race to be held May 19–20

City of Georgetown staff announced Jan. 17 the city would host the inaugural Georgetown Grand criterium cycling race May 19–20. The event is expected to draw up to 800 cyclists and 5,000 spectators in its first year.

Out-of-state transportation leaders talk transit, urban rail with local policymakers

On Feb. 6, as part of a two-day roundtable series, transportation leaders from Denver, Phoenix and Salt Lake City discussed implementing transit systems to the Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization’s Transit Working Group.

American Cancer Society seeks locals to participate in ‘historic’ research study

The American Cancer Society, in partnership with Scott & White Healthcare, is asking for Williamson County residents to participate in a long-term study designed to track genetic and hormonal factors linked to cancer.
You can’t always predict your family’s health needs. But you can know where to go when you need care the most. For faster emergency care closer to home, St. David’s Georgetown is here for you and your children 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Our full service emergency department will treat all of your family’s health needs. From colds, cuts and sprains to abdominal pain, chest pain or more severe problems, you’ll find comfort in our quick, convenient care.

To find a doctor, speak to one of our nurses, or register for upcoming seminars/events, call 512-478-3627 or 1-888-868-2104, 24 hours a day.

STDAVIDS.COM
Last month, we relaunched our paper as a Georgetown-exclusive publication, and the response from our readers has been overwhelmingly positive. I heard from people who said they enjoyed the issue because it had so much more Georgetown content. Others were pleased because they say Georgetown is too different to be grouped with other cities. We hope you will continue to let us know what you think.

In our January issue, we wrote a cover story about the resurgence of activity in downtown. It is so exciting to see the new businesses on the Square, and the story continues to develop. Even within the last few weeks, there is more activity: a new restaurant called Burger University has made plans to open on the Square, and the Mexican restaurant at River Place looks like it is getting close to completion. It’s hard to keep up with everything that is new or changing, but you don’t have to wait until your next Community Impact Newspaper arrives to know what’s going on in Georgetown and Williamson County. To keep up with news throughout the month, visit our website, impactnews.com/geo.

This month, you will notice some new features, including our Manufacturing feature and Arts feature, and some features we are bringing back, such as History and the Nonprofit profile. What is your favorite part of the paper? Let us know by messaging us on Facebook at www.impactnews.com/geo-facebook.

Reader Feedback

Would you use a public bus system in Georgetown?

- Yes: 47%
- No: 47%
- I don’t know: 6%

Results from an unscientific Web survey, collected 01/18/12–02/08/12

Additional poll comments

“Based on the 2010 Census, Georgetown should proceed with the process necessary to operate its own city bus system. There are adequate high density areas, and high economic need areas to operate effectively. Investing in a simple solution that is convenient and affordable will encourage the economic development and smart growth that we need, and the ability to provide for our aging population in all areas of the city. Conroe, Texas, may be a good model to follow.”

—Brian Ortego

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**New Ownership**

13 **Georgetown Music Studio** came under new ownership Dec. 1. Sharon James now owns the studio located at 2544 Shell Road, Ste. A. Offering private and group lessons for students of all ages and skill levels, the studio has about nine instructors that teach piano, voice, guitar, violin and more. Hours are Mon.–Fri. 10 a.m.–8 p.m. 868-2255, www.georgetownmusicstudio.com

**Relocations**

14 **Allergy & Asthma Center of Georgetown** plans to move Feb. 25 from 1526 Leander Road to the Austin Avenue Medical Plaza at 3301 S. Austin Ave., Ste. 140. Established in 1998, the clinic is served by board-certified allergists and immunologists Dr. Sheila Amar and Dr. Kim Hovanyak who specialize in the evaluation and treatment of adults and children for a variety of conditions. 868-6673, www.georgetownallergy.com


**Expansions**

17 **Lone Star Circle of Care Georgetown Dental Center** opened an expansion to its building at 2411 Williams Drive on Jan. 2, adding 11 exam rooms so that it has the capacity for 70 percent more patient visits. The dental center will also be adding two more dentists and a dental hygienist in the next couple of months. Lone Star Circle of Care, which celebrated its 10th anniversary Jan. 14, is a Georgetown-based community health center that operates more than 25 clinics in the Central Texas area. 864-1445, www.lscctx.org

**Name Change**

12 **Patti Plymate-McEnnis** bought Kay's Kloset on Jan. 1 and changed the store's name to Fashion. Located at 3010 Williams Drive, Ste. 115, the boutique sells women’s clothing, purses and accessories. 869-7011
Nonprofit

Neighborhood Conference Committee of Williamson County, an organization that strives to keep students who are truant out of the juvenile justice system and empower them to take positive control of their education, is seeking volunteer panel members in Georgetown to complete interviews with students and families. Volunteers must pass a background check and complete the program training. 943-3216, www.nccwilco.org

Anniversaries

18 St. Helen Catholic School, 2700 E. University Ave., celebrated its 10-year anniversary Feb. 11. The school serves students in pre-K through eighth grade. 868-0744, www.sainthelens.org/school

School Note

The Georgetown ISD board of trustees is expected to vote Feb. 21 on new elementary attendance zones for Frost and McCoy elementary schools that would go into effect for the 2012–13 school year. The board hosted a public forum Feb. 6 and said current students would be allowed to “grandfather” into their current campus if affected by the boundary change; however, transportation would not be provided. The proposed maps are available online. 943-5000, www.georgetownisd.org

Closings

19 Adi’s Italian Village closed Jan. 8 at 119 W. Seventh St.

20 Rusty Justus, founder and CEO of Justus Foods, said the company will close by the end of February. The company had a manufacturing facility at 2522 Shell Road, Ste. B, that packaged freeze-dried fruit products. www.justusfoods.com

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February

18 Artist showcase
Leander photographer Jack Puryear Jr. hosts a live presentation on his acrylic printmaking on copper-leafed foil. • 2–4 p.m. • Free • Through the Looking Glass Gallery, 122 E. Eighth St. 864-1371 • www.throughthelookingglass.us

18–19 Williamson County Gemboree
The Williamson County Gem and Mineral Society hosts the Gemboree with exhibits of beads, jewelry, fossils, minerals and artifacts as well as demonstrations, games and educational displays. Proceeds benefit college students studying earth science. • Sat. 10 a.m.–6 p.m., Sun. 10 a.m.–5 p.m. • $2 (adults), $1 (children ages 6–12), free (children younger than 6) • Georgetown Community Center, San Gabriel Park, 445 E. Morrow St., Georgetown 930-2788 • www.wcgms.org

19 Family research ‘Getting Started’ workshop
The John Berry Chapter of the Daughters of the Republic of Texas hosts a workshop on how to get started in genealogy research. Internet sources, utilizing courthouses and libraries, preserving old photos and more. 2–4 p.m. • Free • Georgetown Public Library, Hewlett Room, 402 W. Eighth St. 869-0240 www.johnberryidrt.com

Basic sign language for parents and teachers
Wendy Bradley teaches basic signs, baby signs, alphabet, animals, numbers, songs, stories and more. Registration is required. • 7–9 p.m. • $10 Community Resource Center, 805 W. University Ave. 527-8281 • www.georgetownproject.com

24–March 25 Singin’ In The Rain
Set in 1920s Hollywood, the romantic comedy chronicles the early days of sound film and follows a music studio trying to salvage the career of its silent picture star. • Fri. and Sat. 7:30 p.m., Sun. 2 p.m., Two Saturday matinees at 2 p.m. March 17 and 24 • $24 (general admission), $22 (seniors), $14 (students and active military), $10 (children 12 or younger) • Georgetown Palace Theater, 810 S. Austin Ave. 869-7469 • www.georgetownpalace.com

25 Talk by author Mike Cox
The Georgetown Heritage Society sponsors a lecture by Austin-based writer and syndicated columnist Mike Cox. He is the author of 20 Texas-related, nonfiction books and writes a weekly syndicated newspaper column, “Texas Tales,” which focuses on aspects of Texas history. • 10 a.m. • Free • Grace Heritage Center, 811 S. Main St. 869-8597 • www.georgetownheritagesociety.com

26 Georgetown Bridal Show
The Georgetown Chamber of Commerce hosts a bridal show that includes about 80 vendors, two fashion shows and a VIP tote bag for the first 250 brides to attend. • Noon–5 p.m. • Free • East View High School, 4490 E. University Ave. 930-3535 • www.georgetownbridalshow.com

ACATamy Awards adoption event
On the night of the Academy Awards, cats can be adopted for no fee at the Williamson County Regional Animal Shelter. • 11 a.m.–4 p.m. • Free • Williamson County Regional Animal Shelter, 1855 S.E. Inner Loop • 943-3322 http://pets.wlico.org

Feb. 27–28 Brown Symposium—‘Back to the Foodture: Sustainable Strategies to Reverse a Global Crisis’
Southwestern University’s Brown Symposium focuses on topics such as how the world can feed its growing population in the 21st century. A schedule of events is available online. Times vary • Free • Alma Thomas Theater, Southwestern University, 1001 E. University Ave. 863-1570 • www.southwestern.edu

March

8 Georgetown Toastmasters open house
Attendees learn about Toastmasters, a self-paced program focused on helping participants gain more confidence and skill in their speaking and leadership abilities. • 7–8 p.m. • Free • Georgetown ISD Administration Building, 603 Lakeway Drive • 703-203-7913 www.georgetowntoastmasters.com

‘What all kids need to hear’
Georgetown Partners in Education presents a special lunch-and-learn for mentors. Dr. Eric Cupp is the keynote speaker and shares the messages of hope he has been imparting to teenagers for more than 30 years. Lunch is provided to those who preregister, limited to first 100. Registration closes March 2. • 11 a.m.–1 p.m. • Free • Georgetown Chamber of Commerce, 100 Stadium Drive • 943-5137 www.georgetownpie.org

13 Soup Supper at The Caring Place
The Caring Place hosts its 22nd annual Soup Supper, which includes soup, cornbread, a drink and dessert. Tickets can be purchased at The Caring Place and at the door. For those who are unable to attend but would like to purchase a ticket to be given to a family in crisis, contact The Caring Place. • $10 (adults), $5 (children) • St. Helen Catholic Church, St. Rita’s Activity Center, 2700 E. University Ave. 943-0702 • www.caringplacetx.org

To submit Georgetown events, visit www.impactnews.com/events/submit.html. For a full list of Georgetown events, visit www.impactnews.com/ge-calendar. To have Georgetown events considered for the print edition, they must be submitted online by the third Friday of the month.

2011 Georgetown Swirl

Stephen Baxter with Fiesta Winery out of Bend, Texas, was one of the vendors at The Georgetown Swirl in 2011.

March 3
By Samantha Bryant
While sipping on wine samples from Texas wineries, attendees of The Georgetown Swirl may shop for gifts, listen to live jazz music and dine on local restaurants’ fare. Wineries from Lampasas, Fredericksburg, Bertram, Georgetown and more are represented at this annual event. A wine auction will take place in the Williamson County Courthouse at 710 Main St. A portion of the proceeds from the auction will go toward The Williamson Museum. Proceeds from the event’s ticket sales go to the Main Street Facade and Grant Program, which allows building and business owners to obtain matching grants for the improvement of downtown signage and facades while preserving the building’s historical integrity.

6–9 p.m. • $30 • Georgetown Square • 930-2027 • www.swirl.georgetown.org

12 The Georgetown Swirl

Set in 1920s Hollywood, the romantic comedy chronicles the early days of sound film and follows a music studio trying to salvage the career of its silent picture star. • Fri. and Sat. 7:30 p.m., Sun. 2 p.m., Two Saturday matinees at 2 p.m. March 17 and 24 • $24 (general admission), $22 (seniors), $14 (students and active military), $10 (children 12 or younger) • Georgetown Palace Theater, 810 S. Austin Ave. 869-7469 • www.georgetownpalace.com

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Recent highlights

Georgetown graphic designer Nick Ramos presents the new Most Beautiful Town Square in Texas logo at the Georgetown Main Street Program’s Quarterly Breakfast Bites meeting Jan. 25.

Estes Audiology gave away hearing aids in December as a part of the company’s Gift of Hearing Holiday Giveaway. Marcelina Lopez (left) was the Georgetown recipient, and she is pictured with Dr. Mandi Fisher from the Sun City office.

Georgetown ISD Superintendent Joe Dan Lee addresses a group of parents, students and GISD staff at a regular school board meeting Jan. 17 in celebration of School Board Appreciation Month.

Cyclists demonstrate criterium-style cycling on the Square Jan. 17 after Mayor George Garver and city staff announced the dates for the Georgetown Grand criterium race, which will run May 19–20.

Junior Forum President Christy Foster (left) and Georgetown Area Junior Forum President Anna Cornett attend a ceremony Dec. 13 where the GAJF donated about $6,000 to local nonprofits.

The Artist’s Booth holds its opening night performances Dec. 17. Chef Gary Zohner held a dinner show as a part of the event.

East View High School Principal Dave Denny (third from left) presents a check Feb. 3 to Wade Todd (second from right), chair of the Patriot Plaza Committee, for the first commemorative brick to be placed at the plaza on the east side of the campus athletic field. (From left) EVHS Soccer Booster Club President Francine Erickson, Superintendent Joe Dan Lee, American Legion Post No. 174 Past Commander Vic Person and school board member Fred Barhydt also help celebrate the new program.

Food vendors interact with parents, students and school district staff at the Food Show and Taste Testing event at Benold Middle School on Jan. 18.

State Rep. Dan Huberty (left) speaks at the grand opening of state Rep. Charles Schwertner’s campaign headquarters in Georgetown on Jan. 25. Schwertner, who is the state representative for District 20, is running for state Senate District 5.
Williamson County improves public safety facilities
New 30,000-sq.-ft. emergency operations center broke ground in January

By Samantha Bryant
The county broke ground on a 30,000-square-foot emergency services operations center Jan. 26, and Williamson County also began a public safety technology project in the spring of 2011 that it will continue to implement in 2012.

Williamson County Emergency Services Director John Sneed said efficiency is paramount in the world of public safety and that Williamson County is committed to ensuring that its public safety and emergency management personnel have the tools they need to perform at a high level.

The new operations center does just that, he said.
“‘It shows the commitment that this county and our [county] court have for supporting public safety,’” Sneed said.

WilCo Emergency Services Operations Center
Scheduled for completion by the summer of 2013, the Williamson County Emergency Services Operations Center will house emergency management departments that right now are scattered in various locations across the county.

Williamson County 911 Communications is currently located within the Sheriff’s Office at 508 S. Rock St. in Georgetown. Sneed said there is no way to expand the department in the space.

“The communications center right now is outdated and cramped,” Precinct 2 Commissioner Cynthia Long said. A previous commissioners court approved funding for the facility and sold the certificate of obligation bonds in 2006.

Long said the current Commissioners Court is committed to the project but also wanted to make sure that the needs were adequately addressed, that the project came in on-budget and that certain technology updates were implemented prior to starting construction on the new facility.

Inside the $12 million building there will be office space for 911 communications, Emergency Management, Hazardous Materials and some personnel from the Sheriff’s Office.

Chip Riggins, executive director and health authority of the Williamson County and Cities Health District, said the Public Health Preparedness Division will also be on-site and participate in emergency management planning.

“I think it will help everybody to have public health to be a part of those discussions and planning processes,” he said.

The county has also budgeted $6 million for electronic and technology equipment for the operations center.

In the case of a wide-scale emergency, such as a flood or a tornado, the facility will become a hub where all county departments that handle emergencies, and even city officials, can gather to deal with the situation.

In the past, county officials have used the training room in the Williamson County Juvenile Justice Center when creating an emergency operations center. It’s not set up, which means I.T. has to come in and set everything up before we can get started, and I hate to say that we have to run wires across the ground and use duct tape to keep people from tripping, but that is the case,” Sneed said. “This facility will allow us to be completely set up and ready to go.”

Public safety technology
In 2011, the county began implementing a $4.2 million public safety technology project, which included installing a new computer-aided dispatch system, known as CAD, and supplying computers for public safety personnel to use in their vehicles.

Sneed said the technology updates are especially useful to law enforcement officers, allowing them to run license plates without calling into the dispatch center and also complete their field reporting from their vehicles.

“They are still visible out in the neighborhoods, still watching for crime, yet now their car has become their office,” he said.

The CAD also has a GPS component that tracks the location and availability of every public safety vehicle in the county.

When a call comes into the 911 communications center, Sneed said the program can send the closest appropriate vehicle to respond to the situation.

Future plans
The county plans to erect more public safety radio towers in the near future. There are five, but plans are to bring two more online in early 2012, one each in Round Rock and Georgetown.

The towers help departments such as fire, police, EMS and public works communicate using their hand-held radios inside of buildings.

“The density in homes as our population grows causes the radio system to degrade because it won’t penetrate through all those buildings,” Sneed said. “So as we get more buildings, we’re going to have to put up more towers.”

Another future goal of the county is to link its CAD system with the CAD systems of the cities within Williamson County and Austin. Instead of a dispatcher in a city transferring a call to Williamson County EMS, the dispatcher will be able to input the information into the computer system, which will then be picked up by the county dispatcher.

“We’re trying to lower the amount of time it takes for fire, police and EMS to respond to our citizens’ calls for help,” he said.
The Capital Area Rural Transportation System began bus services Jan. 30 at a new stop one block from the Georgetown Square at Ninth and Main streets.

The bus stop will offer 10 daily departures to Austin, Round Rock or Taylor, along with three new routes with connections to Capital Metro and Austin Greyhound bus services, according to a city news release.

“We operate the station in Georgetown and Round Rock, and with that we’ve seen a need of those trying to get to the east and a need of how we can connect the businesses of Taylor, Round Rock and Georgetown to Tech Ridge where there’s a major Capital Metro transfer point,” Director of CARTS Field Operations Don Hill said.

Hill said the buses leaving from the Georgetown Station, located at 3620 S. Austin Ave., only traveled to Austin, Round Rock and Temple, but the new interurban routes from Georgetown will loop from downtown Georgetown to Taylor and allow people to catch a connecting bus to downtown Austin.

“We’re trying to get people to where they need to go,” he said.

Hill said the new stop was built as a late response to a survey conducted by an independent traffic consultant hired by CARTS. The planning process for the new routes, he said, was initially put on the shelf because of the lack of federal transportation funding during the economic downturn.

Georgetown Transportation Services Director Ed Polasek said the study was specifically conducted in 2008 to address the needs of a growing Georgetown. However, along with assessing city and population growth, Polasek said there is a 90 percent chance that Georgetown will be classified as a small urban area for the next fiscal year. As a small urban area, CARTS would not be able to provide service to the area.

However, Polasek said the service will not stop, only the source of the CARTS funding would change, and Georgetown is currently moving toward operating on a fixed-route system in which buses run on a prescribed schedule.

Bus fares:
- $2 for a one-way fare in one county or a Metro Connector route
- $1 for one-way trips anywhere in the CARTS district
- $1 for an all-day pass
- Seniors age 65 or older or persons with disabilities ride for half-fares.
Georgetown

Council renames five streets

Five streets in Georgetown will soon receive new names after City Council members approved the first reading of an ordinance to make the switch Jan. 24. The names reflect Georgetown’s heritage and Texas history.

The following names were approved:
• Southfork Road to J.M. Page Lane,
• A portion of CR 110 to Rockride Lane
• A portion of CR 104 to Patriot Way
• A portion of CR 104 to Bell Gin Road
• Southeast Arterial 1 (under construction) to Sam Houston Avenue

Animal shelter achieves no-kill status for 2011

The Georgetown Animal Shelter reported a 90 percent live outcome rate for five separate months throughout 2011.

With help from organizations like Friends of the Georgetown Animal Shelter, which raised $26,000 for the facility’s needs, and other volunteers, nine out of 10 animals who came through the shelter were adopted to new homes, transferred to rescue groups or returned to their owner.

Animal Service Manager Jackie Carey said the shelter follows a practice that has broad public support because it does not euthanize animals for lack of space or ones they consider adoptable. “Our numbers are true numbers of all animals that came in, including the animals we euthanized that were not adoptable, but are still counted,” she said.

Grant OK’d for extension of San Gabriel River Trail

The Georgetown City Council accepted a $200,000 matching grant from the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department on Jan. 24 to extend the San Gabriel River Trail.

The city will use 2008 bond money to fund its portion of the project, which will extend the trail about 1 mile from Blue Hole Park along Scenic Drive to 17th Street near Carver Elementary School.

Georgetown Parks and Recreation Director Kimberly Garrett said the trail will be constructed in stages, but the $1.2 million project is expected to be finished by the end of this year.

Williamson County

Commissioners oppose emergency listing of Jollyville Plateau salamander

On Jan. 31, the Williamson County commissioners approved sending letters to two environmental groups as well as U.S. Fish and Wildlife voicing the county’s opposition to the emergency listing for the Jollyville Plateau salamander as an endangered species.

The environmental groups, including Biological Diversity and Save Our Springs Alliance, are requesting the emergency listing because “shaft leaks near salamander habitat in connection with the City of Austin’s construction of Water Treatment Plant 4, compounded by the current Texas drought, have created a significant risk to the well-being of the salamander,” according to the county’s letter addressed to the environmental groups.

Although the environmental groups are protesting the effects of a project in Austin, Williamson County Precinct 1 Commissioner Lisa Birkman said the emergency listing would also impact areas of Williamson County. The salamander exists in springs in the southwestern portion of Williamson County.

Gary Boyd, director of environmental programs with Williamson County, said Fish and Wildlife had previously entered into an agreement with environmental organizations to review the listing status of four Central Texas salamander species and, if it determined a species was endangered, the listing could go into effect in summer 2013.

County breaks ground on Hwy. 29 safety improvements

Williamson County held a groundbreaking ceremony Jan. 18 for safety improvements to Hwy. 29.

The improvements include adding right-turn lanes on Hwy. 29 near the Cimarron Hills and Gabriels Overlook subdivisions. Commissioner Valerie Covey said the turn lanes will allow vehicles to slow down before turning into the subdivisions.

“Because of the speed of the traffic [on Hwy. 29], there is no safe way to turn into those subdivisions,” Covey said.

The right-turn lanes will be added at Jack Nicklaus Boulevard and Park Place Drive. Construction is expected to cost $420,000 and to be finished in August.

Meetings

Georgetown City Council
101 E. Seventh St.
Feb. 28 and March 13 at 6 p.m.
Watch replays of the council meeting on Suddenlink Cable Channel 10 at 7 p.m.
931-7715, www.georgetown.org

Williamson County Commissioners Court
710 S. Main St., Georgetown
Meetings are every Tuesday at 9:30 a.m.
943-1550, www.wilco.org

Other action
• Council directed staff Jan. 24 to research regulations in place related to urban farming, costs associated with animal husbandry and gardening information.
Federal court rejects attorney general’s proposed maps

By Mitzie Stelte
The U.S. District Court in San Antonio rejected interim redistricting maps proposed by Texas Attorney General Greg Abbott on Feb. 6 as the deadline to reach a compromise in time to preserve the April 3 deadline passed.

The San Antonio federal court had urged a compromise on a plan with the state by Feb. 6 to uphold the primary date following the Supreme Court’s rejection of their proposed maps.

The Texas Latino Redistricting Task Force reached an agreement. However, the Mexican American Legislative Caucus, the Black Legislative Caucus and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People did not support the plan.

Abbott was confident the maps would satisfy all parties.

“Even though this agreement did not receive the sign-off by some other Latino-based groups, we know from what they told us [that] this largely satisfies what they were really seeking,” Abbott said.

MALC Chairman Trey Martinez Fischer issued his group’s response.

“Unfortunately, negotiations stalled when it became apparent some parties in these discussions had a narrow and at times unrealistic view of the evidence presented at trial,” Martinez Fischer stated.

While the April 3 primary deadline passed, Republican Party of Texas Chairman Steve Munisteri said that if a compromise is reached by Feb. 20, the primaries could be held in April.

Abbott’s plan would have made half of Texas’ four new congressional seats Hispanic-controlled, including Congressional District 35, the former district of U.S. Rep. Lloyd Doggett, D-Austin, which runs from Austin to San Antonio, as well as District 33, a Fort Worth–area district.

Results of the 2010 census indicating the state’s population had earned Texas four more congressional seats sparked chaos in the already tricky redistricting process.

Lawsuits have since halted the new maps drawn by the Republican-dominated state Legislature, originally delaying the primaries from March 6 to April 3.

Texas is among the states that must get preclearance on redistricting maps by the U.S. Department of Justice under Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act, according to the Texas Legislative Council. However, the state did not submit the maps to the DOJ for preclearance and instead petitioned a U.S. District Court for a declaratory judgment validating the redistricting plans.

The Supreme Court denied the petition and held a trial Jan. 17–31. The court issued a statement saying a decision was not likely in February.

Meanwhile, separate lawsuits were filed by opponents who claim the maps dilute minority voting power.

Some of the lawsuits were consolidated and heard in September by the court in San Antonio, which redrew the state’s maps and submitted them to the U.S. Supreme Court.

On Jan. 20, the Supreme Court rejected the San Antonio court’s maps citing the insertion of the judges’ own preferences. The court instructed them to redraw the maps to more closely resemble the state’s plan but to not incorporate legal defects.

As of press time Feb. 10, the San Antonio court had a hearing scheduled for Feb. 14 to go over the interim maps and election schedule.

For up-to-date coverage of the primary date change, visit impactnews.com.
By Samantha Bryant

From an exploration rover on Mars to a submarine deep in the ocean, AirBorn Inc. makes products that are operating in electronic systems in a variety of places.

Headquartered in Georgetown at 3500 AirBorn Circle, the company manufactures electronic components for the aerospace, avionics, defense, energy, medical and automotive markets.

In January, AirBorn expanded its medical field and commercial production offerings by acquiring AESCO Electronics, a company with divisions in Ohio and Massachusetts. With the recent acquisition, Clint Barton, vice president of governmental affairs, said AirBorn not only increased its employee base by 30 percent, but it also diversified its services.

“We’re just continuing to add more services and more things we can do for our customers,” he said.

The electronic interconnect products AirBorn makes join electrical circuits together.

“It’s a connector,” said Michael Cuff, senior vice president and chief technology officer. “Basically like the plug-in socket in the wall. Only these are quite sophisticated, if you will. They go in aircraft, missiles.”

The company also offers electronic components including cable assemblies, flexible circuit assemblies, custom power supplies and other solutions for its customers around the world.

“We actually create solutions for whatever the customer needs, rather than [say] ‘Here’s our catalog—find something in it.’ So ours are very much engineered solutions,” Barton said.

AirBorn’s roots in Georgetown date back to 1971, when it acquired two companies in the city, but it was not until 1984 that the AirBorn name was officially adopted, Cuff said.

Previously located at 215 Royal Drive, AirBorn opened a new facility in April 2010. The company employs 368 people, making AirBorn the largest manufacturing employer in Georgetown, Georgetown Chamber of Commerce President Mel Pendland said.

The facility has an engineering department where new products are designed, administrative offices, a test lab, stock room and a manufacturing area.

More than 250 people work to assemble and manufacture the products in the Georgetown building.

In the test lab, AirBorn staff members place the products in machines so they can be tested at different temperatures, humidity levels, vibration levels and altitudes. Many of the products will end up in places where it is critical that they function properly.

“You've got to think about it from the point of view of a satellite,” Cuff said. “If they don’t work, you can't send somebody up there to repair it.”

AirBorn products are in the electric systems inside heart catheter monitors, space shuttles, oil and gas drills, missile defense systems, commercial airline cockpit controls and submarine sonar systems.

“It's mainly where it has to operate all the time, every time,” Barton said.

He said the company is vertically integrated, meaning that everything that goes into their products can be made within the company.

“That gives us an advantage on being able to turn over prototypes and new products quickly,” he said.
“Originally, when we started the housing plan, we thought there was a need for more single-family development,” Bills said. “But it was actually the multifamily market that was going to have a shortfall.”

Bills said the study qualified affordable housing as units set up for income levels at 80 percent or below the Area Median Family Income. “The problem with most market-rate apartments is there is nothing to keep them from becoming unaffordable to people,” she said.

Bills said that if a city was going to incentivize development, it may place an income restriction to meet the specific needs of the community. “Otherwise when the market changes [rents can increase],” she said. “Right now, rents are going up pretty quickly with the rental market the way it is, and people are seeing 8 percent or 9 percent increases in their rental rates. With income-restricted units, there is a limit to how much you can raise the rents because they are set aside as affordable units.”

In Williamson County, the AMFI is $75,900 for a family of four. At 80 percent of the AMFI, the household can earn up to $60,700 a year, while a single person could earn up to $42,500 a year. “The service and retail industries—if you don’t have people who can live in town, there is not a lot of desire to drive 20 miles to work a minimum-wage job.”

—Jennifer Bills, Georgetown housing coordinator

of all income levels, including service industry employees, public service employees and teachers. “We need to build Georgetown into a well-balanced community,” Urban said. “We’re at a tipping point in Georgetown right now. We’re talking about adding all these jobs, but people who work these lower-level jobs are not going to be buying $400,000 homes out at The Woods or million-dollar homes out at Cimarron Hills. They need affordable places they can live in that are safe.”

Bills said depending on the economy and job sources, the availability of affordable housing can play a big part in the workforce of a community. “It takes all different income levels for the economy to thrive, and you are better off having a local employment base. … The service and retail industries—if you don’t have people who can live in town, there is not a lot of desire to drive 20 miles to work a minimum-wage job.”

Gateway Northwest

The Texas Housing Foundation, with the help of multifamily private activity bonds and noncompetitive housing tax credits awarded by the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs, will fund the Gateway Northwest Apartments development, Mayfield said. Incomes will be restricted at 60 percent of AMFI.

“What that tells you is basically [Gateway Northwest Apartments] is just for the workforce within that area,” Mayfield said. “I don’t like people to get bogged down on the affordable title. They tend to think, ‘Well that’s public-type housing.’ This is not public housing.”

About 98.5 percent of the units available would be income-restricted, with about 1.5 percent available at market rate, he said.

Once financing is approved, Mayfield said he hopes to break ground on the project in September and begin leasing units in spring 2013. “Georgetown has so much potential, as evidenced by the desire for real estate growth and retail growth and all the other growth that goes along with the community. It is just a very bustling community,” Mayfield said. “This would just provide for the needs of the influx of individuals coming to that community and those that are there now.”

FULL-YEAR HOUSING UNIT LOCATIONS IN GEORGETOWN

Cypress Creek Apartment Homes
120 River Bend Drive
180 units
Low Income Housing Tax Credit

Georgetown Place
805 Quail Valley Drive
176 total units, 106 affordable units
Low Income Housing Tax Credit

Georgetown Square Apartments
206 Royal Drive
53 units
Section 8, Section 236

Mariposa Apartment Homes
at River Bend (adults 55+)
121 River Bend Drive
201 units
Low Income Housing Tax Credit

Northwest Apartments
1623 Northwest Blvd.
24 units
Low Income Housing Tax Credit; Farmers Home Administration*

Parkview Place
2111 N. Austin Ave.
176 total units, 12 affordable units
HOME

Proposed Gateway Northwest Apartments
Intersection of Northwest Boulevard and Washam Drive
180 units
Low Income Housing Tax Credit and private activity bonds

San Gabriel Senior Village
2101 Railroad St.
100 units
Low Income Housing Tax Credit, Farmers Home Administration*

Shady Oaks Apartments
501 E. Janis Drive
60 units
New construction, Section 8, Low Income Housing Tax Credit

Stonehaven Apartments
210 E. 18th St.
156 units
Public housing, Low Income Housing Tax Credit

The Oaks at Georgetown
550 W. 22nd St.
192 units
Low Income Housing Tax Credit

*(Program for rural area; no longer available)

Comment at impactnews.com

INCOME LIMITS FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING

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<th>Number of people per household</th>
<th>30%</th>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

WILLIAMSON COUNTY 2012 INCOME LIMITS FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Amercoast

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EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT
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Round Rock, TX
(Directly behind the Round Rock Premium Outlet Mall)

To see our current wait times or to learn more, visit roundrockemergency.sw.org
on propane—the county has eight vehicles so far—would have trouble finding a place to refuel. The stations are located in Cedar Park, Georgetown, Florence, Round Rock, Taylor and Granger.

Although the savings the county is experiencing right now is a small part of the overall $126.88 million general fund budget, commissioners had to cut $2.6 million from the proposed budget to reach that mark in 2011, and Commissioner Ron Morrison said any savings is beneficial to the county.

“There’s an old saying, ‘You watch nickels and dimes, and dollars take care of themselves,’” he said. “We have to watch every penny, because the tax base has been pretty much flat the last three or four years or so.”

Other benefits that made exploring propane attractive were its impact on the environment and reducing dependence on gasoline and foreign oil, Morrison said.

**A Texas fuel**

Propane, or liquefied petroleum gas, is produced as a byproduct of natural gas processing and crude oil refining. According to the U.S. Department of Energy, it is the world’s third most common engine fuel—trailing gasoline and diesel—and has been used to power vehicles in the United States since the 1920s.

Almost 97 percent of propane consumed in the United States is produced in North America, according to the Propane Education and Resource Council, and all propane used by Williamson County for its vehicles comes from Texas, said former Fleet Manager Michael Fox, who retired in January.

Propane’s availability in the Central Texas region makes it a popular choice for municipalities, school districts and universities seeking an alternative fuel for their fleets, said Stacy Neef, program manager of Clean Cities Central Texas coalition.

Sponsored by the DOE, Clean Cities promotes the use of alternative fuels and vehicles. Fox said the county began discussing adding propane vehicles to its fleet in 2009. Williamson County received two grants—one from the DOE for $611,600 and one from the Railroad Commission of Texas for $208,420—that paid for converting vehicles to run on propane and for the fueling stations, which cost about $60,000 each.

**Additional funding**

Now that the county has the propane stations, it is eligible to receive the Alternative Fuel Excise Tax Credit, a 50 cent per gallon tax credit for alternative fuels, including propane. Although the credit expired Dec. 31, the Propane Green Gas Solutions (GAS) Act of 2011 is a bill that proposes to extend the 50 cent credit for five years.

Nine departments in Williamson County requested to use propane vehicles. Most of the vehicles are bi-fuel, or can run on either propane or gasoline, but are set to run on propane. The county also purchased some Ford F-250 and F-350 pickup trucks with ROUSH CleanTech systems that are fueled exclusively with propane.

**Propane analysis**

During one 12-month period, the county paid on average $1.82 per gallon for propane, compared with an average of $3.15 per gallon for gasoline.

Fox also said the county expects to save money on oil changes and possibly on engine maintenance costs, too.

“According to the people we’ve talked to, the engines have a longer life on propane,” Fox said.

Because the county received grants to kick off its propane vehicle program, the savings are immediate. Without the grant money, the county would have spent, on average, $8,250 more on each vehicle than on purchasing a regular gasoline-powered automobile.

Fox said that without the money, the county would have started to see a return on its investment after about six years on a vehicle that has a typical lifespan of 10 years.

**Clean air**

In addition to financial benefits, the propane vehicles are helping the county meet the Environmental Protection Agency’s Clean Air Act standards, Morrison said.

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I’m Paul, and I’m a St. David’s Neal Kocurek Scholar.

I graduated from Leander High School in 2009.

I receive $6,000 a year to study biomedical engineering at UT Austin.

I have a mentor who works in my field, and I’ll even get money for grad school.

St. David’s Neal Kocurek Scholarship Program is now accepting applications for the graduating class of 2012.

Since 2005, more than $4 million in scholarships have been awarded to 199 Central Texas students studying health care in 27 colleges and universities in Texas. Maybe you’re next.

Application deadline is February 24 at midnight.

Eligibility information and online application at www.stdavidsfoundation.org.
Tax laws slated to change soon

By Dale Ross

With tax law changes passed in 2010 set to expire after 2012, it can be important for individual income taxpayers to understand just what changes are taking place and when.

After 2012, many provisions in the tax law revert back to what they were before 2001. Several even expired in 2011.

Tax rates on both pay and investment will be set to spike, especially for those at the bottom rungs of the tax ladder, and the estate tax exemptions will drop dramatically unless new laws are passed before the end of February unless it is extended again.

Payroll taxes

One of the most significant changes in 2011 was a temporary 2 percent cut in the employee’s share of Social Security taxes, saving a maximum of $2,136 per worker. For someone making $50,000, this amounted to approximately $1,000 during the course of the year. This item was scheduled to expire at the end of 2011; however, Congress has granted a two-month extension that will expire at the end of February unless it is extended again.

Alternative Minimum Tax (AMT)

The “patch” enacted by Congress sets the AMT exemption at $47,450 for single filers and $74,450 for married couples. The AMT expired at the end of 2011. However, Congress has traditionally and consistently extended it each tax year and will most likely extend it for tax year 2012 in December 2013.

ROTH IRA conversion

The income limit for conversions has been permanently removed, so in 2011 all taxpayers may still convert ordinary IRAs into ROTH IRAs. But taxpayers who converted Roth IRAs in 2011 no longer have the option of deferring conversion income into later years, as was true for 2010 conversions. Those who converted in 2010 had until October 17, 2011, to decide whether to use this deferral.

Energy tax credits for homeowners

Lawmakers extended the credit for energy-efficient improvements from 2010, but tweaked it. The amount of the credit has shrunk to a maximum of $500 per taxpayer per lifetime, so those who took 2010’s $1,500 credit don’t qualify. The current version of this credit expired at the end of 2011.

Other changes

The $250 deduction for teacher classroom expenses, a deduction for state sales taxes in lieu of state income tax deduction, and the tax-free donation of IRA proceeds to charity expired at the end of 2011.

Estate and gift taxes

The system has been overhauled, with a top rate of 35 percent and one exemption of $5 million per individual for estate, gift and generation-skipping taxes alike. For those who can stand to part with assets, it’s now possible to shift large amounts of wealth.

If Congress makes no changes by the end of 2012, the long-term capital gains tax for those in the 15 percent bracket goes from zero to 10 percent and the 28 percent and 39.6 percent brackets rises from 15 percent to 20 percent.

Short-term capital gains would also rise across the board.

Taxes on investments

Rates continue at historic lows for both long-term capital gains and dividends. For taxpayers in the 15 percent income tax bracket and below—tax brackets are based on income—the rate is zero. For those in the 25 percent bracket and above, the rate is 15 percent.

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Short-term capital gains would also rise across the board.
Detleff Knoll wasn’t born in Texas—or even the United States—but he got here as fast as he could.

Knoll opened his first store selling and repairing televisions in Luetjenburg, Germany, in 1971, but after several trips to the United States with his wife, Connie, the couple decided to move to America.

“In the 1970s, we made three independent trips to the United States, and we fell in love with this country,” Knoll said. “After the third trip, we decided to move to America.”

Fast forward several years, and the couple and their four children moved to Texas. Their children ranged from a year old to 8 years old at the time. The couple bought Fred’s TVs in Marble Falls, which sold TVs and other appliances.

“It was a beautiful little mom and pop store,” Knoll said. “After two years, Knoll and his wife changed the name to C&D TV, and five years after coming to America, the family applied for and received their United States citizenship.

The Knolls sold the shop after owning the business for more than 25 years and moved to Georgetown, where Knoll opened Georgetown TV & Audio off of East University Avenue.

“Our business is not built on selling TVs. Our business is built on customer relationships and service,” Knoll said. “I highlight the name service more than anything else because we are not in [business] for the huge things; we are for the daily customer who walks into my store.”

Knoll runs the business with the help of his youngest son, Thomas, who works full time in the store as a technician.

Along with his son, Knoll’s daughter, Jessica Sharpe, works in the store.

“We are a family business,” he said. “My daughter works here part time unfortunately. I wish she was here every day, but she has family, too. My son is here full time. He spends probably 60 hours a week. I do the same hours, because we are a father-and-son business.”

Along with family, Knoll employs four other technicians who install TVs and audio systems.

“We don’t subcontract anybody to install your TV,” he said. “It is my technicians, and they do the job right.”

Knoll added that his technicians will also help customers move old TVs, hide cables and program remote controls, because after all, he said, customer service is the name of the game.

“It’s about personal, friendly business,” he said. “We keep the promise we say and finish the job.”

Georgetown TV & Audio
Family focused on customer service

By Beth Wade

Detleff Knoll has sold TVs for more than 30 years.

Thomas Knoll repairs televisions with his father at Georgetown TV & Audio.

Georgetown TV & Audio
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Photos by Bobby Longoria

Independent Bank. A partnership you can bank on.
Dia Thai Cuisine owner Dia Ewton welcomes diners to her restaurant for lunch and dinner six days a week in downtown Georgetown. She opened the eatery in September 2008.

DINING

Dia Thai Cuisine
Restaurateur brings Thai food to Georgetown

By Emilie Boenig

When Dia Ewton opened her namesake Thai restaurant in downtown Georgetown, she knew she wanted to serve accessible Asian food in an untapped market. “I would drive my car around Georgetown, and I saw it was quiet and unique,” she said. “I thought, ‘Here is a small town with no Thai food.’ So it’s a good market.”

Ewton said the restaurant’s location on the Square makes Dia Thai Cuisine convenient for families who do not want to cook every night.

In the three years since the restaurant’s opening, Ewton said she created a menu full of the best noodle, rice, soup and salad plates at affordable prices.

“The menu is small, but if you see five pages of food, you don’t know what to choose, and I think it’s complicated for people to choose what to eat,” she said.

Ewton spent her early years in Thailand, where she said much of her family still works in restaurants, serving steaming plates of fried dumplings, pad thai and green curry. But Ewton said for her restaurant, she customizes classic Thai dishes to accommodate Texans’ taste buds.

“She is great at what she does, and she works hard to please her customers,” said George Town Mayor John America. “I use my own recipes, and some are different because we have to adapt to the tastes of the people,” she said. “I can do almost everything, even if it’s not on my menu. If I have enough ingredients to make it, I will.”

While Thai food can be spicy, Ewton said she can adjust the level of spice in each dish to make sure none of the dishes are too spicy for her guests.

With a staff of seven, Ewton runs the restaurant six days a week, cooking, cleaning, buying groceries and managing. She said she’s proud to serve the only Thai restaurant six days a week, cooking, cleaning, buying groceries and managing.

“I will not let my food go out if it’s not any good,” she said. “If something is wrong, I will fix it.”

Dia Thai Cuisine offers a variety of classic Thai appetizers for guests.

- Spring rolls ($3.50)
- Egg rolls ($4.50)
- Cheese rolls ($4.50)
- Fried tofu ($4.50)
- Satay ($6)
- Dumplings ($6)
- Fish cake ($6)
- Coconut shrimp ($7)
- Sampler tray ($9)

Five dumplings stuffed with pork, mushrooms and onions are served with a sweet soy dipping sauce.

Dia Thai Cuisine
114 E. Seventh St., Ste. 105
868-0023
www.diacuisine.com

Dia Thai Cuisine serves a variety of classic Thai flavors.

- Fried banana with honey ($3)
- Coconut, vanilla or green tea ice cream ($3)
- Fried ice cream ($4.50)
- Sweet rice with fresh mango ($4.50)
- Sweet rice with coconut custard ($4.50)

Desserts galore

Dia Thai Cuisine offers a variety of fresh desserts that highlight Thai flavors.

- Sweet rice with fresh mango ($4.50)
- Coconut shrimp ($7)
- Fish cake ($6)
- Spring rolls ($3.50)
- Satay ($6)
- Fried tofu ($4.50)
- Cheese rolls ($4.50)
- Egg rolls ($4.50)
- Chicken pad ped basil is served with black sauce, onion, chili, garlic, fresh basil and jalapeños.

Seasonal favorite sweet rice with fresh mango is topped with roasted sesame seeds over a sticky, sweet bed of steamed rice with sweet milk.

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- Sampler tray ($9)

Five dumplings stuffed with pork, mushrooms and onions are served with a sweet soy dipping sauce.

Best sellers

Owner Dia Ewton said the top-selling noodle dish is pad thai. Yellow and green curry dishes are also popular.

The Dia Thai Cuisine menu lists about 30 lunch and dinner entrees, in addition to soup and salad options, for $14 or less. Guests can select their own meat or tofu for most dishes.

Ewton said she purchases as many fresh ingredients as possible to reproduce dishes similar to those served in her native country of Thailand.

Desserts galore

Dia Thai Cuisine sells five desserts that highlight Thai flavors.

- Fried banana with honey ($3)
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Seasonal favorite sweet rice with fresh mango is topped with roasted sesame seeds over a sticky, sweet bed of steamed rice with sweet milk.
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- Breast Lifts
- Breast Reduction
- Abdominoplasty
- Rhinoplasty
- Blepharoplasty
- Face Lift/Brow Lift
- Botox
- Juvederm
- Radiesse
- Permanent Makeup
- Liposuction/Lipo-sculpture
- Labial Reduction
- Prominent Ear Correction
- Post-Weight Loss Body Contouring
- Facial Resurfacing (Chemical Peels, Dermabrasion, Laser Resurfacing)
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- Mini-Face lift
- Laser Hair and Vein Removal
- IPL Photofacial
- Spider Vein Injections

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Seton Heart Institute
Stephanie Blanck
Educator gives back through volunteering

By Beth Wade

To say Stephanie Blanck is involved in the Georgetown community is a bit of an understatement. Blanck, who currently serves as the interim executive director for Georgetown Partners in Education, has served on a multitude of boards and volunteers her time with several area organizations. “There was a day when I was a young mom [and a young] professional in town, and I would see people like Jo Ann Ford, Barbara Pearce and Barbara Brightwell, and because of my work, our paths crossed a lot,” Blanck said. “They were the people I always looked up to, and I would be like, ‘If I could just be like them, and if I could just have an impact like them.’ And then I realized I became them.”

Blanck moved to Georgetown with her husband and the couple’s 1-month-old daughter in 1980 while working for six school districts throughout Bell County as a licensed specialist in school psychology. In 1986, Blanck began working in Georgetown and her volunteer work that seem to take up most of her time, she said.

Blanck serves on several boards, including the Georgetown Chamber of Commerce, Seeds of Strength and Community Child Care (WC4C)—just to name a few.

“People say, ‘I don’t know how you do it.’ But it’s who I am,” Blanck said. “I’m the magician with the plates, and I make sure I get back to the first one and keep it going.” Blanck said her goal for 2012 is to focus on being a worker bee.

“I will serve at the serving line,” Blanck said. “I will stand in front of Walmart in 107 degrees begging for money for Fill the Bus, but I don’t want to be in charge.”

Blanck was named Volunteer of the Year by the Georgetown Chamber of Commerce at its annual awards banquet Feb. 3.
The Christi Center
Group lends peer support to help grievers cope with loss of loved ones

By Andrea Leptinsky

After seeking community support when their 20-year-old daughter, Christi, was killed by a drunk driver in 1985, Susan and Don Cox decided to fill the void they found in local resources available to help individuals cope with the loss of a loved one.

“The Coxes’ experience was that everyone they knew expected them to grieve for a respectable amount of time, but then get over it and move on,” said Cara Fox, executive director of The Christi Center, the nonprofit support organization the couple founded in 1987. “The most comfort they found was in gathering with other people who had lost loved ones and knew what it felt like.”

The Christi Center, which is headquartered off Burnet Road in Central Austin, offers peer support for individuals who have lost a spouse, child, parent, friend or neighbor. The center is open to all Central Texas residents, including those from Williamson, Hays and Bastrop counties. The organization also keeps a satellite office at the Georgetown Community Resource Center, 805 W. University Ave., to help adult residents cope with their loss.

The center also provides very limited individualized services.

“Susan and Don know 24 years’ worth of people and their stories, and Susan never forgets anything, ever. They are just the heart and soul of this organization,” Fox said.

The Christi Center has received huge support from the community, Fox said, which has helped the organization grow the services it provides as well as the space in which it resides.

“What’s amazing about this organization is everybody knows somebody,” she said. “We have this amazing group of people who come through the program, and they’re just so grateful that they want to give back in any way that they can.”

As part of the center’s expansion that was completed this summer, the organization received $25,000 in in-kind donations from members and the community to fund the task. Additionally, more than 110 volunteers donated their time to the center in 2011, resulting in 9,284 hours of service The Christi Center received. That equated to several full-time positions the center did not have to pay for, Fox said.

To bring those in the community suffering from grief and loss together, the center hosts a variety of weekly classes based on both age and circumstance.

While The Christi Center provides classes for adults, it also offers support groups for those who lost a loved one in a violent crime, as well as a session for survivors of suicide.

“Our hours of operation are technically 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., but we have groups almost every night of the week. Someone is here almost all the time,” Fox said, adding that new members can walk in at any time during the day to sign up for the center’s services.

The Christi Center offers its services free of charge. Fox said, in order to help all individuals seeking support through grief.

“All of our services are free of charge, and that’s a fundamental philosophy we have,” she said. “We don’t want cost to be a barrier. People are dealing with enough things when they come here.”

While ongoing recovery and support is a primary theme at The Christi Center, so is remembrance. The center features a heart wall, which was constructed in the center’s addition that was completed in June.

“We had a number of people who wanted to memorialize their loved ones, so some people chose to put a loved one’s name up on the heart wall,” Fox said. “We had an artist donate the mural, and we still have names going up on an ongoing basis.”

For group schedules, locations and more information, call 467-2600 or visit www.fortheloveofchristi.org.

Although The Christi Center began serving the community in 1987, it moved into its 2307 Hancock Drive residence in Austin in 1996 to accommodate its growing presence.

The Christi Center Executive Director Cara Fox stands in front of the center’s heart wall, a space designed to honor members’ loved ones who have died.

The Christi Center
Georgetown satellite office
Georgetown Community Resource Center
805 W. University Ave.
467-2600 • www.fortheloveofchristi.org

Susan and Don Cox, founders of The Christi Center, placed a stone for their late daughter, Christi, in the building’s front healing garden.
The Georgetown Chamber of Commerce hosted its annual awards banquet Feb. 3 at Gabriel Springs Event Center. The chamber gave out several awards and recapped its activities from 2011.

Georgetown Chamber of Commerce President Mel Pendland begins the awards portion of the banquet.

First Texas Bank Vice President Bill Stanley (left) presents The Caring Place Executive Director John Stock with the chamber’s Jesse “Buzz” Sawyer Award.

Kirk Kriegel (left) with U.S. Leadership presents Vic Figurelli with the chamber’s Citizen of the Year award.

Martha Diaz Hurtado College Town Award winners (from left) George and Barbara Brightwell talk to Southwestern University President Jake Schrum during the awards presentation.

Martha Diaz Hurtado College Town Award winners (from left) Cornerstone award winners Cindy Thompson for the education cornerstone, Nancy Benold and Chris Spence with Wesleyan Homes for the health care cornerstone, Linda Lipscomb with the Georgetown Police Department Victim Services Program for the public safety cornerstone, and Chris Aadnesen with Georgetown Rail Equipment Co. for the economic development cornerstone accept their awards with Georgetown Chamber of Commerce President Mel Pendland. The four cornerstone winners represent members of the community who have contributed to the chamber’s vision of Georgetown as the best community of 100,000 citizens in the nation.

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March 9 marks 120 years since the cornerstone was laid for First United Methodist Church, but the church’s presence in Georgetown extends back even further.

Shortly after Georgetown’s own inception in 1848, the Annual Texas Conference instructed James W. Lloyd to organize Georgetown Mission Church in 1849, according to a history of the church by local historian Clara Scarbrough.

The fledgling congregation was served by traveling circuit preachers and did not have a meeting place of its own until 1874, when the trustees of the school that would become Southwestern University agreed to let the congregation meet in the university’s chapel.

Southwestern University’s original building was located where Williams Elementary School currently stands in the 500 block of East University Avenue. The church’s first full-time pastor, James Campbell, was a Southwestern graduate and began leading the congregation in 1879, according to a Texas Historical Marker.

The Methodist church then built a chapel to meet in on Southwestern’s property in 1882.

After about nine years, the congregation decided to build again, this time at the church’s current location on University Avenue. Construction lasted from 1891–93 and would cost about $25,000, according to Scarbrough.

The building is covered in native limestone and is constructed in the Gothic Revival style. Robert S. Hyer, a Southwestern professor of physics, designed the building.

Stained-glass windows were installed in June 1893, and the formal dedication of the church took place in 1896.

In 1930, a religious education building was built along the west wall of the church. The three-story building also included a basement and contained meeting and classroom space as well as a kitchen.

“That was quite a thing to do because it was in the depths of the Depression,” said Dr. Doug Benold, who has been a member of the church since 1934. “It took them awhile to get it paid off.”

During the 1950s, the church completed a restoration and renovation project that included modifications in the sanctuary and education building, and the stained-glass windows were also restored in the 1970s.

The 1970s and 1980s marked a time of growth for the church, so plans were made to expand again. Benold said Tom Graves was the pastor from 1970–78.

“He was a very popular pastor, and the town was beginning to grow,” Benold said. To keep pace with the increased membership, construction began in 1986 on the Genevieve Atkin Educational Activities Building.

Further growth necessitated a remodel of the 1930s education building as well as 6,800 more square feet in two stories, a covered driveway and covered walkway on the south side of the building in 1994.

In 2006, construction was finished on the Eric McKinney Center, which is located directly across Ash Street from the church. Now headed by Pastor Steve Langford, First United Methodist Church has 2,373 people on its membership rolls, according to its 2011 end of year report.
Toby Blumenthal
Williamson County resident’s passion for music makes melodic impact on community

By Christine Bolaños

Toby Blumenthal, a Williamson County resident and renowned pianist, discovered music at a young age and has been working to bring that same joy to students in Williamson County and across the nation.

Blumenthal serves on the Round Rock Symphony Orchestra board, which relies on concert proceeds and donations to stay active. The group, along with the Georgetown Festival of the Arts for the second consecutive year, which will be held May 31–June 3.

Blumenthal credits music for giving her some of the best things in life: a shared passion with her late husband, Bert Phillips; an entire extended family of students; and lifetime bonds with fellow musicians.

She began playing the piano at age 7, and by age 13 she performed at a concert as a piano soloist with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra after winning an area-wide competition for the opportunity.

“When I had an opportunity to play in front of that amazing orchestra, it was almost overwhelming. It wasn’t that I had difficulty doing it initially, but when I finished the performance, the magnitude of the whole thing really hit me. I decided that’s what I wanted to do … to become a professional musician,” she said.

Since then, Blumenthal has performed as piano soloist for the Chicago and Houston symphony orchestras, cofounded an international music camp now in its 32nd year and received acclaim for her chamber music performances with the Philadelphia Orchestra.

She moved to Round Rock about two years ago and quickly made her mark in the local music community by becoming involved with the Round Rock Symphony Orchestra and CHAMPS (Chamber Music in Public Schools), taking on the role of CHAMPS director in April 2011.

CHAMPS is an educational branch of Salon Concerts Inc. that provides free weekly professional chamber music coaching to 13 public middle and high schools in Austin, Eanes, Lake Travis and Round Rock school districts.

The organization does not offer services in Georgetown ISD, but Blumenthal said she would like to branch out to more schools in Williamson County.

“A lot of schools would like to have us, but it costs a lot of money for each school,” she said. “I have already been over to see JD Janda [Georgetown ISD director of Fine Arts], and he’s very interested.”

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Indoor sports complex planning under way

Round Rock The Round Rock City Council formally approved $7.8 million in bonds for its long-awaited indoor sports complex Jan. 26, moving the project one step closer to its estimated December 2013 completion date.

The sports complex is expected to fill a hole in the schedule for “The Sports Capital of Texas” during the upcoming months. The facility is set to be opened in mid-2013, but the project has faced delays due to financial issues and a controversy over the city’s financing plan.

“By approving this bond issue, we are taking a significant step towards the completion of our indoor sports complex,” said Mayor Richard McElveen.

Development activity picks up at The Domain

Northwest Austin Construction on three new projects at The Domain began in the past five months, ending Endeavor Real Estate Group’s three-year-long development hiatus at the high-end retail, office and residential center.

The three projects that broke ground include a 55,000-square-foot Whole Foods Market, which will replace the smaller location at Capital of Texas Hwy. and MoPac. Workers broke ground in September, and the market is scheduled to open in spring 2013.

In October, a residential project developed by Endeavor, Dallas-based Columbus Realty and an international real estate investment firm, RREEF, also broke ground. The development will open in two phases: Phase 1 will be a 315-unit apartment complex at Esperanza Crossing and Alterra Parkway, and Phase 2 will be a 228-unit apartment complex at Domain Drive and Esperanza Crossing.

The third project is a 9-acre park on Alterra Parkway between Kramer Lane and Esperanza Crossing, for which construction began in January. The initial phase of the park will include grassy areas, a bocce ball court and a trail and will open in 2012. A second phase will add a pavilion. Although Endeavor is likely to introduce more mixed-use development on the remaining 83 undeveloped acres, Bulkin said the earliest date such projects could appear is fall 2014.

Retail giants bring jobs, cachet to Cedar Park

Cedar Park In a matter of weeks, two of the most well-known big-box retailers in the United States chose Cedar Park as a site for new stores. Wal-Mart Stores Inc. announced plans in early December to open a Supercenter at the corner of RM 1431 and Ronald Reagan Boulevard, and on Dec. 9, wholesaler Costco announced plans to build a store in the Town Center development located at RM 1431 and Toll 183A. Wal-Mart already has a store

Officials: Schlitterbahn looking for financing

Cedar Park Cedar Park officials say though negotiations are ongoing, the park will certainly miss the summer 2012 opening deadline laid out in an economic development agreement between the city and a proposed Schlitterbahn water park’s partners.

In December 2010, Rick Redmond, a partner in the development, said bank loan regulations had made securing a loan for the project more difficult than anticipated and made the project more risky for the developers. He also said the first phase—the phase that includes the water park that was originally projected to open in May 2012—could be closer to a cost of $45 million than the $75 million developers presented to the city.

Cedar Park Economic Development Director Phil Brewer said there are still active discussions going on between the city and the partners in the water park development.

The original economic development agreement between the partners in the water park and the city is worth $6 million in incentives to improve city infrastructure near the planned site at Parmer Lane and RM 1431. The agreement required the first phase of the project be completed by May 2012, phases 2 and 3 were to be started in May 2012, and the final phase was to be under way no more than 48 months after the completion of phases 2 and 3.

Brewer said there is a new goal of May 2013 for Phase 1, but as time passes without a new agreement, the window to complete the project gets smaller and smaller.
### Features

| 312 Oak Plaza Cove | 349,000 | 2,323 sq. ft. | 4 Bedroom / 3.5 Bath | Paula Thomas | 818-1717 |
| 121 Gabriels Loop   | 344,500 | 2,673 sq. ft. | 4 Bedroom / 2.5 Bath | Donald Wood | 626-2075 |
| 201 Oak Meadow Drive| 344,900 | 3,383 sq. ft. | 4 Bedroom / 3 Bath  | Robert Sedlor | 517-8241 |
| 209 Park Place Drive| 379,000 | 3,543 sq. ft. | 4 Bedroom / 3.5 Bath | Jarrod Weaver | 818-1650 |

### Overview

**Build-out year:** Not built out  
**Builders:** Absolute Custom Homes, Berry Creek Builders, Custom Homes by Marie, Drennan Day Custom Homes, Ewald Custom Homes, Hahn Custom Homes, Horizon Builders, JK Builders, JMS Design & Construction, K Bar T Custom Homes, Oak Ridge Homes, Malvaiz Builders, Ron Butler Builder, TLC Construction, Value Builders, Watts Custom Homes, Weekley Homes, Woodridge Homes

**Square footage:** 1,935–5,631  
**Home values:** $262,066–$765,674  
**HOA dues (estimated):** $475 annually

**Property taxes:**
- Williamson County: 0.457687  
- Williamson County FM/RD: 0.030000  
- Williamson ESD No. 4: 0.100000  
- Liberty Hill ISD: 1.335000  
- **Total** (per $100 value): 1.922687

**Schools:**
- Liberty Hill ISD
  - Liberty Hill ISD
  - 14001 W. Hwy. 29, Liberty Hill
  - 260-5580 • [www.libertyhill.txed.net](http://www.libertyhill.txed.net)

### On the market (As of Jan. 27, 2012)

<table>
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<th>Home sales (Jan. 27, 2011–Jan. 27, 2012)</th>
<th>No. of homes for sale</th>
<th>No. of homes under contract</th>
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**Home values:** 2.750/3.942  
**Selling price:** $324,000/$480,000

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## Property Listings

### ZIP code Subdivision

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<td>Matthew Manard</td>
<td>947-6787</td>
<td>Keller Williams Realty</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Note:** Residential real estate listings added to the market between 01/22/12 and 01/31/12 were included and provided by the Austin Board of Realtors, www.abor.com. Although every effort has been made to ensure the timeliness and accuracy of this listing, Community Impact Newspaper assumes no liability for errors or omissions. Contact the property’s agent or seller for the most current information.

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**ZIP code guide**

- 78626 East Georgetown
- 78628 West Georgetown
- 78633 Northwest/Lake Georgetown area

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**Market Data provided by**

Nicole Boynton

Austin Suburban Properties

289-4663 | nicole@512buyhome.com

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**Market Data**

**Georgetown**

**On the market (Jan. 1–31, 2012)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Price Range</th>
<th>Number of homes for sale</th>
<th>Average days on the market</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than $100,000</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$100,000–$149,990</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$150,000–$199,990</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$200,000–$299,990</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$300,000–$399,990</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$400,000–$499,990</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$500,000–$749,990</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$750,000–$999,990</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$1 million +</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Monthly home sales**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Number of homes sold</th>
<th>Average price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 2012</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>$143,511</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 2011</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>$194,861</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 2011</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>$136,611</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 2011</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>$158,237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 2011</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>$149,149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 2011</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>$151,451</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 2011</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>$145,076</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 2011</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>$163,368</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 2011</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>$163,126</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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FROM HEALTH TO HOME

*a day for women*

Saturday, March 3, 2012
1:30 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Free Renewal Expo:
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Community Impact
Crabtree & Evelyn
Delightful Me Bakery
Essential Bodywear
Flourish Over 50
Fuego Fitness
Genesis Today
Juice Plus
Kytara Yoga Acupuncture
Las Brisas
Le Creuset
Lin Scheib, CPCC
Morning Blossom Boutique

Novita Spa
The POSH Space
Professional Women of Williamson County
Reebok
Reneé Trudeau & Associates
Round Rock Premium Outlets
Shibber D’Lites
Seton Brain and Spine Institute
Seton Cove
Seton Family of Doctors
Seton Heart Institute
Seton Institute of Reconstructive Plastic Surgery
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