

PECAN GROVE MUD NEWS

PGMUD Project Updates

Levee

On January 11, 2009, Paskey Incorporated, the selected levee contractor for the Levee Improvements Project, began work to raise the existing Pecan Grove MUD levee. The project includes adding approximately 12 to 16 inches of additional compacted fill to the top of the levee along the southern and western perimeter from Pitts Road Park along FM 359 and Farmer Road to south of Belin Park. The Contractor has completed filling most of the area south of Plantation Road and is just beginning work on the levee section adjacent to the Pecan Plantation County Club. The project will be completed by mid June 2009.

This work is being performed to allow recertification of the levee by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) after release of the revised Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM). FEMA is in the last stages publishing the results of a study to update the FIRMS for the Brazos River area within Fort Bend County. For certification, the levee must maintain a minimum three (3) feet height above the Base Flood Elevation (BFE) referred to as freeboard. While the entire levee is above the predicted BFE, the Levee Improvements Project will add freeboard to areas affected by the revised study.

For additional information on FEMA and the National Flood Insurance Program please visit their website at <http://www.floodsmart.gov>

Storm Water Management

The District is into the second year of implementation for the Storm Water Management Plan. We are completing the required Year 2 implementation tasks, one of which includes the installation of storm sewer inlets markers to help prevent unauthorized disposal or dumping of debris and pollutants into the storm sewer system. Potential pollutants can consist of anything from used motor oil and paint, to construction material and yard waste, and as a general rule, only natural rainwater should enter the inlets. This year will be the first phase of this project and will include the installation of approximately 200 markers.

The four-inch (4") diameter polycarbonate markers are placed at the open inlets along streets and curbs to remind individuals that any materials that enter the storm sewers drain straight to the Brazos River and our natural water sheds. Installation is relatively simple, consisting of cleaning the curb with a wire brush, applying the supplied adhesive and placing the marker.

The District greatly appreciates any help from community groups and/or individuals in the implementation of this important pollution prevention program. To find out more about lending a hand, contact the District office at 281-238-5000. All markers and adhesive material will be provided. ■

Progress Continues on Pecan Grove MUD Drinking Water Treatment Plant

In compliance with mandates from the state and the Fort Bend Subsidence District (which require the District to convert our drinking water source from ground to surface water), Pecan Grove MUD is moving forward with the design and construction of a surface water treatment plant.

As previously stated, Pecan Gove MUD has retained rights to 2.77 million gallons per day of Brazos River water that will be diverted into Oyster Creek. The new treatment plant - an advanced membrane technology process facility which will remove pathogens and a broad range of other contaminants from Oyster Creek water – was designed by Malcolm Pirnie and has a scheduled completion date of spring 2011.

Design of the facility is underway, and pilot scale testing of the membranes and other equipment to be used at the plant was successfully completed in December 2008. Construction is scheduled to begin in December 2009.

**The water we
conserve today...
can serve us
tomorrow!**

Tips for a Happy, Healthy and Budget-Friendly Lawn

As temperatures rise and our lawns and gardens spring back to life, it's a good time to revisit how to approach lawn care in the most efficient, effective and eco-friendly manner possible. Saving money is on all of our minds these days, and implementing proper watering and planting practices can not only provide positive differences in your water bill, but also give your lawn the best possible opportunity to grow and thrive.



Is your lawn waterlogged?

Excessive watering of lawns is a big issue in this area. In fact, landscape irrigation can account for more than 50% of all the water used in Texas during the summer – and about half of that water is wasted due to over-watering or runoff.

Odds are you've seen automatic sprinkler systems running in the middle of a downpour or water streaming down the driveway from an already saturated lawn. These are classic examples of wasteful watering practices and all too prevalent.

Please reacquaint yourself

with some of the tips we offered up last spring, along with some new money-saving ideas to help you during this time and beyond:

- Add a water sensor to your irrigation system. This may well be the most important thing you can do to avoid excessive and unnecessary watering, and it will save you money on your water bill!

For those of you without irrigation systems, Michael Murr, owner of Murr, Inc., and a landscape preservation and restoration specialist, suggests that you “buy some water timers at a local hardware center – at a cost of about \$12.00 each”.

“You can add these to outdoor spigots,” says Murr. “This allows you to time your watering similar to the irrigation timer and helps you to avoid walking away with the water running if you forget to turn it off.”

- Check irrigation system timers. It's always best to water in the early morning hours (3-5 a.m.) for maximum effectiveness. Watering in the heat of the day can cause much of the water to evaporate before it ever reaches your lawn or plants/flower beds. Also, make sure heads are adjusted and check for solenoids on the valves themselves.

- Remember, it is always better to water deeply versus frequently – it encourages well established root systems. Soil should be soaked to a minimum depth of six inches, and should not be watered again until the soil an inch below the surface is dry. Healthy, properly irrigated lawns *rarely* require more than one inch of water per week



during the summer months (unless there is an extended dry spell).

- If you are considering a more effective, cost-efficient irrigation system, look into low output sprinkler heads, bubblers, or drip irrigation systems. And make sure you work with an experienced, licensed professional, well-versed in designing and installing the system that will work best for your unique yard. Individuals should be licensed by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) and should be able to show you their license number. Ask for it to ensure you're working with a qualified specialist.

- Don't cut your grass too short. Mowing grass at the proper height (three inches for St. Augustine and one inch for Bermuda) decreases the need for watering. Cutting grass any lower can cut into the stem and cause it to lose its ability to photosynthesize – making it more susceptible to disease and insect problems.



Keep It Natural!

Using organic mulches such as pine needles, pine bark,

straw, leaves, wood shavings, compost or sawdust can exponentially help your yard reach its full potential. Organic mulches reduce soil temperature, conserve moisture, and control weeds that compete with desirable plants for a drink. Two inches of mulch used around plants twice a year will allow your plants and flowers to thrive.

Michael Murr also suggests mulching grass instead of bagging it.

“This is as simple as purchasing a mulching blade for your existing lawn mower and leaving fine clippings in the lawn,” says Murr. “This tends to put free fertilizer back on the yard, saving on fertilizer bags (which aren't cheap) and water.”

If you do choose to purchase fertilizer, we recommend using an organic. Synthetic fertilizers can kill off beneficial organisms in the soil, resulting in more insect, disease and weed problems, while organic fertilizers allow the good microorganisms to grow stronger. Just as important, synthetic fertilizers can pollute our streams and other waterways and can also be a potential danger to ourselves, our pets and ironically, to our plants. It just pays to go organic. You will see a wonderful difference in the quality of your lawn, plants and shrubs, while eliminating any worries about the health of you, your family and your neighbors.

Find Out Your Lawn's DNA

Finding out what your lawn needs to be fed is extremely valuable information. Send a soil sample to the Texas A&M University Soil, Water & Forage Testing Laboratory to find out the deficiencies you may have in your soil and which nutrients are needed. It's well worth the minimal cost

of around \$10 per sample (for a routine analysis) to bring your outdoor space back to beautiful! You can find a submittal form, along with detailed instructions on how to properly send your sample(s) at <http://soiltesting.tamu.edu>.

Beauty Doesn't Have to be Fleeting

When purchasing new plants, consider native, drought-tolerant varieties...they'll require less work and less water and can be just as beautiful as other less-tolerant options.

The specialists at Murr, Inc. suggest perennials for seasonal color.

“Knock Out Roses are really beautiful most of the year,” says Murr, “and others, such as Lantana or Plumbago add color, but don't have to be replaced each year. You can imagine the savings when, after your initial planting, you're replacing only half (or less) of your plants and flowers each year.”



To help create your best yard possible, remember to visit the helpful experts at your local nursery. Have a wonderful season and happy planting!

Helping Out Your Community During Tough Economic Times...For Free!

For many, today's economic challenges have us cutting back on extraneous expenses. From clipping coupons to eating meals at home...delaying family vacations (or at least looking for budget-friendly locales) and discovering, or rediscovering, low or no-cost entertainment options (such as street festivals, Houston's impressive museums, local parks and the Houston Zoo)...we're all doing what we can to provide for our families during a difficult time.

Unfortunately, some of those cutbacks may include monetary donations to our charities of choice. As a result, local charitable organizations are suffering during a time when those they provide for need the most help.

Although monetary donations are obviously appreciated and necessary to keep these organizations running, there are countless ways to help that don't cost a dime. By offering a helping hand, minimal time, donated items and much more, your family can not only help out your community in the manner that best fits your schedule, but you and your children can reap the emotional "wealth" that comes from giving back.

Below are just a few of the quality organizations in our area that desperately need your help, along with some specific ideas for how best to give back:

Fort Bend County Women's Center

Serving Fort Bend and surrounding counties since 1980, Fort Bend County Women's Center helps survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault and their

children to achieve safety and self-sufficiency, while striving to prevent violence against women. No one is turned away and all services are free. This important organization provides emergency shelter, counseling, crisis intervention, advocacy (including legal advocacy and accompaniment to court), case management, financial assistance when appropriate, transportation, job training and life skills classes, GED/ESL classes, a Children's Program (counseling referrals, evaluations, tutoring, mentoring, etc.), and much more.

The FB County Women's Center also provides necessary items to their clients and the community, and generates 25%-30% of the total income for their organization through their three **Penny Wise Resale Centers**. Clients of the Women's Center receive a voucher for twenty free outfits through the resale centers, and the general public can also shop for low-cost items, knowing their dollars are going to help out a necessary organization.



Vita Goodell, Executive Director at FB County Women's Center, says that help can be as simple as cleaning out your closet.

"Clothing and other donations to our **Penny Wise Resale Centers** have really tapered off," says Goodell. "Our drop sites used to be piled high with donated



items...now you can walk in our storage areas, and they're almost completely bare. It's very difficult to generate funds to operate our programs if we don't have the donated items to sale. For those donating, it's really a win-win. They get room in their closets, the donation is tax deductible, and they can be assured that their items are going to help a worthy cause in their own community."

In addition to donations to their resale centers, the FB County Women's Center has a multitude of volunteer opportunities sure to fit the skills and time constraints of any individual or family. Volunteers can help out at fundraising events, in administrative positions and at the center's hotline (note: hotline volunteers do require training). Many also choose to pass on specific skills by teaching classes on topics ranging from safe budgeting to knitting...anything you have a talent for can be passed on as a helpful skill to those in need.

Do you have a church or other community group looking to

help? Why not get the crew together to help paint a shelter hallway? Are you a local hairdresser looking to give back? There are a lot of women who would love to feel better about themselves... and a new look is sure to give them a great start! To get started today, give volunteer coordinator, Patty Holt a call at 281-494-4545, or visit their website at www.fortbendwomenscenter.org.



“Fort Bend County is the best place in the world to be as a charity,” says Goodell. “Folks are so generous, but we are feeling the pinch. We know this community is trying to do what they can, but they are understandably cautious. I truly feel that volunteering or donating items are great ways to help. And we will do all we can to make it as easy as possible. If there are large donations (of clothing or other items) to be made, we can come pick them up (call 281-342-5004 to arrange a pick up), and if they’d like to drop items off, one of our Penny Wise Resale Centers is right around the corner at 1120 E Hwy 90A in Richmond...about 200 yards west of the intersection of FM 359 and US 90A. And as always, if there are family members or friends in need of our help, they can call our hotline number (281-342-4357) for information on our range of services.”

Fort Bend Seniors Meals on Wheels and Much, Much More!

Fort Bend Seniors Meals on Wheels, a United Way organization, was established in 1974 to provide seniors with hot, regular meals. Through the years, the organization evolved and now serves over 800 seniors daily from seven site locations throughout Fort Bend County and one site in Waller County. Although Meals on Wheels will provide meals to any persons over 60 years of age, statistics show that 85% of Fort Bend Seniors’ clients live at or below the poverty level.

Today, the program provides comprehensive programs and services including Meals on Wheels, congregate meals, transportation, homemaker assistance, case management, health screenings, information and referral services, recreation and more. Each of these programs and services enable area seniors to remain in their homes and continue to be an integral part of the community for as long as possible.



According to Manuela Arroyos, CEO of Fort Bend Seniors Meals on Wheels, the organization

“has a list of 150 seniors waiting to receive meals at home, and this number continues to grow daily”.

“As the economy grows worse,” says Arroyos, “we receive more calls from seniors or their family members for assistance. We desperately need a volunteer base to help us offset our cost and deliver to more seniors.”



Each meal delivered costs Meals on Wheels about \$7.00 (\$3.30 to \$3.50 for the actual meal and the remaining cost in operational expenses). Anytime meals are delivered at no cost by volunteers, the organization saves 50%, allowing them to provide another meal and feed another senior. It literally doubles the meals they can get out to the homebound senior community.

Arroyos also stresses the importance of helping to provide their client base with a variety of products, allowing them to spend their limited income on things like medication and utilities.

“We greatly appreciate donations from the community in the form of incontinence products, nutritional supplements (such as Ensure), denture cleansers, toilet paper, and other hygiene products like shampoo, deodorant, tooth-

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Helping Your Community

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paste and powders,” says Arroyo. “Towels, linens and pet food are also incredibly helpful, and in preparation for another hot south Texas summer, many of our seniors are in dire need of fans.”

Volunteers are also welcome at senior citizen locations, where folks can help out with activities, crafts, exercise, the serving of hot meals, or just to provide reassurance and a kind ear.

To find out more about volunteering with **Fort Bend Seniors Meals on Wheels**, call Volunteer Director, Kristin Weiss at 281-633-7057, or visit the website at www.fortbendseniors.org.

The Arc of Fort Bend County

In 1961, The Arc of Fort Bend County was founded by a group of concerned parents, friends and professionals who wanted to positively affect the lives of persons with intellectual disabilities and provide a base of support for their families.

Working for the inclusion of their clients in all aspects of society – from children joining in regular classrooms to adults joining the workforce - The Arc has been instrumental in the creation of virtually every program, service, and benefit available in Fort Bend County to those with intellectual disabilities.

Today, The Arc of Fort Bend County continues to serve as a catalyst for change by providing advocacy and training in a number of additional areas including education, state legislation, employment assistance, Special Olympics, parent support groups and self advocacy – an organiza-

tion which teaches individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities how to advocate for themselves.

The Arc, which is FULLY funded through fundraisers, donations and a precious few grants, receives **no state or federal funds**. Therefore, participation and support from the community is crucial for this organization to continue to provide their special services.

According to Laura LaVigne, Executive Director of The Arc, “living with intellectual disabilities can be an isolating experience. Individuals depend on family and friends not only for transportation, but to perform many of their day-to-day errands. Our clients are not able to participate in employment and leisure activities you and I take for granted. It’s the dedicated families and organizations like The Arc that truly help to provide the crucial sense of independence these individuals so deserve.”



Through recreational programs, employment assistance, their year-round Special Olympics delegation, and much more, The Arc is able to help successfully incorporate their clients into the “real world” - where they can live a happy, active and fulfilling life. So, how can you help The Arc? “We are in great need of coaches for the many sports in our Special Olympics delegation,” says LaVigne. “Throughout the year, our

clients enjoy team activities, including basketball, volleyball, softball, swimming, and track and field. Our track and field program just began, and we are still in need of coaches. Swimming began in May, and softball begins in August. Coaching these teams is not only fun, but is an extremely fulfilling experience.”

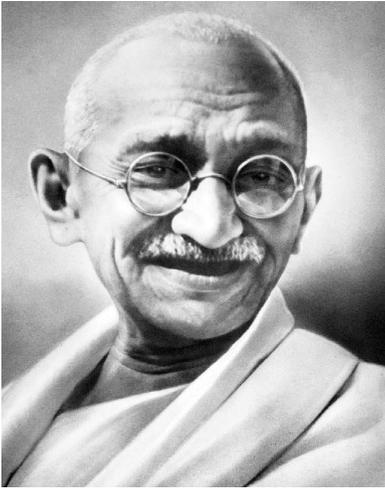
Those interested in volunteering as a coach need only fill out a simple online registration, receive minimal training from Special Olympics Texas, and submit to a background check. The Arc staff will walk you through the whole process. Commitment would involve one to two nights a week during the chosen sports season. Note: all volunteers are welcome, but The Arc is especially in need of male coaches.

The Arc also hosts a bowling contingency at Stafford Lanes, every Saturday, from 2:00 – 4:00 p.m. - Labor Day through Memorial Day (for adults with intellectual disabilities). Volunteers are always welcome. Just show up and check in with one of our Arc volunteers. This is a great opportunity for high school kids to earn volunteer hours!

“We are also looking for an office volunteer to help with oversight of our accounting practices (about 6 to 8 hours per month), and someone to assist with our website hosting and design,” says LaVigne. “And as always, we are looking for local businesses to provide employment opportunities for our clients. Folks with intellectual disabilities can be valued and hard-working employees. We currently have clients in positions ranging from routine office upkeep in an office supply store, to grocery store sackers, to a golf cart detailer at Quail

Valley Country Club. The possibilities are many.”

To learn more about volunteering with The Arc, call Laura LaVigne at 281-494-5293, or visit www.thearcoffortbend.org.



Giving Back to Others is Giving Back to Yourself

Mahatma Gandhi likely said it best: “You must be the change you want to see in the world.” Most surprising to those who begin to volunteer are the benefits that come back to them...in spades. You will not only learn new skills, rejoice in new life experiences, meet a diverse range of people, and become a more integral part of your community – resulting in renewed vigor and purpose, but volunteering is also good for your health. In fact, a study conducted by the Corporation for National and Community Service (*The Health Benefits of Volunteering: A Review of Recent Research – May 2007*), found a significant connection between volunteering and good health. The report showed that volunteers “have greater longevity, higher functional ability, lower rates of depression and less incidence of heart disease.”

So, what are you waiting for? Get started volunteering today. Your heart will thank you! ■

Is It Already That Time Again?

Reminder: Many of us may still be dealing with the aftereffects of Hurricane Ike, but the time is here again -- another hurricane season begins on June 1st.

Although Colorado State University forecasts a bit less active 2009 hurricane season (predicting six hurricanes and twelve named tropical storms will form in the Atlantic), it's best to be prepared. As we all know, it takes just one significant storm to wreak havoc, and in our already compromised Gulf Coast region we must be extra careful.

As previously reported to our residents, PGMUD is well prepared for whatever may come our way. With emergency backup generators at our water plants, an elevated storage tank (with a capacity of 650,000 gallons of safe drinking water), emergency fuel storage, a mobile diesel refuel tank, and a backup generator for our largest sewage pump station, we are ready to weather the strongest of storms. It's important, however, that Pecan Grove residents are prepared as well.

For a comprehensive checklist on how best to keep your family safe before, during and after a storm, please revisit the article “Are You Prepared? Another Hurricane Season Is Upon Us” at www.pecangrovemud.com (September 2007 issue in the “Newsletter” section). We all hope we don't see a repeat of Ike this year, but if it is in the cards, PGMUD is ready.



**Pecan Grove Municipal
Utility District**

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NOTICE OF WATER SYSTEM FLUSHING

As part of routine maintenance of fire hydrants and water mains, flushing of the District's water lines will begin on Monday, June 1st, 2009. We will be moving throughout the District on week-days only and expect to be completed by Friday, June 12th, 2009.

During this time you may notice discoloring of the water due to mineral sediment that is being flushed out of the system. These mineral deposits can cause permanent staining of clothing, so *-please check the water before washing clothes or filling your pool or spa.*

If you would like to know a more specific location of our flushing crew during this period, please call the customer service office at 281-238-5000.

Thank you for your cooperation.

WHO TO CALL:

Water, sewer and drainage questions:

PGMUD Customer Service Office
2035 FM 359, Suite 13 (located in the rear of the Sweet Mesquite Center)
(281) 238-5000

Office Hours: 8:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m. and
2:00 p.m.-4:00 p.m.

After Hours: (281) 238-5000;
24 hrs/7 days a week

NOTE: *If you have water or sewer related problems, PLEASE CALL US BEFORE YOU CALL THE PLUMBER! We will investigate the problem at no cost to you. If it is found to be a water district-related problem, we will arrange to correct it. If it is not a water district issue, we will provide our advice. Remember, we are here to help!*



Use water wisely... It is the right thing to do.

There are more than 1 billion people in the world who do not have access to safe drinking water, and that number will more than double by 2020. The United States uses some 450 billion gallons of water every day. Unfortunately, we have taken our water supplies for granted and have developed some wasteful habits. Strangely enough, we drink very little of our drinking water...only one percent of what is produced by water utilities to be exact. The rest goes on our lawns, in washing machines, and down toilets and drains. We need to think more about how we use our water supplies. Consider, for example, if everyone in the U.S. flushed the toilet just one less time each day, we could save the amount of water it would take to fill a lake a mile long, a mile wide and four feet deep.

Think about it...the water we conserve today can serve us tomorrow!