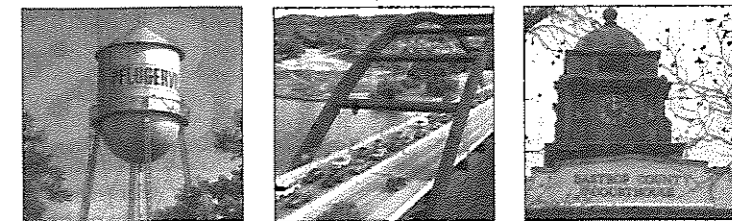


COMMUNITY NEWS

News: communitynews@statesman.com or 512-445-3863



TRAVIS COUNTY

SOUTH AUSTIN

Input sought on park improvements

The city of Austin Parks and Recreation Department is collecting feedback from the public to help identify park improvements that can be done to build upon the recent renovations at Barton Springs Pool.

The improvement plan concerns the Barton Springs Bathhouse, as well as its surrounding amenities and features.

An online survey has been set up for residents to give their input at surveymonkey.com/r/zilker-improvements. A community meeting has been scheduled for Sept. 30 from 6 to 8 p.m. at the Zilker Botanical Garden, 2220 Barton Springs Road.

To learn more about the project, visit bit.ly/lihM3dP.

— AMERICAN-STATESMAN STAFF

EAST AUSTIN

Get Dia de los Muertos fest tickets

Tickets are on sale for the third annual Dia de los Muertos Festival benefiting Easter Seals Central Texas.

Live music, performances, art, a children's area and food will be part of the festival Oct. 17 from noon to 10 p.m. at Festival Gardens, 2101 Jesse E. Segovia St.

General admission tickets for ages 13 and older are \$15 plus fees; children age 12 and younger are admitted for free with a valid purchased adult ticket. VIP tickets are also available for ages 21 and older for \$100 and include entry to a VIP tent with a private viewing area of the stage, free food and a wristband with drink tickets.

Purchase tickets at austindiadelosmuertos.com.

— AMERICAN-STATESMAN STAFF

LAKEWAY

Prescription Take-Back Day returns

The Lakeway Police Department invites the public to participate in the popular Prescription Drug Take-Back Day initiative from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Saturday at the Lakeway Justice Center, 104 Cross Creek.

It is the seventh Take-Back Day for the Police Department, which is hosting the event in partnership with the Drug Enforcement Administration and provides a venue for Lakeway-area residents to properly dispose of unwanted and unused controlled, uncontrolled and over-the-counter medications.

The collection will be quick, secure and supervised by law enforcement officials. The event is free and open to the public. No effort will be made to count, inventory or log medication or those

LAKE TRAVIS

In yearly ritual, volunteers pick up trash in, along Lake Travis

They come each year to help Keep Austin Beautiful.

By Rachel Rice
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On the shore and in the water, volunteers rolled up their sleeves or pulled on their fins and cleaned up Lake Travis.

Kevin Chmiel and his family have come out to clean the lake before, but this year he took on more responsibility, taking charge of the shore cleanup at Mansfield Dam Park. The handful of families who showed up Sept. 13 received trash bags and metal grabbers and scoured the swim and picnic areas for bottles, wrappers and other discarded items.

"(Travis County Parks) does a good job getting big stuff. I'm just picking up little things — papers and plastic and cigarette butts," Chmiel said.

Keep Austin Beautiful hosts its Lake Travis Underwater and Shoreline Cleanup once a year, coordinated with Travis County Parks and the Colorado River Alliance, along with several private scuba companies.

Shoreline cleanup volunteers can sign up to clean at 10 sites around the lake, including Mansfield Dam Park, Pace Bend, Bob Wentz



Kevin Chmiel and his 6-year-old son, Christian, pick up trash in Mansfield Dam Park on Sept. 13 as part of an effort with the nonprofit Keep Austin Beautiful. They focused on the "little things" that were dumped. RACHEL RICE / LAKE TRAVIS VIEW

at Windy Point and Low Water Crossing. Scuba volunteers can sign up with one of 11 dive groups. And for the first time, the Lake Travis cleanup included kayakers — volunteers who brought their own kayaks and paddled near the shoreline, picking up trash from the water.

"Being able to add these new elements makes people excited," Keep Austin Beautiful Director of Development and Communications Monica Lopez Magee said. "It

attracts both people interested in the service aspect as well as the recreation aspect, so we're able to cross-promote."

Robert Weiss, owner and operator of Lake Travis Scuba, has been coordinating with Keep Austin Beautiful for about seven years, he said.

"Don't Mess with Texas" doesn't just apply above the water," Weiss said. "It applies below, and people don't think about that. The lake isn't a trash can for people who

come out to enjoy the lake and yet throw things to the bottom where they can't see it. ... It's out of sight and out of mind for the party barge, but it's in our face when we dive — cups and cans and bottles."

Vandegrift High School Future Farmers of America students also went to Mansfield Dam Park.

"We're keeping Austin clean and keeping the lake clean because no one wants to swim in trash," senior Ellie Simpson said.

The Keep Austin Beautiful volunteers competed to see who could find the strangest thing scattered on the shoreline. The group found sunglasses, fishing lures and pool toys. Lopez Magee said those sorts of games, along with incentives like parties and food, help recruit and retain volunteers.

The Lake Travis area in particular has a loyal group of return volunteers, she said. In past years, they've gathered 5 tons of trash in two hours.

"It's a chance to engage people in service and give them ownership of their area," she said. "This is their lake they're cleaning. ... It's our backyard, right? If you play there, you need to clean up there, too."

Contact Rachel Rice at 512-445-3809.