

BARTON HILLS NEWS

A Quarterly Newsletter

April 2011

SAVING OUR SCHOOLS

Kelly Tagle, Barton Hills Elementary PTA President

Three months ago, the Austin Independent School District (AISD) publicly announced a proposal to close Barton Hills Elementary (BHE) and eight other urban Austin schools. The BHE PTA kicked into high gear and turned into an action campaign headquarters overnight. Within days, signs and T-shirts were printed, surveys and petitions were circulated, and Save our School committees were formed.

It was clear from the onset that the threat of school closure did not just affect the families with children at BHE, but also every person in the greater Barton Hills community. We were reassured by the regular stream of op-eds in the *Statesman* from several neighbors and by the countless individuals who spoke up for our school in letters, meetings, and on the evening news. Despite the severity of the situation, it comforted us to see that we had at least 2,000 cohorts on Facebook who committed with us to Keep BHE Open! More highlights from the last three months of work include:

- Walk a Mile in Our Shoes Rally
- Neighborhood survey to document influx of new families
- Attendance by our community at literally every Facilities Task Force meeting, AISD board meeting, and community meeting
- Meetings with individual AISD Trustees, Task Force members, elected officials, and Superintendent Carstarphen
- Speakers representing BHE at every community input meeting
- Engagement with AISD District Advisory Council
- Postcard campaigns to state legislators to free up the state Rainy Day Fund
- Letter-writing and email campaigns for elected city and state officials
- Letters to and interviews with the media
- Letters and petitions to the AISD Board to keep Austin schools open and to reject the Facilities Task Force report
- Petition from the South Lamar Business Alliance: “school closure is bad for business”

NEXT MEETING

TUESDAY, APRIL 26 6-8 pm

Join us at St. Mark’s Church (corner of Barton Skyway & Barton Hills Dr.). All are welcome! Social hour 6 pm. Come at 6 to say goodbye to Art Stone. Italian dinner \$7.



AGENDA

- 7:00 Call to order
- 7:05 Treasurer’s report, minutes
- 7:20 Campaign to save BHE
- 7:30 Neighborhood improvement projects
- 8:00 Committee reports: Neighborhood Watch, Greenbelt Guardians, Area Development, ANC
- 8:30 Other business from membership
- 8:45 Adjourn

- Save TX Schools Rally at the Capitol
- BHE community-wide updates via email and in person

And this is only a partial list! So many neighbors have given countless hours of their time working tirelessly for our cause, proving what a total community effort we’ve seen. Nonetheless, we give special thanks to Barton Hills Neighborhood Association President Craig Smith for his leadership and to former Trustees Nan Clayton, Pat Whiteside, and Karen Dulaney Smith for their wisdom and guidance.

We are especially grateful to the Barton Hills Neighborhood Association for passing its resolution supporting BHE and for their financial commitment to Keeping BHE Open. The donated funds pay for advocacy efforts, including postcards sent to members of the Texas legislature and a chartered bus to trans-

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port our neighbors to the 12,000+ Save Texas Schools Rally March 12.

We had originally hoped for and expected a clear conclusion to the threat of school closure as early as February, but as the public education funding crisis affects us at both district and state levels, we acknowledge that we've merely sprinted the first mile of a marathon. To paraphrase Sen. Lloyd Doggett's message to the Austin community last month, education in Texas has had a moment. It's up to us to determine if we will be able to create a movement.

We've met with many of the AISD trustees. Several have voiced support for keeping all AISD schools open, and though there are no expected school closures through the 2011-2012 school year, we've been given no guarantees in future years. The trustees have postponed any decisions based on the controversial Facilities Master Plan. Unfortunately, it is too soon to declare victory. It's impossible and unnecessary to sustain a full sprint for 26 miles, and as we enter this next phase of Keeping BHE Open, we will remain ever vigilant and organized. The BHE PTA stands ready to mobilize in the uncertain future.

On behalf of our PTA, thank you for so generously reminding us who Barton Hills really is: a group of committed, involved citizens, neighbors and parents who care for one another and look out for each other's children.

Kelly Tagle
President
Barton Hills Elementary PTA



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2011 EVENTS CALENDAR

- Apr. 26** Neighborhood meeting
- June. 4** Greenbelt Guardians Work Day,
National Trails Day
- July 4** Barton Hills July 4 Parade

Do you have a neighborhood event that you would like to see included in the newsletter? Send it to jenncook@austin.rr.com at least one month before the next general meeting date.

Barton Hills News

The Barton Hills Neighborhood Association newsletter is published quarterly and supported by advertisers. It is distributed to homes in the Barton Hills neighborhood of Austin, TX in January, April, July, and October. For more information on membership or neighborhood affairs, contact the appropriate person below.

2011 Executive Committee

- President** - Craig Smith
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- Committee on Area Development** - Peter Hess
(pheess@mail.utexas.edu)
- Greenbelt Guardians** - Glee Ingram
(gleeful@earthlink.net)
- Neighborhood Watch** - John Luther
(jluther@austin.rr.com)

Learn more about us at www.bartonhills.org!

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

SAVE OUR SCHOOL! Nothing can unite a neighborhood like trying to close its community elementary school. When the AISD Facilities Task Force early this year recommended closing Barton Hills Elementary (BHE), along with Zilker Elementary and half a dozen other schools, it was as if a deadly threat had arrived at our gates. We all realized how much we stood to lose as a dynamic and attractive neighborhood if the school were closed. Any internal disagreements were forgotten, and we came together to save our school.

The campaign to keep BHE open has brought out some of our most talented and energetic neighbors, who have devoted countless volunteer hours to the effort. It has been spearheaded by current, former, and hope-to-be BHE parents, among them Cherylann Campbell, Suzanne Soares, Tina Donahoo, Mary Ann Neely, Julian Rivera, Jason Sabo, Stefan Pharis and Don Green. The informal campaign team, whose members have little in common except their concern for the school and the neighborhood, has worked with the BHE PTA, under the leadership of Kelly Tagle, to present the case for continuing and improving BHE, rated as one of the top 20% of schools in Texas in terms of educational results.

The group compiled a more-than-100-page report to the AISD administration challenging the arguments for school closure. It has met with our precinct's school board member Lori Moya and with the two at-large members, Annette LoVois and Tamala Barksdale. The group has also met with the president of the Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce and sponsored a table at a Chamber luncheon in order to bring home the practical economic reasons for backing exemplary education such as BHE provides. Kim Heide, owner of B&B Muffler and Auto, has organized more than 25 businesses along and around South Lamar that oppose the school closure.

The strong district-wide opposition has caused the AISD administration to relent, at least for the coming school year. The cover article in this newsletter from Kelly Tagle reports on the current status of the struggle, which is far from over.

I have talked with BHE Principal Katie Achtermann about how the Barton Hills Neighborhood Association could help to address some of the issues related to the school facilities, especially those at the playground, which is also a City of Austin park and is used by neighborhood residents both during and after school hours. The Barton Hills Neighborhood Association Executive Committee hopes to present some ideas at our April membership meeting and,

if given the go-ahead, then to seek cost estimates and develop specific plans for improvements that could be funded by association resources, approved by but not paid for by AISD. The project would back up our words of support with resources independent of state appropriations and local tax revenue. Clearly, many of the more expensive items would be beyond our means. But I am sure there are things that we could do that would improve the playground for both the schoolchildren and the neighborhood patrons.

Craig Smith

1908 Barton Parkway
442-3414

ART STONE LEAVES BARTON HILLS AFTER 54 YEARS

"Art knows everything" is a neighborhood slogan. Soon the lucky folks in Howard, Colorado, will be saying the same thing. Art Stone, a resident of Barton Hills since 1957, is moving to Howard, Colorado in July. It has been his long-range plan to retire to the mountains and pursue his passions in alternative energy, green building and playing outdoors. He has promised to be here for the July 4th parade.

Art moved to Westhill Drive in 1957, which at that time was a dirt road outside of the city limits. In 1964, he moved to La Casa to a house that he bought for \$9,800. In 1966 he moved to Spring Creek. 1973 found him moving back next door to his parents' home on Westhill. In 1997 he moved to the current location on Westrock. Art will be selling his wonderful property but will maintain a Texas residence for winter and trips to see his kids and grandkids.

Art has been a huge help to the neighborhood, quietly contributing to the July 4th parade, offering his sound system at meetings, and generously helping neighbors with building and repair projects, with dry wit and an engineer's zeal. Wish him happy trails (and good luck moving that baby grand) at the next BHNA meeting, April 26.



FRIENDS OF BARTON HILLS

Cherylann Campbell

As I sit here on 6th Street, not in a bar or swanky new restaurant but in another AISD Board of Trustees meeting, I find myself reflecting on why I am here. My other recent visits were clear and purposeful, yet tonight's agenda has nothing to do with the past 12 weeks of our fight to save Barton Hills Elementary (BHE) from closure, and yet I am here. Except for a brief visit to a Board Meeting in 2009 when my daughter received recognition for her state achievement with Odyssey of the Mind, I rarely took any interest in what happened in this building. Now I do, and I can't stop paying attention.

In January, we found out that our beloved school was on a list of options that included closure and consolidation as part of the district's draft Facilities Master Plan. Many of you know the rest and have followed the news closely. For those that want some details, read on ...

I am a parent of two BHE students and have lived in the neighborhood since 1996. We made a choice, based on lots of research, to live HERE – not north of the river, not southwest, and not in the suburbs. We moved here, as did many people, because of the elementary school, its tracking schools, O'Henry Middle School and Austin High, and the overall vibe achieved by the presence of a neighborhood school and the strong sense of community. Since then, my husband and I have invested a lot of heart, soul, time and money to make that choice pay off for our family. Once that was threatened, I had to do something. I stayed involved with the PTA and also helped initiate a parallel group, the Friends of Barton Hills; both have been fighting for the past several months to retain these choice schools and the great vibe.

The Friends of Barton Hills is a group of concerned parents, neighbors and community members who have volunteered their time and worked diligently on issues associated with the AISD Facilities Master Plan process. Specifically, we have focused on concerns with BHE's closure options as proposed by an ad hoc school district task force. While many of us are active members of the BHE PTA, we do not formally represent the PTA. That distinction is important while we maintain a parallel path alongside the PTA. As a result, in many cases, we have been able to move more quickly and, in some cases, advocate more strongly when the PTA might have been obligated by certain by-laws or other constraints. The PTA is responsible to represent the views of its members, generally by vote.

The Friends of Barton Hills operates independently but in concert with the strategies of the formal school community. In addition to a small core group, many BHE parents

have contributed writing, ideas and feedback. It's amazing to consider what everyone has accomplished in such short period of time. In a nutshell, our focus has been on the following:

- Strategy and messaging
- Writing and research
- Meetings and advocacy
- Press and information sharing

Early on, we realized and called out the fact that the data "just didn't add up." We analyzed the Facilities Task Force reports at various stages and have produced three formal responses since January. You can find them at www.SaveAustinSchools.com. We established that the district "won't save money by closing successful schools," and we built a strong business case to keep our school open. Along with the PTA, we have attended many of the district's public meetings to stay abreast of critical issues and the fast-changing landscape. Early on, one neighbor with a young family, who hopes to send his kids to Barton Hills, wrote an incredible op-ed for the *Statesman* (so we recruited him!). Some of us met with representatives of the Austin Chamber of Commerce to learn their point of view since they expressed concerns about district efficiency; other members reached out to political contacts to seek support. We supported PTA efforts to address the threat of changes to the district's transfer policy, and some reached out to various political associations to get resolutions passed similar to the one passed by BHNA in January. I hosted four members of the Board of Trustees in my home so they could hear community interests ... and the list goes on.

As you may have heard, we are not out of the woods yet. Although school closures are off the table for the 2011-2012 school year, we now wait for Superintendent Meria Carstarphen to develop her administrative recommendations in response to the Task Force's final report and the feedback she has received from all across the community. In June, we also should know how the Texas legislative cuts for public education will affect our district budget – and thus, our schools, teachers and students. It is not looking very good at the time of this article.

I imagine we will have to kick things into gear again in the fall. Regardless of how this all turns out, I have learned the importance of staying engaged in school district activities, and I imagine they are stuck with me for at least 10 more years as my kids work through the AISD system.

Please contact me if you have questions or are interested in helping with future efforts. Cherylann Occhipinti Campbell: tcampbell19@austin.rr.com

GREENBELT GUARDIANS

Youth in Action on the Greenbelt

Glee Ingram

Recently we have had increased participation by youth groups, ranging in age from kindergarten to college. It is great having their energy and enthusiasm on the trail, and they are learning young to partner with our natural world for optimum mutual benefit.

Particularly exciting is the increased level of partnership with the Barton Hills Elementary class of Collins Van Nort, who has integrated the greenbelt into his science lessons for the past 15 years. In January, he had me speak to his class about the impact of invasives on ecosystems and lead the students on a greenbelt walk to identify the invasives there. At the March work day, he led a team and recruited a group of his students to work on invasives removal and windrow construction. We are working on a plan to share our tools with them so they can do weekly work on the trail.

We also continue our productive relationship with the Travis County Juvenile Probation staff and high school students - our neighbor Jon Beall recently coached them in effective teamwork and tool use to remove some 20-foot-tall ligustrum, with much cheering and celebration.

We also have a new working partnership with Little Helping Hands, a service mentoring organization for parents and their three- to nine-year-old children. Our Green-

belt Guardian neighbor Yates Barreda has become a specialist in leading these young ones in productive tasks on the greenbelt.

The Boy Scouts have also been working through us on greenbelt projects. Neighbor Eddie Torres arranged for the Pack 14 Cub Scouts to come en masse to the work day in March. Eagle Scout neighbor James Pazdral trained with us on invasives removal techniques, then borrowed our tools to lead a two-day removal session at Umlauf Gardens, clearing a 1/4 acre hillside. Another Eagle Scout is planning with John Cook and me to build a stone retaining wall to support the foot bridge on Homedale Trail for his Eagle Scout project.

Also participating at the past two work days were Del Valle High School Key Club members and the University of Texas Alpha Phi Omega service group, who did some very impressive windrow construction work, under the capable leadership of our neighbors Patrick and Sonya Apodaca.

A reminder that our next work day will be on June 4, National Trails Day. We will be working on the greenbelt in partnership many other groups being organized through the Austin Parks Foundation, to fulfill commitments under the Impact Austin grant that is funding numerous volunteer work days and five Ameri-Corps crew dedicated to working on greenbelt trail repair during this fiscal year.

Next Greenbelt Work Day: June 4

Greenbelt Guardians 2011 Work Days

June 4: National Trails
Day

Sept. 24: National
Public Lands
Day

Look for details on
the BHNA listserv &
website:
www.bartonhills.org

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BARLEY SWINE CHEF AMONG NATION'S 10 BEST

Jennifer Cook, Editor

Bryce Gilmore of the Odd Duck and Barley Swine was named one of the nation's 10 Best New Chefs of 2011 by *Food + Wine*. Barley Swine is a tiny, delightful restaurant on South Lamar. Gilmore began serving seasonal and local dishes out of a food trailer, the Odd Duck Farm to Trailer at 1219 S. Lamar. After being featured on Anthony Bourdain's show, "No Reservations," Gilmore attained funds to open the Barley Swine "gastropub" at 2024 S. Lamar.

The cozy restaurant has communal tables and now likely a hefty wait (hint: go before 6:30pm or after 9:30pm). The open kitchen serves exquisitely flavored, small dishes (emphasizing pork, although quail, rabbit, and scallops are typically on the menu). Beer is American and often local; however, be forewarned that the "pint" is actually less than a pint. Excellent starters include fried, crispy brussel sprouts with capers and potato fritters. According to other reviewers, the pig trotters are spectacular. The cheese dessert plate was expensive and disappointing, and the "local" cheese was from Houston. The portions are small, so be prepared to savor every bite or spend a bit.

Don't prune February through June!

To prevent the spread of Oak Wilt in the neighborhood, avoid pruning susceptible oaks during the spring. If you must make a cut, seal the wound with paint. www.texasoakwilt.org

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PEST MANAGEMENT: FIRE ANTS ARE BACK

Wizzie Brown, the A&M AgriLife Extension

I was working in the yard pruning roses last week and I got stung by my first fire ant of the season. While I knew it was inevitable, I was hoping that it would occur a bit later in the year, but it's true. Fire ants have begun to dot the landscape with their mounds.

Spring is when people see fire ants swarming, in a reproductive process that usually occurs on warm days after rain. After mating, females search for a location to establish a new colony. They dig a small chamber in the soil, lay a few eggs and rear those young to become mature worker ants. The workers take over colony functions, and the queen continues to expand the population of the colony by laying more eggs. While searching for a new colony location, many mated fire ant queens are killed by lizards, birds, spiders, other ants, and often my shoe stomping them. The queens that survive can be managed by broadcasting fire ant bait over your entire property. New colonies may be too small to find and treat individually. The worker ants forage for food, so they carry bait back to the colony to share.

For more information or help with identification, contact Wizzie Brown, Texas AgriLife Extension Service Program Specialist, (512) 854-9600. www.urban-ipm.blogspot.com

SOUTH LAMAR & BARTON SPRINGS ALLIANCE OF BUSINESSES TO SAVE SCHOOLS

Businesses along South Lamar and in the neighborhood rallied to save neighborhood schools, sending a petition and letter to AISD opposing closure of Zilker and Barton Hills Elementary Schools. We thank the following businesses for their efforts and support:

Accent Antiques & Upholstery	Chris Cobb Architecture	One Quality Nails
Alamo Drafthouse	Chuy's #1	Papalote Taco House
American Cleaners	Diablo Rojo	Peoples Pharmacy
Amy's Ice Creams, Inc.	Dog Almighty	Performance Bicycle, Inc.
Anna's Toy Depot	Downstairs Apparel	Phil's Ice House, Inc.
Artz Ribhouse	Electra Beauty Lounge	Pioneer Wine Company
Ashley Woodson Design	El Meson Restaurant	Pit Stop Auto Repair, Inc.
Audio Mobile	Embree Designs	Pluckers Wing Bar
Austin Gift Co.	Faith United Methodist Preschool	Pro Cali Nails
Austin Java	Far Out Home Fittings	P. Terrys Burger Stand
Austin Sonic	Flipnotics Coffee Space	R. Martin Limited
Austin's Pizza	Flywheel Fitness	Red's Porch
Aviary	Gaga	Red Wing Shoe Store
Azul Tequila	Genie Car Wash	Rockin' Tomato
B&B Muffler & Automotive	Giovannie's Pizza Stand	Romeo's Restaurant
Baby A's #2	Green Mesquite - Barton Springs Rd.	Sazon
Baker Street Pub	Half Price Books	Scholz Garten - 9900 SIH 35
Barking Hound Village	Irie Bean Coffee Bar	Sola
Barton Hill Food Mart	Jack & Adam's Bicycle Shop	South Austin Gym
Barton Hills Market	Jameson Interiors	Spectacle Sunglasses
Barton Springs Saloon	Jiffy Lube	St. Marks Day School
Barton Springs Upholstery	Jump Gymnastics	Strait Music Co.
Batteries Plus	Just Brakes	Strut
Bead It	Kaleido Properties	Subway
Big Kids Productions, Inc.	Kenny Hill's Autoworks	Taco Express
Binswanger Glass	Kerby Lane Café	Texas Hydroponics
Bird's Barbershop	La Feria Restaurant	The Upholstery Shop
Blacksheep Lodge	Legendary Beads	The Soup Peddler
Bluebonnet Food Mart	Lets Dish	The Waxing Studio
Bicycle Sport Shop	Lights Out Candles	Thom's Market
Casa Garcia's Mexican Restaurant	Lou's Hairs Designs, Inc.	Thundercloud Subs
Casita Taco	Marigold – Gateway to India	Uchi
Castleberry Engineering	Matt's El Rancho, Inc.	Uncle Billy's Brew & Que
Cell Repair	Maudie's Too	UPS Store 2416
CG&S Design-Build	Olivia Restaurant	Websy Daisy

2011 MEMBERSHIP FORM

Join or review your membership in the Barton Hills Neighborhood Association. Annual dues are \$10/household. Make checks payable to BHNA and mail them to **Barton Hills Neighborhood Association, PO Box 2042, Austin TX 78768-2042**. You can pay dues online (with a \$1 PayPal service fee) at www.bartonhills.org/membership.html. If you pay online, send an email to barton_hills-subscribe@yahoogroups.com to be added the list server.

Your Name: _____

Other 18+ members of your household: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Sign Me Up! I/we wish to receive email from the BHNA listserv.

I am interested in getting more involved in neighborhood activities. Please contact me.

CALL FOR IMPROVEMENTS

If you were at the last meeting or are on the listserv, you've received President Craig Smith's call for ideas to improve the neighborhood. Suggestions have ranged from more dog-poop bag dispensers, to lighting, to a welcoming entrance to the neighborhood at Barton Skyway and S. Lamar. Email ideas to Craig or note them on the listserv. The next meeting, April 26, neighbors can discuss options.

Memberships are due every January. If you need to update your email address for the listserv, please let VP Melissa Hawthorne know both new and old email addresses. Over 500 people enjoy the listserv, one of the benefits of membership, including information from your neighbors about lost & found pets, furniture, crime, contractors, and events. The listserv can send you a daily "batch," which is a single email with all the posts.



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