

A newsletter
for the customers
of the Wells Branch
Municipal Utility
District

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WELLS BRANCH

WORD



MUD aerobics instructor carries Olympic torch

Running for exercise has been a part of Linda Spataro's life for 13 years. But the adrenaline rush received when finishing a race has never been as strong as it was when she carried the Olympic Torch on its route to Auditorium Shores on Dec. 11.

"It was absolutely the most incredible experience of my life," said the longtime Wells Branch MUD aerobics instructor. "It was moment in time I will never forget."

The moment came about as a result of a nomination conducted by her fellow employees last spring at Park Crest Middle School in Pflugerville.

"I never knew they had done this until I got a notice in September that I had been chosen to be a finalist," the middle school secretary said. "I got a Federal Express packet in the mail, and I had, like, three days to get certified by a doctor and

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Linda Spataro (right) takes the torch for her brush with Olympic glory.



Wells Branch revamps district website

With the help of a new contractor (AustinTexas.net), Wells Branch MUD has increased the information and pizzazz of its website. Check it out yourself at: www.wellsbranchmud.com.

Pennies from heaven

Rain collection system conserves water, funds

By Rachel Albin

On a sunny spring day looking out across the baseball field adjacent to the Wells Branch Community Center, you can periodically see sprinkler heads spewing water onto thirsty blades of grass. But the water being used to irrigate is not your typical water; it's rainwater.

Impossible, some might say, when it isn't raining. But a second glance can reveal a new hut-like structure with gutter drains running directly from the Community Center into what is called a Rainwater Harvest Tank.

This 20-foot tank can contain as much as 18,000 gallons of collected rainwater and distribute it as needed by means of an electrically controlled pump.

Manufactured by Timber Tank International, in New Zealand, the tank allows Wells Branch to collect, store and redistribute water as needed.

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Holiday highlights



As 2001 drew to a close and 2002 began, the song “We Need a Little Christmas” seemed to linger. It was a challenging year, reflected in the new category in the annual Lights Contest: Most Patriotic (won by the home at 14926 Doria, above left). And the theme in the annual Community Center holiday gathering (below) was “The Lights of Freedom.” Still, it was a time of tradition, including the traditional visits to Santa at the Homestead (left), and the beauty of the season was captured in hundreds of homes, including the one at 15820 Sambuca Circle, (above right), winner of the “Most Beautiful” prize in the Lights Contest. Other winners included Most Original, 14505 Sandyside; Most Traditional, 14512 Donald; Most Effective Use of Lights, 2509 Emmett Parkway and Honorable Mentions, 2209 Taylor-Simonetti, 14401 Oceanna Court, 14916 Haley Hollow, 1701 Gaylord and 14601 Gold Fish Pond.

Compost guidelines

1. Place your container(s) of grass clippings, leaves and brush at curbside by 8 A.M. MONDAY. Items placed at curbside after 8 a.m. cannot be picked up.
2. Please place grass clippings in the containers, NOT IN PLASTIC BAGS.
3. Place limbs which are too large for the containers on the ground next to the containers. Please cut the limbs — about 6 feet is an ideal length.
4. Do not put rocks, ashes, lumber, animal waste or other trash in the containers.
5. If you need additional tubs or information, call 251-9814.



RAINWATER

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Rainwater harvesting is growing in popularity among corporations, ranchers and homeowners who formerly relied on ground wells or municipal systems to supply water demands.

“The problem with wells is that they’re in the ground, and you’re never sure what you might find,” said Jack Hall, North American distributor for Timber Tanks of New Zealand. “I have a 25,000 gallon [rainwater harvesting tank] out at my house, and I rely on it for all my water usage, not just irrigation. After all, rainwater is as natural as it gets. It’s soft (relatively mineral-free.)”

It was this practical use that led Don Williams, Wells Branch MUD general manager, to the Timer Tank company.

“The board had been thinking on this for some time and I started investigating similar structures on the market about a year ago,” Williams said. “What also impressed me about this was its attractiveness, as well as the fact that the water inside does not touch the timber wood of which it is made.”

The 20-by-10 foot structure peaks at the roof. Inside the tank is a large polyliner that keeps the stored water from corroding the outside timber boards.

The minimal adjustments required to attach the structure were limited to connecting the gutters running from the roof of the Community Center to the water storage tank. Because the tank is controlled electronically, the irrigation system could be reconnected to the MUD’s well if ever needed.

“We had to dig down about three feet and lay a level of sand and crushed granite in order for the tank to be able to sit right,” Williams said gesturing toward the sloped land leading from the building down to the soccer fields. “And we were able to do all the maintenance work ourselves.”

When in operation, the electric pump controlling the storage tank, covers three zones in Katherine Fleischer Park. Each zone contains approximately 12 sprinkler heads. When turned on, the water sprays its surrounding area with 12 gallons a minute for a total of 20 minutes.

“We eventually plan to add another tank on the opposite side of the Community Center to irrigate that side,” Williams said in December. “Right now the tank is about half-full. We actually thought it would be more than that after all the rain we have received.”

Regardless on the amount of water in the tank, the MUD is pleased on the savings the investment will return in subsequent years.

“We’re all pleased. The savings comes to about \$100 a month when compared to City of Austin water (the MUD’s wholesale water supplier).” Williams said. He noted that using the rainwater harvesting system eases the strain on the MUD’s water well.

“And our price was reduced from \$18,000 to around \$14,000 because we already had an irrigation system in place and the maintenance crews to put it together. We will have made up the money we spent in about two years.”

TORCH

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get all these forms filled out. I mailed it back and I did not hear anything until November.”

November brought another Federal Express package, only this time it contained the Olympic torch running suit, cap and instructions down to the minute of where she needed to be and when.

“I couldn’t believe it. I mean there are so many deserving people out there and I was chosen.”

Linda, who has taught Wells Branch aerobics classes three-days a week for the past eight years, ran as part of a 17-member support team that carried the torch on a course of about one mile beginning in the William Cannon vicinity and ending on Congress Avenue.

“Part of the time I walked beside an elderly woman and then at other parts I ran,” she said. Linda carried the torch twice during her run, fol-

lowed closely by fellow runners, police on motorcycles and news crews.

“It was a rush. Running down the streets packed with people waving American flags and chanting, ‘USA! USA!’” she said. “I am so proud to have been chosen to be a part of it, and I just didn’t want it to end. When I watch the opening ceremonies in Salt Lake City and see the torch arrive, I will know that I was part of it all and helped make it happen.”

