

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

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December 2002

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Municipal Utility District

WELLS BRANCH

WORD



## MUD to add to park patrol

At their Nov. 19 meeting, MUD board members voted to hire a private security officer to monitor recreation activities in Katherine Fleischer Park.

Recreation tags are required to use district facilities, including the basketball court in the park. The security officer will check to make sure that participants at the basketball court have purchased tags.

The officer will also be able to check for dogs that are not on a leash. District rules require that pets in the park must be on a leash and under the control of a person.

Dog owners may be subject to a fine if the rules are violated, and the security officer will be authorized to issue tickets for rules violations. Repeated or flagrant violation may result in loss of privileges to use the park.

In another decision regarding enforcement of rules, the board voted to hire off-duty Travis County sheriff's deputies to enforce traffic laws on Wells Branch streets — particularly speeding laws.

## District evaluates options for trash, recycling service

Amid concerns about trash hauler BFI's customer service, Wells Branch MUD is seeking proposals from other contractors.

"We have a long relationship with BFI and hope that meetings with BFI can correct the problems," said MUD Board Pres. Chuck

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A young Wells Branch resident greets Santa, dressed in his Victorian-era costume, during the Nov. 16 Thanksgiving Feast.

## *Luminaria, Santa visit Wells Branch*

Join your neighbors in Wells Branch in celebrating the holiday season. Beautiful luminaria will light the trails in Katherine Fleischer Park beginning about 4:30 p.m. on the weekend of Dec. 13-14. Other highlights:

### **FRIDAY, DEC. 13**

Santa will be available to visit with children and pose for Polaroid photos (\$2 each) from 6 to 9 p.m. at the Homestead.

### **SATURDAY, DEC. 14**

Come enjoy the entertainment at the Community Center from 6 to 9 p.m., including a performance of Renaissance-era dancing by the Society for Creative Anachronism.

Santa will again visit the Homestead, and throughout the weekend, keep your home's Christmas lights bright as judges determine the winners in categories including Most Beautiful, Most Effective Use of Lights, Most Original, Most Patriotic and Most Traditional. For information, call 251-9814.



## A community of thanks

Wells Branch residents crowded the Community Center Nov. 16 for the annual Thanksgiving Feast (left), a neighborhood-wide celebration that featured plenty of good food and lots of down-home bluegrass music. Above, Boy Scouts from Troop 1409 found the fare better than fair and gave proof to the Scout's unwritten rule that, along with being "trustworthy, helpful, friendly..." and so on, a Scout is pretty much always hungry.

# Save water in winter, save money all year long

*Winter use  
calculates  
wastewater bills;  
City of Austin  
conservation  
programs available  
in Wells Branch*

Wells Branch can save money year-round by conserving water during the wastewater averaging period.

There are no meters on customers' wastewater lines. To determine wastewater usage, a customer's water usage is averaged over three consecutive, low-demand winter months, when lawn watering and irrigation are less frequent.

The customer's wastewater charge each month will be based on the new wastewater average or actual monthly water usage, whichever is lowest.

It benefits customers all year long to conserve water during the wastewater averaging period. Because the MUD is a wholesale customer of the City of Austin, the City's Water Conservation Program is available to Wells Branch residents to help reduce charges for both water and wastewater. Some

programs include:

- Replacement of water-guzzling toilets with new 1.6 gallon per flush models. The City offers free toilets, plus rebates if installed by a licensed plumber.
- Installation of water-saving devices, such as faucet aerators or low-flow showerheads, which you can get from the City at no cost.
- Purchase of a water-efficient clothes washer and earn a City rebate of up to \$100.
- If you have an irrigation system, the City will conduct a free audit to identify leaks. In the meantime, turn off the controller and only run the system if there is no rain for two to three weeks.

For more information on City of Austin Water Conservation Programs, customers can call 974-2199, or visit [www.ci.austin.tx.us/watercon](http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/watercon).

# Wells Branch rolls out the barrels for rainwater

Wells Branch MUD has launched a pilot program to help residents conserve water through rainwater collection.

Two tanks, for display purposes, have been erected in front of the District Office at 3000 Shoreline Drive.

Caroline Hall, marketing director of the North American distributor for Timber Tanks of New Zealand, said, "We have one 500-gallon- and one 1,000-gallon tank. These would be placed in a homeowner's yard as a means to collect rainwater for use later for watering purposes."

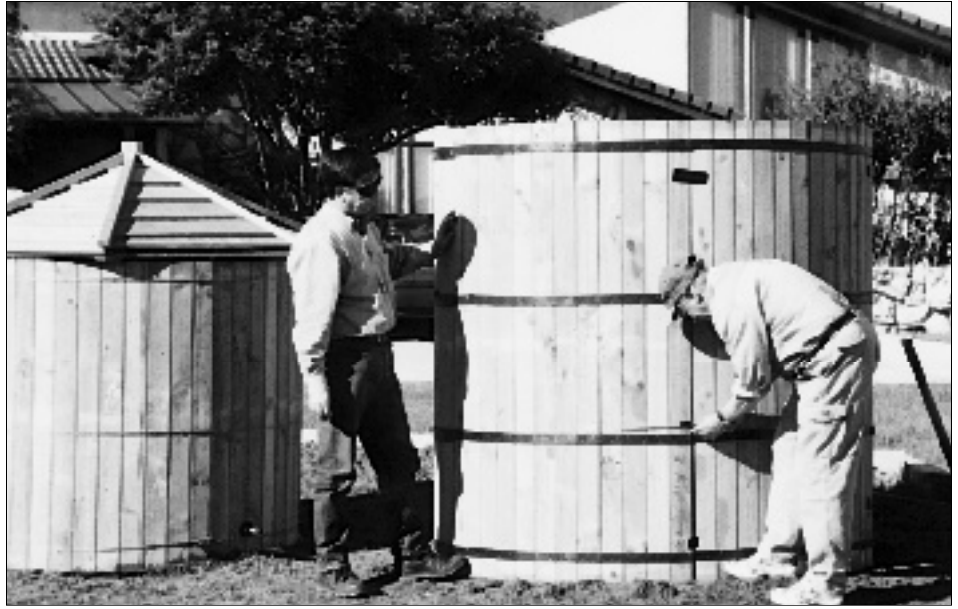
Morton Jordan, an architectural engineer, came up with the idea behind the timber tanks 35 years ago in Auckland, New Zealand.

"I needed to get a collection bucket in a tight space and the usual materials were not going to work," Jordan said. "So I came up with this."

In the past 35 years, Jordan's design has spread throughout the Pacific, Italy, Alaska, and most recently, right here in Wells Branch. The timber Rainwater Harvest tank, which sits adjacent to the Katherine Fleischer Park baseball field, has been actively collecting, storing and redistributing rainwater in the park since its construction late last November.

Rainwater harvesting is growing in popularity among corporations, ranchers and homeowners who in the past have had to rely exclusively upon ground wells or municipal systems for water.

Residents can contact the MUD office, 251-9814, about



Sample rainwater collection tanks are on display at the District Office.

purchasing the tanks. The smaller, 500-gallon tank, measuring four feet, six inches in diameter will cost \$1,000 and the larger 1,000 gallon tank, measuring five feet, six inches in diameter, will run \$1,400.

Placed inside each timber tank is a large polyliner that keeps stored water from corroding the outside timber boards.

"The good thing about these smaller ones is that all the pieces come in one box that can easily be handled and assemble by two people," Hall said.

The residential tanks would work similarly to the Community Center tank.

"The ones built for individual home use would operate on a much smaller scale," Hall said. "But regardless, the tanks cut residential water bills. It's an ideal way to conserve water by using already-received rainfall."

## Don't end up in the doghouse over too many pets

While it's well-known that pets can add years to your life, it's possible to have too much of a good thing.

Restrictive covenants in most parts of Wells Branch limit the number of animals that can live at a home. In all the neighborhood, covenants prohibit nuisances.

In some cases, residents find that the number of pets owned by one of their neighbors is a nuisance, either due to excessive noise, health concerns caused by failing to keep the yard cleared of pet waste, or pets roaming free

and causing damage to property or interfering with the other neighbors enjoyment of their property.

The district has authority to enforce restrictive covenants to preserve its tax base. When nuisance issues are involved, the district will require that complaining neighbors be willing to testify if the matter ends up in court.

Think on it: the stress of too many pets — and possible legal action — may take away all the years you're adding.

## Dedicated to ones we love

A record number of friends and family members attended Nov. 16 ceremony at the Dedication Grove. The ceremony honored family events carved into the stone pavers at the grove, which is located just west of the pavilion in Katherine Fleischer Park. Among the honorees was Carolyn Beard (right) who received a paver in honor of her many hours of volunteering at district events. She's standing with MUD Recreation Manager Dawn Moonan and fellow volunteer Janet Maxey.



## MUD seeks ways to get bills paid on time

Wells Branch officials continue to explore ways to assure timely payment of utility bills.

Despite requirements for an additional deposit after delinquency, several water and wastewater customers continue to be late paying their MUD bills, and utility staff members find that often it's the same individuals month after month.

In October, 68 customers were required to pay additional deposits to restore service, a jump from the 29 the month before.

Previous studies have shown a high correlation between people who are habitually late paying their bills and people who leave the district owing money for utility service.

When that occurs, the remaining

MUD customers are left to pay for water and wastewater service provided to the person who doesn't pay his bills. The additional deposit required of people who are late payers helps protect all Wells Branch customers from unpaid bills.

"It's not fair to the people who pay their bills on time," said MUD District Manager Don H. Williams. "The MUD has to pay its wholesale water supplier (the City of Austin) in a timely fashion. We have to expect the same of our customers."

The MUD bills are mailed at the first of the month and due on the 20th. If the bill is not paid, a letter is sent to the customer advising that all charges must be paid by the 12th of the next month. If the charges re-

main unpaid at noon on the 20th of that month, service will be cut off.

To restore service, the customer must pay the current charges, pay a reconnect fee of \$75 and submit another \$100 deposit, up to a total deposit of \$300.

Williams is evaluating details of habitually delinquent accounts in an effort to stem the pattern before it becomes a problem. One suggestion has been requiring high-risk customers to pay for service within ten days of billing or face service termination.

"People can avoid all those hassles if they'll pay their bills on time," Williams noted. "We appreciate the many, many customers who pay on time. We do everything we can to see they don't get left holding the bag."



## Halloween Hijinx

Children from across Wells Branch were all dressed up with someplace to go on Halloween: the Wells Branch Community Center. • Above left, a guardian angel watched over Snow White. There were other, more current movie “stars” in attendance. • Above, “Stitch” (Robbie Hall) is able to give a hand to the princess from Shrek (Wells Branch MUD’s own Stephanie McClugage). Shrek was the theme for the Community Center fun. • Across the way, the Homestead was dressed up as a haunted house, complete with a trash cart with a scary attitude (That comes from talkin’ trash!). Photos by Robert Wood Images for Gilleland Creek Press.

## TRASH

*From Page 1*

Walters, “But in the end, we must take whatever steps necessary to assure our residents’ are served properly.”

Complaints have arisen over the company’s beginning trash collection too early in the day. To minimize traffic, especially when children are walking to school, the MUD’s contract restricts the hours that BFI’s trucks can collect in the neighborhood.

Some blocks have been skipped on collection day, and MUD officials are also concerned that carts are not being delivered to new residents promptly.

Any change in trash and recycling collection would not affect the District’s collection of compostibles — grass clippings, brush and limbs. That’s handled by a separate contractor: TexaScapes, Inc.

For information, 251-9814.

### REMINDER:

No change — if any — in Wells Branch’s trash and recyclable collection contractor is expected before January 2003.

Under BFI’s holiday schedule, no pickup will occur on Christmas or New Year’s Day.

If collection at your home would normally be scheduled on either day, BFI will collect from your home the next day.

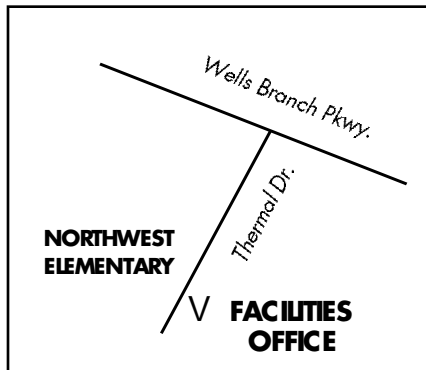
## WELLS BRANCH WORD

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**DUMPSTER AVAILABLE FOR  
LARGER-THAN-USUAL ITEMS**  
**2nd Saturday of every Month**  
**Facilities Office, 13905 Thermal**

## COVENANT CORNER

Make sure the vehicles parked at your home are either up-to-date or out-of-sight, Wells Branch covenant enforcement officials remind.

Under restrictive covenants in all parts of the district, vehicles parked in public view must be in operable condition.

That means that they must have inflated tires and be in good working order. And they must have current registration and inspection. If they don't, they're inoperable.

Inoperable vehicles must be screened from public view.

Your neighbors didn't buy their homes to live in a salvage yard. We all have a stake in making Wells Branch an attractive place to live.

Take a moment to make sure your vehicles aren't detracting from the neighborhood.

For information, call 251-9814.

## WELLS BRANCH ... IN BRIEF

### *Wells Branch hosts meeting of MUDs*

Municipal utility district officials from across Central Texas visited Wells Branch Oct. 19 to discuss the forthcoming Legislature. The MUD officials heard from legislative experts about what to expect in the vastly changed Capitol.

### *MUD board awards contract for detention pond*

The Wells Branch MUD board has awarded a \$1,245,330.45 contract for construction of the Shoreline Detention Pond to the low bidder, Central Plains Contracting of Lenexa, Kansas.

The Shoreline Detention Pond will be constructed on acreage just off Shoreline Drive, near the MUD office. It's designed to help control flood waters and protect homes along the creek.

### *MUD assists neighboring district*

Wells Branch MUD, long recognized as a leader in the way it serves its customers, will be doing what it does best for another municipal utility district. Wells Branch will provide services to nearby Northtown Municipal Utility District under a contract approved by the Wells Branch board Nov. 19. Wells Branch staff will provide covenant enforcement, park inspection and other services; Northtown will pay Wells Branch MUD a monthly fee. The Northtown MUD board will hold its monthly meetings at the Wells Branch Community Center.