THE AUSTIN CHRONICLE

THE DRINKS ISSUE

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FREE BUT NOT CHEAP

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Welcome to the Drinks Issue

Here’s a reason I’ve grown to like Mondays – because that’s when Food Editor Jessi Cape sends out her weekly newsletter. The purpose of the newsletter is to round up the Chronicle’s latest food coverage, and it’s a handy way to stay on top of the deluge of restaurant news. (You can sign up for it at AustinChronicle.com/newsletters.) But what I really get a kick out of is hearing Jessi’s voice, clear as a bell. Whether she’s walking us through her latest experiments in home cooking or recounting her household’s misadventures in managing the pandemic, it feels like a conversation with my funny, empathetic, ever-animated friend.

The newsletter is 100-proof Jessi, but it’s not the only place you’ll find her voice, her values. The Food section, like all of our sections at the paper, is molded in the image of the section editor. In Jessi’s case, that means the stories she assigns to reporters, and the ones she writes herself, are so often about uplifting the underdog and amplifying less-heard voices. They’re about staying curious about the world and considering how issues of sustainability, fair wages, and food justice are not a separate part of the conversation around Austin’s restaurant community but instead integral to that conversation. Oh, and they’re definitely about taking a hearty, sensual pleasure in food and drink, the socializing that happens around them – the nourishment, body and soul, that comes from sharing a meal, or simply reflecting on how many hands it takes to put dinner on a plate.

That’s what I mean when I say an editor’s values are manifest in the stories they choose to tell.

This week – our annual Drinks Issue – those stories are best enjoyed chilled, in a festive glass. Dive into the deliciousness, starting with Jessi’s introduction to the issue, on page 28.
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**WE NEED LEADERS: CITY BUDGET MISSES THE MARK**

In early April as the reality of COVID-19 began to set in, Arundhati Roy wrote the pandemic is a portal, “a gateway between one world and the next.” What Roy knew and what’s become all too apparent is that COVID has exposed the fault lines beneath the wealthiest country in the world.

As the pandemic surged and more Texans file unemployment, our leadership, Republican and Democratic, has proven itself to be woefully inept at handling this crisis. After months of inaction and record-breaking spikes in cases, Gov. Abbott has finally done the bare minimum and implemented a statewide executive order requiring masks in public. Mayor Adler hasn’t fared much better as Austin has regularly led the country in positivity rate and, instead of figuring out ways to help our vulnerable populations, particularly unsheltered folks, he’s resorted to finger-pointing with the governor. From the occupant of the White House, who has all but abandoned the fight against the coronavirus, to our local leaders, the pandemic has proven that neoliberal policies that value big business and gut social safety-net spending ultimately supports prof-it more than people.

Ordinary people have been put in impossible situations. As COVID-19 impacts Black and Latinx folks disproportionately, they are overwhelmingly the essential workers that have to decide between their health and livelihood. Not only are these communities having to find new, socially distant ways to bury their loved ones lost to the virus, but coupled with the deaths of Mike Ramos, Vanessa Guillen, Tony McDade, Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, and countless others, our communities are in mourning.

We would think that in times like these the city’s politicians would pull together to pass a budget that reflects the needs of the communities. A central concern of the recent unrest and reemergence of the Movement for Black Lives is the demand to defund the police, a demand that ultimately argues that, as a society, we divest from policing, jails, and prisons and invest in the social services that improve the lives and well-being of all, especially our society’s vulnerable. The demand reflects the at least half a century trend of drying up budgets dedicated to funding affordable housing, public health programs, universal childcare, and the eradication of poverty, programs that have historically supported over-policed communities. Instead, year after year, increasingly militarized police get their budgets bolstered as reflected in this year’s fiscal budget that dedicates over 40% of the general funds to APD. The culmination of the city’s priorities were laid bare when APD shot a 16-year-old during a protest with so-called “non-lethal” rounds, underscoring the city and its leaders’ inability to solve a crisis with resources other than the police. Instead, they offer empty and symbolic gestures like painting “Black Lives Matter” on streets but offer no real and substantial change.

Indeed, the new budget proposed by City Manager Spencer Cronk claims to be cognizant of the need for police reform and the desire to cut spending. In reality, however, the proposed budget not only fails to cut police spending in comparison to last year’s budget, but it actually increases spending in the police state apparatus. In a disingenuous political move, Cronk “cut” $11.3 million in additional spending that would have been allocated to police, bringing down APD’s budget to $434 million, the same amount they were allocated last fiscal year, and invested roughly $6.3 million more into the police state allocated for the Office of Police Accountability and to replace APD’s records management system. In short, Cronk is playing politics and hopes that we don’t find out.

What has been made apparent is the serious lack of leadership in Austin, Texas, and the nation. We need leaders not politicians. We need leaders who care more about people than profit. We need leaders who can lead a public health crisis without capitulating to the demands of big business. We need leaders more concerned about homelessness than attracting the next corporation with large tax cuts. We need leaders who are concerned about the vulnerable among us. If the pandemic is to be a portal to take us from our old “normal” to a new world where all of our basic physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual needs are met, then we must be those leaders. We will have to be the ones that fight to make sure politicians know they work for us and that people come first.

Joshua Crutchfield is a Ph.D. student in the African and African Diaspora Department at the University of Texas where he studies the history of social movements. The Chronicle welcomes submissions of opinion pieces on any topic from the community. Find guidelines and tips at austinchronicle.com/contact/opinion.
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Dear Editor,

In recent years, the idea of “community policing” has become popularized and touted as a solution to police violence against civilians. But when police forces are able to acquire excess military weapons at very little cost and with little oversight or transparency, they undermine their own ability to protect their community and its members. The 1033 Program was instituted in 1997 to fight the elusive and destructive “War on Terror” and “War on Drugs” in our communities. Through the 1033 Program, administered by the Law Enforcement Support Office (LESO) of the Defense Logistics Agency (DLA), local and state law enforcement agencies from 49 states and four U.S. territories have been able to acquire excess military equipment including pistols, rifles, and a mine-resistant vehicle in about a four-year period from 2010-14. With very little oversight or transparency due to lax tracking, police departments continue to militarize at virtually no cost and utilize military equipment to carry out attacks against civilians. Austinites need to be aware of the 1033 Program and how it has led to militarization of our city.

Janet Abou-Elias

POLICE BUDGET POEM

Dear Editor,

On the Proposal to Cut the Police Budget by One-Third of One Percent

There’s a giant lawnmower in a not-so-distant heaven

whose blades cut the air above my house so furiously

that a substance as quiet and freely given as air is churned into a noise that echoes to the edges of heaven.

It rocks the blossoms of my garden

or wakes me up at night when it flies low.

Ever since the protests God knows how much gas it’s spent circling like a buzzard that buzzes and doesn’t rest.

What are you watching for? Another sign of unrest,
like a teenager dressed for work in an essential business

with his hands held high above his head to film from the heights of an interstate overpass the crowds that less lethal rounds of rubber bullets and lead shot cut down, until a bag of lead hit him in his head and fractured his skull?

We only cut things as clear as youth or air, the mayor explained in a city council meeting. Black lives matter in the market, but we’re not here to cut the police budget. We cut through skulls, pregnant bellies, and men with their hands up, but not things that can be cut with a pen.

Let this city be a sanctuary for your tired, your wounded,
your ailing corporate earnings yearning to be free, the mayor said, raising his hands above his head.

And no one cut him down.

J. Brent Crosson

Now, the blades continue to cut the air above my house as the grass in the garden grows higher.

It’s summer and they’re hoping we’re tired, but we’re just waking up.

Christopher Ekman
Full Speed Ahead
City, AISD unfazed by public criticism

In a pair of somewhat surreal meetings Tuesday night, July 21, first city staff and then the Austin ISD board of trustees each got blasted in public comment, which they basically ignored and declined to address, and then moved ahead with the predetermined action. It was a strange and troubling evening of Kabuki theatre – giving lip service to public process, all the while knowing that there was no way public process was going to have any impact on the decisions being made. Bad stuff.

As usual, the school board was the absolute worst.

They were convened Tuesday to name the sole candidate to be the new district superintendent. A week earlier, a diverse group of mostly Eastside public education advocates, loosely organized as the Austin Equity Coalition, held a press conference and sent a letter to the board and administration asking them not to accelerate the decision, originally scheduled for July 27, and to have the finalist candidates answer a questionnaire the group had created, thus “allowing community members an increased opportunity to learn about the finalists and provide constructive feedback to the trustees prior to their decisions. …

“The current political moment demands greater transparency across sectors and community-driven solutions to public policy issues, and it is incumbent upon the AISD trustees to be as collaborative as possible with the community and deliberative in their process … [F]urther lack of transparency, and changing the timeline, amidst a global pandemic, only perpetuates the community’s mistrust.”

So, in response to this call for transparency and openness, the AISD board convened at 2:30 pm on Tuesday for some eight hours of closed Executive Session, broken up by about an hour’s worth of citizens communicating, which they took in without
Still Celebrating? WHAT HAS REALLY CHANGED?

“NOBODY CAN GIVE YOU FREEDOM, NOBODY CAN GIVE YOU EQUALITY OR JUSTICE OR ANYTHING... YOU TAKE IT.”
“IF YOU DON'T STAND FOR SOMETHING, YOU WILL FALL FOR ANYTHING.” - Malcolm X - MalcolmXFoundation.org

IS ENOUGH ENOUGH YET?

Austin Police have shot and killed 27 human beings since 2015.
That’s a minimum of 5 a year including 12 with mental illness, 6 unknown mental state, 1 drug or alcohol use. 4 were unarmed including Michael Ramos who was shot and killed on April 24, 2020.

Both Republicans and Democrats are responsible for the current crises.
Both Republicans and Democrats have militarized the police
(and most cities can still point to a series of police killings with few prosecutions or convictions!)
Police and prisons are the two core parts of a system of state violence. Police serve as the occupying troops while jails and prisons then warehouse, stigmatize and disenfranchise those the police have jailed.
In Austin, police were firing on demonstrators with “non lethal” weapons from atop IH35 - kinda like a turkey shoot and they have critically hurt innocent people - those cops have not been identified and are still on the job! Why?

We must all look more deeply at the role of the police in our community.

According to retired police major Neill Franklin
Executive director of the Law Enforcement Action Partnership
“We need a new paradigm of policing in the U.S. It needs to be completely dismantled and reconstructed, not changing a policy here or there.”

The city of Austin will now supposedly spend around $334 million on the police each year (down from 434 million).
That’s still 33% of the city’s General Fund, which could be better spent funding human services / housing / parks.
• Divert police overfunding to human services. • Make police contracts transparent.
• Establish community control boards with full oversight. • End police immunity & insure accountability.

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PUBLIC NOTICE continued from p.8

comment. (With the writing on the wall, commenters had changed their tack to now ask the board to at least have their sole candidate answer the questionnaire; there’s no indication whether that, too, fell on deaf ears.) The board finally reemerged at 10:30pm to announce their choice – Stephanie Elizalde, currently chief of school leadership at Dallas ISD – voted to approve her as sole candidate after about five more minutes of discussion, and adjourned at 10:45pm.

Notably, the vote was 7-0-2 to approve, with the two trustees representing East Austin both witholding their support: Jayne Mathias abstained, citing the insufficient process and time to select a sole candidate out of 44 qualified applicants, and LaTisha Anderson did the same, stating flatly that while she looked forward to working with Elizalde, “I don’t think she’s the best person for the job.” So, as usual, this board and administration give lip service to the Eastside but move full speed ahead without the Eastside’s consent. Ominously, one of Elizalde’s key attributes that was cited was how successful she had been in managing school closures in Dallas. Let’s all hope she has more sense than the people who selected her.

... Meanwhile, it looks like there may be no incumbent trustees running for reelection this November; all four have indicated that they’re not going to seek another term.

PLANNING ON PLANNING AHEAD

A couple of weeks ago, Assistant City Manager Rodney Gonzales announced a plan to merge the city’s Planning and Zoning Department into the Neighborhood Housing and Community Development Department in the 2020-21 fiscal year, which starts in October. The new depart-

ment’s proposed name is the Housing and Planning Department, to be led by current Housing Department head Rosie Truelove. On Tuesday night, Gonzales and Truelove led a staff presentation of the plan to the Zoning and Platting Commission, and it was not terribly well received. A clear majority of the board expressed grave reservations about the move, especially the fact that it doesn’t include a head planner.

Nor was it solely the commission’s density skeptics sounding alarms. Some of the bluntest comments came from Jimmy Flanagan appointee Bruce Evans: “I think that it’s imperative that this whole operation be led by somebody who thoroughly understands the planning process. We’re a victim in the city of not properly planning for such a long time, and I think that, without having that kind of capability, it’s going to lead to more of the same.”

Commissioners Ann Denkler (“I don’t think you got it right. ... Why isn’t the head of this department someone with experience in planning?”) and Jim Duncan (“It’s imperative that this be done right; if not, don’t do it.”) piled on, and Duncan assailed Truelove’s record at Housing as well: Back during the CodeNext process, “I was frustrated because nobody had any idea of how many dwelling units our affordable housing program had generated. That’s five years ago. This is 2020. We still have no idea. That’s not good management. ... The future is good, OK, and it’s going to be good in Austin. But somebody needs to start making some major changes. And start listening to the entire community, and not just the one-percenter.”

He also pointed out that it’s been a year now since Planning Director Greg Guernsey retired, and there’s been no real move to rehire the position. (Nor do we have a city demographer, several people noted in disarray. June 30 was — very quietly — Ryan Robinson’s last day on the job, after 25 years in the position.) “We are the only city that I know of, major city, that does not have a certified planner in a key management position,” said Duncan, and Chair Jolene Kiolbassa built on that by referencing an earlier discussion about “visionary planner” Dick Lilly: “And I thought, ‘Where is our Dick Lilly, and why are we not looking for a Dick Lilly right now?’ And I think it’s especially important now to have a Dick Lilly [because] we are not being planned right now, and planning is more than housing; it’s transportation, it’s open space, it’s resiliency. It is so many things. ... So let’s go back to being purists and having people who plan in the Planning Department.”

Gonzales ended the session by thanking the commissioners for their comments but affirming his determination to move ahead with the move. He said he hoped to have an org chart ready for public view within the next couple of weeks and that there might be an opportunity to bring on a fourth executive, probably an assistant director position, who will have planning experience.

Meanwhile, two very different “grass-roots” groups are organizing to try to bring two very different proposals to voters. First came a petition drive by Austin Outside, a local nonprofit comprising some 37 other local nonprofits — primarily environmental and social activist groups — asking that the city approve a $750 million Safe Mobility Bond “for a public vote this November to fund the City’s Bikeway Plan, Bicycle Plan, Urban Trail Plan, and Vision Zero goals.” There’s no official response from the city thus far, and it’s unclear whether officials might find either complementary, or perhaps in competition with, the much larger Project Connect bond they hope to put before voters in that same election. (Local taxpayers would have to pay for over half of that $1 billion plan, amounting to perhaps $360/year for the average homeowner, compared to $50 for the Austin Outside plan.)

Then there’s Austinites for Progressive Reform, a campaign newly announced this week “to amend the city charter to make local government more representa-
tive, diverse, responsive, and accountable to the people it serves.” Specifically, though this isn’t expressly stated anywhere yet, the idea is to put a package of city charter amendments on the May 2021 ballot that would move the city to a strong-mayor form of govern-
ament as opposed to the council-and-city-manager form we have now, move the mayoral election to coincide with presidential elections rather than the lower turnout off years, and create a public campaign finance system.

The steering committee list includes some heavy-hitter names: Andrew Allison, Fred Cantu, Angela De Hoyos Hart, Bobby LeVanka Nelson Linder, Chas Moore, Mary Patrick, Carmen Llanes Puluco, Shuronda Robinson, Eugene Sepulveda, Tom Perez, Selena Yip, and in the “political team” of Sepulveda, Jim Wick, Laura Hernandez, Mark Little, David Butts, and Mykle Tomlinson, and you have a big chunk of the inner circle of Mayor Steve Adler, who’s spent much of his tenure chafing at the limitations of being a “weak mayor,” but while the goals are worthy, it’s worth noting that there’s no real evidence that strong-mayor is any more democratic a governance system than council-manager, there are plenty of examples around the country of both systems producing good and bad results. One thing it clearly does, though, is to make management decisions more political and more susceptible to being controlled by a char-
tismatic populist. In these heady days of BLM and police reform, populism looks pretty good, but it’s worth reminding yourself that the most successful charismatic populists in recent history is still squating in the White House. Be careful what you wish for.

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**Off to the Races!**

As Council campaigns begin, the cash rolls in

**BY AUSTIN SANDERS**

Filing for November's City Council elections is underway, and campaigns filed their first finance reports of the cycle last week (covering January-June), giving a glimpse into how races for the seats in Districts 2, 4, 6, 7, and 10 are shaping up. As the Chronicle went to press on Wednesday, each of the four incumbents planning to seek reelection had a challenger, and two candidates have filed in the open D2 seat being vacated by mayor pro tem and County Attorney-elect Delia Garza. The deadline to file is Aug. 17, so expect additional new names to jump in before then.

Had Garza lost her run-off race last week, things might have gotten awkward for David Chincanchan and Vanessa Fuentes, who are vying for Garza’s Council seat. Chincanchan, the former chief of staff to CM Pio Renteria, took in $32,754 in contributions, spending $5,412, leaving him with $47,475 cash on hand. In addition to his deep roots in D2, which covers outer Southeast Austin, Chincanchan has been well-respected at City Hall for years, and his contributor list reflects that – several current Council staffers, attorneys from firms who do regular business at City Hall, and advocates, along with state Rep. Sheryl Cole, a former Austin mayor pro tem herself.

With $26,944 raised and $24,682 cash on hand, Fuentes is keeping the race competitive. A comparative newcomer to city politics, Fuentes dove into the campaign by volunteering to hand out protective equipment and meals throughout D2, with a focus on Del Valle. Notable contributors to Fuentes include attention-seeking attorney Adam Loewy, a Democratic donor who’s made noise about running for mayor (or, briefly, in the state Senate District 14 special election), but who regularly tweeted MAGA-leaning sentiments before deleting his account. Fuentes also got funds from former IndyAustin agitator Linda Curtis, who lives in Bastrop, along with state Reps. Terry Canales and Celia Israel.

CM Greg Casar also opted out of the SD 14 race; thus far, he’s in a comfortable position to keep representing D4 in North Central Austin. Neither of Casar’s two declared opponents appears to have raised any money yet: Louis Herrin III just appointed a campaign treasurer on July 21, and Manuel Muñoz filed a finance report with zero dollars raised or spent. Casar, meanwhile, reported $73,418 in contributions and still has $50,708 on hand. His expansive donor list includes criminal justice advocates Chas Moore and Chris Harris, various attorneys, city and Council staffers, and even Dallas County Judge Clay Jenkins.

In far Northwest Austin’s D6, likely the most conservative Council district, a semi-famous right-wing challenger to unabashed progressive Jimmy Flannigan would seem like a threat. But so far, fundraising doesn’t support that idea; Flannigan raised $68,154 and has $60,057 in available cash as the race heats up. His colleagues Natasha Harper-Madison, Paige Ellis, and Ann Kitchen all contributed, along with former CMs Betty Dunkerley and Chris Riley. Planning Commissioners Conor Kenny and Fayez Kazi, along with urbanist advocate Dan Keshet, also contributed, reflecting Flannigan’s alignment with urbanists despite representing a mostly suburban district. State Rep. John Bucy, who represents the Williamson County portion of Flannigan’s council district, also donated.

Flannigan challenger Mackenzie Kelly, who ran for D6 in the great 10-1 Blitz of 2014 (she finished fifth in a six-way race), has pulled in just $19,056, although she only appointed a treasurer in early May. In 2014, Kelly gained national notoriety for

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**AISD Names Dr. Stephanie Elizalde as Lone Superintendent Finalist**

The Austin Independent School District named Dr. Stephanie Elizalde as its lone finalist for outgoing Superintendent Paul Cruz’s successor in a special board meeting on Tuesday, July 21. Elizalde was chosen with a 7-0-2 vote, with trustees Latisha Anderson and Jayme Mathias abstaining because they preferred other candidates.

“We are all looking forward to having her serve our community,” AISD Board President Geronimo Rodriguez said. “I believe she is the right person at the right time.” Trustee Arati Singh praised Elizalde’s familiarity with AISD’s data, saying “she was the only one” who had plans to analyze disaggregated data, which shows how different student groups perform. Trustee Cindy Anderson said Elizalde also discussed suspension data and the district’s Alternative Learning Center, which could prepare her to address the disproportionate disciplining of Black students.

Multiple trustees also mentioned Elizalde’s work in special education, including a goal of “reducing caseloads” for special education teachers and experience in dyslexia education. She currently works as the chief of school leadership of the Dallas Independent School District. She earned her doctorate in educational leadership and policy from UT-Austin last year.

The vote comes nearly a week before the original announcement date, July 27. The quicker timeline is part of an already speedy search: Three months after JG Consulting began meeting with trustees, the final candidate was selected. The speed drew ire from activists who felt that community input had not been prioritized.

Throughout July, six community groups, including the Austin Justice Coalition and teachers’ union Education Austin, called for all candidates to fill out an equity-centered questionnaire. They hoped AISD would publish each candidate’s answers to the questionnaire, allowing the community to provide feedback to the trustees before they chose the finalist. “It’s not too much to ask for superintendent finalists, knowing one may expect to receive an annual salary that’s over $300,000, to complete a questionnaire generated by the actual community they will serve,” Vincent Tovar, who contributed to the questionnaire, said last week. During public comment at the board meeting, more than a dozen callers asked for AISD to present the questionnaire to the lone finalist and publish her answers. No trustees responded to the request during the meeting.

Texas requires a 21-day waiting period after the naming of the finalist before she can sign a contract. Elizalde would thus become eligible on August 12, six days before the school year officially begins.

— Clara Ence Morse
her support of Gamergate – the online harassment campaign waged by mostly white males against women in the industry. This time, she’s focusing on homelessness, where she’s been a constant critic of the Council. Now that Save Austin Now’s initiative to roll back Council’s decriminalization efforts may end up on the November ballot, Kelly’s campaign could gain some steam. Her fellow Council critics Susan Spataro and Sharon Blythe have contributed, along with Don Zimmerman, who narrowly beat Flannigan in that 2014 race but lost the rematch in 2016. (He actually did run in the SD 14 special election, placing third, after also placing third in March’s GOP primary for House District 47.)

Up until a few weeks ago, D7 incumbent Leslie Pool did not have an opponent; since January, she only took in $6,725 in contributions, but she still has $24,586 in cash on hand. She also received a contribution from Dunkerley, as well as from attorneys from the major City Hall firms – Husch Blackwell, Drenner Group, and Armbrust & Brown. Challenger Morgan Witt appointed a treasurer on July 1 to run against Pool in the Northside district, but has not yet posted a campaign finance report; in a Facebook post, the bilingual educator announced she’d raised $1,000 in the two days following her launch. She’s also aligning with urbanists, who targeted Pool in both 2014 and 2016, saying her top three priorities are making Austin “more equitable, affordable, and mobile.” Her campaign is managed by AURA board member Caroline Bailey.

Finally, there were big numbers posted in the affluent D10 race. Incumbent Alison Alter raised $83,588 since January from an array of donors, including AISD trustees Amber Elenz and Ann Teich (both stepping down after this term), Travis County Commissioner Margaret Gómez, a host of UT faculty, and Save Our Springs Managing Director Pat Brodnax. Alter also got support from leading opponents of Land Development Code Revision, such as Chris Allen, Fred Lewis, and Barbara McArthur.

Alter spent $11,695 during the filing period and has a staggering $112,871 in available funds. Her opponent, Pooja Sethi, posted an impressive $43,498 in contributions; she appointed a treasurer and began fundraising back in November. Prominent donors to Sethi’s campaign include local Dem activist Laura Hernandez, former congressional candidate Shannon Hutcheson, former CM Mike Martinez, and criminal defense attorney Brian McGiverin – one of a number of lawyers who contributed to the attorney’s first run for office.

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End-of-Life Decisions in a Pandemic

The case of Michael Hickson highlights legal and ethical issues around who receives treatment and who decides

BY MARGARET NICKLAS

COVID-19 has raised the profile of hospitals across the nation. They are crucial to our fight against the pandemic, as are the doctors and nurses who risk their health daily to save lives. But the centrality of hospitals to our national response has also underscored their power when it comes to making critical decisions, such as who receives what treatment and when.

Take the case of Michael Hickson, a 46-year-old paraplegic man who recently died at St. David’s South Austin Medical Center. His death has received enormous attention from advocates for people with disabilities and religious groups after doctors made end-of-life decisions with which his wife disagreed, and because a doctor implied that Hickson’s disabilities might have been a factor in the hospital’s treatment decisions.

Legally, doctors did not have to follow Melissa Hickson’s wishes regarding her husband’s care. She and Hickson’s sister, Renee Hickson, had been in contention to be his legal guardian since at least January, court records show. In February, a Travis County probate judge appointed third-party nonprofit Family Eldercare to act as his temporary guardian while it processed the case. Hickson acquired COVID-19 in May in a local nursing home and died in June, according to a YouTube video posted by his wife.

A spokesperson for St. David’s HealthCare told us that Family Eldercare no longer permits the hospital network to speak with the media or the public about his case. But in a statement dated July 2, posted to and later removed from SDHC’s website, Chief Medical Officer DeVry Anderson defended the hospital’s actions. “Some people want the public to believe that we took the position that Mr. Hickson’s life wasn’t worth being saved, and that is absolutely wrong. It wasn’t medically possible to save him,” the statement said.

Hickson’s sister, who is a physician practicing family medicine, told the Chronicle she felt her brother received the best care possible given the circumstances; she was in full agreement with St. David’s recommendation for hospice care. Family Eldercare declined to comment beyond a statement posted on their website, which reads in part, “As Guardian, and in consultation with Mr. Hickson’s family and medical providers, we agreed to the recommendation for hospice care so that Mr. Hickson could receive end-of-life comfort, nutrition and medications, in a caring environment.”

NEGOTIATING MEDICAL ETHICS

In Hickson’s case, his legal guardian and the hospital agreed regarding his care, but this is not always true. The Texas Advance Directives Act, which took effect in 1999, was meant to help doctors and families deal with such conflicts. The act allows physicians to withdraw or refuse treatment they consider medically inappropriate against the wishes of a patient or his or her legal representatives – and be immune from prosecution – but only if an “ethics or medical committee” agrees and if other procedures are followed. Medically inappropriate treatment might be painful, violent, or invasive and unlikely to produce any benefit.

Experts we spoke to said it’s rare that treatment is withdrawn under the law over family objections. Most often, agreement is reached or the person dies or is transferred to another facility willing to provide the disputed treatment before that happens. SMU law professor Tom Mayo, who helped craft the legislation, told the Chronicle that he could recall perhaps three cases over 21 years where treatment was withdrawn at one large Dallas hospital on whose ethics committee he serves. One goal of the legislation was to make clear that the state recognizes that “there are limits to what medicine can accomplish,” Mayo said.

Dr. Robert Fine, clinical director for Baylor Scott and White’s Office of Clinical Ethics and Palliative Care, also helped draft the law. Fine told us there was just one case last year that went to a clinical ethics committee for full dispute resolution, among all hospitals in the BSW system. “Good families and good doctors can disagree about what to do for a patient who is terminally or irreversibly ill,” Fine said. The law helps prevent these disagreements from winding up in court by fostering communication and providing a formal resolution process.

Families often disagree among themselves as well, Fine said. “We try to pull families together,” which has eliminated many dis-

Study: Nondiscrimination Law Could Bring Big Business to Texas

A study analyzing the economic benefits of a statewide comprehensive nondiscrimination law is now putting numbers and dollars behind the maxim that discrimination is bad for business.

According to recent analyses commissioned by Texas Competes – a statewide coalition of businesses, chambers of commerce, and other entities “making the economic case for Texas to be welcoming to LGBTQ people” – the Lone Star State stands to gain billions in business activity, among other economic advantages, over time if Texas were to pass an LGBTQ nondiscrimination act with protections in employment, housing, and public accommodations.

In a webinar last week co-hosted by Texas Competes and the Austin Chamber of Commerce, the study’s leader, economist Ray Perryman, presented findings from the Perryman Group’s May survey that indicate a statewide LGBTQ nondiscrimination law could generate $738 million in state revenue and $531 million in local revenue in the next biennium. Such a law could also lead to the creation of 180,000 jobs, plus $19.8 billion in gross product in the tourism and tech sectors by 2025, according to the study – growth that would stem largely from Texas’ greater ability to attract tech talent, tourism, conventions, and related activities. Of those 180,000 jobs, Austin would account for 27,000, with a projected path to 123,000 new jobs by 2045 out of the study’s estimated 700,000 new jobs statewide by then.

“If we want to escalate our competitive advantage into the future, our research shows significant benefits from enactment of a comprehensive nondiscrimination law that includes all people, including LGBTQ people,” said Perryman in a press release.

The survey coincides with a concerted effort by state lawmakers working to pass a statewide LGBTQ nondiscrimination law in the 87th Texas Legislature, in a May virtual announcement – which also referenced some study findings – state Rep. Jessica González (D-Dallas), vice chair of the LGBTQ House Caucus, announced she would prioritize “the legislation” on the bill’s next session, with bipartisan support of state Reps. Sarah Davis (R-West University Place) and Todd Hunter (R-Corpus Christi) plus early backing from several Democratic state reps. Last week members of the Central Texas House delegation – state Reps. Jon Zwiener, Sherry Cole, James Talarico, B. Todd R公開 - added their support to working on a bipartisan, comprehensive LGBTQ nondiscrimination bill to be filed in the 87th Legislature.
Politicians, Activists, Artists Headline the 19th Represents Virtual Summit

In August, the 19th, Austin’s newest nonprofit newsroom, will host the 19th Represents, a weekend-long virtual summit featuring some of the country’s most prominent voices in politics, activism, and art. Those voices will all be female.

Ramona Nava, Stacey Abrams, Hillary Clinton, and influential GOP star Elise Stefanik, among many other political heavyweights, will take part in a series of keynote conversations to celebrate the centennial of the 19th Amendment, granting women the right to vote – the “largest expansion of democracy in our country’s history,” according to the American Bar Association.

The free virtual summit will also reckoning with the amendment’s “unfinished business,” says Emily Ramshaw, co-founder and CEO of the 19th, which launched two years ago. “We think this moment is ripe – the right time to engage with this amendment,” she said.

The 19th Represents takes cues from TribFest, the wonky annual conference hosted by the Texas Tribune, where Ramshaw served as editor-in-chief before launching the 19th. To its equally wonky speaker lineup, the 19th has added poetry, a pop-up punk performance, and live readings of suffragette speeches by Meryl Streep and Zoe Saldana. For women, there’s a particular connection between artistic expression and civic involvement, Ramshaw says. “I hope this serves as a rallying cry for women to get engaged. And I hope it offers some hope and light and maybe even some entertainment in a really difficult time.”

The complete Aug. 10-14 program can be found at www.summit.19thnews.org. Another big August event to look for: the 19th’s full website launch.

Victoria Rossi

Two members of Congress have mentioned investigations. Meanwhile, the coronavirus has also caused greater uncertainty and less autonomy for hospitalized patients and their loved ones, no matter their condition or prognosis. Restrictions set by the state and individual hospitals have curtailed family access to the sick and the dying. And while such measures may be necessary, they make it harder to build trust between patients, families, and doctors.

Mayo also told us there had always been concern that the law not be used to disadvantage patients with disabilities; a 2015 amendment aimed to provide them more protection. He pointed to supportive palliative care programs that develop relationships with family members and explain the dispute process well before the law requires it.

AND YET...

Mayo also told us there had always been concern that the law not be used to disadvantage patients with disabilities; a 2015 amendment aimed to provide them more protection, he said. Fine told us, “We never use ‘quality of life’ as a justification for anything.” Yet Michael Hickson’s doctor alluded to both of these in his recorded conversation with Hickson’s wife, which has spurred criticism and concern among people with disabilities who already worry their lives may be seen as less valuable.

In the recording the doctor states that, as part of why more aggressive treatment isn’t required to provide “life-sustaining treatment” to one patient if it means denying care to another.

And things may get worse. If COVID-19 cases surge to the point where hospitals can no longer provide maximal treatment to every patient who is ill, they may be forced to triage cases based on which patients are deemed to have the best chance of survival – as part of implementing “crisis standards of care.” How that would work remains unclear, as universal standards don’t exist. But, Fine said, it would mean doctors might be forced to unilaterally decide to withhold or withdraw treatment in order to save as many lives as possible. Such decisions may be protected under another provision of the 1999 law, which says doctors are not required to provide “life-sustaining treatment” to one patient if it means denying the same treatment to another.

See links to Melissa Hickson’s video and the audio recording of Michael Hickson’s doctor with this story online.
The Spies Among Us

APD’s secret informants are eyeing their neighbors for “suspicious” activity, leaked documents reveal

BY JOHN ANDERSON

In early June, an intelligence center operated by the Austin Police Department was hacked, along with many others like it across the country. Known as BlueLeaks, the collection of leaked documents from the hack contains over 10 gigs of material taken from the Austin center. They reveal a secret citizen spying program that’s active in the Austin area and across the country. The Chronicle has obtained copies of BlueLeaks and will report further on the documents in the coming weeks.

Known as a fusion center, the Austin Regional Intelligence Center (ARIC) is a partnership between 19 local law enforcement agencies, housed at the Texas Department of Public Safety complex on North Lamar. Established after the perceived failures of intelligence sharing that contributed to 9/11, fusion centers use a national network of agencies, housed at the center in each state. Texas currently has eight.

A critical part of ARIC’s intelligence gathering process is the use of Threat Liaison Officers (TLOs), who report suspicious activity or behavior to ARIC. According to APD Public Information Specialist Tara Long, ARIC currently works with about 800 such officers. These include sworn law enforcement officers, but also non-sworn government employees as well as private citizens. Long confirmed the hack, but could not provide us with a breakdown of sworn and civilian TLOs.

Documents examined by the Chronicle show that each TLO must sign a nondisclosure agreement with ARIC, including those not working in law enforcement, essentially creating secret citizen officers. These informants, known as For Official Use Only TLOs, are able to access the fusion centers’ national intelligence database (excluding personal identifying information). The FOUO TLOs include private security officers with local hotels, malls, large venues, and local semiconductor companies. Government employees in “education,” “code enforcement,” and “public works” also contribute to ARIC as FOUO TLOs.

Long indicated there were no other categories of FOUO TLOs, but a document from the Texas Division of Emergency Management (included with BlueLeaks but also available at the agency’s website), titled “Building Relationships With Fusion Centers – A Guide for Non-Law Enforcement Organizations,” listed “military,” “hospital systems,” and “faith community” as additional “partner organizations.” These expanding partnerships exemplify what civil rights activists often criticize as the fusion centers’ “mission creep” – from well-defined efforts to combat terrorism into a broad conception of “suspicious activity” without clear links to any kind of crime.

“The FOUO TLO program appears to create a cadre of anonymous, non-law-enforcement citizen informants who, unlike ARIC, are completely unaccountable to the public,” said Texas Civil Rights Project lawyer and ARIC Community Advocate Peter Steffensen. “When we have no idea who is surveilling Austin’s communities, I find it hard to trust that the Privacy Policy is actually serving one of its core functions: ‘to protect the privacy, civil rights and civil liberties of all individuals.’” The NDAs may contractually obligate these TLOs not to...
disclose any information they receive from ARIC, but it does not appear from the strict wording of the Privacy Policy that these people are even authorized to receive this information to begin with. Given this country’s tortured history of over-surveillance of Black and brown communities, these secretive programs deserve intense scrutiny and more substantial public oversight.”

IS AN “ARABIC HAT” A THREAT?

The reports submitted by ARIC TLOs range from mundane observations to serious threats that require immediate law enforcement action. For example, numerous school shooting threats are included, derived from comments made to school counselors and on social media. APD gave the Chronicle an example of a person who had told a counselor or of an interest in committing a mass shooting at a school, mall, or other gathering place, with a detailed plan and access to weapons. The counselor said the individual “had previously expressed ideations of ramming their truck into a crowd of people so they could ‘hear their bones crunching.’” The report led to the individual being taken into custody for a mental health evaluation.

That’s the sort of report a community would expect their police to follow up on. But there are many more troubling examples, such as racial profiling of Middle Eastern persons and reports on First Amendment-protected speech involving protests. For example, one report warns that a person “who regularly rides the MetroRail from Howard Station to the Downtown Station has changed his dress from traditional westernized clothing to ‘tunics with an Arabic style hat,’” and describes the person as tense and sweaty. Another describes a planned peaceful protest by Bee Cave high school students, saying the “interest of attendees is unknown.”

ARIC is governed by a Privacy Policy, which is relatively progressive compared to other fusion centers (though the bar is quite low). ARIC’s policy states the center “shall collect and retain information only where there is reasonable suspicion that a specific individual or organization has committed a criminal offense or is involved in or is planning criminal (including terrorism) conduct or activity that presents a threat to any individual, the community, or the nation.” It defines suspicious activity as “observed behavior reasonably indicative of pre-operational planning related to terrorism or other criminal activity.” Some reports meet this standard, but many describe “suspicious activity” that falls well short of what a reasonable person would consider criminal or terrorist activity or evidence of such intent. The leaked documents include submission forms TLOs use to make their reports. At the top of the forms are boxes to check indicating the type of activity being reported. These include the aforementioned “School Threat,” but also “Eliciting Information,” “Observation/Surveillance,” and “Suspicious/Odd Facebook Post.” The TLO report spreadsheet contains 128 reports of school threats. But the category most reported by far was “Expressed or Implied Threat,” with more than a thousand entries. One threat is simply listed as “Photography,” with at least 35 examples reported as suspicious. According to one FOOU TLO’s report, an individual was seen taking photos of Zach Scott’s Topfer Theatre on Sept. 22, 2016. The report includes five different pictures of a young person using a camera on a tripod to photograph the theatre from across the street. Another report, from a law enforcement TLO, describes a person who got out of their vehicle to take photos of a school building’s facade and then drove away. Apparently even taking photos at a “public commission meeting” can be considered suspicious, as another report indicates. (As a Chronicle staff photographer, this reporter found these examples disturbingly similar to their own assignments at times.)

Another TLO report described an “Expressed or Implied Threat, Other” that appears more gross than criminal: A person “posted comments on a social media page, that he was going to spit in the drink of a classmate, whom he dislikes. The subject later posted to having completed the act and enjoying watching the classmate unknowingly drink the subject’s spit.”

None of these reports led to the completion of a Suspicious Activity Report by an intelligence analyst, the next step taken when a report is considered credible enough to add to the ARIC database. But worrisome examples of “suspicious activity” have led to that increased scrutiny; in the coming weeks, the Chronicle will report on local political activists whose noncriminal activity has resulted in their surveillance by TLO officers, along with other concerning aspects of ARIC. Stay tuned.

Civil rights activists often criticize the fusion centers’ “mission creep” – from well-defined efforts to combat terrorism into a broad conception of “suspicious activity” without clear links to any kind of crime.
A Lagniappe About Mary Trump’s Book

Unlike Susanne Craig of The New York Times, I did not show up on the doorstep of Mary L. Trump to ask about her uncle Donald. Using my journalistic research techniques, however, I did find out where her brother Freddy, my childhood school friend, lives, but it would have been super creepy of me to show up at his home after losing touch with him some 45 years ago and ask him how things are going. We last saw each other in seventh grade at a bar mitzvah party.

For three years, I attended Kew-Forest, a private school in Queens, New York. My parents put me there after I was bullied in public school for being Jewish. The whole fourth grade at Kew-Forest was about 20 people. I loved the small class size, and Freddy was just one of the guys like me. The boys all wore the same dark gray blazers with a school patch, white shirts, striped ties, and gray slacks, and the girls wore white blouses and red-and-blue plaid skirts.

I first met Mary Trump when she was about 7 and I was about 10. Although we didn’t interact much, I thought she was nice. Freddy, Mary, and their mom had a good-sized apartment in Jamaica Estates. One year, Freddy had a birthday party and his dad, Fred, took us all to see a matinee professional wrestling match at the old Sunnyside Gardens on Queens Boulevard. We saw our heroes, Chief Jay Strongbow and Pedro Morales, Freddy’s parents were divorced so I didn’t see his dad a lot, but he seemed like an easygoing, generous guy. I had a secret crush on Freddy’s mom, Linda. I bought Mary’s book, Too Much and Never Enough: How My Family Created the World’s Most Dangerous Man, and now I feel a little guilty about the crush part, but what do you expect from a prepubescent boy?

Judging by the book’s timeline, my crush would have started just a couple years after Linda asked Fred Trump to move out after their fights escalated. I never got to see the bedroom described in the book as having a decaying drywall, or the snake Fred bought to torment Linda. Mary says she used to call her brother “Fitz,” but he was just Freddy to me. He was pretty stock and never let on about his family’s issues — his father’s alcoholism, his mother’s struggles, and how his grandfather treated the family.

Donald was kicked out of Kew-Forest before I was born. When I heard the supposed reason — that he had punched the music teacher — I thought of Virgil Toms, my music teacher at the school. Mr. Toms had us study the classical composers and for fun the class would sing songs like “Go Down Moses (Let My People Go).” These were hardly punchable offenses, I later learned. Mr. Toms wasn’t the teacher Donald punched.

Mary Trump is now a clinical psychologist, and I appreciated her attempt in the book to diagnose her uncle. Having personally written brochures to recruit foster and adoptive parents for children who have been abused or neglected, I understood her emphasis on attachment disorders. If a child never gets a smile from a parent, it makes a big difference. You almost feel sorry for Donald and his brothers, having grown up in a family where their mom had health issues and their dad showed little affection. Still, it’s hard to comprehend how Donald has handled the COVID-19 pandemic. Do you consider his grandfather Friedrich died from the Spanish flu.

In articles about Donald prior to the election in 2016, I read that Freddy’s son was born with cerebral palsy and needed help paying for medical expenses. The story was actually old news, broken by Heidi Evans in The New York Daily News in 2000. I was heartbroken. My own son was born with a mild form of Asperger’s syndrome — hardly comprable — but my parents, who weren’t millionnaires, helped out emotionally and financially. It made a huge difference.

Now that I have a better understanding about the Trump family’s dynamics, however, I make sense how Freddy seems to have been treated by his uncle concerning his son’s medical care. If there’s anything I learned from writing those brochures, it was that children with attachment disorders can grow up into adults who lack empathy. In her book’s epilogue, Mary Trump says: “The simple fact is that Donald is fundamentally incapable of acknowledging the suffering of others.”

The stories of those we’ve just lost would bore him. Acknowledging the victims of COVID-19 would be to associate himself with their weakness, a trait his father taught him to despise.

R.U. Steinberg

A Pandemic Delay Lets Deborah Roberts Meet the Moment in Her Upcoming Show at the Contemporary Austin

Deborah Roberts’ solo exhibition at the Contemporary Austin was one of the most highly anticipated arts events of 2020 in Austin — and outside it, in an article in The New York Times was any indication. Now, because of the pandemic, “Deborah Roberts: I’m” will be one of the most highly anticipated arts events of 2021. The museum has shifted it from September to January, which may disappoint Roberts’ fans, but the artist herself is fine with the delay.

“Because this is my hometown,” she says, “doing this show at the Contemporary was a really personal act. I wanted to throw the kitchen sink at this show.” More specifically, the postponement “has allowed me to really reflect on what it’s like to be in a Black person’s body.” The new movement “driving BLM” helped me with the work.

That was one insight of many revealed in Roberts’ hourlong Coffee Chat with fellow artist and friend Bethelhym Makonnen on July 16, part of the weekly Creative Standard series from Big Medium. Whether or not you were well-acquainted with the art of this Austinite who’s now an international sensation, the conversation was an enlightening glimpse into a major artist’s effort to meet the moment in her work.

Roberts described her complex, compelling collages — images of African American children, their faces and bodies composed from multiple faces and bodies (children’s and adults’) — as “artifacts of this time, gathered from Black history, American history, art history, pop culture” to construct “a new identity with these images.” She said it’s important that people see the complexity in her work and what she’s trying to say, that they look beyond her figures’ exaggerated features to see the “innocence and beauty within that work,” the “beautiful little kid that exists in this joined body.” To her, “once you see someone & human and vulnerable, it’s impossible to mistreat them. That’s the basis of my work.”

But the innocence and beauty of children has also made what’s happening now difficult for Roberts to address. “It’s really hard to use a child’s body in relationship to violence and people displacing them and seeing them as invisible.” She struggled with “what was the best way to talk about boiling and brutal and racial protecting using children? I really had to think a lot about how to do that.” It was a hard thing to do.

Roberts admitted to making a few major changes to her work that can be seen in the new collages, but besides going darker with some colors, she wouldn’t describe the rest. “I don’t want to give it all away,” she said, “because I definitely want people to come to the show.”

“Deborah Roberts: I’m” opens Jan. 23, 2021, at the Contemporary Austin — Jones Center, 700 Congress. For more info, visit www.thect.com.
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Police on the Block

“Reimagining” APD and its huge budget starts now

BY AUSTIN SANDERS

City Manager Spencer Cronk wants his proposed police budget to be viewed as a starting point. His fiscal year 2021 spending plan includes $11.3 million in cuts to the Austin Police Department’s base budget, of which $3.2 million is reinvested back into APD to enhance its training and records management. The resulting $8.1 million in actual reductions – mostly through eliminating vacant positions – is largely offset by the budget’s fixed “cost drivers,” notably a 2% raise for all city employees, including both civilian and sworn APD personnel (the latter guaranteed a raise by their contract). So the entire bottom-line police budget is only $150,000 less than what was approved last year. However, that 0.03% trimming breaks a trend of more than a decade of increasing APD spending (see chart, p.21).

“I’ve always characterized this as a budget snapshot in time,” Cronk told us in a recent interview. “The two crises, the pandemic and public safety, are very much evolutions and we need to make sure that we continue to adapt and adjust in an ongoing way. Unlike previous years where it does feel like there’s an annual budget and we’re not going to touch it until next year … that playbook is just out the door. We have to allow ourselves the space for multiple budget amendments that will come throughout the year.” (See p.26 for more from our conversation with Cronk, his first sit-down with the Chronicle.)

Activists and council members say the proposal falls well short of their desired police divestment (ranging from $100 million to around $220 million), while mostly acknowledging that Cronk and his staff didn’t have much time to produce those kinds of numbers. So how much space to allow for amendments – where the bolder, more difficult “reimagining” of public safety will begin to take place – is now at the center of the budget debate.

The goal of “reimagining” is not just to reduce the APD budget, but “to move away from policing and into alternatives that reduce harm,” CM Greg Casar told us. Even by that metric, Casar continued, “the budget the city manager presented does not go far enough. I and other members of Council are going to make much more significant changes before we can support this budget.”

WHAT CHANGE LOOKS LIKE

Getting from the FY 21 budget proposed by Cronk to one that reallocates 20% to 50% of APD’s budget, as advocates are seeking, can involve two forms of divestment: cuts that outright eliminate existing APD programs and personnel, and transfers of programs and funding into other departments or agencies that can handle them more efficiently or effectively.

An example of the first of these is APD’s Mounted Patrol, which is mostly used for crowd control; as the past six weeks have made clear, the community wants APD to rethink its approach to crowd control, and it may be time to give up the horses. An example of a potential transfer can be found in traffic enforcement; instead of sending officers to crashes that may only require them to direct traffic, other (less expensive) city staff, such as from Transportation or Public Works, could manage this task.

Some of the ideas being floated for de-policing Austin and right-sizing APD come with legal and political hurdles that will make them challenging – such as moving Internal Affairs out of APD, for example. Others, like transferring the department’s public information and human resources functions (mostly managed by civilians), are much easier. More than 90% of APD’s $434 million budget goes to wages and benefits, so any real cuts involve real employees, many of them sworn officers that must report to a sworn chief, per state statute.

There is some thinking on Council that state law would allow civilian department heads to control the funding that is used for sworn staffing (as, ultimately, Cronk does now). For example, last year APD’s budget included about $6 million for patrols of city parks. If that funding were moved to the Parks and Recreation Department, its leadership could use it to pay for whatever level of APD patrol made sense, or on other strategies like hiring more park rangers. (Old-timers will remember that Austin used to have separate park and airport police forces, with their own sworn chiefs; these were merged with each other, and then with APD, in the mid-2000s.)

Moving Internal Affairs outside of APD is a much heavier political and legal lift. It’s not clear what abilities a civilian investigation unit would legally have to examine officer misconduct; perhaps a hybrid that combines sworn and civilian staff could be made to work under state law. While moving Internal Affairs out of the APD chain of command would be a major victory for accountability advocates, police officials and their allies are unlikely to go along willingly with any plan that takes away their power to investigate their own.

WHERE DOES THE TIME GO?

Advocates have helped Council turn its visions for police reform into policy guidance; they’re also providing data that will inform Council’s near-term work to amend the FY 21 budget as well as potentially

“It’s a big disappointment. … I don’t buy it at all [that there wasn’t enough time]; it’s just further proof the city manager is out of step with the community.”

CHRIS HARRIS, TEXAS APPLESEED
**AUSTIN POLICE DEPARTMENT BUDGET FY 2009-2020**

The total approved amount budgeted each year for the Austin Police Department

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<th>Fiscal Year</th>
<th>Total Budget</th>
<th>Percent Change</th>
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**THE POLICE BUDGET: MUCH ROOM FOR DEFUNDING**

Many complaints have been made about the proposed budget’s tight trim of APD funding - compared to the 25% or even 50% haircut proposed by advocates. But the budget does propose the first actual decrease in police spending in more than a decade, during which APD’s budget grew 63%. (The exceptional FY 15 increase reflects a citywide change in budget practices regarding employee compensation, which means the totals from that year on more accurately reflect the true cost of policing, and the ones from earlier are too low.)

The Austin Justice Coalition hired a firm called AH Datalytics to analyze 18 months (January 2019-June 2020) of calls for service to which police responded – more than 1 million calls. The researchers acknowledge their analysis does not fully account for all of the time officers spend while on the clock, but their findings do provide what they call “a snapshot” of how officers interact with members of the public.

Among key findings: Officers spent 21.5% of their time responding to crimes of any variety – those included in the Uniform Crime Reporting statistics APD and other departments report to the FBI, as well as others. Within that, though, officers only spent 0.6% of their time responding to the eight categories of serious crimes known as “Part 1 offenses” in the UCR, those include homicide, rape, aggravated assault, different types of theft, and arson. (Not all these crimes involve violence, and not all violent crimes are Part 1 offenses.)

Officers spend much more time responding to burglar alarms, which took up 6% of the time accounted in the AH Datalytics study, most of it to little benefit. (A staggering 70% of such calls were false alarms; another 18% were canceled after the alarm went off, and another 7% resulted in no police report.) Overall, traffic calls accounted for 21% of officer time, of which more than half was spent managing accidents and directing traffic. (This doesn’t, of course, include traffic stops made by officers on patrol, just responses to calls.)

These look to advocates like prime opportunities to not pay police salaries and overtime for duties that other departments and agencies could likely handle just fine.

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Continued on p.22
NEWS > COVER STORY > ARTS & CULTURE > FOOD > SCREENS > MUSIC

APD BUDGET CONTINUED FROM P.21

That doesn’t mean eliminating funding for traffic enforcement, although that function could likewise be managed by, for example, Transportation (which already writes parking tickets) while sworn officers continue to report to the police chief. As with the park patrols, such a move opens up opportunities to reprioritize how the city invests in the goal of traffic safety: less focus on traffic stops (a gateway to profiling, escalation, and unequal justice, as many advocates see it) and more on assisting stranded motorists or creating safer environments for all users, not just drivers.

Perhaps the most important opportunity the city can – and is trying to – address right now is to transform mental health crisis response. AH DataLytics found that in the first six months of this year (not the entire 18 months of its study), about 7.8% of all calls involved some kind of mental health component. These calls often originate as other issues – 64% came from welfare checks, disturbances, and trespassing incidents, according to the report – making it hard to track and analyze the data as well as we could.

As we reported last week, the city paid the Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute to examine how Austin’s public safety agencies respond to mental health calls, resulting in a blueprint for improving its management of these crises (“Mental Health Crisis Plan Still Lags Behind Austin’s Needs,” News, July 17). That plan has only been about half-funded to date, but CMs believe that the $3.5 million proposed in the FY 21 budget should allow the Meadows report to be fully implemented.

A champion for this on Council is CM Ann Kitchen, who co-sponsored the budget amendment in 2019 that funded the Meadows report. She told us that the $5.3 million in new funding is “a significant step forward” that’s critical to achieve Council’s commitment “to provide an alternative to police in every mental health call, when possible.” That could be one of Austin-Travis County EMS’s Community Health Paramedics (seven new CHPs will be funded in the new budget), an Integral Care clinician on the Extended/Mobile Crisis Outreach Team, or both. “There will be cases where police presence is necessary,” Kitchen continued, “but our goal is to get to a point where officers have to spend as little time as possible on mental health calls.”

Of course, EMS medics don’t just respond to mental health calls; EMS Association President Selena Xie has called for the budget to include funding for a new ambulance and the 12 FTEs required to staff it. That’s roughly $2 million in funding for the ambulance and medics, which Xie says is needed to deal with increasing call volume, especially in Central Austin. “I worked a shift recently, and at 4:30pm, 32 out of 33 ambulances in all of Austin were unavailable,” Xie told us. “The only ambulance available in the whole city was in Circle C.” The funding for a new ambulance has not been included in the budget, partly because the new Travis County Fire/EMS station is expected to open in June 2021.

Concerns from Xie’s police counterpart, Austin Police Association President Ken Casaday, have been fairly predictable: Reducing police department funding will make the city less safe, he argues, although national research has not found any clear connection between increased police spending and reduced crime rates. Casaday also cautions against thinking that some calls that seem innocuous could first six calls handled by civilians. “It’s easy to say you don’t need to send an officer to a type of call because it didn’t result in a report,” Casaday said of the AH DataLytics report. “But those reports don’t say if the call went bad or turned into something else. Policing is dynamic, and even when a call seems safe, it can quickly turn dangerous.”

Police Chief Brian Manley echoed this sentiment at the July 20 meeting of the Council’s Public Safety Committee, noting that even routine traffic stops can turn into dangerous situations for officers. But, he said, his comments shouldn’t be interpreted as resisting changes pursued by Council: “I am not trying to throw up roadblocks. I’m just trying to make sure these decisions are as informed as possible.”

WHAT SHOULD CHANGE, WHEN?

The next phase of “reimagining” will be where decisions to decrease APD’s role in Austin’s public safety will be made. That work begins today, July 23, as Council holds its first public hearing on the budget, but Cronk and his leadership team expect it to take longer – “more than weeks, and probably more accurately measured in months,” Assistant City Manager Rey Arellano, who oversees the public safety departments. “To set a path for us to take as a community, it will take months, and potentially into the next year or so.”

Activists are frustrated by this deliberate pace. “It’s a big disappointment,” Chris Harris, director of the criminal justice project at Texas Appleseed, said. “The last council meeting was June 11” – when Council adopted resolutions that, among other police reform measures, directed Cronk to start scrubbing APD’s budget. “The draft resolution posted the week before, and the calls for defund were coming in two weeks prior to that. I don’t buy it at all [that there wasn’t enough time]; it’s just further proof the city manager is out of step with the community.”

The process outlined by Cronk (in his transmittal message when presenting the FY 21 budget) involves community engagement and stakeholder dialogue, including with advocates such as Harris, on big-picture questions such as how APD’s leadership structure should be organized. But Cronk says he can move swiftly to take action on lower-hanging fruit. For example, moving the APD forensics lab out of the department, perhaps into an independent entity that serves APD and other agencies, has buy-in from Council, staff, and the APA.

A core leadership team, including Manley, Arellano and his fellow ACM Chris Shorter, Office of Police Oversight Director Farah Muscadin, Equity Officer Brion Oaks, and Deputy City Manager Nuria Rivera-Vandermyde will be meeting with various stakeholders – APA and advocacy groups such as AJC among them – in upcoming weeks. Some of the city’s volunteer commissions will also solicit feedback, and other “listening sessions” will open to the public. The work will continue through a “City Community Reimagining Task Force” and multiple “Advisory Working Groups” on issues like use of force, policing alternatives, and officer training.

THE HOMELESSNESS PRECEDENT

One area where advocates, City Hall, and even to a degree APD (but not the APA) have already done some “reimagining” is in the city’s commitment to end homelessness in Austin. The proposed budget maintains the historic funding levels adopted in FY 20 – about $60.9 million – with continued focus on buying motels and hotels to be converted into emergency and permanent supportive housing. (This fiscal year’s spending actually amounts to about $73.4 million, but includes $29.2 million in onetime expenses that won’t carry over to the new fiscal year.) Staff has allocated spending into three categories: helping people avoid entering homelessness, supporting those living without homes, and aiding those who have attained housing to maintain stable lives. According to the annual Point in Time Count, the number of people experiencing homelessness in Austin has increased each year since 2017. The count does not perfectly measure the extent of homelessness in Austin, but Shorter acknowledges that progress on the issue has been slower than some would expect. “I don’t think anyone who’s in this work doesn’t feel pressure,” he told us. “I want to commend city staff who play a big part in making all of this happen, but we are all feeling the pressure to get things done as quickly as possible.”

Part of that work will be accomplished through the creation of a new local housing voucher program, funded with $3.6 million from the Housing Trust Fund, that will be distributed to people in need of supportive housing – like the kind planned for the Rodeway Inn in South Austin, which is still undergoing renovation before opening to residents. The city is hoping to continue this strategy, in part, with $30 million set aside for land acquisition for a variety of affordable housing projects, including those serving people exiting homelessness. The proposed budget also formalizes the creation of a new Homeless Services Division, which will operate under Austin Public Health. The department will include four FTEs and the Homeless Strategy Officer, which will assist all city departments in addressing issues relating to homelessness.

The FY 21 budget also includes an increase of more than $1 million ($2.4 million) in spending on encampment cleanups. These are controversial, as the Chronicle has reported; homelessness advocates say they often result in personal belongings being thrown away, or in make-shift housing structures being dismantled, which can lead to displacement. The funding is split across various departments, including Public Works, Austin Resource Recovery, PARD, and Watershed – with about $1.25 million going to ARR for funding of five new FTEs that would serve as a dedicated encampment cleanup crew, for additional contracted cleanups, and for the Violet Bag program that allows those in encampments to collect their own refuse for disposal.

Reducing homelessness is a collaborative effort that involves more than just city dollars. Last year, Barbara Poppe and Matthew Doherty – both former directors of the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness – were hired to help guide the city and its Continuum of Care partners (the multi-agency consortium led by the End Community Homelessness Coalition) in crafting a plan to improve Austin’s shelter system. Their report is expected as soon as this week; Council hopes to review it and possibly propose funding amendments to address its recommendations before it adopts the FY 21 budget in mid-August.

“There will be cases where police presence is necessary, but our goal is to get to a point where officers have to spend as little time as possible on mental health calls.”

COUNCIL MEMBER ANN KITCHEN

22 THE AUSTIN CHRONICLE JULY 24, 2020 austinchronicle.com
Resilience, Rethinking, Recovery

A budget forged in crisis looks toward long-term opportunities  **BY MIKE CLARK-MADISON**

The community’s firm pushback on the public safety status quo, fueled by protest and rage over police violence, is topic A as Council considers City Manager Spencer Cronk’s proposed fiscal year 2021 budget. The events of early June could only have a small impact on a months-long budget development process that had already been shaped by the ravages of COVID-19 and the economic pain of public health shutdowns. But those realities have helped set the table for reimagining not just public safety but other things we need the city to do well.

How do we make Austin more resilient? Not just to emergency shocks like pandemics or other disasters, but to the everyday stresses and inequities that cascade into crises, like the ones we now ask police to resolve – or leave unresolved because we fear and distrust the police. And how can we consistently improve the city’s performance? Not just to rise to the current challenging moment but to fill in the cracks in service delivery – particularly to the vulnerable and marginalized – that 2020 has laid bare.

**THINKING STRATEGICALLY**

Considering how dramatic COVID-19’s impact has been, Austin’s FY 21 budget is quite stable, not a painful contraction. The “all funds” budget of $4.19 billion is only 2.5%, or $110 million, lower than the current (amended) FY 20 budget. The General Fund, where your taxes go, is basically flat – up 0.1%, or about $1.3 million, to $1.09 billion (see chart, p.24). The much larger group of city enterprise funds, those which generate their own revenues, account for $2.77 billion of the new budget, a 4.2% drop that reflects the massive COVID-19 hit taken by Austin-Bergstrom International Airport. Special revenue funds, which include the city’s hotel occupancy tax revenue, see a 16% decrease.

Beginning in FY 19, after the adoption of the city’s five-year strategic plan, Strategic Direction 2023 (or “SD 23”), Cronk and the budget team led by Deputy Chief Financial Officer Ed Van Eenoo have aimed to align the annual spending plan with SD 23’s six “outcomes”: Mobility; Economic Opportunity and Affordability; Safety; Health and Environment; Culture and Lifelong Learning; and Government That Works for All. (These categories also formed the basis for Cronk’s reorganization of his executive team, with different members assigned to each.) To non-wonks, this may help make sense of how the entire budget works, as it allocates the spending of huge departments (the largest being Austin Energy) across different outcomes.

One thing the SD 23 outcome budget clearly shows is that we spend a lot on “safety” – continued on p.24

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**THE WHOLE BUDGET: ALL FUNDS BY OUTCOME**

The six “outcomes” that form the structure of the city’s Strategic Directions 2023 plan also define the responsibilities of Spencer Cronk’s management team and provide a way of looking at the entire city budget – both the General Fund and the self-supporting enterprises like Austin Energy. The “safety” outcome includes not just APD, fire, and EMS but also water and electric infrastructure, flood control and water quality, and communications technology.

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**FY 2021 ALL FUNDS BY STRATEGIC OUTCOME**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Safety</td>
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<tr>
<td>Economic Opportunity and Affordability</td>
<td>$763,833,811</td>
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<tr>
<td>Government That Works for All</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mobility</td>
<td>$240,907,529</td>
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<tr>
<td>Culture and Lifelong Learning</td>
<td>$88,418,030</td>
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</tbody>
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**PLOTTING A RECOVERY MID-PANDEMIC**

While most of the budget reflects in some way the changes wrought by the pandemic, much of the city’s COVID-19 relief spending on health services, emergency preparedness, and economic recovery is fueled by the funds it’s received from the feds, primarily through the CARES Act. As Van Eenoo notes, there may be more on the way, and obviously the city’s and community’s needs are still great and urgent. Until then, most of the relief spending will end on Dec. 31, three months into the new fiscal year. What happens then – not just to the sick and the needy who need direct support, but to the businesses and employers and artists and musicians who’ve basically lost a whole year of income and who the relief programs aim to help?

Veronica Briseño, a City Hall veteran who moved from Economic Development to leading the recovery effort, sees both a need and an opportunity for “more technical assistance, for capacity building” within the local business and creative communities that her department’s programs aim to help all the time, but who have been hit extra hard by the effects of COVID-19. “We want to provide that assistance to build more financial resilience in those communities. When we get to the point of the new normal” – that is, a city forever changed, at some level, by COVID-19 – “we need to talk about how we prepare for the next event so our business and creative ecosystem is not so fragile.”

That means retooling “some of the resources we provide and are providing,” though as Briseño notes, “Back in March we thought we might be fully past this by now. It’s hard to talk about recovery now when we’re still in the pandemic and public health has to be the focus. But we are trying to learn as we go to support not just immediate but also long-term recovery as we move forward.”

Within the spectrum of those damaged economically by COVID-19, perhaps the most troubled are the arts and culture groups whose city support comes from dormant HOT revenues. (This includes the nascent Live Music Fund created by the city just last year.) A 35% reduction in arts funding will mean extinction for some groups, and there’s really no way to soften the blow.

“We did look at what happened the last time we saw a big drop in HOT revenue, and probably 9/11 is the best example – it took a long time to rebuild, but we did,” says Briseño. “We’re working with the Arts Commission [which recommends who receives funding] on what’s the best way to move forward and be thoughtful about it. We want to work with the community on a fair way to approach it. It will go back to looking in non-crisis years about how we can be more resilient, because these cultural arts are so essential to this community.”

**IN CRISIS, BETTER COLLABORATION**

For much of City Hall and for city departments, the COVID-19 crisis has been a learning experience – showing not just what the city needs to do better every day and in future emergencies, but also how it can do those things better as an organization. The city is, after all, a collection of workplaces with nearly 15,000 employees between them. Its performance is affected by the same things that influence performance, productivity, and outcomes at all workplaces. Many of those things find their way into the budget.

For example, the response to COVID-19 has led to regular collaboration between departments that had formerly been more siloed, which everyone we talked to has cited as a bonus. “Even having the weekly meetings between department heads with different roles in recovery, we’ve seen the effects of having ongoing cross-communication when we’re not in our silos,” says Briseño. “That’s a benefit for our community.”

Some of these departments have to work together regularly anyway, but across the organization’s internal boundary lines. Two such natural teammates – the city’s Planning and Zoning, and Neighborhood Housing and Community Development departments – are being merged into one: Housing and Planning. Both NHCD Director Rosie Truelove and Planning and Zoning Assistant Director Jerry Rusthoven (its de facto leader since the retirement last year of former Planning Director Greg Guernsey) are both very supportive of this change. (For Rusthoven, who’s been with the city for 26 years, this will be the fifth different incarnation of the city’s planning department. “It’s a five-year cycle,” he says. “It’s like sunspots.”)

As described by Cronk in his transmittal message upon presenting the budget, the new H&P is “replacing and improving upon” the services provided by its predecessors, and “beyond efficiency, this change reflects our recognition of the connection between affordable housing and land use across the city.” This was brought squarely to the fore by the lengthy effort to rewrite the city’s Land Development Code, which established as a primary goal of LDC Revision (the job of P&Z) the production of the amount of housing called for by the city’s Strategic Housing Blueprint (the job of NHCD).

“Our jobs have always been aligned,” says Rusthoven. “Bringing us together makes it a little bit easier. The mission and culture line up and have been for a long time, but it’s not a drastic shift in our priorities and goals.”

Truelove concurs: “Strategically, we’ve been at the same table and sharing the same space for a long time; I’m hoping we’ll have that extra amount of collaboration and will move forward with decision-making in a unified way. The teams are really excited about it.”

**CHANGING BUILDINGS AND BUILDING RESILIENCE**

Eventually, most of Planning and Zoning will move in with Housing at its current...
offices on East 11th Street, though some planning staffers are assigned to the new one-stop shop at Development Services’ new digs at Highland. Truelove adds that the merger won’t impact her department’s current and ongoing partnership with Austin Public Health to implement the city’s strategies to end homelessness and that it “allows us to create a space that’s a little more formal and organized to address displacement prevention … a robust division that can look at land use policies with a mindset toward creating ways to avoid displacement.”

Rusthoven and Truelove’s boss, Assistant City Manager Rodney Gonzales, sees the H&P merger as just one of the several ways the city is trying to be both more effective for customers and more resilient as an organization. Along with the long-awaited one-stop shop, the Development Services Department is now set to take over the full range of city permitting – including the Austin Center for Events, which is being moved from APD as part of that department’s budget reductions; music and sound permits; and license agreements to use city property from Real Estate Services. The department was converted last year into an enterprise fund, meaning all the permitting and development fees stay within the department – allowing it to build financial reserves and have the funds to address the performance improvements called for by scathing audits in years past.

Building financial resilience for the city is a big part of Van Eenoo’s job, though he sees the mission more broadly. “We’re increasingly seeing that concept being brought into government and community thought processes – not only how we [in] government respond to something like COVID, but also how to best help out the community, including those disproportionately affected by the pandemic.” One of the new programs being added in this year’s budget is a position dedicated to community resilience, to be located within the city’s Equity Office.

On the city side, Van Eenoo is seeking to create resilience by increasing the city’s reserves from the current 12% (which is maintained in this budget) to 14% once revenues are back on the uptick. He notes that the state-imposed property tax revenue cap of a 3.5% increase – which the proposed budget falls within, even though the city could go up to the former 8% cap due to the pandemic – will remove a tool from the city’s crisis management toolbox. “An 8% cap gives you much more flexibility to manage through an economic crisis when other sources of revenue are falling off,” he says. “Another tool is our reserves, so now we’ll need to have more; not immediately, because there are too many pressures on this budget, but take it up to 14% with clear parameters [to not go lower] but for an economic downturn.”

Last year, before COVID-19 but as the city was anticipating the 3.5% cap, Cronk and Van Eenoo put a spotlight on the ways in which the city was looking to tighten up its ship to sail the new low-tax seas. Those efforts got blown sideways by this year’s events, but they will eventually need to stay on course. “One thing is to make sure we’re doing the right things, and the other is to do them as efficiently as we can. With 3.5% the ability to do more things is going to be constrained, so how are the things we’ve been doing for a long time lining up with Council priorities, and from there, see how we can do as much as we can with those dollars.”

Van Eenoo points to homelessness as an example of such rethinking, along with ongoing efficiency reviews to the public safety departments (including whether to merge fire and EMS), which the current focus on de-policing scales up to a whole new level. “What kind of scope creep has happened over the years [to APD], and how can we take this opportunity to reset that? We’re looking at all of that; it’s what we have to do, but the need is really heightened with our fiscal situation now.”

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“There’s Always Additional Need”

A Q&A with City Manager Spencer Cronk

BY MIKE CLARK-MADISON AND AUSTIN SANDERS

On July 14, City Manager Spencer Cronk sat down (virtually of course) with News Editor Mike Clark-Madison and City Hall reporter Austin Sanders for his first Chronicle interview. We discussed Cronk’s proposed fiscal year 2021 budget, reimagining public safety, the impact of COVID-19, and the city’s ongoing efforts to end homelessness. This transcript has been edited for length and clarity; find a longer version online at austinchronicle.com/news.

AustIn Chronicle: Starting with public safety – you didn’t have much time to prepare in this budget a response to the events of early June and the Council resolutions. At this point, could you commit to a more defined timeline for your “reimagining” process, or a funding target for the end of that process, before budget adoption? Or is that not the right thing to do at this point?

Spencer Cronk: We’ve assembled a core team within the city enterprise and we’re talking to a number of stakeholders to establish that advisory group which will meet for the first time – kind of a trial run – before the end of the month. That will give us some indication of how much input might be needed for our first recommendations. I’ve definitely thought about making sure we have at least some budget amendments before the end of the calendar year. Based on the input these stakeholders will be giving us on the areas we outlined – whether it’s dispatch or victim services or the forensic lab – within a handful of months we can see what that future state looks like, and how that impacts the budget going forward.

“I’ve characterized this as a budget snapshot in time – we can only do what we can with the information we have at this moment. The two crises – the pandemic and safety – are very much evolutions; we need to continue to adapt and adjust in an ongoing way.”

I’ve characterized this as a budget snapshot in time – we can only do what we can with the information we have at this moment. The two crises – the pandemic and safety – are very much evolutions; we need to continue to adapt and adjust in an ongoing way. Unlike previous years where it does feel like there’s one annual budget that we don’t touch throughout the year – that playbook is just out the door. We just have to think differently and allow ourselves space for multiple budget amendments throughout the year.

AC: The deliberate co-creation process that you’ve laid out will help create lasting change in how we do safety, rather than just responding to this moment. Having said that, if Council asks for more cuts to APD’s budget, what would your response be?

SC: That’s always the process, but I think it will be important to know the impacts of those cuts, so we can appropriately set expectations with our community. I don’t want to have any illusions that making cuts wouldn’t result in a decrease in services. Maybe that’s okay, but we just have to be very clear about what that looks like. So a thoughtful, deliberative discussion about the impact of any future cuts will be an important part of the conversation.

I also hear that we can just move some of those functions outside APD. That’s somewhat a process issue, but it’s not changing the substantive dialogue that we want about the purpose of those departments, what those functions would be going forward. Is that really changing how we’re providing those services, just because they’re outside of the department?

AC: There’s such a huge gap between the $100 million or $200 million reduction advocates have been calling for and the $8 million that’s in the proposed budget. Even with a timeline for the end of the year, how do you plan to navigate that when tension in the community is already so high with this sense of inaction?

SC: We basically had about 10 days between the Council resolutions and needing to finalize this proposal, so it is just one step, and I’ve been transparent about that, because the cries from the community are so strong that we need to completely reimagine how we’re doing public safety in Austin. What we were able to do was a good faith effort. Based on what was outlined in the resolutions, I think that we accomplished much of that and tried to make sure everything was at least addressed in some way.

But “what public safety needs to be” for the city of Austin is a topic that requires some additional discussion, not only with advocates but with all members of our community. We all have different ideas and different perspectives, and we need to build the trust and have the accountability that we need for the future. That type of dialogue with our residents needs to happen, and we just haven’t had the time to do that. Hopefully there’s enough buy-in around how we’re going to move forward and the fact that we put all our ideas on the table – some of which could be sacred cows, like IA [Internal Affairs], or even the governance of the police department. What would a civilian police commission look like? Other cities have that; is that something Austin wants to explore? There may be a lot of research and ideas, but we need to make sure there’s a common understanding. We can say something makes sense, but that has to be co-created with community voices, and we have to recognize and lift up even higher those who are most disproportionately impacted by our public safety institutions. Those voices need to be at the center of the table.

AC: Looking at what was outlined in the Council resolution, what in your mind are the big outstanding items to be addressed?

SC: We won’t know until we get further in the process. The resolutions talk about things like audits of the department and reviewing the General Orders – things that require some work, and I don’t know what will result from that work. We were able to put in resources to start to address those questions, but we don’t know what will play out from that, and if we’re resourced appropriately to be able to respond.

AC: Part of reallocating funds from APD is knowing if there’s capacity at the other end to actually use them. Simply moving functions out of the department sounds attractive and easy, but are the receiving departments – whether it is Austin Public Health or EMS or the city’s partners at Integral Care – ready to pick up that slack at the scale that advocates are calling for?

SC: I’m confident that’s the case with the proposals we put forward; we have the resources and bandwidth in those departments to accommodate increases in our EMCOT program [Extended/Mobile Crisis Outreach Team] and, with our mental health services, the full implementation of the Meadows report. But more broadly, again, we don’t know what we don’t know yet – if we have the appropriate structure in place to accommodate what that future state looks like or what our community expects from public safety. I know there’s a lot of expectations for other services to be revamped or redefined, and I’ll be honest, I think a lot of those may end up outside the city government; they could be more appropriate for a nonprofit or community organization, or some other entity. And we have to work with those entities to make sure they can accommodate additional requests or
calls for service. It is in the weeds, but those are the things that I’m looking forward to having the groups really work on, and then recommend to us the governance, the resources needed, how that service looks moving forward.

**AC:** Moving from that to COVID-19: You have all this money that you’re spending now from relief grant funds that mostly needs to be spent this calendar year. How is that interacting with your budgeting and programming for those services? And have the city’s operations changed, or gotten better, after pushing this $250 million through the pipeline?

**SC:** We think the framework that Council approved contains the appropriate buckets, if you will, for spending the money. And we have enough flexibility from the federal government to be creative and think about using those resources in different ways. Some of that is direct assistance to our residents. Some of that is redoubling our own efforts to reallocate and repurpose our existing resources that are specifically focused on COVID. We’re hopeful that we will get out of this, and when we do, individuals will be able to focus on their original jobs and provide those services in a different way.

But one thing that I don’t want to lose in this moment, not just with public safety but also COVID, is the opportunity we’ve had to think very differently about how the city provides services. We are doing so much more work remotely, serving residents and customers in a different way. We are thinking in a much more flexible and adaptable manner than what we had been used to. So I think we will come out of this stronger, more resilient, and more productive.”

COVID-19, the city is allowed to raise that cap back to 8% during the emergency. What happens if Council wants to do that?

**SC:** I knew these were going to be tight times; we were going to be asking a lot of our residents anyway, and they are already feeling financial strain. I was hopeful that we could still present a budget at 3.5%. We never created another scenario; there isn’t an 8% plan on the shelf.

**AC:** If Council were interested in going to 8%, could you bank that extra revenue in reserves – to address falling off the COVID-19 funding cliff in January, or to fill in for things like parking revenue that are just gone, with no way to get them back?

**SC:** That would certainly be my preference. If there was a decision by Council to go above 3.5%, I would provide that recommendation. But it’s up to them.

**AC:** With this budget, the Housing and Planning departments are being merged, and Development Services is preparing to move into its new space with the one-stop shop. Homelessness services are going to be based at Austin Public Health; what steps is the city taking to maintain the momentum toward ending homelessness that was such a big part of last year’s budget?

**SC:** One thing that I value about the team that I’ve assembled is its orientation toward collaboration; whether through the work on the Land Development Code, or the police contracts, or crises like flooding and the boil-water notice, we’ve seen all these different departments come together in a very collaborative way.

Homelessness is another example of not just having one area own this, knowing that so many different parts of the city [government] are part of addressing this in a comprehensive way. And we need to include our stakeholders: service providers, philanthropy, and others that need to be at the table. We felt like the appropriate home was in Public Health, but I’m confident we won’t lose the strong connections to Housing or the other services that need to be provided for people experiencing homelessness.

**AC:** Last year, there was a lot of hubbub on Council on how much direction to provide to staff on strategies to reduce homelessness. Can you give an update on how the city is progressing?

**SC:** I think we have a common understanding about our path forward, working with our service providers and really leaning into our partnership with ECHO [the End Community Homelessness Coalition]. We’ve honed in on the need for more permanent supportive housing and gotten buy-in from the providers and then Council to go after this motel strategy; we need to get these additional units. Even during the pandemic, with some of the facilities we’ve stood up for people experiencing homelessness [the so-called Protective Lodges], there’s a lease purchase option that potentially moves us along that path. I think there’s always going to be additional need. Housing has earmarked about $30 million from the 2018 bond for additional [PSH] units. So when opportunities arise we’re ready to take advantage. But I also know that if I just buy 500 more units, I need to be able to resource them and have an operations team in place. We’re never moving as fast as people want us to, but I do think that we’re heading in the right direction and that we have a broader consensus around that strategy.
Humans can only survive three days or so without water. But in addition to serving their basic function of keeping our organs humming and satiating thirst, drinks add much more to the composite of our daily lives, especially while living under the thumb of a global pandemic. So as the months of this most bizarre and disruptive year march on, as we look at what formulates our societal and personal hierarchies of need, it seems fitting in this annual issue celebrating the liquids we love to consume to peek into how some of our local drinks are made, too.

Austin’s natural wine scene is on the rise, and one local maker has begun the arduous and delicate process of learning an old-world technique – amphora winemaking – that’s uniquely suited to our region, and preserves the terroir’s flavors. Hard seltzers are still all the rage, and one local father-son team went from ranching to brewing sugar cane to create a new product. Coffee subscriptions not only ensure a ready supply of caffeine, but they offer a quar-friendly route to enjoying “medleys of java you might’ve never known otherwise.”

Brewery taprooms weren’t necessarily emphasised as a feature before the 2013 legislation passed in Texas allowing direct-to-customer taproom sales. Before it was just picnic tables scattered around fermenting tanks, but as a result of the hard-won law, “Texas breweries began to focus on the whole customer experience, moving beyond just the quality of the beer and further into the quality of its overall taproom culture.”

A new Austin-based bubbly tonic, one named for the goddess of agave and made with organic hand-harvested agave, helps improve digestion and boost immunity. We won’t say anything else is alright, but Matthew McConaughey has joined forces with Eddie Russell, master distiller of Wild Turkey, to create a small-batch eight-year bourbon refined with Texas Mesquite and oak charcoal. When Naijean Bernard moved to Austin from her native Grenada, she missed the flavors of home, and now she sells classic cold-pressed ginger flavors, and some twists, at the farmers’ market.

And in a recent legislative win for local businesses trying to stay afloat, mixed drinks are allowed in to-go sales, so we rounded up a boatload of options for you online. No one knows what the rest of the year holds in store, but Austin surely won’t be thirsty.
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Austin Winemakers are reviving an ancient winemaking technique  

BY VERONICA MEEWES

The crescent moon is the only light illuminating the rows of vines at Salt Lick Vineyards when the Austin Winery team arrives to pick grapes. But Assistant Winemaker Adrienne Ash is wide awake — and has been since 3am. “I was so excited about this harvest, I woke up early and just couldn’t get back to sleep,” says Ash, who grew up drinking wine with her family in Lake Tahoe and studied biology at Sonoma State University.

In 2016, Ash sought out a job in the wine industry and found herself at the Austin Winery, where she acted as bar manager before picking up one cellar shift a week. At the time, the winery was just two years old. CEO Ross McLauchlan, winemaker Cooper Anderson, and COO Matt Smith founded it in 2014, becoming the first full production, grape-to-glass winery inside Austin city limits.

They made their first minimal-intervention wine in their third vintage and now such “natural” styles of wine make up a third of their portfolio. The team also prides itself on being self-taught and self-funded — and everyone in the employee-owned operation has a hand in the winemaking process.

While working in the cellar, Ash helped craft their flagship wines, but she was also given the opportunity to begin experimenting with her own creations. It was then that she discovered amphorae, the earthenware vessels originally used to store and transport wine some 6,000 years ago in ancient Greece and Rome — or qvevri, as they were known in what is now the republic of Georgia, where they were traditionally filled with wine and buried in the ground.

“I did a lot of research on how to stand out in a crowd of experienced winemakers,” explains Ash. “I ended up stumbling upon amphorae and qvevri wines. I grabbed a bunch of bottles from U.S. and Georgian producers and fell in love with the flavors. The soft, creamy fruit characteristics were so amazing, I decided this was how I would make wine.”

Amphorae — and certainly qvevri stored underground — keep wine particularly cool during fermentation and aging, helping to preserve the uniqueness of the terroir and enabling extended skin fermentation. The flavor-neutral clay is filled with trace minerals, which vary depending on its source, and the oxygen exchange is similar to that of concrete.

This porosity allows for micro-oxidation without imparting any additional flavors into the wine, like barrels do. Some winemakers opt to line their amphorae with beeswax to decrease that porosity, depending on their winemaking style, and to help expedite the vessels’ tedious cleaning process.

“I want as much clay influence as possible, so no beeswax lining for me,” says Ash, who is especially drawn to the mineral complexity and plush textures created by using amphorae.

For her first vintage under her own label Ash Wines, she purchased a 320-liter vessel from Italian producer ArteNova, made from clay sourced from outside Florence, and used it to ferment and age 100% Texas-grown Montepulciano for six months. Last year, she vinified Sangiovese rosé and Picpoul to produce a Méthode Traditionnelle wine, riddling and disgorging each of the 400 bottles by hand. This Champagne-method sparkling wine will soon be available for purchase at the winery.

Last week, Ash received two more amphorae from Andrew Beckham, owner of Beckham Estate Vineyard in Sherwood, Ore. The winemaker is also a skilled ceramicist who combined his passion for the two arts and became the first commercial producer of terracotta amphorae in North America. When Ash visited his winery this January, she told him about her drive to create more amphora wine and he agreed to commission her two vessels.

Now three amphorae strong, the Austin Winery has produced a 2018 Trebbiano aged in amphora (which, at press time, was almost sold out), a 2019 Grenache Syrah Mourvèdre native ferment (now available), and a 2019 Viognier, which was aged both in barrel and in clay, and will be released soon.

Right now, 580 pounds of freshly harvested Albariño grapes fill the Italian clay vessel where Ash agitates the skins, eagerly awaiting fermentation. She admits she’s always wanted to try her hand at learning how to make her own amphora but has been intimidated thus far. But now that she’s so invested in this unique winemaking style, she’s thinking more about getting some hands-on experience with large-scale ceramics.

“I’ll have a lot to learn, but I’m willing to do it!” she says. Judging from the wines she’s already putting out, we have no doubt about that.

For much more on this story please visit the online version.

"I DID A LOT OF RESEARCH ON HOW TO STAND OUT IN A CROWD OF EXPERIENCED WINEMAKERS. THE SOFT, CREAMY FRUIT CHARACTERISTICS [OF AMPHORAE AND QVEVRI WINES] WERE SO AMAZING, I DECIDED THIS WAS HOW I WOULD MAKE WINE." 

ADRIENNE ASH
CANNED COLD FRONT

Local hard seltzer brewed right here in Southeast Austin

BY JESSI CAPE

Named for the fast-moving cold front known to whip through Texas, Blue Norther — a new line of hard seltzers brewed right here in Southeast Austin and created by local father-son and ranching team Austin T. and Austin M. Pittman, is built to withstand the current climate. But going from the ranch to this new venture doesn’t necessarily mean trading in boots (“and even the occasional ‘aloha’ shirt”) for suits again.

“I’m so proud and excited to bring Blue Norther to the people of my home state, especially doing so alongside my oldest son,” said Austin T. (the dad). “Our fantastic bold flavors are ready-made for the bold people who call Texas home.”

Founded in 2019, the seltzer is inspired by Texas fruits and gluten-free, made with real fruit juice and organic agave. Available in two flavors, wild blackberry and agave lime, Blue Norther is available at retail locations including H-E-B, Bread Basket, Royal Blue Grocery, and Wheatsville Food Co-op (plus online markets), with more flavors and retail locations around the bend. Unlike the artificial sweeteners found in similar products, the organic agave is used not only for its great flavor but because the Pittmans “trust what comes out of the ground. We commonly hear a complaint about the ‘artificial flavor’ or ‘chemically’ taste in other hard seltzers.”

Austin T. combines 25 years of experience in executive leadership in the health care industry with the knowledge his son, Austin M., brings to the table through years of consulting, software, sales, and interestingly, marine biology. (The company is owned and operated by the Pittmans along with a small group of investors, Blue Partners.) The pair of Texas gents relish that country life, and while working their family ranch in Harwood, Texas, they discovered a need for a more flavorful, more refreshing seltzer after a long day in the heat.

Bridging the gap from idea to product, despite not previously existing in the drinks space and going up against some big brands, has required lots of time, hard work, and a little luck!” Pittman says. “In all honesty, it required baby steps, and help from our friends and partners as we tried to answer the question, ‘How do you actually make a [great-tasting] drink?’ Ultimately, we were introduced to a food scientist, who taught us about how the system works, and how to produce and scale a formula commercially.

And as for that elusive brewing formula, he says, “The process is similar to brewing beer, but instead of beer, we make sugar brew from cane sugar. Unlike the malt-based brews used in a few other drinks in the category, a pure sugar brew is a clean fermentation that results in a flavor-neutral alcohol with no aftertaste. It’s a great pair for the natural juice and organic agave that make our drink shine.”

It’s a strange and difficult time to operate a business, but the Blue Norther guys are leaning on the Austin community’s word-of-mouth marketing as product sampling has gone by the wayside in the wake of pandemic restrictions. “We’ve had to pivot, persevere, and change just like everyone else. It’s hard, but there’s a silver lining, too.”

Ultimately, the guys aim to get their tasty beverage into the hands of anyone who’s curious for a local alternative to those well-known names in the seltzer sphere. “Blue Norther is a brand born in the spirit of Austin — it’s about weirdness, individuality, and being yourself. If you like something, you say it and do it. The best advice we’ve received in this business is to treat people the right way, and to always ask for help. So please, Austin, help us! Ask around, try Blue Norther for yourself (we know you’ll love it) and tell your friends!”

MATTHEW McCONAUGHEY DIVES INTO THE WHISKEY BIZ

PLUS TWO REFRESHING SUMMER COCKTAIL RECIPES

The University of Texas Minister of Culture, Austin native Matthew McConaughey has joined forces with Eddie Russell, master distiller of Wild Turkey, to create a small-batch eight-year bourbon, Longbranch, inspired by McConaughey’s Texas and Kentucky roots. It is refined with Texas Mesquite and oak charcoals — a unique method that deepens the flavor and complexity of the whiskey and gives it a hint of smoke to accompany sweet and spicy notes.

“Longbranch, in its simplest form, is an extended hand, inviting a friend into your family,” McConaughey said. “So the branch that was extended to me from the Russels was a long one, one that reached from Kentucky to Texas and back again, I offered the Mesquite from my great state to add to their legendary Kentucky whiskey and together we made Longbranch.”

And a guy who knows a thing or two about whiskey, Eddie Russell, master distiller at Wild Turkey said, “Matthew and I collaborated closely on Longbranch Bourbon — sharing ideas and tasting notes over many months to land on the perfect taste profile. By adding the mesquite to our whiskey, we connected two cultures – Texas BBQ and Kentucky Straight Bourbon – to create Matthew’s favorite bourbon on the planet.”

While Matthew recommends enjoying Longbranch neat, it also blends nicely inside a cocktail. Try the simple Gold Rush: Mix 2 parts Longbranch with 75 part each of lemon juice and honey syrup, shake over ice and double strain into a glass; serve on the rocks with a lemon peel garnish. Or the refreshing Branch Water: Mix 2 parts Longbranch with the juice of half a lime and top with sparkling water; serve in a highball with the lime.
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Sometimes you want to visit a record store and rummage around for a while following your tastes until you find an album worth buying. Other times, you’d rather just sit back (or dance) and let a good DJ decide what aural treats will drone or shimmer or avalanche their way into your sound-craving ear holes.

Coffee subscriptions are more like that last one. That’s where you buy into having a certain amount delivered on a regular schedule, thus enjoying medleys of java that can introduce you to beans that you might’ve never known otherwise – though you choose the roast, the frequency, maybe even the flavor profiles. Coffee subscriptions, in these days when physical distancing makes sense and time seems a little more slippery, can be a really good idea. And right now we’re going to tell you about five Austin-based ones.

SUPERTHING

From the folks who brought us the popular South Lamar cafe Patika comes a service “born out of an obsession with great coffee, and a love for weirdo art, science fiction, design, and excruciatingly long exposition.” Never mind their self-effacing humor, though it’s almost as charming as the clever graphic postcards and stickers accompanying the bags of beans. These guys, led by javamonger Tony Smith (formerly of Austin’s Bad Dog Bar Craft), will set you up with a diversity of single-origin goods from the world’s top growing regions.

www.superingthingcoffee.com

CREATURE COFFEE

This one is like the math construct where a set contains every set except sets that don’t contain themselves, or something like that – which you might be able to grok if you drink more coffee. Because Creature’s mission is to send you beans from a variety of this town’s best roasters – Civil Goat, Flat Track, Casa Brasil, Little City, Wild Gift, Los Altos, and more – so you’ll not only get the whole-wide-worldly experience, you’ll also score big local-brand bragging rights in one fell and caffeinated (or decaffeinated) swoop, www.creaturecoffee.co

ATLAS COFFEE CLUB

Here’s a subscription deal predicated on keeping it international as each travel-themed package “highlights a new coffee growing country and shows the unique differences in both taste and culture” and provides a trove of information along with their expertly roasted beans, thanks to globetrotting founders Michael Shewmake and Jon Miller. And here, too, the packaging – based on each coffee’s country of origin – is gorgeous, www.atlascoffeeclub.com

CUVÉE COFFEE

This coffee’s as good as the interior of their flagship venue on East Sixth is stunning – which is to say, very. And it’s frustrating not to be able to go in there and chill with a fine brew, but Mike McKim and company will keep you well supplied with a steady direct-to-home flow, www.cuveecoffee.com

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Tap Dance

How Stephen Oliver and OPA Design Studio are making Austin’s elite brewery taprooms

BY ERIC PUGA

Imagine a time when a Texas brewery couldn’t sell its own beer to its own visiting taproom customers. There was a loophole breweries cartoonishly tiptoed through like tophatted, waxed-moustache bootleggers in order to get their product in front of gawking tourists and local beer fans, and that was to peddle a logo souvenir glass to their visitors populated with a few “free beer fill” coupons inside. And while giving away all that liquid profit in exchange for moving a lousy $10 pint glass sounds like a super lucrative endeavor for small breweries statewide, it was joyously celebrated when the Texas legislature finally and legally allowed direct-to-customer taproom sales in 2013.

Taprooms themselves weren’t necessarily emphasized as a brewery feature before then, where the tasting room highlights entailed picnic tables scattered around the fermenting tanks with maybe a crowd puller of spent bourbon barrels decorated in 1990s vintage microbrewery cliches like dried wheat sprigs in mason jars; just a real golden age of beverage industry design. But as a result of 2013, Texas breweries began to focus on the whole customer experience, moving beyond just the quality of the beer and further into the quality of its overall taproom culture.

“When the legislature put [those laws] into place after years of lobbying it was a little like the Wild West,” recalls Stephen Oliver, principal at Austin-based OPA Design Studio, one of only a handful of American architecture firms tasked with visualizing taproom culture concepts that brewery founders envision into more than just “Instagrammable moments” (Oliver’s description of showy tasting-room centerpieces that sometimes distract from a taproom’s true conviviality). “Having your customer doing your marketing for you is usually a win, but it shouldn’t be a substitute for a well thought out alignment of your space and the brand.” Oliver explains that because most of OPA’s brewery clients are family businesses with few heavy-weight investors, founders often have to get creative with their brewery locations. “A lot of the time they are taking spaces that [other businesses] have overlooked,” explains Oliver.

When Taylor Ziebarth, brewer and co-founder of Oddwood Ales, was combing Austin for a spot to host its wild ale barrel-aging program after decamping from Adelbert’s Brewing in 2016, Ziebarth, along with co-founder brother Brett, discovered a 1950s standalone building on Airport Boulevard that once accommodated a Tejano nightclub, a restaurant, an advertising firm, and even a set from box office smash, Machete 2: Machete Kills. But Oliver and crew uncorked the awkward 2,500-square-foot layout into a Ruidoso retreat, channeling the brewery’s namesake into 10 different wood species that adorn the taphandles, bartop, floors, patio, and chandeliers. The firm was even able to onboard a pizza kitchen, a customer-preserving feature that many local taprooms tend to lack.

“We saw some of our clients go into retail spaces and convert those into breweries, places you wouldn’t typically think a brewery should go, but the market says that’s where the brewery needs to be,” reasons Oliver. “The [Oddwood] building needed so much love. It wasn’t some architectural jewel but it didn’t have to be. It didn’t have to have that super high-end finish like you’re serving sushi out of it, but the tasting room experience still had to be entertaining and comfortable, even if the space was a bit more gritty in the beginning. Taprooms like [Oddwood] have raised the bar for all of Austin.”

Another dazzling OPA team project is the recently minted Beerburg Brewing in the Hill Country, a seeming design layup given the ambitious views of rolling habitat all the way out into the wooded horizon. To

“TO CONNECT THE SPACE WHERE THE CRAFT IS OCCURRING, IT HAS TO MAKE IT ALL THE WAY THROUGH TO THE TAPROOM AND EVEN THE BIERGARTEN, LIKE, THIS IS WHERE THE WORK HAPPENS AND THIS IS WHERE THE PLAY BEGINS.”

STEPHEN OLIVER
frame the view, eight-pane windows under large vaulted ceilings. And yet, without a radiant insight into the culture of craft beer and those who proliferate it, a taproom risks being a one-hit wonder for customers. “[Beerburg] uses the big windows for connectivity to indoors-outdoors, but people [also] want to see the equipment,” emphasizes Oliver with regards to giving customers a full visual spectrum. “While we’re trying to make more polished taprooms, we don’t lose sight that people want to see the process. They want to see the brewhouse and the fermentation tanks. Without that, a taproom is just a bar. To connect the space where the craft is occurring, it has to make it all the way through to the taproom and even the biergarten, like, this is where the work happens and this is where the play begins. For a brewery to stand out, it needs to provide more than just the beer. There is energy to watching the day unfold for a brewery.”

Even the old-school spots – gassy cool-dad breweries like Live Oak who fundamentally founded the craft beer scene in Austin – are recognizing the value of a heightened taproom experience as a worthwhile and necessary revenue generator. “For some [breweries], depending on if they were renting or owned their building, [they] had to decide if it was worthwhile for a big make-over, or to just transition to a new site as did Live Oak,” states Oliver. “Moving from that old dairy facility was part of their long-term plan, where before, on the Eastside, it was nothing more than just a few people

CONTINUED ON P.40
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For a brewery to stand out, it needs to provide more than just the beer. There is energy to watching the day unfold for a brewery.

Stephen Oliver

"For a brewery to stand out, it needs to provide more than just the beer. There is energy to watching the day unfold for a brewery." - Stephen Oliver

And everyone is playing off each other’s strengths to make the brand better.”

Similar to the humble rural grace of Live Oak is a personal from-the-ground-up design favorite of Oliver’s: “Vista [Brewing in Driftwood] feels so relaxed when I need a spot to hang out for the afternoon with my dog or a buddy. I love the way the two buildings respect the land and the trees around them. I was once talking to a lady next to me washing her hands next to me and [knowing I was the architect] she said to me, ‘You know what I love most about this place? This is where my husband and I want to raise our kids.’ When she said that, she hit a chord that I could only dream to hit on every project, where people embrace the place you make and make it their own.”

Forthcoming projects for the excessively capable 13-year-old design firm include Southeast Austin's Meanwhile Brewing, fronted by former brewers from Portland’s Breakside Brewing, Ghost Note Brewing in Dripping Springs, founded by a husband/wife team out of the Houston area, and Pinthouse Pizza 4, the firm's attempt at a Grand Slam for the hazy IPA impresarios.

And perhaps you’ve been as captivated as us with the dregs of Uncle Billy’s old brewery site on Barton Springs Road...
being juiced into Austin Eastciders’ glittering new tasting room. “That was another building that was long overdue for a reinvestment,” says Oliver. “[It needed] a look and feel that was different than the one before, to be really in tune with what their brand is. It needed a lot of work to get it to this new life, but we still had to work with the existing building. The core walls had to stay the same but the rest had to transform drastically. It was a real hurdle. But now it has a vibrant, core connection to the neighborhood and it feels fresh. It was an amazing opportunity for a mature brand like Austin Eastciders to be in that spot near the park, and combined with their food, it was such a great opportunity to elevate what their cider is all about.”

But great taproom design isn’t meant to foster the schematic integrity of the brewery itself. Like a good baseball umpire, it should merely facilitate the game and be nearly imperceptible. It should bring an identity to the beer program but not surpass it – after all, quality of product is paramount in small beer. A great design should assist with expediting excellent service, as well as integrate seamlessly into the geographic milieu. Above all else, a great taproom should promote community.

“Breweries tend to embrace the idea of collaboration which is one of the reasons why we really like working with them,” concludes Oliver. “There is so much connectivity between them. Sometimes it even feels like we are playing matchmaker. There is a sense of working together in the brewery world like no other industry.”

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Goddess of Agave

Improve digestion and support fair wages with local bubbly tonic

BY JESSI CAPE

A new Austin-based bubbly tonic made with organic hand-harvested agave not only tastes great but helps improve digestion and boost immunity. Mayawell, whose name was inspired by Mayahuel, the goddess of the agave who represents life and vitality, is low in sugar and rich in prebiotic fiber. “Mayahuel is an important figure, especially with indigenous communities in Mexico, and we wanted to honor her with our name,” said co-founder Oliver Shuttlesworth, a native Texan and UT graduate.

Shuttlesworth (CEO) and his partner in Oaxaca, Vicente Reyes (COO), were both socially conscious entrepreneurs and that inspired a mutual friend to introduce the future duo. Shuttlesworth started a bag company, Esperos, in which proceeds from every bag sold contributed to child education in developing countries; Reyes, an early mezcal pioneer in Oaxaca, spent years studying the agave plant’s role in immunity and health, and developing what would become Mayawell’s proprietary ingredient, PREGAVE.

Made of prebiotic agavin and agave nectar, PREGAVE delivers “a meaningful amount of prebiotic fiber with a very low amount of sugar (which is both low Glycemic Index and low in fructose),” said Shuttlesworth. “We use a unique blend of agave species with a clinically validated prebiotic benefit.

“The agave plant plays a very special role in Mexican, and specifically Oaxacan, culture,” he added. “We believe that using only organic, hand-harvested agave helps reduce the amount of processing and creates a more pure product. Beyond that, as a company, we strive to create full-circle impact by providing meaningful work to indigenous communities and through supporting regenerative farming efforts in areas where we harvest agave.”

Now their socially conscious business endeavors continue through Mayawell by providing jobs with fair wages and education on sustainable land stewardship and agave sourcing in Oaxaca. “Our fair wage program, Hermano Maguey, was built out by Vicente. We help support initiatives such as a seed bank for agave and other crops (for regenerative farming purposes), microloans to equip farmers with the resources to cultivate agave crops, and a program to repurpose the espadín fibers from the agave into textiles that can be woven by local female artisans. The finished product is bottled in the Northeastern USA with a lead time under a month.”

Immunity is a big topic right now, and while Mayawell is not a cure-all solution, it could aid in fortifying the body against illness, improve digestion, and elevate cognitive function. Their active prebiotic is “clinically proven to retain up to 60 percent of healthy gut bacteria,” Shuttlesworth said. “A simple way to think of the difference between prebiotics and probiotics is as if probiotics are seeds and prebiotics are the water that helps grow and nourish them. While probiotics are living strands of bacteria, prebiotics are nondigestible fibers that help feed and strengthen the probiotic bacteria so that they operate at peak function. The gut is the body’s second brain, so ensuring it operates at peak function is critical to one’s holistic health and wellness.”

Shuttlesworth explained that a beverage formulator helped them develop the combinations of functional, flavorful ingredients by looking at market trends and also classic drinking shrub recipes to design three unique flavors – Pineapple Mango Turmeric, Pear Lime Green Tea, and Strawberry Ginger Hibiscus. “We believe she knocked it out of the park.”

Mayawell is currently sold locally at spots including Mañana Coffee at South Congress Hotel, Roots Juices at Equinox, Royal Blue Grocery, The Meteor, Thom’s, and Honest Mary’s, and slated for Central Market in the fall. www.instagram.com/drinkmayawell
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WE MIGHT NOT BE ABLE TO VISIT TOGETHER IN 2020, BUT WE CAN STILL SUPPORT LAST YEAR’S PARTICIPATING BREWERIES. CHEERS FROM OUR COUCH TO YOURS!

I S L A N D  V I B E S

“The Caribbean in a bottle” BY JESSI CAPE

When Najiean Bernard moved to Austin from her native Grenada in 2006, she missed the flavors of home, especially the fresh juices her grandmother made. Jeany’s Ginger Elixir was born many recipe tests later and has grown to include the classic cold-pressed ginger flavor, Very Berry, Hibiscus Spiced Iced Tea, Tamarindo, Cucumber Mint Limeade, and Melon Breeze. So naturally she’s branched into vegan egg rolls made with local veggies and bottled hot sauce.

Austin Chronicle: Your recipes are based on your maternal grandmother’s recipes; please tell me about her, your relationship (did you cook with her?), and how her influence shaped you.

Najiean Bernard: My grandmother, Lyris Charles, passed away in 2004 at the age of 94. I would visit her in the summer and observe her in the garden and in the kitchen. Although I started cooking at a young age, 10 years old, I never cooked with her. I just stayed close by so I could get the first taste, as I love food. She influenced me in that she lived off of her land, loved gardening, and made her own herbal tinctures from scratch. I have gardened for 20 years and also make my own tinctures based on her recipes. She did not write down the recipes.

AC: I was born in Grenada and came to the U.S. as a child so that my parents could attend college. Before COVID-19, I would visit Grenada every three to six months to pick up more spices, tea leaves, fruits, cacao, and sea moss (I have a USDA agricultural permit). I began to miss the juices that my grandmother made and re-created them, from memory. I first shared them at weekly pot lucks and then began selling at pop-ups and smaller farmers’ markets.

AC: You source from local farms; tell me about the relationship with farmers and your own garden.

NB: I use organic ginger from In the Garden Organics supplies the bulk of my local ingredients, such as cucumbers, melons, habanero peppers, onions, garlic, collard greens, cilantro, and mint. Watermelon comes from Big Brazos Sustainable Farm. I also barter with other local farmers at the markets I sell at. I have maintained relationships with JBG since 2017 when I started selling at Hope Farmers Market and also at Barton Creek and Mueller. I am known as the juice lady and make sure that the JBG market staff stays hydrated.

AC: Is there a connection between eating local and health?

NB: I believe that we are what we eat. Food that is grown locally tastes much better, has more nutritional value, a much lower carbon footprint, and the dollars spent stay within the local community.

AC: I also want to know about those egg rolls and hot sauces! And are you bottling your hot sauces?

NB: Yes, I am bottling them. They are available for sale on the Vinder app. [They’ll be available on her website soon.] In the Caribbean, we are a very cosmopolitan society. We have strong Asian influence, in particular, India and China. The egg rolls are vegan. The two sauces are Jeany’s Sweet Heat, which is a spicy mango habanero sauce, and Tamarindo BBQ sauce, [which] is more subtle, with a hint of spice.

Jeany’s products are available at Barton Creek Farmers Market, Mueller and Lakeline farmers’ markets, Lil’ Nonna’s vegan pizza food truck, and Mañana Austin. www.jeanysgingerelixir.com
KTonic Kombucha now offers free, contactless deliveries within the Austin area.

 KTonicKombucha.com
DJ DANGIT: GABE HAS ISSUES

Breakaway Records co-crater Gabe Vaughan has issues, all right. You try reopening a thumb-through in a pandemic. Naturally, the bear-sized proprietor put out his solo debut in an era when curbside service saves lives. Gabe Has Issues introduces pre- and post-millennial angst, ennui, and dub. Think North Loop chillwave and overactive brainiac function. See more music recommendations on p.64.

DJ DANGIT: GABE HAS ISSUES

HAROLD WHIT WILLIAMS READING
Malvern Books, 7pm

The author and music artist will be reading from his new book and performing songs from his new solo album, both titled My Heavens.
See more arts events on p.50.

ASLEEP AT THE WHEEL’S AT-HOME DANCE
7pm

As the pandemic continues, Benson & Co. adapt to the virtual concert experience. They’ll livestream from an outside stage at the Starlight Ranch. If your dance card’s full that night, viewers can purchase it on-demand afterward.
See more music recommendations on p.64.

AJC BOOK CLUB: THE END OF POLICING
5pm

This month Austin Justice Coalition will discuss The End of Policing by Alex S. Vitale and how it relates to AJC’s police advocacy work. Everyone is welcome to join.
See more community events on p.52.

¡PURO PINCHE POLLO!
July 27-Aug. 2

Suerte Taqueria presents a monthlong celebration of that tastiest of yardbirds, the pollo. Each meal features a different half-a-chicken each week and comes with two seasonal sides, and it’s enough for two people. This week it’s Polloito Frito O’Clock.
See more food events on p.54.

¡PURO PINCHE POLLO!

“BIRDWATCHING”
Collection Rert

Collection Rert is having a show that’s all about birds. They’ve invited over a dozen artists to submit work in various mediums and now present all of the different avian creations. “There will be select pieces arranged inside the gallery, which will be viewed from outside at two different windows. Each window will have a pair of sanitized binoculars for you.”
See more arts events on p.50.

“BIRDWATCHING”

“AMIGOS”
Artus Co, daily, noon-6pm

Artus Co is “a community of artists and makers at the Arboretum,” and they’ve got a new display of that Matthew Rodriguez’s work (you know: from Cheer Up Charlies and random happy-faced trees?) and you’re invited to stop by and see it inside the current pop-up shop of local creative goodness.
See more arts events on p.50.

“AMIGOS”

NEW PERSPECTIVES: THE OLD CHISHOLM TRAIL
Noon

The Old Chisholm Trail: From Cow Path to Tourist Stop charts the evolution of the major Texas cattle trails. Join author Wayne Ludwig for a livestream discussion and Q&A on his groundbreaking study that offers a new and nuanced look at an important but short-lived era in the history of the American West.
See more community events on p.52.

NEW PERSPECTIVES: THE OLD CHISHOLM TRAIL

For FAQs about submitting a listing, contact info, deadlines, and an online submission form, go to austinchronicle.com/submit.
ONE, TWO, Die Felicia’s coming for you. Three, four, don’t miss these hellhounds we adore. … Yes, the “Best of Austin” award-winning horror drag revue is coming to Twitch with its first-ever digital showcase this Sunday, July 26, 10pm. Our mistress of the dark and hostess, Louisianna Purchase, tells me this “campier Die Felicia than seen before” will feature 12 prerecorded performances from its newest cast – including Ruby Knight, Noodles, and others – plus a few super secret announcements. “Nothing will replace drag in a live setting,” says the Dragula season 3 star, but exploring the medium through her video performances – made in collaboration with her drag daughter Chique Fil-Atio – has sparked a certain amount of artistic excitement. Of course, like it is for so many performers forced to adapt to COVID-19’s impact on the entertainment industry, the IRL-to-URL pivot is born out of both dedication to the craft and survival. “You’re stuck at home, but you still want to be creative because drag is what we love to do as drag performers. But then, quite honestly, the thought of having no money coming in definitely instigates the hustle,” she shares. “I have the luxury of saying that I will not be performing live again until it’s completely safe for everyone,” acknowledges Louisianna. And while drag has allowed Louisianna avenues for merchandise and tipping via videos, she emphasizes the same can’t be said for all performing arts. “If people still want live entertainment – whenever we are able to all be together again – it’s something that we all have to collectively try to save, and keep performers afloat and surviving during this ordeal.” Still, Louisianna is hopeful that digital drag – which she plans on staying involved with even after in-person performances return – has helped make the drag world more accessible to fans who may have faced previous barriers to live shows. “This offers a way to feel connected to the drag community [and] enjoy an art form that you support, all in the comfort of [your] home,” she explains. “It’s really thrown open the door for inclusivity.”
Drink to These Not Only With Thine Eyes

Local beverage packaging designs quench our thirst for tasty graphics  BY WAYNE ALAN BRENNER

You’re gulping down the Drinks Issue of The Austin Chronicle, but it’s no liquid refreshment; it’s a composition of words and images and maybe, if it’s the print edition, the ink-stained textures of thin, crinkly newspaper.

But words and especially images are what alert us to products, and thus to actual drinkables, in these modern times. Beverage-packaging graphics vie for consumer attention from shelves, screens, billboards, buses, and just about every buyable part of our made environment. And the old exhortation to “Don’t judge a book by its cover” is still damned good advice. But sometimes what’s on the surface of a package can be a reliable indicator of the quality to be found within – and, besides, wow, just look at that gorgeous thing. You know?

So we asked a few local graphic designers what their favorites are among the wide and burgeoning field of local beverage identity, to share some of that visual beauty with you and to maybe even hip you to local drinks that you didn’t know about that might be something you’ll want to slake your thirst with as another hotter-than-hell summer continues its Texas onslaught during the Great Coronavirus Pandemic of 2020.

Jennymarie Jemison of Five and Four is no stranger to beverage label design herself, having created the looks for Wunder-Pilz kombucha tea, Moontower Matcha, and Alkemy Brewlab’s excellent line of chai out of Brooklyn, among other tasty things. She gives a shout-out to typography wizard Simon Walker’s work for Austin Eastciders, to Karl Hébert of Daily Greens, and waxes effusive about the team behind Independence Brewing’s visual identity. “The designers who worked on these Independence cans are the all-stars of Austin graphic design,” Jemison tells us. “That’s Jose Canales, Lauren Dickens, Drew Lakin, and Keith Davis Young. They’ve used hand-drawn illustrations of grackles, dogs, backroads, and even Ann Richards with a shotgun, to represent the brewery – plus some truly beautiful type. This is Texas with love.”

Dave McClinton, digital-collaging savant and crafter of professional eye-pleasers for such places as Coco’s Cafe and Benevida Health & Wellness Center, is perfectly frank: “Most local labels suck. Hard.” But, he admits, “I tend to make beverage purchases that are heavily influenced by the packaging. Sometimes it’s not about aesthetics but easy recognition. I like Austin Beerworks’ huge logo and color-coded cans – easily recognizable in the darkness of a bar. It’s good beer, too.” Other favorites are Driftwood-born Desert Door Sotol – “The bottles are lovely, a deep beautiful blue” – and Tequila 512. “The simplicity of those bottles,” McClinton says. “It presents the booze

**“The Helms Workshop design for Austin Beerworks – the simplicity of the packaging and the playfulness, is delicious.”**

SEAN CARNEGIE OF LEWIS CARNEGIE
as clean, almost therapeutic. Tequila fixes things, doesn’t it? The 512 is based here but made in Mexico – does that disqualify it?"

No, Dave, that’s totally legit for our purposes.

Just like design shaman Marc English is based here but was made in Boston, and we’re not disqualifying him. Several titles of the Criterion Collection of films shine due to English’s creative panache, and, back in the beverage-wise day, he conjured up the identity for Dr. Dreams Juice Machine. And he’s extremely particular: “I certainly don’t drink any Austin beers other than Live Oak,” the grizzled font wrangler texts us from somewhere on the road with his favorite motorcycle. “That’s designed by David Kampa.”

Sean Carnegie of Lewis Carnegie – who designed the graphics for Bee Weaver Apiaries and that new Wildflyer Mead Company out in the Hill Country – offers a more lavish consideration of local whistle-wetters. “The Helms Workshop design for Austin Beerworks – the simplicity of the packaging and the playfulness – is delicious,” he says. “Treaty Oak Distillery has a series of thoughtful labels across both their whiskey and wine. And Texas Keeper cider, I’m unclear as to the designer, but it looks like they’re having fun. And sometimes our favorite drinks don’t always come in an amazing package, but we love them because it’s a great product. My wife Wendy is always trying different kombuchas just for the label, but she keeps coming back to Buddha’s Brew because it’s the best. She’s also a fan of Big Swig waters for the packaging – that’s Helms again – and because it’s the best flavored water in Austin.”

Local designer (and trapeze artist!) Liz Taylor’s business name is Herculiz, and the mighty maven of mercantile markmaking used to work at this very paper. These days she’s running her own studio and has created, among other projects, the entire suite of visuals – corporate identity, website, promotion for the annual festival – for Salado Winery. “The most fun part,” says the designer, “is that June [Ritterbusch, winery owner] let me name all the wines, too, so I’ve named them after Texas animals and there’s a tiny factoid about each on the label.” When it comes to other designers’ beverage work, Taylor echoes the plaudits for the graphics of Desert Door and Austin Beerworks – damn, everybody loves those guys – but she’s most effusive about Me & the Bees Lemonade, the company run by local teenage apiculture entrepreneur Mikaila Ulmer. “That design is by Sanders/Wingo, and the bold and fun typography in combination with those bright colors – it’s perfect for a lemonade brand. And Mikaila’s brand story describes many folks advising her to remove her portrait from the label for greater marketability, but she wants to be a source of inspiration for other people of color and sticks to her guns. Ten years and 1,500 shelves later, it’s pretty clear she knows what’s best for her brand.”
Teacher’s Point

Area educators deliver a timely lesson in Summer Break Theatre’s COVID-era comedy Going the Distance

BY ROBERT FAIRES

Maybe you’ve heard a little something about schools reopening and if they should and what it will mean for the students and what doctors think about it and what parents think and what pundits think and what Betsy DeVos thinks and so on and so forth. Seems like everybody is getting to weigh in on the situation except the folks who will actually have to walk into the classrooms every day and do the teaching, coronavirus or no coronavirus.

Well, in Going the Distance, the teachers get their say. This original production from Summer Break Theatre focuses on a crew of eighth-grade educators at a fictitious Texas middle school, who are still teaching remotely this fall but planning their transition to in-person classes in the spring. Do they have thoughts on the matter? You can count on it — and you can count on those thoughts being authentic. Because everyone on this production is a teacher.

Summer Break is a company of, by, and for teachers. It was launched to provide a creative outlet for educators who love theatre but can’t do it during the school year because, well, school. Such drama-deprived instructors are legion, as became clear when teachers from school districts in Austin, Round Rock, Georgetown, Hutto, and Jarrell signed on to help Summer Break mount John Cariani’s dark suburban comedy Cul-de-Sac. That show, which ran for three nights at Hyde Park Theatre last July, left the teachers hungry for more.

So Summer Break planned another show for this July and had the play picked and a run booked when the coronavirus crisis crushed the possibility of a live production. Given the gravity of the pandemic and their experiences in the last months of the school year, the teachers wondered if they should even do a show. But then they realized that the pandemic and their experiences in the last months of the school year were the reasons they should do a show. In a play, they could speak directly to the coronavirus crisis’ impact on education as they’d witnessed it firsthand and felt it personally. And out of this came Going the Distance.

The play takes the form of that mode of communication teachers had long grown accustomed to — weary of by May, the Zoom call. Its characters gather on a series of dreaded staff meeting calls (Professional Learning Community sessions, to use the jargon), and between those scenes are sprinkled more intimate ones with just two characters sharing their personal POVs. In developing the play, teachers worked from an outline and characters established by Ria Ferich and Courtney Wilson, but they had ample room to improvise, which let them draw on the true-life disconnectedness and anxiety and frustration and burnout that have overwhelmed them since the COVID-19 wave hit. But — and this is a major but — at the same time that they were revealing that heavy reality in education right now, the teachers wanted to make the play itself lighthearted. Producer Maggie Bell calls Going the Distance “a satire, with elements of farce” and says it “resembles a school-centered telenova of sorts.” That fictitious school where the play’s set? It’s Buck E. Middle, sponsored by a certain ubiquitous chain of travel centers (wanna guess the mascot?) — a dig at the insidious corporatization of the school system. (Another is that the educators get schooled in best teaching practices by a private company of non-teachers.)

So even in this dark time for theatre, Summer Break has managed to make something original — and it’s managed to find an original way to present it, too. The first of its two prerecorded “performances” will screen at the Blue Starlite Mini Urban Drive-In in the Mueller neighborhood. The hourlong play will be preceded by videos of new music from local soul musician Ray Prim and humor from Dallas stand-up Kc Mack, who knows how to mine jokes from school because he’s a teacher himself. Snacks will be provided by Summer Break sponsor Austin’s Pizza. That will be Sunday, July 26, at 9pm, but for those who can’t get to the drive-in, Summer Break is offering a second presentation on YouTube Monday, July 27, at a more teacher-friendly hour: 7pm.

And speaking of teacher-friendly, Summer Break has launched a campaign to aid teachers in purchasing classroom supplies without dipping into their own pockets. They’re raising funds for gift cards they can give to teachers, and H-E-B has led the way by donating $200 to the campaign. If you want to learn more about the campaign and Summer Break Theatre and Going the Distance — and we all know the importance of lifelong learning, right? — visit www.summerbreaktheatre.com. Class dismissed!

THEATRE

TESTIFY: ALL’S WELL Journey to the finish this month with Testify’s true tales that end well. They’ll have stories of getting stranded in the forest, dancing through sorrow, learning how to re-feel, reflecting on dreams, and trying to have “The Talk.” Thu., July 30, 8pm. Free. www.testifythe.com.

THE SOCIAL DISTANCING FESTIVAL This is an online community, as playwright and unstoppable force of creative nature Nick Green informs us, and it’s been activated to “celebrate and showcase the work of the many artists around the world who have been affected by the need for social distancing that has come about due to the spread of Coronavirus (COVID-19).” It’s not Austin-based, this virtual and ongoing festival of all kinds of performances, but damned if there aren’t a few talented Austinites among the eclectic (and ever-growing) mix. www.socialdistancingfestival.com.

COMEDY

ColdTowne Theater www.coldtownetheater.com FRIDAYS & SATURDAYS LIVE The stage on Airport might be dark, citizen, but the stars of that laugh factory near Mrs. Johnson’s Doughnuts are shining bright every Friday and Saturday night on ColdTowne TV! Tune in for this variety show format and drop a few bucks in the virtual tip jar to keep local comedy alive. Fridays & Saturdays, 8pm. Donations accepted.

VICTROLA ColdTowne’s sketch comedy podcast goes online with guests from, well, it could really be from anywhere, right? Because internet? You wanna see these bright local zanies working the virtual thing for all it’s worth, citizen, you’ll catch every episode. Mondays, 8pm. Donations accepted.

YEAH, BUT ARE YOU HAPPY? Austin comedians Katie Stone and Lane Ingram invite you to an ongoing podcast that explores the intersection between creativity and mental health. Wednesdays, 8pm. Donations accepted.

Hideout Theatre www.hideouttheatre.com IMPROV SOCIAL HOUR It’s social — demented and virtual, but social. Join the Hideout crowd every weekday at 6pm for a Zoomed hour of improv games and antics where you’ll learn a thing or two about comedy improvisation and your day will certainly be brightened. Yes, and maybe bring a friend with you? Even if that friend’s a dog? “I’m a varmint and all varmints are welcome!” Weekdays, 6pm. $10.

MAESTRO This is an all-improvised battle royale, featuring the most ornery cusses in the scene doing their damnedest to emerge victorious from a mind-warping multiplayer fray: imagine a screen crowded with Zoomers, competing in short improv games and wildcard gambits to be crowned the one and only Maestro for the week. Sound good? Yeah — we like it, too. Wednesdays, 8pm; Saturdays, 10pm. $5.

PGRAFF The fantastic foursome of improv fabulators returns for another week, bringing their arch spontaneity through Zoom and onto Twitch to make your minds zoom and your hearts twitch at what a talented local quartet can do, off-the-cuff, at the intersection of goofy and brilliant. Thursdays, 8pm; Saturdays, 7:30pm. $5.

BUT WAIT — THERE’S MORE!

ESTHER’S FOLLIES You don’t have to slog your way through Dirty Suth anymore, citizen — you can catch the arch antics and musical mayhem of the Esther’s crew on video as they unleash fresh new sketches and songs and more about the hottest topics of the day. And there’s all sorts of behind-the-scenes extras now, too, and it’s all available via their Patreon page. You need to laugh right about now, so this is a good idea, right? Answer: Hell yes. www.esthersfollies.com.

COMEDY WHAM: ISOLATION COMEDY SHOWCASE in which Valerie Lopez, who runs that fierce online resource of stand-up-focused podcasts and profiles, presents a weekly livesreamed lineup of local stand-ups, hosted by Cotton Dowling. Fridays, 8pm. Donations accepted. www.comedywham.com.

CAP CITY COMEDY CLUB: ADAM RAY You know this guy from the newly rebooted MADtv, right? And from when he co-hosted TBS’s comedy show Separation Anxiety? Now come on out and catch him onstage at Cap City in the midst of the Great Pandemic of 2020! Note: reserved tables of 2-4 only. July 29-Aug. 1. Wed.-Thu., 8pm; Fri.-Sat., 7:30 & 10pm. Cap City Comedy Club, 8120 Research #100, 512/467-2333. $30 and up. www.capcitycomedy.com.

DANCE

BALLET AUSTIN: CLASSES ONLINE While you’re home, wherever you are across the world, you can still take a dance, fitness, or Pilates class with Ballet Austin. Ballet, barre, contemporary dance, hip-hop, tap, cardio dance fitness, and Pilates out the wazoo, so to speak, because there are so many varieties to choose among, and all taught by professional instructors — and it’s all available 24/7, just like the internets. Ongoing. $3-7 per class. www.balletaustin.org.
Classical Music

The 24th annual festival continues, streaming online and featuring ACMC’s Michelle Schumann hosting interviews and performances each weekend. This Saturday features Austin favorite Anton Nel performing music by Beethoven in celebration of his 250th year. (Note: That’s Beethoven’s 250th, not Nel’s.) And, yes, you’ll have the opportunity to chat with the artists and fellow audience members live during each program. Saturdays through Aug. 8. Free. www.austinchambermusic.org.

Austin Opera: Live From Indy Terrace

This week’s series features livestreamed performances from local stars of the vocal stage – they’ve already showcased Elena Villalón, Mela Sarajane Dailey, Claudia Chapa, Will Liverman, Kyle Albertson, and more – and this week soprano Lauren Snouffer makes her Austin Opera debut, performing a superbly elegant program of Poulenc and Mozart with Kyle Matsuoaka at the piano. Fridays, 3pm. Free. www.austinopera.org.

Visual Arts

Big Medium: Coffee Chats

In addition to their regular artist features, the Big Medium folks offer virtual coffee-time convo, too – with leaders in the creative community sharing their personal and professional experiences to inspire others pursuing careers in art. Up next: multidisciplinary provocateur Michelle Mayer (Thu., July 23, 11am-noon); painter Dawn Okoro (Thu., July 30, 9-10am). Free. www.bigmedium.org.

Umlauf: Closed

Remember how we told you that the Umlauf Sculpture Garden & Museum had reopened? But, well, you know how our current coronavirus situation has gotten a little out of control. And so the lovely Umlauf is shuttered until at least the end of July. Suggestion: Do your species a solid, citizen, and put that mask back on. Umlauf Sculpture Garden & Museum, 601 Aze Morton, 512/445-5582. www.umlauflsculpture.org.

The Blanton Museum: Curated Conversations

This series explores and connects with the Blanton staff, streaming live every Tuesday at 5pm. The first installment featured Elliott Kelly’s Austin; another week had curators discussing artworks that reinterpreted, interrogated, and expand the narrative of national flags. The Blanton’s collections are vast, as is the knowledge of these professionals. Click on over, we suggest, to enjoy a bit of both. Tuesdays, 5-6pm. Free. www.blantonmuseum.org.

Opening

Artus Co: Amigos

Artus Co is “a community of artists and makers at the Arboretum,” and they’re got a new display of that Matthew Rodriguez’s work (you know: from Cheer Up Charlie’s and random happy-faced trees and those kerkel-mash-up-bots). And you’re invited to stop by and see it inside the current pop-up shop of local creative goodness. Through Aug. 15. Daily, noon-6pm. 1000 Research. www.artuscous.com.

Georgetown Art Center: Ingrained

Georgetown? Yeah, what the hell, there’s a pandemic on; so we’ll gonna list it all out for you. But, this week has two shows: one’s a show of five artists – Aléme M. Everett, Alicia Philley, Caroline Walker, Linda Windt, and Thomas Cook – with different styles and subjects who are united by their use of a common material: wood. Through Aug. 23, Georgetown Art Center, 816 S. Main, Georgetown, 512/930-2583. www.georgetownartcenters.org.

Contemporary From Home

The Contemporary Austin’s superlative museum galleries and sculpture park can be visited digitally through art and nature snapshots, tours, and quiet moments of reflection. Experience past performances and new happenings at the museum, discover artist talks, curated collections, and playlists for those all-too-interesting times – in the comfort of your own home. Free. www.thecontemporaryaustin.org.

Yard Dog: Black Light Paintings


Camiba: Habitats and Pathways

This is an exhibition of oil paintings and mixed media works on paper by Austin artist Valerie Fowler. Over the past eight months – partly during our recent pandemic lockdown – Fowler produced a dynamic body of work that honors the everyday natural landscapes of her local environment. (If you recall our review of the artist’s previous creations, you’ll know we had to coin the term florapychozestic in attempting to describe the sinuous, serpentine patterns of color with which she renders her lucky subjects.) You really should get a look at these astonishing new works, images inspired by scenes from hikes and bike rides along Town Creek and its environs, Onion Creek Metropolitan Park, and the Ann and Roy Butler Hike-Bike Trail at Lady Bird Lake. Note: It’s a mostly virtual art show displayed on the gallery’s website, yes, but you can attend a by-appointment-only show in the physical gallery, Recommended. Through Aug. 15. Camiba Art, 6448 Hwy. 290, E Ste. A-102, 512/922-1737. www.camibaart.com.

ICOSA: In the Absence of Time

This exhibition of new works by Jana Swec and Jonas Cristoe explores the concept of entropy through movement, pattern, cycles, and decay. Appropriately enough, ICOSA was in movement toward an opening to the public; but the recently spiking pattern of COVID-19 has altered the cycles of renascence, and so this will be a by-appointment-only show. But, hold on: “Each week we will be rotating work from the exhibition into our front window space. This will allow those who feel more comfortable seeing the show from afar to view the exhibition over a four week span, in an outdoor setting.” Hell of a great idea, especially because the art is so good that no one should miss it. Through Aug. 8, by appointment only, ICOSA, 916 Springdale, 512/920-2062. www.icosacollective.com.

Macc Galleries: Reopened

The Community Gallery and the Sam Z. Coronado Gallery in the Mexican American Cultural Center are open and distanced, and additional health and safety precautions in place,” and inviting reservations to see “Rosy Campanilla, El Camino del Corazón, The Path of the Heart,” which documents 13 years of struggle, peace, and artistic growth between 2003 and 2016, and “Poética Textil/Textile Poems,” in which contemporary artists reveal their restlessness, inquiry, and research into the creation of fabric art via printing, weaving, and assemblage. Mon.-Fri., 11am-6pm. Mexican American Cultural Center, 600 River St. Donations accepted. www.maccaustin.org.

Northern-Southern: Fuzzy Forces

Philip Niemeyer, whose excellent gallery is responsible for the array of “Where Is Here” community portraits elsewhere in this issue, tells us that Laura Ut is working fiercely, producing fast and focused bursts of drawing with colored pencils. The new compositions “seem sentient, astral manifestations of spirit,” he says. But we’re too earthbound to coax such drawings out of him and are instead merely like, “Daazzaam, these drawings are gorgeous!” Which is why this news is exciting: “The Northern-Southern website and Instagram will feature one new drawing every Friday until it completes the series. www.northsouthernaustin.com.

Stephen L Clark Gallery: Black Tulips and Dead Flowers

This new show by acclaimed photographer Kate Breakey is focused on specimens of the plant kingdom and reveals itself as a series of windows into arcane botanical memories. Through Sept. 12, by appointment only. Stephen L Clark Gallery, 1101 E 6th, 512/477-0928. www.stephenclargcallery.com.

Wally Workman Gallery: America Martin

The popular artist’s distinctive style, inspired by midcentury modernist masters, is underscored by the use of boldly brushed lines and punctuated bursts of color to imply tone and mood. And we, somewhat toned and moody ourselves, are very glad to infer. Call for appointment! Through Aug. 9. Wally Workman Gallery, 1201 W. Sixth, 512/472-7428. www.wallyworkmangallery.com.

Women & Their Work Online: 42 Years

Did they say “25 years of contemporary art by women in our online archive,” citizen? Yes, they did — and we recommend feasting your binge-worthy eyes on what this excellent Downtown gallery has to reward your clicks with. www.womenandtheirwork.com.

Wyld Gallery

This is Ray Donley’s gallery of art by Native Americans, located Downtown and resplendent with creations from the original people of our struggling community. Call for appointment. Wyld Gallery, 805 Brazos. www.wyld.gallery.

Creative Opportunities

Atereljo: Remote Studios

The local powerhouse of figurative painting, the art school that’s the smart school for artists of all kinds, they’ve got a painting-along-at-home series going to help you keep your skills honed in these times. Again, if you’re interested in learning, featuring live guided sessions, use any pose that’s yours, and be sure to check in with your studio teachers for instructions on how to get those supplies. “Join us for a three-hour costumed-model drawing session!” And while you’re still working from home, you wish, listen to music, share your work, chat with others. It’s a great way to stay connected with your art community!” Tuesdays, 1:30-4:30pm; Fridays, 6:30-9:30pm; Saturdays, 9:30am-12:30pm. $5. www.arteljo.com.

Ariel René Jackson: Introduction to Video Editing

Big Medium presents this free workshop, in which Ariel René Jackson discusses and shares tips on video editing using Adobe Premiere Pro and Audition. Note: This workshop is meant for people to little to no video editing experience or knowledge. Wed., July 29, 6:30pm. Free. www.bigmedium.org.

Books

Books: Pick ‘Em Up Curbside!

Don’t forget, citizen: The best place to get your reading material is from Austin’s own Malvern Books or Half Price Books or BookPeople or BookWorm stores online. (And for the ultimate in vintage collectors’ editions and unique works on paper, we recommend the excellent South Congress Books – right there on South Congress.) Or try Bookshop.org in general – because Bookshop, unlike the interwoven behemoth named after a certain South American river, Bookshop shares the profits among all its independent-bookstore members. Which means that Boco fellow is already making enough goddamn money, n’est-ce pas? www.bookshop.org.

Malvern Books:

Harold Whit Williams

The author and music artist will be reading from his new book and performing songs from his new solo album, both titled My Heavens. Fri., July 24, 7pm. Free. www.malvernbooks.com.

New Perspectives:

The Old Chisholm Trail

The Old Chisholm Trail: From Cow Path to Tourist Stop charts the evolution of the major Texas cattle trails, explores the rise of the Chisholm Trail in legend and lore, and analyzes the role of cattle trail tourism long after the end of the trail-driving era itself. Join author Wayne Ludwig for a livestream discussion and Q&A on his groundbreaking study that offers a new and nuanced look at an important but short-lived era in the history of the American West. Thu., July 30, noon. Free. www.thestoryoftexas.com.
COMMUNITY AC

COVID-19 VACCINE TRIAL RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS NEEDED
This month, medical research firm Benchmark Research will launch clinical trials to test vaccines aimed at preventing the spread of COVID-19 in Austin. Participants must be 18 or older, and front-line workers, people likely to be exposed to the virus, and those over 65 or at high risk with chronic health conditions are especially needed. All participants will receive financial compensation. Call or inquire via the website for more info. www.benchmarkresearch.net.

EARTH TO EAR PRO BONO PROGRAM
Minority-owned advertising agency Third Ear is familiar with the barriers advertising agencies face on a daily basis in pursuit of growth, so they’ve launched Ear to Ear, in which they’ll select one Austin minority-owned small business annually and provide pro bono advertising services. Get details and apply online if your small business qualifies. Through Mon., Aug. 3. Apply online. forms.gle/QOk4amM5WcCW98.

TOXINS DETECTED IN LADY BIRD LAKE
Lady Bird Lake experienced a harmful algae bloom in 2019, which sickened and killed several dogs. On July 20, the city reported that toxins have again been detected in algae at Festival Beach and Red Bud Isle, and it is recommended that you do not allow dogs to swim in or drink from Lady Bird Lake. The city continues to monitor algae in the water; keep tabs on the status via their online dashboard. www.austintexas.gov/algae.

CHILD CARE PROVIDER RELIEF GRANT APPLICATION PERIOD OPEN
The Austin Child Care Provider Relief Grant provides immediate one-time financial assistance to eligible child care centers, including home providers. In partnership with the city of Austin, United Way for Greater Austin will accept applications and provide consultation and case management services to grant applicants. Get details and apply online. Open July 21 to Oct. 1 or when funding is expended, whichever is first. www.austintexas.gov/departments/austin-childcare-provider-relief-grant.

HERE TO HELP ATX FUNDRAISER
Austin families impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic are still struggling with access to basic needs such as groceries, household items, medical supplies, and rental assistance. Show your support by bidding on auction items like a backyard barbecue with SaulPaul or by purchasing raffle tickets for such treats as a Downtown staycation or Tito's gift basket. Sponsored by ATXelerator. Fundraising through Sun., July 26, 10pm. Online. www.heretohelpatx.org.

SBA FEDERAL FINANCIAL RESOURCES WORKSHOP
Austin’s Economic Development Department and the U.S. Small Business Administration’s San Antonio District Office host this workshop on federal financial resources for businesses, nonprofits, and self-employed individuals impacted by the pandemic. Learn about the Paycheck Protection Program and the Economic Injury Disaster Loan Program and find out if you’re eligible. Thu., July 23, 3-4pm. Online. www.eventbrite.com/e/sba-federal-financial-resources-workshop-registration-1382959306.

CAREER CHAT 101: NAVIGATE YOUR JOB SEARCH

OPTIMIZING YOUR LINKEDIN PROFILE & RÉSUMÉ
If you want to up-level your LinkedIn profile and résumé in order to stand out and land your next job, this is the workshop for you. Thu., July 23, 7-8:30pm. Online via Zoom. Free. www.generalsassemb.ly.

ONLINE ORGANIZING 101
Join Tx 25 nominee Julie Oliver to discuss how to register and turn out more Democratic voters with online organizing. Thu., July 23, 8pm. Online. www.fb.com/events/620163351957792.

DAY TRIPS
BY GERALD E. MCLEOD
Stonehenge II in Ingram

Stonehenge II in Ingram attracts a steady stream of pilgrims to the replica of the famous prehistoric monument outside of Wiltshire, England.

While the origins of the English cultural icon might be a bit murky, the history of the Texas monument has been well documented.

It all started in 1989 when contractor Doug Hill had a large chunk of limestone left over from a patio project. As a joke, he placed it upright in his neighbor’s pasture.

His neighbor, Al Shepperd, liked the addition to his field. The two friends got to talking and decided that the lone stone reminded them of Stonehenge. Pretty soon they were busy constructing a wire-mesh-and-plaster, two-thirds-scale reproduction of the UK landmark.

Later, the pair of jokesters added two Easter Island-style heads, one wearing a Texas sombrero. The show starts in 1994, and his field outside of Hunt was eventually sold. In 2010, the Hill County Art’s Foundation moved the folk art to its current location west of Kerrville.

Stonehenge II is in front of the arts center on Highway 39 Continue west on 39 toward Hunt to find three swimming holes where the highway crosses creeks. The Ingram monument is not the only replica of Stonehenge in Texas. Another one is on the campus of the University of Texas Permian Basin in Odessa. Made of 40,000-pound stone blocks arranged to match the original Stonehenge layout, it is 3 feet shorter. Originally part of a student project, the limestone arches are lined up to mark the Summer Solstice.

The Odessa Stonehenge is north of I-20 and west of the intersection of highways 338 and 191. (East 42nd Street). 1,509th in a series. Follow “Day Trips & Beyond,” a travel blog, at austinchronicle.com/daily/travel.

NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES AT EAST AUSTIN YMCA
Austin Public Health’s East Austin YMCA satellite location provides various services, including bus passes, rent and utility assistance, and social work and nursing services. For more information or to schedule an appointment, contact the Rosewood-Zaragosa Neighborhood Center at 512/972-6740. Thursdays, 8:30am-noon. East Communities YMCA, 5315 Ed Bluestein. www.fb.com/events/51078679545934.

SOUTH OF THE PORCH FROM AUSTIN, TEXAS
Support forward-thinking artists and musicians through this new weekly web show. Visit the grocery list early in the week, then, during the show, learn how to create special cocktails and enjoy intimate live music sets. The show airs via online streaming sites including Facebook and YouTube Live, and the first episode features special guest bartender Sunny Allen along with musical guests John Guinan and Aubrey Hays. Follow the Instagram to get updates. Fri., July 24, 8-30pm. Online. Free. www.instagram.com/southoftheporch.

AUSTIN JUSTICE COALITION SUPPLY DRIVE
AIC is accepting donations for their supply drive. Drop-offs are accepted on Friday but exceptions may be made; arrange those via email. Find a link to the supply list with this event listing at austinchronicle.com/events; some items have links to Amazon so you can order and have them delivered to the AIC headquarters. Fridays, Austin Justice Coalition, 1603 E. 38th St., 512/921-4933, austinjustice.org.

CHARCUTERIE BOARD CLASS
Learn to sand and stain your own wood charcuterie board with woodworking artist Abby Ruston. Sign up by the day prior to get your materials kit from the Cathedral. Sat., July 25, 11am. Online. $85. www.thecathedraltxt.com/pages/workshops.

VIRTUAL DIY MAKE A MINI LIVING WALL CLASS
These mini living walls are a signature Articulture creation. Now’s your chance to learn how to make your own from Articulture founder and “entrepreneur” Monique Capanelli. Learn the basics and get design instruction, longevity tips, care instructions, and more. Sat., July 25, 11am-noon. Online. $85+. www.articulturesigns.com.

TCPD BIG TENT PARTY
Join a slate of Democratic nominees for a musical celebration and telethon to kick off the Travis County Democratic Party’s coordinated campaign to turn Texas blue and keep Travis County deep blue in 2020. Meet the candidates on your November ballot and listen to your favorite local bands. Sat., July 25, 1-9pm. Online. www.fb.com/events/265070734737841.

DESDAL SALA VIRTUAL CONCERT SERIES
Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center’s digital program “Desde la Sala” features a series of free performances by some of their favorite artists, from their living room to yours.

Like and follow the ESB-MACC’s Facebook and/or the city of Austin’s Parks & Recreation Department YouTube to get updates on upcoming concerts. Sat., July 25, 6-9pm. Free. www.desdalsala.net.
SOCCER WATCH

BY NICK BARBARO

Even as other major league sports prepare to restart, soccer leagues here and abroad are reaching their climax.

This Sunday is the final day of the English Premier League season, with all 20 teams in action at 3pm. July 26 on various NBC networks. And while Liverpool’s Reds wrapped up the title ages ago, there’s still plenty to play for. Best bets: Manchester United and Leicester go head-to-head for the last Champions League spot, and Chelsea plays Wolves with both teams needing a result to hold their CL and Europa League spots, respectively.

At the other end of the table, Aston Villa, Watford, and Bournemouth are all trying to stay in the top division; only one will succeed.

The MLS is Back Tournament group stage ends with three games today, Thursday, July 23; the round of 16 runs Saturday through Tuesday, July 25-28: two games a night on ESPN or FS1, counting down toward an Aug. 11 final. The intensity has picked up as the tournament has gone on, even if the level of play still feels decidedly preseason.

The NWSL Challenge Cup winds up this Sunday, with the championship final at 11:30am on CBS between the Houston Dash and either Chicago Red Stars or New York’s Sky Blue FC, who are meeting in the second semifinal as we go to press. The young Dash team—who many picked to finish last in the eight-team field—have been the breakout success story of the tourney so far.

This just in: The Austin Bold have postponed their next two games—tonight at home and at OKC on Sunday, after “one of Austin Bold FC’s covered persons testing positive for COVID-19” in routine weekly testing. They’re scheduled for home games at Bold Stadium the next two Saturdays, Aug. 1 & 8; more word next week on how those games will play out.
FOOD NEWS BUFFET

BY WAYNE ALAN BRENNER

At least once a week, Austinite: Culled from numerous PR releases, official announcements, words on the digital street, and even the occasional (verified) IRL eavesdroppings, it’s your food! News! Buffet!

By now you know that longtime bowling alley Dart Bowl has closed permanently and taken the Dart Bowl Cafe and its legendary enchiladas along with it, right? The popular gathering spot succumbed to economic hardships wrought by our current coronavirus situation and went out with a last hurrah with a careful crowd on Friday, July 17 – and we’ve got an online photo gallery by David Brendan Hall commemorating those final hours of bittersweet fun.

We’ve also had to bid adieu to the Manor Road incarnation of Sugar Mama’s Bakeshop (but Olivia O’Neal’s original Sugar Mama’s shop on South First is, thankfully, still open six days a week) and to that venue of hearty grub and nonpareil beers the Brewer’s Table. Owner Jake Maddux, executive chef Zach Hunter, and head brewer Drew Durish ran an excellent operation at that Table, and we can only hope they’ll rebound to delight us again after all this shit has passed.

Enough with the obits, although who knows who else might’ve folded by the time you read this. (Justine’s, which was temporarily shuttered to deal with a COVID situation – and was refreshingly transparent about the whole thing – may be open for business again later this very week.)

Let’s note a few actual openings and more:

Hilton Hotels’ Canopy concept revealed itself on West Sixth at the start of July; now the hotel’s enhanced by Verbena, a new eatery with chef Nic Yanes of Juniper and Uncle Nicky’s in charge. “Obviously a pandemic is not the best time to open a brand new restaurant,” notes the announcement, “but everything is in place to ensure the safety of all guests and Verbena is excited to welcome diners.” … That tree-studded event center called Barr Mansion has decided to open their beloved grounds to the public each Wednesday for Pizza & Pints, an evening experience that will feature picnic-style dining in their spacious outdoor gardens and feature organic salads, snacks, and sweets, in addition to the savory pies made in their onsite wood-fired oven. … We told you about the Far Out Lounge’s Fowl Mouth (with its new weekend brunch service) and Austin Rotisserie food trucks a while ago, but now that same location’s been super charged with the addition of Wünder Pig BBQ Co. and SolarSno Shaved Ice. … It won’t be open until this fall, but construction has begun on Jjim BBQ, a concept boasting a new kind of ‘cue for this city – a Korean method of slow cooking until tender, differing from the grilled meats typically associated with Korean barbecue. The menu of the Lamar Union eatery will feature galbi jjim (braised beef short ribs served with carrots, shishito peppers, potatoes, king oyster mushrooms) and other such delicacies.

Note: Tso Chinese Delivery’s Min Choe is on the CKN Hospitality team behind this place, which we reckon is a fine recommendation right there. “Growing up, galbi jjim was by far my favorite food,” says Choe. “I can’t wait for the Austin community to experience the same joy I have had with this delightful meal.” … Speaking of damn good barbecue, upstart barbecue badasses LeRoy and Lewis are bringing their Heat Week back for a fourth annual challenge that will “offer momentary relief from staring at your own four walls, if only to concentrate on the intense fire in your mouth.” They’re giving prizes to those valiant citizens who finish all five days of spicy specials, and they’re debuting three new bottled sauces and rubs for at-home grilling… Downtown’s Mexic-Arte Museum looks forward to welcoming everyone to their annual Taste of Mexico again, but they’re looking a bit further forward to it now, having rescheduled the popular culinary celebration to Wed., April 21, 2021. And maybe we’ll be safely beyond the plague times by then? *fingers crossed, flatware polished* … As for more of what’s happening right now, look – food events:

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TEXAS MONTHLY’S HAPPY HOUR SERIES
This seven-week series from one of the country’s favorite magazines features summer cocktail creations from an array of Texas’ finest bartenders (in Austin, DFW, Houston, and San Antonio). But this isn’t just any drinking series; it’s also an opportunity for these mixologists to shed light on the causes that matter most to them. You want a virtual date with the best and brightest and most whistle-wetting the Lone Star State has to offer? Each Friday debuts a new video and recipe for you to imbibe along at home with – and we heartily recommend it.


BARR MANSION’S PIZZA & PINTS
The tree-studded event center called Barr Mansion is opening its lovely grounds to the public each Wednesday for an evening of picnic-style dining in the spacious outdoor gardens, featuring organic salads, snacks, and sweets, in addition to the savory pies made in Barr’s onsite wood-fired oven. Bonus: Live music by Joshua Klaus, beer from Hopsquad Brewery, and cocktails by The Tigress. (And zero-proof cocktails, too, by the Barr home team.) Wednesdays, 6-10pm. Barr Mansion, 10463 Sprinkle, 512/926-6907. www.barrmansion.com.

Delysia Chocolatier: Virtual Chocolate Tastings
You know Zoom always works better when it’s covered in chocolate, right? So we’re telling you about Delysia’s August series of tastings – an array of deliciously fun, interactive, and educational events hosted by the acclaimed Austin choco-mongers – and we’re telling you early, because these things (each accompanied by four unique chocolate truffles) tend to sell out lickety-split. Check the website for details and to schedule your spot for Havana Nights (Aug. 2), Japanese Rising Sun (Aug. 9), Moroccan Medley (Aug. 16), Sweet as a Peach (Aug. 23), and Wine-a-Little (Aug. 29).


Suerte Taqueria: ¡Puro Pinche Pollo!
Suerte Taqueria presents a monthlong celebration of that tastiest of yardbirds, the pollo. (Note for the monoglots: That’s a chicken, mmmkay?) Each meal features a different half-a-chicken each week and comes with two seasonal sides, and it’s enough for two people, and is available for dine-in or carry-out alongside Suerte’s regular menu. First week, it’s Pollo a la Leña (July 20-26); then, Pollito Frito O’Clock (July 27-Aug. 2), Mr. James Chicken Adobo en Stylo Filipino (Aug. 3-9), and, finally, People’s Choice (Aug. 10-15) among those diverse styles. Hey, you’re a people – treat yourself and help them choose!


Suerte presents a monthlong celebration of that tastiest of yardbirds, the pollo.

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Slacker at 30

In 1990, Austin audiences watched Richard Linklater’s indie milestone ... and saw themselves  

BY RICHARD WHITTAKER

It’s a conspiracy. Whatever IMDB or Wikipedia tells you, don’t believe it. *Slacker* did not open on July 5, 1991. That’s the corporate line they want you to swallow.

OK, so maybe there’s a bit of truth. That’s when Orion Classics officially released Richard Linklater’s groundbreaking second feature onto screens nationally, and the directionless children of the Reagan-Bush era finally saw themselves in a movie: hanging out, doing nothing, working out that the only destination is wherever you end up. But Austin could have told them what was coming 11 months earlier. On July 27, 1990, *Slacker* opened on one of the two screens at the now-defunct Dobie Theater, in the food court on the second floor of the 27-story Dobie Center dorms, just off the UT-Austin campus at the end of the section of Guadalupe known as the Drag.

That run is cinematic folklore. Linklater shot most of his film about students and wastrels, para noiacs and philosophers, within 10 minutes’ shuffle of the theatre. When he submitted it to distributors and festivals the silence was deafening, and he thought he’d have to make his $23,000 budget back by selling VHS copies through the classifieds in *Film Threat* magazine. That’s when he struck a deal with Dobie owner/manager Scott Dinger: Linklater was already screening films under the still freshly printed Austin Film Society banner there, so Dinger agreed to schedule his micro-indie up against his guaranteed money-maker: *The Brave Little Toaster*. What they got was a full-blown one-screen blockbuster, selling out screenings for weeks.

Linklater didn’t need to make a movie. He could have just knocked a hole in the wall and charged audiences admission, because anybody walking by could have been in *Slacker*. That was the point, and Beau Paul almost was. In 1989, he was fresh out of high school, living at 31st and Speedway, splitting days between being a good student at ACC and hanging out on the Drag. It was a cycle: bouncing around Le Run arcade (before the Scientologists took the building over), drinking at Les Amis, picking up a pack of Gauloise at Pipes Plus, browsing the racks at Record Exchange before catching Ed Hall or Butthole Surfers “and then you get up and do it all over again. ... I remember seeing these fliers going, ‘You should come audition for our weird movie.’” He didn’t see it as anything to get excited about. “Fliers would appear on Guadalupe every day,” he said. “We had no idea that this was going to be the juggernaut it became.”

When the movie crept in the Dobie the following year, he was part of the crowds. He was already a regular: In simple terms, it was the Drafthouse before the Drafthouse, the only place to see foreign and inde-

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Linklater on Linklater  
FROM THE ARCHIVES, OUR 1991 SELF-INTERVIEW BY THE SLACKER FILMMAKER

“Austin has the highest per capita ratio of wonderful people and the lowest percentage of assholes of any city, I believe I’ll be based here for quite some time,” When Richard Linklater made that announcement to the Chronicle back in 1991, at the height of Slacker’s success, it would have been reasonable to believe that he was bluffing at least a little. But three decades, five Oscar nominations, and $300 million in the global box office later, he’s still hanging around — an older, wiser version of the Indie Innovator whose latest film, live-action/animation hybrid coming-of-age period piece Apollo 10½: A Space Age Adventure, has been acquired by Netflix and was still in the ATX.

But 30 years ago, he was the newly minted hometown hero, in typical fashion, when the Chronicle sponsored a screening of Slacker at the Dobie Theater on Sept. 22, 1991, we ran a story under the unwieldy title of: “The Art of the Interview: Self-Realization or Self Torture? Richard Linklater Interviewed by...”. There’s no byline, because the subject was the author: Linklater, still whirring from the seemingly never-ending press tour, sat down with himself to dispatch, once and for all, the most meaningful answer to the most generic questions he had been asked over the summer months. Here’s a snippet:

RL: So, just what is a slacker?
RL: (Acting like he’s never heard the question before.) Hmm...
Slackers might look like the left-behinds but they are actually one step ahead, rejecting most of society and the social hierarchy before it rejects them. The dictionary defines slackers as people who evade duties and responsibilities. A more modern notion would be people who are ultimately being responsible to themselves and not wasting their time in a realm of activity that has nothing to do with who they are or what they might ultimately be striving for.

RL: (A slightly suspecting, almost distrustful look) So okay... You aren’t a slacker. Slackers don’t make movies.

RL: Sure they do, just not the kind you would usually want to interview somebody about. It sounds like I am being judged on the success of the film, not its simple existence. No one ever said slackers weren’t productive. It’s just that their products often fall outside the market economy, if the film never found an audience, would my slacker credentials be revoked like this? I think I still qualify as a slacker... just one that’s currently lucky. I’ve been officially employed about one year of the last seven. Actually, filmmaking is the perfect slacker profession. You can hobble around for years, watch tons of movies and dream about what important films you would make if you only had the cash. RL: The rest ...

RL: Don’t ever believe press kits... that was all bullshit. Actually, we’d just turn the camera on and whatever happened, happened. I don’t know why everybody [would] do a movie like this. I guess we just got lucky that it all fit together somehow (smiling).

RL: One of the most interesting aspects of the movie is its large cast of mostly non-professional actors. Where did you find such poorly dressed people? RL: Many were friends of mine or the crew but most were found through a very selective vetting process where we gave out cards that were essentially invitations to a video interview. From there it was matching people to parts they seemed to embody the essence of. A lot of interesting people couldn’t get it together to show up for their interview, and a lot of cool people we met with just didn’t match a preconceived part. We were then so underground no one cared much, I run into people who say ‘if they had known it was going to be any good, they would have been interested. Basically, the cast has never been given enough credit. These were not only interesting, creative, and courageous people, but also the ones serious enough to approach the rehearsal and shooting process in a professional manner. By saying everyone... simply played themselves, it doesn’t acknowledge that leap of faith to get into that arena and tap into a part of themselves necessary for the part. It’s not easy to be yourself on purpose, take after take.

Find the full interview at austinchronicle.com/screens.

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SLACKER AT 30 CONTINUED FROM P.56

so much the people as the details, Blizzard recognized onscreen, like trying to rub the ink from an admission stamp onto your friend’s hand so you could save the $5 cover charge for a gig. Or the less sanitary option: “We would do this thing of putting your hand in the exhaust of a car just to blacken it up.”

In 1990, Blizzard wasn’t some kid on the Drag: If he was any character, he would have been “Budding Capitalist Youth.” He’d graduated from UT, a little street-laced, and had taken a year off, working the graveyard shift at the notoriously sleazy Rio Motel at 48th and I-35. Now he was back on campus, studying for a psychology Ph.D. he would never finish. “I didn’t really know what academia was like. It was just the next thing to do.” He’d hang around the Dobie a lot, and the sign for Slacker was on the marquee forever, so he finally decided to go see what the fuss was about. Within a couple of years, he became a self-described “vegetarian political canvasser hanging out at Quackenbush’s and I think Slacker had a lot to do with it.”

Looking back, the actual screening at the Dobie, and the famous lines, don’t stand out that much. After all, it didn’t take much to make the cramped little cinema look crowded. What stuck in his mind was the shoes. He was a pretty conventional college kid, wearing either hi-tops, boots, maybe some dress shoes from the back of his closet. “I remember being astounded by the wide variety of footwear, because a lot of people were wearing this thrift store style.”

Slacker’s genius was in embracing that anti-uniform. Unlike other pop culture zeitgeist films, there were no “sides,” no Sharks or Jets, no bikers and preppies, no hippies and townies. Blizzard said, “By its very lack of a coherent definition of these characters, it was very indicative of the time.”

Yet it was hard to recognize the importance at the time, just because it was so a part of the scene. Bob Ray was another Let’s Go regular like Skloss, but he was 20, drinking and partying, catching the rare metal show that bypassed San Antonio, and forged his own Austin time capsule, into a career track, ubiquitous around City Hall as a progressive campaign operative before sliding onto the board of Austin Film Society, then into filmmaking, and now he’s a credited producer for Linklater’s next film, Apollo 10½: A Space Age Adventure. Ray picked up the camera and forged his own Austin time capsule, 2005’s Roller Derby documentary Hell on Wheels. Skloss is now an in-demand editor and director, and seeing Slacker in its natural habitat helped her realize that she could make films too. “It opened your world, and made you realize that there are so many more possibilities.”

But it wasn’t that it made Austin bigger or more mythic. If anything, it demystified and democratized the creative process, made it all more reachable. A couple of years after the Dobie run, Skloss decided to audition for Linklater’s big-budget follow-up, Dazed and Confused. She walked in the room at his Detour Film Productions office, and saw the director. Or rather, saw another of those folks from the slice-of-her-life movie. “I went, oh my god, you’re the guy from Slacker in the taxi!”

At the local level, the audience saw that if Linklater could do it, they could too. Now an actor, Paul has become a fixture on Austin stages, as well as a game designer, writer, and film critic on the One of Us podcast network. Blizzard turned “vegetarian political canvasser” into a career track, ubiquitous around City Hall as a progressive campaign operative before sliding onto the board of Austin Film Society, then into filmmaking, and now he’s a credited producer for Linklater’s next film, Apollo 10½: A Space Age Adventure. Ray picked up the camera and forged his own Austin time capsule, 2005’s Roller Derby documentary Hell on Wheels. Skloss is now an in-demand editor and director, and seeing Slacker in its natural habitat helped her realize that she could make films too. “It opened your world, and made you realize that there are so many more possibilities.”

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The Austin Chronicle  JULY 24, 2020  austinchronicle.com
Dive Bar Blues

All the good times wasted in boozehound elegy Bloody Nose, Empty Pockets

BY MARC SAVLOV

I don’t know about you, but I’ve been knocking back a few more than usual lately. And why not? Pundits and palavers, doomsayers and truth-tellers have been rattleing on about the end of the whole shebang since our world began, but this time, right here, right now, it feels like maybe possibly probably they’ve nailed it. The end is nigh, or near enough to warrant one for my baby and one more for the road. (Cormac McCarthy’s The Road, that is.)

Documentarian siblings the Ross brothers have perfectly captured the current global zeitgeist in all its woefully shocking abruptness with Bloody Nose, Empty Pockets, which premiered at Sundance Film Festival ever. How they managed to presage the present is a puzzler in itself, but this time, right here, right now, it feels like this dingy bar like this, after all, acts as a valid surrogate for the Catholic confessional, acts of contrition and all. Bloody Nose, Empty Pockets is as real as it gets, a snapshot stolen from the very year everything turned to shit. It’s a masterpiece. To quote Dashiell Hammett’s tippling couple Nick and Nora Charles, “How do you feel?” “Terrible. I must’ve gone to bed sober.” Bloody Nose, Empty Pockets is available now as a Virtual Cinema release through AFS Cinema and Violet Crown Theatre.

Here’s the thing, though. The Roaring Twenties isn’t in Las Vegas. It’s an actual bar in New Orleans, and the cast of Bloody Nose, Empty Pockets are real people, mostly non-actors portraying variations of themselves, drinking real booze and acting like it’s the end of their world as they know it and come hell or daylight they’re going to do their best to feel fine. It’s a melancholy affair alight with tipsy camaraderie and desperate good cheer beset by the unspoken fact that this dingy bar they call home is about to be no more. For these Bukowskian wastrels and dipsomaniacal drunks their oblivion is the object because, well, what else is there for them after tonight? The harsh and unforgiving light of day is no friend of theirs. As a metaphor for our times – the film itself is set in 2016 and thus front-loaded with all that that implies – the Ross brothers have crafted a doozy.

Convivial bartender Marc oversees a motley crew consisting firstly of grey fox Michael, a Replacements regular who treats the joint like it’s his own (or only) home and whose face is a road map of bar ditch bad breaks and busted up dreams. Then there’s old Lowell, first seen stumbling into the bar, apparently at dawn, as Buck Owens’ “Big in Vegas” plays over the shot. Night bartender Shay worries about her stoner son and his troublesome buddies, gloomy war vet Bruce finds solace in A$AP Rocky’s “Fuckin’ Problems,” and as the bar fills up and the booze flows freely, the party – a wake, actually – moves out into the parking lot for an impromptu fireworks display. It’s the utterly wasted Michael who digs deep and sums it all up, slurring, “There’s nothing more boring than a guy in a bar who used to do stuff but who doesn’t do stuff... because he’s in a bar.” Wisdom from on low!

At one point someone brings out a celebratory cake with the inscription “This Place Sucked Anyway.”

The Ross brothers trompe l’oeil scenario is occasionally messed around with. Camera crew can be seen reflected in the bar’s mirror, and the occasional shot of a black-and-white television that only seems to show old film noirs are weirdly apropos touches. Shot minus a real script, the directors instead employed predetermined staged moments for their characters to latch on to and then run as wild as they saw fit. Cassavetes would dig this like crazy, and so, I think, would the late Austinite filmmaker Eagle Pennell, whose Last Night at the Alamo tred similarly loaded ground.

As befits a real dive bar, music plays as much a role in the film as the cast, and the Ross brothers clearly know when to hold ’em – Kenny Rogers’ “The Gambler” plays more than once – and when to dial it down to focus on the touching intimacy of soused confessions. A bar like this, after all, acts as a valid surrogate for the Catholic confessional, acts of contrition and all.

**BLOODY NOSE, EMPTY POCKETS**

D: Bill Ross IV, Turner Ross; with Peter Elwell, Michael Martin, Shay Walker, Cheryl Fink, Marc Paradis, John Nerichow, Rikki Redd, Pam Harper, Trevor Moore, Bruce Hadnot. (NR, 98 min.)

★★★★★ As perfect as a movie can be
★★★★ Slightly flawed, but excellent nonetheless
★★★ Has its good points, and its bad points
★★ Mediocre, but with one or two bright spots
★ Poor, without any saving graces
♂ La bomba
♀ Recommended
NEW REVIEWS

AMULET
D: Romola Garai; with Alec Secareanu, Imelda Staunton, Carla Juri. (NR, 100 min.)

A refugee soldier from an unnamed war, Tomaz (Secareanu) washes up in London, with no money and crippling PTSD, where a kindly nun (Staunton) sets him up as a live-in handyman for Magda (Juri), who is in turn caring for her decrepit mother. Everyone, inevitably, has gristy secrets that circle and threaten to consume them all, as Tomaz becomes increasingly convinced there are demonic forces at play. Yet the slow-burn gruesomeness and metaphysical horror never feels fully realized, like a highfalutin remake of The Lords of Salem without the B-movie veneer. First-time writer/director Garai undoubtedly strikes a consistent mood of dread, but there’s a lack of thematic coherence to her tale of dark magic, and a resolution that is neither as neat nor satisfying as she seems to believe. The parts of the spell are all there, but the conjuring is incomplete. Amulet is available on VOD now.

HELMTUT NEWTON: THE BAD AND THE BEAUTIFUL
D: Gero von Boehm. (NR, 89 min., subtitled)

Helmut Newton would have despised the idea of a documentary of his life. “Most photographers are terribly boring people,” he said, “and the films of photographers that I have seen are terribly boring.” Yet Gero von Boehm’s portrait of the inimitable self-described “naughty boy” fits well with another recent biography of a fashion great, Mark Bozek’s The Times of Bill Cunningham. Cunningham was a self-deprecating street snapper, while Newton constructed his universe to the smallest detail. His super-styled glazamors, naked and powerful, were often nothing to do with fashion, and more about his obsessions — as recounted by the women he photographed, objectified, deified. As Grace Jones giggles, “He was a little bit pervert, but so am I, so it’s OK.” Read our full review at austinchronicle.com/screens.

Helmut Newton: The Bad and the Beautiful is available as a Virtual Cinema release now through Violet Crown Cinema.★★★★

– Richard Whittaker

AUSTIN VIOLET CROWN.COM

SPECIAL SCREENINGS

BY KAT McNEVIN

VIRTUAL SCREENINGS

AFS CINEMA VIRTUAL SCREENINGS
The quality programming you’ve come to expect from AFS Cinema is available virtually, and online ticket purchases will help ensure it can reopen so you can visit again in person. Online via www.austinfilm.org/afs-cinema.

ALAMO ON DEMAND
Make any Tuesday terrorific, any Wednesday weird, and the rest of the week fantastic with Alamo Drafthouse-curated picks via Alamo On Demand. Online via www.drafthouse.com.

BLACK LIVES MATTER WATCH PARTIES
BLM Austin will be hosting Black film watch parties until Black August. Read more about it and check out the daily film events on their Facebook page. Online via BLM Austin, www.fb.com/blacklivesmatteraustin.

DAILY THROUGH JUNE & JULY

MYS POLISH HONEYMOON (2019) D: Elize Otzenberger. (NR, 88 min.) Co-presented by Austin Film Festival and Austin Jewish Film Festival, a screening and Q&A with filmmaker Elize Otzenberger. Online via www.austinfilmfestival.com. Screening through July 24; Q&A Sun., July 26, 2pm.

PARANORM THEATRE QUARANTINE SERIES
This series offers a selection of films curated by Paranorm Theatre producer Stephen Janisse, as well as meal pairings so you can enjoy dinner and a movie. They’ve taken the guesswork out of movie night and arranged discounts with participating restaurants. Get all the details online via Paranorm Theatre, www.austinfilmfestival.com.

VIOLET CROWN VIRTUAL CINEMA
Violet Crown Cinema is saving a seat for you ... on the couch. They continue Magnolia Mondays as well as offering the arthouse cinema they’re known for, all virtually, and ticket purchases benefit the theatre. Online via austinvioletcrowncinema.com.

SUBMISSION INFORMATION:
The Austin Chronicle is published every Thursday. Info is due the Monday of the week prior to the issue date. The deadline for the August 7 issue is Monday, July 27. Include name of event, date, time, location, price, phone number(s), a description, and any available photos or artwork. Send submissions to the Chronicle, PO Box 4189, Austin, TX 78765; fax, 512/458-6910; or email. Contact Kat McNevin (Special Screenings): specialscreenings@austinchronicle.com.

DRIVE-INS

For fans missing the big screen, drive-ins are the ideal way to enjoy a film while social distancing. Doc's Drive In Theatre in Buda has screenings through most of the week, and they've even got tiny houses to rent for a quick getaway. Get more information at www.docsdriveintheatre.com. Blue Starlite has locations in Round Rock and Austin, and the Mueller location in Austin offers five screens for a variety of experiences. Get details at www.bluestarlitecinema.com, and get schedule updates by texting “Starlite” to 797097. All the drive-ins have procedures in place to protect patrons during the pandemic, so be sure to read their rules before buying your tickets.

DRIVE-IN FEATURED

SUMMER BREAK THEATRE: GOING THE DISTANCE
Live Zoom theatre at the drive-in! A play about “covidicators,” with new music by Ray Prim. 6Blue Starlite Mueller II, Sunday, 9pm.

MOVIE THEATRES

All Austin cinemas except for iPic and Lake Creek 7 are currently closed for in-person screenings.

IPIC THEATRES AUSTIN
3225 AMY DONOVAN PLAZA
(512) 266-3400

THE GREATEST SHOWMAN: Fri-Sun, 12:45, 4:00
MARVEL’S THE AVENGERS: Fri-Sun, 11:45am, 3:00, 6:00, 7:30

THE DEADLINE: Thu, 7:00; Fri-Sun, noon, 2:30, 5:00, 7:00; 11:30

SONIC THE HEDGEHOG (2020) D: Jeff Fowler. (PG, 98 min.) After a long hiatus, Community First! Village film screenings return with a new drive-in style. They’ve partnered with Antonelli’s Cheese Shop and the other Ones Foundation for this exclusive night. Cheese plates are available for preorder, or pick up candy and drinks at check-in.* @Community First! Village, Friday, 8pm.

FESTIVALS

CINE LAS AMERICAS VIRTUAL SHOWCASE
In conjunction with the Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center, Cine Las Americas’ virtual two-weekend event will present 49 films (seven features, 32 shorts, and 10 music videos) hailing from 12 different countries. And it’s all free; you just have to register. Online, Thu.-Sun., July 23-26. www.cinelasamericas.org.

SOON HOME (2020) D: Anneliese Van Der Pol. (NR, 93 min.) A young woman finds herself in a cult after the death of her mother. She flees to her grandmother’s (Whoopi Goldberg) farm, where she tries to reconnect with her roots. Online via austinchronicle.com.

OFFSCREEN

AUSTIN SCHOOL OF FILM: PLAY AT HOME
Austin School of Film has a full schedule of interactive online workshops to choose from this summer, and they’re all free or low-cost. Learn about animation, Super 8, location scouting, and everything else film-related, all from home. Ongoing. Online via Austin School of Film. www.austinschooloffilm.org.
Now Streaming in Austin:
“Our Home Here”

Angela Chen explores the American dream at Cine Las Americas

By Richard Whittaker

Does a dream die when you wake up, or is that just when you struggle to make it a reality? In Austin-based filmmaker Angela Chen’s “Our Home Here” (which screens for free this weekend as part of Cine Las Americas’ streaming Virtual Showcase), four characters struggle with the way the American dream has let them down. Second-generation migrant Rose (Dianne Doan) is dealing with the misplaced rage of her brother, Dylan (Brandon Soo Hoo), and her own feelings of dispossession. Sean (Nick Fink) is lost in his own aimlessness, while Celine (Raquenel) pretends to her distant family that she’s got a high-powered job while she’s really living out of her car, working. Are they living in a fantasy, or does a bloody moment that brings them together present a way to overcome? “We need dreams because it instills hope,” Chen said. “We wake up every day to fight for what we believe in.”

Austin Chronicle: The key to “Our Home Here” is that all four characters are represented as rounded figures. How did you develop that structure, and what was your thinking for interweaving their stories?

Angela Chen: The film explores the themes of identity, family, and the desires for autonomy. I wanted to portray the complexity of living in America, especially as a person of color, a woman, a second-generation American, and also as an immigrant. Armed with multiple perspectives, we show different sides of the same coin as two men come to a clash while we explore the second-generation siblings who have been abandoned from their two cultural identities, and an immigrant mother who had left her home country to pursue a dream to enrich her family back home.

These stories stemmed from personal experience and true events, so interweaving these narratives through different characters offered a wider view to draw commonalities and hopefully to create a new or aligned understanding of our home here.

AC: The underlying theme of clinging to a home that may not even exist anymore is a powerful one, and this sense of alienation from the American dream is what unifies the characters. But why do you think the idea of the American dream remains such a powerful cultural force, even after it has failed so many people?

Chen: I think there is value in the human desire to believe in an honest and just world, that the work we put in will equate to the benefits reaped, that equality exists, and that opportunity is equitable. Perhaps that’s what separates and defines the American dream from the American reality where systems of oppression and discrimination fail our human rights.

AC: You’ve discussed how this was inspired by an incident in your own life. Was it more challenging to develop the elements in the script that were more personal, or the viewpoints further from yourself?
“Walking Crime” by Pussy Gillette

During their year as a band, exploratory ATX rockers Pussy Gillette have demonstrated an affinity for timely releases. Dropped last Dec. 31, “Scotch at the Opera” constituted their New Year’s song, says singer/bassist Masani Negloria, while “Don’t Touch Your Face” emerged on March 11. Self-recorded at PG’s rehearsal space this spring, “Walking Crime” languished as a concept in her notebook before its late-May release.

“George Floyd” was happening at that time, but the same stuff has been happening over and over again,” explains Negloria, who with guitarist Nathan Calhoun makes up the group’s core duo. “So, no matter when we released that song, it would still be relevant.”

Loss of a friend to police violence inspired the singer’s lyrics on the bite-sized, snarly guitar track, also a conduit for her contemplation over and over again, “What could she have possibly done?”

“Goblin” by Kydd Jones

On the night of June 4, Randell “Kydd” Jones sat down in his home studio in front of his laptop. Within hours, he crafted nominative new track “Goblin.” Forgoing typical single release prep with his management, he posted it the very next morning.

“It was getting to be late, like 1am, and I hadn’t decided if I wanted to make a song about how I felt yet,” says the celebrated local MC. “It’s such a sensitive moment, and I didn’t want to even think about the outcome of [publicity]. It was more of a personal thing.”

Over somber, lulling vocal samples, the minimal track builds a buzzing headspace bearing the anxieties of violence and quarantine. Reference to Floyd and artwork featuring an altered image of Minneapolis protests faced the issue head-on. “Who wanna be Black in America?” asks Jones in the hook.

“I felt like everyone was viewing us, as Black people, like scary and nonhuman, and basically not worthy of simple things,” furthers Jones. “I was playing around with words, and that one, ‘Goblin,’ made so much sense to me. It’s basically a monster.”

Following the 2014 shooting of Mike Brown by police in Ferguson, Mo., Jones remembers getting caught up in a silenced shelfed album on the politicized events. He’s found the solution in quick turnaround on recent tracks “Goblin” and “Rubber Bullets.” The latter references serious injuries suffered by Kydd’s guitarist Bomani Ray Barton during Austin protests in May.

“Before, I just wasn’t mentally prepared to tackle it,” remembers Jones. “Now, with ‘Goblin,’ it’s me getting my therapy out. It’s releasing my thoughts, and getting it out to my people. That’s how my musical process works. It’s all reflections, contradictions, and everything in a bundle.”

“Goblin” is the artist’s biggest statement and his first single in six years. “I think my enemies would not kill me. My enemies be kinder than the police are,” she reasons.

Police are always going to treat you the same way just because of the color of your skin, no matter what you do or how you present yourself. I wanted to make people question, ‘What could she have possibly done?’”

Your Face” emerged on March 11. Self-bassist Kyles Jones sat down in his home studio in front of his laptop. Within hours, he crafted ruminative new track “Goblin.” Forgoing typical single release prep with his management, he posted it the very next morning.

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CROSSTALK

SIXTY-TWO PERCENT OF LIVE MUSIC VENUES in Austin predicted only being able to last four months or fewer “under current conditions,” according to a June survey commissioned by the Austin Chamber of Commerce, reported the Austin Monitor. Locally, clubs can apply until Monday for small-business grants up to $40,000 as funded by the federal CARES Act, nationally, Austin members of the National Independent Venue Association urge fans to support the Restart Act in Congress.

VIRTUAL HAAM: Marking 15 years, the Health Alliance for Austin Musicians plays a crucial role in the COVID-19 era, providing low-cost care to now out-of-work musicians. On Tuesday, the national role model announced its annual fundraising day, wherein local businesses donate proceeds to HAAM, where Sept. 15, they hope to raise $600,000 in conjunction with a virtual daylong local livestream.

PREORDERS OF INTEREST: Austin artist Ben Snakepit, known for daily comic strips, offers a jigsaw puzzle depicting “A Night at Beerland,” right down to the Elvis-head statues at the former Red River venue. Antone’s screenprints a commemorative “Unity” poster for the historic blues club’s 45th anniversary, featuring a collage of historic snaps. End of an Era lands an exclusive sea-glass-colored vinyl run of Chicago act Whitney’s upcoming LP Candid.
**LIVE STREAMING**

**THURSDAY 7/23**
- NMASS Fest day four w/ Kraken Quartet, Damien Duque (City of Dawn), Stop Motion Orchestra 6pm
- NMASSFEST.ORG
- Eve Monsees & Mike Buck 7pm FACEBOOK LIVE
- Graham Wilkinson 7pm FACEBOOK LIVE
- I Always Cry on Thursdays w/ Jean Caffeine 7pm FACEBOOK LIVE
- Blue Rock Alive w/ Tina & Walt Wilkins 7:30pm BLUEROCKTEXAS.COM
- Curtis McMurtry 8pm INSTAGRAM
- Patrice Pike 8pm FACEBOOK LIVE
- The Harms Hang w/ guests 10pm INSTAGRAM

**FRIDAY 7/24**
- More Love Music Lunch Hour w/ Joanna Howerton & Michael Cross 12:30pm FACEBOOK LIVE
- Giulia Millanta single release w/ Gabriel Rhodes 6pm FACEBOOK LIVE
- NMASS Fest day five w/ Zachary James Watkins & Luke Judd, Juan Cisneros, Claire Rousay & Jacob Wick, Chromatic System (Paul Baker w/ Fez Moreno) 6pm NMASSFEST.ORG

**SATURDAY 7/25**
- Austin Parks Foundation presents the Backyard Ball hosted by DJ Mel 11am TWITCH
- Kris Schultz Live From the Corner (Of Her Apartment) 1pm FACEBOOK LIVE
- Kick Butt Coffee Fundraiser w/ Austin Ukulele Society 5pm YOUTUBE
- Levitation Sessions w/ Holy Wave 5pm VEEPS.COM
- Desde La Sala w/ Money Chica 6pm DESDELASALANET
- DJ Mel’s Living Room Dance Party 6pm FACEBOOK LIVE
- NMASS Fest day six w/ Rue Bainbridge, Howard Martin & Georgina Lewis, Natália Rocaufuerte & Jeannelle Ramirez, Zachary Smith & Sara King 6pm NMASSFEST.ORG

**SUNDAY 7/26**
- Corey Baum 11am FACEBOOK LIVE
- Atlas Major 2pm FACEBOOK LIVE
- Shelley King’s Soul-O Sundays 2pm FACEBOOK LIVE
- Chase Frank 3pm FACEBOOK LIVE

**WEDNESDAY 7/29**
- The Lost Well’s Rock for Rent w/ USS Battleship & Bridge Farmers 8pm FACEBOOK LIVE
- Free Parking w/ Mandy Prater 9pm FACEBOOK LIVE
- Kevin Russell 9pm FACEBOOK LIVE
- DJ Chorizo Funk 10pm INSTAGRAM
- Synthy & Chatty w/ Todd V. Wolfson 10pm FACEBOOK LIVE

**MONDAY 7/27**
- Bonnie Whitmore 3pm FACEBOOK LIVE
- Stephen Carolan 5pm FACEBOOK LIVE
- Bob Appel 7pm FACEBOOK LIVE
- Jeff Plankenhorn 7pm FACEBOOK LIVE
- Blue Monday w/ Oscar Orellas 8pm FACEBOOK LIVE
- John & Ahdie 8:30pm TWITCH
- Cari Hutson & Hunter St. Marie 8pm FACEBOOK LIVE
- No Lights No Lycra dance party in the dark w/ DJ Brian Blackout 8pm TWITCH
- Not at Donn’s Depot w/ Chris Gage 8pm FACEBOOK LIVE
- Line of Fire: Live From Living Room 8:30pm FACEBOOK LIVE

**TUESDAY 7/28**
- Mario Matteoli & Family 5pm FACEBOOK LIVE
- Brazilian Jazz Happy Hour w/ Paula Maya 5:30pm FACEBOOK LIVE
- At 7 w/ Frederico7 & guests 7pm FACEBOOK LIVE
- Eric Bettencourt 7pm FACEBOOK LIVE
- Monks Jazz presents Adrian Ruiz Quartet 7:30pm FACEBOOK LIVE
- Good Time Supper Club w/ Band of Heathehs 7:30pm FACEBOOK LIVE, YOUTUBE, TWITCH, PERISCOPE

**THURSDAY 7/30**
- Lex Land Fridays, 10:30am and Mondays, 5pm FACEBOOK LIVE
- Karen Mal & Will Taylor Tuesdays, 7:30pm and Wednesdays, 1pm FACEBOOK LIVE
- Miles Zuñiga Tuesdays, 7pm and Fridays, 9pm FACEBOOK LIVE
- A Gathering w/ Adrian Conner Wednesdays, 9:30pm and Fridays, 7pm FACEBOOK LIVE
- Isolation Congregation w/ Dave Madden Wednesdays, 7pm and Sundays, 10:30am FACEBOOK LIVE

**ONGOING**
- The Far Out Jacob Alan Jaeger (9:00)
- The Far Out Jazz brunch w/ the Watters (1:00)
- The Far Out Deuce Coupe (9:00)
- The Far Out Ruby Dice (8:30)
- Looking for more? Check out the full list at austinchronicle.com/events/music.
Asleep at the Wheel’s At Home Dance

Asleep at the Wheel kicked off its 50th year with stadium dates opening for Lone Star dignitary George Strait. On the horizon: recording a new album, leader Ray Benson’s annual birthday concert during South by Southwest, loads of touring, and a star-studded, two-day blowout at the Long Center in October celebrating the Austinites’ golden anniversary.

“That all went away... in one day,” sighs Benson.

The coronavirus’ path of destruction through the concert industry wiped clean the Western swing vet’s schedule. Then, Benson contracted COVID-19 in late March.

“I was dizzy, nauseous, and deadbeat tired,” he reports. “It took 12 days before I was well enough to function. I’d lost 35 pounds. My right hamstring was so messed up I couldn’t bend over.”

As the pandemic continues, Benson & Co. adapts to the virtual concert experience, having produced Ray’s Birthday Bash online and made appearances on Luck Reunion’s ‘Til Further Notice, fundraiser A Night for Austin, and Willie Nelson’s 4th of July Picnic. On Saturday, they’ll livestream from an outside stage at the Starlight Ranch. If your dance card’s full that night, viewers can purchase it on-demand afterward, with Zoom meet-and-greets available.

For the complete Q&A visit austinchronicle.com/daily.music.
Dear Luv Doc,

Please. Please. I beg of you, stop setting such a fine example of manhood. Please just stop. Every week I await the Chronicle like a kid waiting for Christmas. Finally Thursday arrives and I read your salty-sweet words of wisdom and … sigh … roll my eyes at the lump of man-flesh I have waiting at home. How can he compete with that?? Your sassy, LOL, feminist, and self-debasing humor. Add to that your non-Chronicle life as a local musician (oh, yes, this girl can stalk!) and whammo, instant marital dissatisfaction. So please, stop or tell me how to live with an average man whose idea of foreplay is Netflix and who has decided that my 20-year loyalty reward is his now forgetting to apologize when he burps in front of me. You may call it “being comfortable with each other” but I still prefer the decency of some shame around your bodily functions! Not to say anything about his leaving dirty dishes in the sink … I could go on, but why? All I want is a man like you. So, should I up my stalking habits and track you down? Is abduction an option? Would you eventually succumb to Stockholm syndrome and love me the way I deserve to be loved? Or should I love the one I’m with? And how do you advise I do that with you raising the Man Bar so damn high?  

– Love Struck in Austin

Happy news, Love Struck! While not apologizing for burping in front of your spouse is indeed reprehensible and leaving dirty dishes in the sink is, to be generous, selfish, I can say without hesitation that you’re probably still winning the man lottery (not to mention that Netflix has this new series called Warrior Nun that’s scoring a solid 72% on Rotten Tomatoes, so it’s not the worst streaming service – that’s clearly HBO Max). Yes, AT&T can ruin anything. So far I am only one episode in on Warrior Nun, but it seems to be about a group of badass nuns who throw regular ass-whuppins on demons. I don’t know what must-see TV is for you and the hubs, but this show is action-packed and, as far as I can tell, seems to be favoring good over evil. That counts as a strong political stance these days.

Demons … I mean … everybody’s got ‘em I suppose. I can say with absolute certainty that while my colored pencil portraiture skillz may be sick, I am deeply flawed in many ways – fatally so, in fact. That’s not self-debasing humor, that’s just plain fact. There are plenty of things you can do to another human being that are much worse than gassing them with an acrid, garlicky burp (and yes, guilty of that too on occasion) or leaving them a pile of dirty dishes in the sink (guilty again). Sometimes people get busy and forgetful and sometimes people are just self-absorbed assholes. I have been both on countless occasions.

To be perfectly honest, I have never been perfect. I have not set the man bar high at all. In fact, you could probably easily step over my man bar high at all. In fact, you could probably easily step over my man bar wearing a pair of saggy skinny jeans, so I recommend you chill on the fantasies. I am neither a hero nor a saint. In fact, every time I write this column I am tortured by the hypocrisy that someone like myself is actually doling out advice. I didn’t start out this way. This is just how it turned out. My first job at the Chronicle was slinging papers, which eventually earned me a spot taking personal ads over the phone. Fast-forward 30 years and I am writing an advice column where the best advice I can give is to not take my advice. Don’t do like I say and definitely don’t do like I do, but feel free to tell your husband you’re so dissatisfied that you’re considering kidnapping an aging small-time musician with bad feet, gray hair, and sumptuous back fat. If that doesn’t get him “doing the dishes,” I don’t know what will.
Looking for Native American Indians, Alaskan Natives or Native Hawaiians needing assistance finding employment or vocational training

Must be a member of a US Federally recognized tribe with supporting documentation from a US Federally recognized Tribe’s Tribal Rolls and Records office and reside within our designated service area in Texas.

Call: 1-877-717-6510 or apply online at www.acwia.org

An application has been made for a Wine and Beer Retailer’s Off-Premise Permit for 7-Eleven Beverage Company Inc/Kedar Food & Gas LLC, Texas Corporations, d/b/a 7-Eleven Convenience Store #369998, located at 823 Congress Ave, Ste. 100, Austin, Travis County, TX 78701.

Said application made to the Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission in accordance with the provisions of the Texas Alcoholic Beverage Code.


Application has been made with the Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission for a BG Beer License/permit by Ceci’s Frogs, dba Mi Celine Marcado LLC to be located at 51 Limmer Loop #500, Round Rock, Williamson County, TX 78686. Officers of said corporation are Firas J Abusaud

Application has been filed with the Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission for a Wine and Beer Retailer’s Off-Premise Permit by American Nour Inc dba MA Food and Gas to be located at 6134 W US HWY 290 Service road, Austin, Travis County, TX 78735. Owner of the said company is Khaled Suleiman Abdelqader, President / secretary

LEGAL NOTICES

CALL TODAY 512/454-5767

An application has been made for a Wine and Beer Retailer’s Off-Premise Permit for 7-Eleven Beverage Company Inc/Kedar Food & Gas LLC, Texas Corporations, d/b/a 7-Eleven Convenience Store #369998, located at 823 Congress Ave, Ste. 100, Austin, Travis County, TX 78701.

Said application made to the Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission in accordance with the provisions of the Texas Alcoholic Beverage Code.


Application has been made with the Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission for a BG Beer License/permit by Ceci’s Frogs, dba Mi Celine Marcado LLC to be located at 51 Limmer Loop #500, Round Rock, Williamson County, TX 78686.Officers of said corporation are Firas J Abusaud

Application has been filed with the Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission for a Wine and Beer Retailer’s Off-Premise Permit by American Nour Inc dba MA Food and Gas to be located at 6134 W US HWY 290 Service road, Austin, Travis County, TX 78735. Owner of the said company is Khaled Suleiman Abdelqader, President / secretary

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Looking to hire a bartender? Have an apartment to sublet? All you need to do is go online to austinchronicle.com. Click on classifieds and submit your ad for free. Make it stand out with pictures! Highlight it by making it bold text. Your ad can even run it in print! Ads run Monday through Sunday, and are posted immediately. After all, immediate gratification takes too long!

The Austin Chronicle’s Employment Section. Better to respond to them within the prescribed time by law to Glyender N. Hill, Independent Administrator of the Estate of Thurman Ardell Hill, c/o Joie L. Bennett, P.C., 3200 Guadalupe St, Suite 140, Austin, Texas 78723. 

To apply, please reference Job# above when mailing resume to: LJ. Visa, Inc., MS: M1-12 SW, 800 Metro Center Blvd., Foster City, CA 94404.

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served this citation and petition, a default judgment may be taken against you. YOU ARE HEREBY COM- MANDED to appear and answer before the Honorable District Court, 33rd Judicial District, Travis County, at the Court House of said county in Austin, Texas, at or before 10 o’clock a.m. on the Monday next following the expiration of twenty days after you were served this citation and petition, a default judgment may be taken against you.

YOU ARE HEREBY COM- MANDED to appear and answer before the Honorable District Court, 39th Judicial District, Travis County, at the Courthouse of said county in Austin, Texas, at or before 10 o’clock a.m. on the Monday next following the expiration of twenty days after you were served this citation and petition, a default judgment may be taken against you.

YOU HAVE BEEN SUED. You may employ an attorney. If you do not have an attorney, you may file a written answer with the clerk who served you not later than 10 o’clock a.m. on the Monday next following the expiration of twenty days after you were served this citation and petition, a default judgment may be taken against you.

YOU ARE HEREBY COM- MANDED to appear and answer before the Honorable District Court, 79th Judicial District, Travis County, at the Court House of said county in Austin, Texas, at or before 10 o’clock a.m. on the Monday next following the expiration of twenty days after you were served this citation and petition, a default judgment may be taken against you.

YOU ARE HEREBY COM- MANDED to appear and answer before the Honorable District Court, 65th Judicial District, Travis County, at the Court House of said county in Austin, Texas, at or before 10 o’clock a.m. on the Monday next following the expiration of twenty days after you were served this citation and petition, a default judgment may be taken against you.

YOU ARE HEREBY COM- MANDED to appear and answer before the Honorable District Court, 209th Judicial District, Travis County, at the Court House of said county in Austin, Texas, at or before 10 o’clock a.m. on the Monday next following the expiration of twenty days after you were served this citation and petition, a default judgment may be taken against you.

YOU ARE HEREBY COM- MANDED to appear and answer before the Honorable District Court, 149th Judicial District, Travis County, at the Court House of said county in Austin, Texas, at or before 10 o’clock a.m. on the Monday next following the expiration of twenty days after you were served this citation and petition, a default judgment may be taken against you.
NOT FADE AWAY
OBITUARIES + MEMORIALS

JENNIFER ROBIN JENNER (1968 - 2020)

Our beloved Jennifer Robbin of Lockhart, Texas died early Saturday morning in an accident while riding her bike. She was the apple of her dad’s (Michael Robbin, of Atlanta) eye, the rock of her mother’s (Veronica Taylor, of Austin) life and the precious love of her dear brother (Shane Robbin, of Atlanta). Her very dear friend, Pat Roach, and her eight brothers and sisters (Sita, Seth, Lillian, Everett, Ella, Joseph, David, and Nicholas) mourn her sudden passing. She was predeceased by her beloved grandparents, Everett William “Cotton” and Myrtle Svoboda Robbin of Poth, Texas and Col. Vince and Virginia Taylor of Dripping Springs, Texas. Jennifer had numerous aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews, cousins and friends throughout the nation who will deeply miss her adventurous spirit and her remarkable positivity.

Bezos and Tater, her trusty friends, will ache to take long walks with her.

Jennifer was born in Austin, Texas. She was an honors student and team graduate of Austin High School, and graduated cum laude from Dickinson College in Carlisle, PA.

Jennifer was not only the sole proprietor of Fetti’s for over 30 years, but also an avid supporter of Antiques in downtown Lockhart, she was one of the smartest, kindest people you would ever meet. As her cousin, John Williams says, “I will always remember her contagious smile and the sweet, soulful grace she gave everyone. I always looked up to her as a bright star with love and admiration.”

The family will have a memorial service at a later date, when the COVID crisis permits. Via con Dios, beautiful Jenner.

The Austin Chronicle

LEGAL NOTICES

continued from P.67

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LEGAL NOTICES

continued from P.67

LEGAL NOTICES
NOTICE OF PUBLIC SALE
Self-storage Cube contents of the following tenants containing household and other goods will be sold for cash to satisfy a lien on August 5, 2020, at approximately 12:00 PM at Texas Self Storage Centers – Austin 5405 Wasson Rd., Austin, TX 78750.

THE ESTATE OF ANNE L. R. BENOLD, DECEASED
Notice is hereby given that original Letters Testamentary for the Estate of Robert James Benefield Stroh were issued to Richard L. Welch, 1000 MoPac Circle, Suite 203, Austin, Texas 78746.

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FREE WILL ASTROLOGY
by Rob Brezny for July 24-30

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22): How can I communicate to wild bunnies that I am their ally? asked a Twitter blogger named Ghost Girl. That question is a good place to start my oracle for you. In the coming weeks, I think you’ll be wise to meditate on how to enhance your relationship with all kinds of wild things: animals, people, weather, landscapes, and your own exotic thoughts and fantasies. In my opinion, you will upgrade your intelligence and well-being by increasing your access to influences that don’t necessarily play by conventional rules and that draw their energy from primal sources.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): It’s never too late to have a rebellious adolescence — hopefully bigger and better and smarter than any you’ve had before. And according to my analysis, now would be a favorable time to get started. Is there any stuffy authority you’d be wise to flout? Any dull and oppressive conventions you would benefit from breaking? Any stale old traditions you’re primed to ignore so you can create some truly new traditions? In my estimation, you will generate good fortune for yourself if you try some benevolent mischief and creative experiments.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22): Your word of power for the coming weeks is ubiquity, a Zulu term meaning “I am because we are” or “the belief in a universal bond of sharing that connects all humanity.” Nobel Prize-winning theologian Archbishop Desmond Tutu writes, “A person with ubuntu is open and available to others, affirming of others, does not feel threatened that others are able and good, for he or she has or she has a proper self-assurance that comes from knowing that he or she belongs in a greater whole and is diminished when others are humiliated or diminished.” I hope that between now and August 25, Libra, you will put ubuntu at the center of everything you do. Make it an intensely practical practice.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21): “The size of your dreams must always exceed your current capacity to achieve them,” says Scorpio-born Liberian politician Ellen Johnson Sirleaf. “If your dreams do not scare you, they are not big enough.” I trust you’ve arrived at this realization on your own in the past few weeks. And I hope you have audaciously expanded and supercharged your dreams so that they do indeed surpass your current ability to accomplish them. If you have not yet done this daring work, please attend to it now. If you have done it, move on to the next step: making definite plans to acquire the power and resources necessary to achieve your new, improved dreams.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21): “If the sky should stand staid,” wrote Sagittarian poet Emily Dickinson, “That’s the kind of loneliness I worry you may be susceptible to right now, Taurus. You’re a bit out of touch with parts of your psyche that are crucial for you to include in your total sense of self. You’ve been neglecting to nurture certain soulful qualities that keep you healthy and wise. Please note: It won’t be useful to try to find those parts of you in other people; you will have to locate them in your own depths. Here’s the good news: The coming weeks will be an excellent time to do just that.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20): Author Diane Ackerman tells us, “So often loneliness comes from being out of touch with parts of oneself.” That’s the kind of loneliness I worry you may be susceptible to right now, Taurus. You’re a bit out of touch with parts of your psyche that are crucial for you to include in your total sense of self. You’ve been neglecting to nurture certain soulful qualities that keep you healthy and wise. Please note: It won’t be useful to try to find those parts of you in other people; you will have to locate them in your own depths. Here’s the good news: The coming weeks will be an excellent time to do just that.

ARIES (March 21-April 19): The creation of the world did not take place once and for all time, but takes place every day. Aries playwright Samuel Beckett made that observation, and now I’m passing it on to you as you glide into an extra-creative phase of your astrological cycle. I hope you will regard Beckett’s idea as an open-ended encouragement to improvise and experiment. May it rouse you to brainstorm about novel possibilities. May it inspire you to explore fresh trends you could launch. May it mobilize you to imagine the new worlds you might Big Bang into existence.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20): “Someone ought to do it, but why should I?” Author and activist Annie Besant identified that sentence as the motto of people who are moral cowards: those who know about an injustice but do nothing to address it. Very few of us have completely avoided that behavior. Most of us, including me, have now and then chosen to serve our need for comfort instead of standing up against corruption or unfairness. But I think it’s more important than usual that you Geminis don’t engage in such moral cowardice now. More depends on your integrity and bravery than you realize.

CANCER (June 21-July 22): Born in 1936, Cancerian author and activist June Jordan was a Black feminist bisexual born to Jamaican immigrant parents. When she was growing up, her father beat her and her mother committed suicide. Later, she raised her child alone as a single mother. Despite the challenges she faced, she published 28 books, won numerous awards, and wielded significant influence. How did she do it? She was a highly evolved Cancerian in the sense that she put a priority on treating herself well. “I must undertake to love myself and to respect myself as though my very life depends upon self-love and self-respect,” she testified. I’d like to make that your keynote for the rest of 2020. Your task is to achieve June Jordan-levels of self-care.

See this week’s puzzle solution at www.austincourier.com/crossword
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Notice is hereby given that
Original Letters Testamentary for the Estate of Malcolm Cooper, Decedent, were issued on July 16, 2020, under Docket No. C-1-PB-20-00979 pending in the Probate Court No. 1, Travis County, Texas, to Michael C. Cooper as Independent Executor. Notice is hereby given that Claims are being administered by Uniform Estoppel, which are currently being administered by a estates are required to present them within the time and in the manner prescribed by law.
By: /s/ Melissa Stone Myers
Attorney for Applicant

NOTICE TO CREDITORS
Notice is hereby given that an Original Letters Testamentary for the Estate of W. Keith Conner AKA Walter Keith Conner, for the Estate of W. Keith Conner, Independent Executor with Full Authority of Sandra Jane Slater Parsons, of Travis County, Texas, were granted on 7/16/2020 under Docket No. C-1-PB-20-00979 pending in the Probate Court No. 1, Travis County, Texas, to: Dung Trung Quach, Attorney for Applicant.
By: /s/ J. Winston Krause
Attorney for Applicant

NOTICE TO CREDITORS
Notice is hereby given that
Original Letters Testamentary for the Estate of BRIAN G. FORD AS TRUSTEE OF the FORD FAMILY TRUST, were granted under Docket No. C-1-PB-20-00979 pending in the Probate Court No. 1, Travis County, Texas, to Dung Trung Quach, Attorney for Applicant.
By: /s/ J. Winston Krause
Attorney for Applicant

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By: /s/ J. Winston Krause
Attorney for Applicant

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By: /s/ J. Winston Krause
Attorney for Applicant

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By: /s/ J. Winston Krause
Attorney for Applicant

OFFICIAL PUBLIC NOTICE TO BIDDERS, TRAVIS COUNTY, TEXAS
Notice is hereby given that sealed bids will be accepted by Travis County for the following items:
1. Disaster Pouches (Body Bags) and Autopsy Gowns, BID #2007-01-LD
Opens: August 12, 2020 at 1:00pm
Bids will be submitted to: Bonnie Floyd, Travis County Purchasing Agent, 700 Lavaca Street, Austin, Texas 78701. Specification can be reviewed at the Travis County Purchasing Office at no charge by downloading a copy from our website: www.co.travis. tx.us/purchasing/calcitation. Bidders should use price per unit regardless of weight or size of the package. Payments may be made by check. The successful bidder shall be required to furnish a Performance Bond in the amount of 100 percent (100%) of the contract amount, if applicable.

PUBLIC NOTICE MEETING

The Travis County District Judges are meeting remotely by videoconference/teleconference. Public Notice Meeting on Wednesday, August 12, 2020, at 12 p.m. to hold a public hearing on an application and appoint a county auditor for a two-year period. All persons having claims against the county auditor and the county auditor's fiduciaries are required to present to the district court confirm the appointment of the county auditor and the county auditor's fiduciaries as well as discuss and set the amount of the county auditor’s bond. Other than making public comments, participation in public meetings is not available.

In accordance with Section 418.016 of the Texas Government Code, to allow for meetings to be held by videoconference or telephone conference in an effort to avoid congregate settings in physical locations, as required by the Governor’s suspension, audio of this meeting will be shared live via a YouTube channel at: https://youtu.be/kSdL5Ji0BqU. A recording of the meeting will be made available to the public via the Travis Country District Judges YouTube channel at: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCQCLpchKu2QjloKJ6DFX-0w. The meeting will also be broadcast on the Travis County District Judges website at: https://www.traviscountytx.gov/courts/civil

Members of the public who wish to participate and address the District Judges may call the toll-free telephone number for this remote public hearing at (877) 240-7179 using code 975 1417 6140.
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