

The Watering Hole

The Willow Waterhole Greenway Conservancy Quarterly Newsletter



IN THIS ISSUE

- Grants Received - 2
- Construction Updates - 3
- Road Construction - 4
- Luanne Novak - 5
- Flowers for a Lady - 8

Abundance at the Waterhole!

It's difficult to include on one newsletter how much activity is occurring at the Greenway. Although there has been a significant reduction in the amount of rain this summer, this lack has allowed the trail and road construction to proceed full steam.

Volunteers continue to keep the Greenway clean during construction, generous donors support our progress, and nature persists in displaying its resiliency.

The Willow Waterhole Greenway Conservancy has received more grants!

\$1,250,000

from The John M. O'Quinn Foundation and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department

The Conservancy is delighted to announce that it has received a generous grant of \$250,000 from The John M. O'Quinn Foundation.

This grant will be used to further our accessibility capital projects, which aim to construct trails and expand parking facilities.

The trail at Scout Lake will be named The John M. O'Quinn Trail to recognize the Foundation's support of the Willow Waterhole Greenway.



John M. O'Quinn Trail

Senator John Whitmire attended the Westbury Civic Club meeting on August 16th and announced a \$1M grant from the State of Texas to the Willow Waterhole Greenway Conservancy.

He sponsored the grant as part of the Texas Legislature's budget bill, which Gov. Greg Abbott signed into law in late May. The grant is part of \$21 million designated for 11 selected parks across the state. The grants are administered by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

The State's contribution brings the Conservancy's capital campaign total to \$12M for improvements to the 291-acre Greenway. This will increase accessibility for the community by adding eight miles of trails, three new parking areas, safer street crossings, and restrooms.



John Whitmire

Construction Updates

There are currently four construction projects happening simultaneously at the Greenway.

The projects include repaving of roadways, new ADA all weather trails at both Westbury and Triangle Lakes, and butterfly sculptures near the Schwartz Gazebo.

By the end of October, residents will be able to enjoy the results of these accessibility and art projects.

Construction will continue on Scout, Heron, Willow, and Prairie Lakes from November 2023 - May 2024.



Construction photos credit Brett Byers



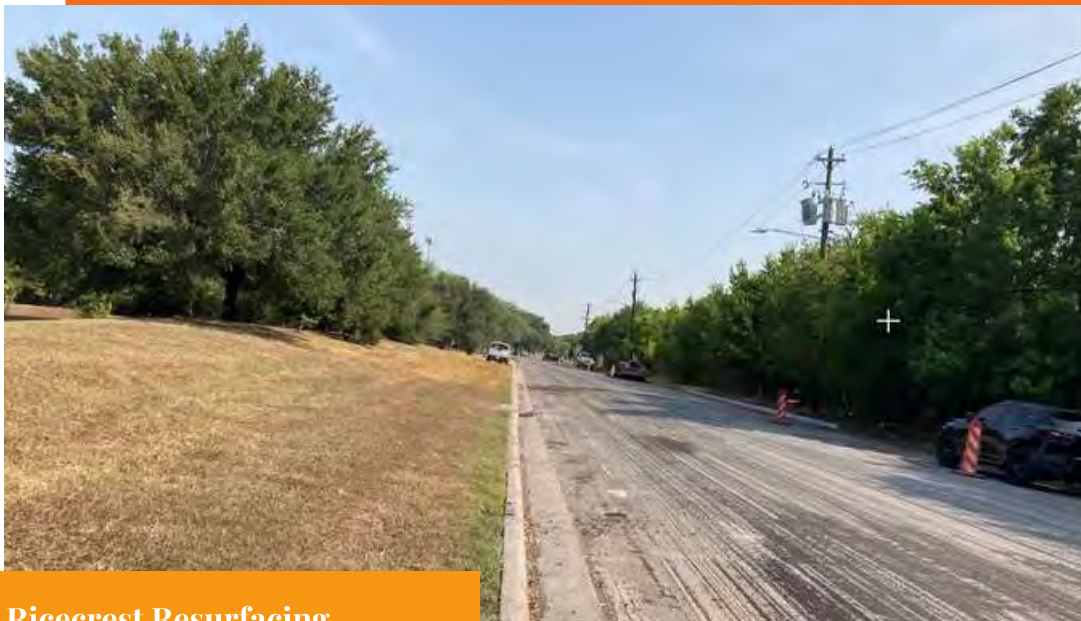
Road Construction

A Houston Public Works project started in August to repave Gasmer, Ricecrest and Clematis streets that run through the Greenway.

They also replaced sidewalks on Gasmer in front of the former Shell Research Administration Building and some curbs on Ricecrest.

The project was completed October 16th.

Thanks for your patience and to District K Council Member Martha Castex-Tatum for getting this project prioritized. It is a big improvement for visitors to the Greenway.



Ricecrest Resurfacing

Board member profile : Luanne Novak

I grew up in Southwest Houston and moved to Willowbend in 1987.

I have worked at various institutions in the Texas Medical Center, including the UT Health Science Center, M. D. Anderson Cancer Center, Baylor College of Medicine, and Houston Methodist Research Institute, where I'm presently employed half-time.

Much of my early career was in graphics, but I transitioned to more technology-based positions. I have worked on websites and web-based portals in the service of clinical and laboratory research and helped on-board new labs and researchers as they have joined the organization.

I am a mother and grandmother – my daughter and her family live in Westbury, so I get to spend time with the cutest grandchild on earth (but I may be prejudiced). Interests are cooking, books, travel, poetry and music from folk to opera, and many things in between. I have 4 cats and a dog, and the dog loves going to the Prairie Lake at Willow Waterhole Greenway.



I have spent countless hours walking there, and in many ways, it saved my life. My late husband was ill for several years and when he could no longer accompany me on my walks, friends came and stayed with him so I could get out for exercise and a break from intense caregiving.

Walking in silence, feeling the sun on my face and hearing the songbirds, watching the trees bud out after a hard winter – these things kept me sane. After my husband died, Willow Waterhole was the balm I needed for my grief. I have spent many hours sitting, looking, listening to the world as it exists in this place.

Below is my favorite photo from the Waterhole! It's magnificent any time of day.



Photo credit Luanne Novak



Meet the 2023-2024 Willow Waterhole Greenway Conservancy Board



President

Bill Burhans

Vice President

Bill King



Treasurer

Valerie Runge



Recording Secretary

Barbara Richards

Corresponding Secretary & Membership Committee

Tony and Donna Robert



Past President and Events Committee Chair

Howard Sacks



Emeritus and Native Prairie Preserve Committee Chair

Russell Schexnayder

Conservation Committee Chair

Brett Byers

Education Committee Chair

Trudy Holmes

Water Resources Committee Chair

Sarah and Richard Ball

Website Committee Chair

Gayle Nesom

Finance Committee Chair

David Naff

Insurance Committee Chair

Becky Edmondson

New Member July 1

Danny Haskin

New Member July 1

Luanne Novak



Meet the 2023-2024 Willow Waterhole Greenway Advisory Board



Westbury High School

Andrew Blanks



WWGC Past Board Member and SW Houston 2000 Board Chairman

Bruce Krewinghaus

Westbury Civic Club

Cindy Chapman



Houston District K Council Member Office

DiDi Chavis

Precinct 287 Civic Association

Edith Napoleon



Native Prairies Association of Texas

Hazel Potvin



Levitt Pavilion Houston & Brays Bayou Association

Jeff Peters

Houston Audubon Society

Mary Ann Beauchemin

Willowbend Civic Association

Mary Tysor

Texas Wildlife Rescue Center

Mary Warwick

Houston Parks Board

Matt Nielsen

Harris County Flood Control District

Nicholas Griffin

Retiree Hermann Park Conservancy

Noreen Hoard

Harris County Precinct One

Patrick Grant

WWGC Past President and Braus Oak Management District Chairman

Ralph Rieger

Westbury High School

Waymon Moore





Thanks to our newest Willow Waterhole Greenway Conservancy members.

Thank you to our local community members whose yearly contributions keep Willow Waterhole a beautiful urban greenspace. The list below reflects new members from July - September 2023

Individual Members	Family Members	Supporting Members	Sustaining Members	Greenway Patrons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Susan Kajs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sam Jacobson 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nancy McDonald



“Flowers for a Lady” by Rosalinda R. Toro - Artist



For the past month, adjacent to the Schwartz Gazebo, you have seen the unfolding of three elaborate columns with a butterfly perched atop each one. These magnificent art pieces are being installed to honor Kathleen Tinsley Ownby to recognize her legacy of creating parkland for Houston through the Spark School Park Program.

Rosalinda Toro was the artist commissioned to create this permanent installation at the Waterhole. A native of South America and longtime citizen of the USA, she has been a resident of Houston since 1999. Of her 300 commissioned pieces, 40 are in the Houston area and many are found in Spark Parks.

Her favorite media are bronze, mosaic, stained glass, and copper.

A ceremony dedicating the art will be held in October and the next newsletter will include photos and more about Kathleen and her contributions to Houston.

Rosa Toro



On this Music Fest day you can join for only \$40!
We will be waiting for you at the membership booth!



FREE LIVE MUSIC
OCT 28

11AM TO 7PM *Saturday*
BRING A CHAIR / BLANKET

WILLOW WATERHOLE
5300 DRYAD DRIVE - 77035

PROFESSIONAL & LOCAL SCHOOL BANDS
& SOME OF HOUSTON'S FINEST FOOD TRUCKS

SANTANABRAXAS FEAT. MARK TOWNS ★ ENTOUCHE FEAT. HORACE YOUNG ★ JAZZIE B & FUNKY KREW
MATTHEW HARTNETT & THE GUMBO ALL-STARS ★ REVERB CARTEL ★ ERIC DEMMER BAND

PARKER ELEMENTARY ★ MEYERLAND MIDDLE SCHOOL ★ WESTBURY HIGH SCHOOL ★ KINDER HSPVA
HAUNTED HOUSE COSTUME PARADE TRUNK OR TREAT & MORE

follow us for updates and more

funded in part by the City of Houston
through the Houston Arts Alliance



WILLOWWATERHOLE.ORG/MUSICFEST



It's Prairie Grass Time

If you visit the Prairie Gardens at Willow Waterhole this year, you will be quite disappointed. Due to our long drought, the gardens are a trampled looking wasteland. However, native plants do survive and will return as rains return.

There are four important native grasses found on the prairies from the Gulf Coast all the way up into Canada. Using their common names, they are Little Bluestem, Big Bluestem, Switch grass and Indian grass. Switch grass and Indian grass are growing and blooming at the prairie gardens. Little and Big Bluestem are not. For some reason these two grasses have failed to thrive.

To find the Switch Grass look for a big clump of grass with delicate open flower blooms. These same clumps come back every year. Birds love the seeds and the cover this grass provides.

The Indian grass tends to grow along the edges of the gardens as it seeks the limestone leaching from the concrete. Its leaves are gray green, and its flower is a dense plume of beige seeds. It too benefits birds.



Switch Grass,
Panicum virgatum

We tend to disdain grasses, but they are very important, not just to wildlife, but also to the soil. Native grasses have deep roots to hold soil in place and absorb over abundant rainwater. They also have a beauty as they bloom and are churned by the wind in Autumn. Their appearance signals that the end of the growing season is near.

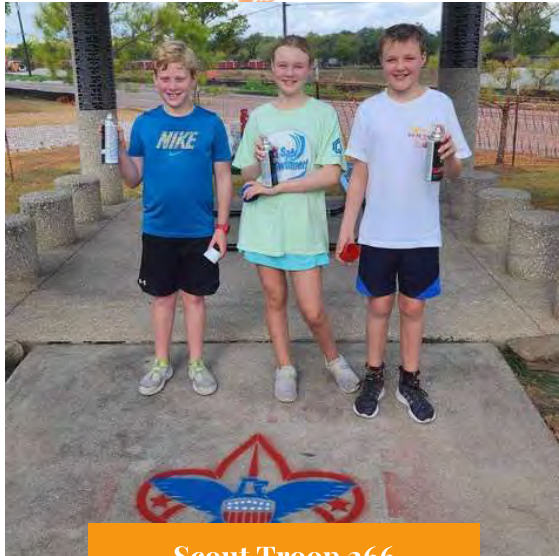


Indian Grass
Sorghastrum nutans

Photo credit: Hazel Potvin

Volunteers at Willow Waterhole

We want to thank the volunteers that helped us the last few months.



Scout Troop 266



Troop 601 @
New Faith Bible Church



Breakthrough Houston, Connect Community



Beth Yeshurun Volunteers



Lookout for limpkins

The limpkin, a large heron-like bird native to Florida, has been sighted sporadically across the eastern half of the US in the last couple of years. A warmer climate may be causing their range expansion as well as the limpkins search for food – the invasive apple snails and freshwater mussels.

While on your walk to find this new greenspace visitor, listen for its distinctive voice. It's a loud creaky wail, often heard as an eerie jungle sound effect in films. This creepy sound is just in time for Halloween!



Limpkin

Limpkin photo credit: Mark Meyers

Trees of Willow Waterhole - Mexican plum

As you walk through Russell's Arboretum trail you will see many trees labeled, including the Mexican plum tree.

It is actually considered a shrub, although it grows to a maximum height of 25 feet with an irregular open crown.

In spring, clusters of white cherry blossom-like flowers appear and then petals fade to pink. The blooms attract butterflies and swarms of hungry bees with their fragrance.

Ripening in mid to late summer, the tree also produces a plum, which you can eat raw, although it tastes better if cooked or made into jelly. Several species of birds and small mammals also enjoy them.



Mexican plum tree



Plums



Volunteer extraordinaire - Alexis



Alexis is a Gold Award Scout who has been actively involved in various projects at the park. Her most recent assignment involved creating and maintaining a pollinator garden near the Dabney gazebo.

She dedicated over a year to this project, diligently replanting, weeding, and watering the garden.

Recently, she added a sign with a QR code that directs visitors to her website. This website provides visitors with insights into the garden's function and offers tips on creating your own pollinator garden. You can follow her at rb.gy/8dfcb.

Hopefully, her efforts will inspire others to learn more about the significant contributions of pollinators.

A final word: Send us your photos!

We'd love to feature your photos in The Watering Hole newsletter. Clear, simple snapshots of landscapes, wildlife, and the lakes are ideal. Email photos to volunteer@willowwaterhole.org or tag us on Facebook.



Willow Waterhole Greenspace Conservancy

Park Address:

5300 Dryad Drive, Houston, TX 77035

Email: info@willowwaterhole.org
www.willowwaterhole.org

