



The Commissioner's Correspondence

News from the office of
Jen Crownover,
Comal County
Commissioner Pct 4
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A note from Jen: Are YOU NextDoor?



Whether you consider yourself on the cutting edge of the Social Media world, or prefer to keep to yourself, you do live in the 9th fastest growing county in the United States, according to the

Texas Tribune (March 26, 2015).

Although half of the population in Comal County lives within the City of New Braunfels, the growth happening outside the city limits cannot be ignored.

While the County works hard to keep up with this growth, it is imperative that citizens take an active role as well. One way is by creating a neighborhood network through NextDoor.com.

NextDoor is an extremely easy platform for networking neighborhoods. It's safe, private, and separate from social media platforms--which not everyone is comfortable or savvy with.

In my own neighborhood, we have had a wonderful response. Everything from the lost dog to the free swing-set, the "good plumber" recommendation, to the suspicious vehicle have been swiftly addressed with good results. It's also built some friendships.

But, even better than that, NextDoor is working on bigger and better applications. Do you know that there are "Agency" applications in the works? The Agency application of NextDoor will allow our local law enforcement to alert specific neighborhoods when there are issues to watch out for. As the New Braunfels Police Department, the Comal County Sheriff's Office, and even our Precinct 4 Constable prepare to utilize the NextDoor program, it will help facilitate

communications between participating Neighborhood Watch neighborhoods as well.

If your neighborhood is not one of the 93 Comal County neighborhoods enrolled onto NextDoor, you may be missing out.

In addition to the Law Enforcement side of things, soon, I will be able to communicate with your neighborhood as well. Whether it is road construction in your neighborhood, or other issues nearby, NextDoor is working on a platform where my office will be able to reach out to you as well.

This part of the program is still in development, but I have already been in communication with NextDoor, and plan to be one of the first enrolled when they unveil this part of their site.

If you are not sure if your neighborhood is on NextDoor or not, it is easy enough to find out. Just go to NextDoor.com and sign up. If your neighborhood is already online, it will plug you in. If they are not, then invite the neighbors. You will be glad you did--and I'm pretty sure they will be thankful, too.

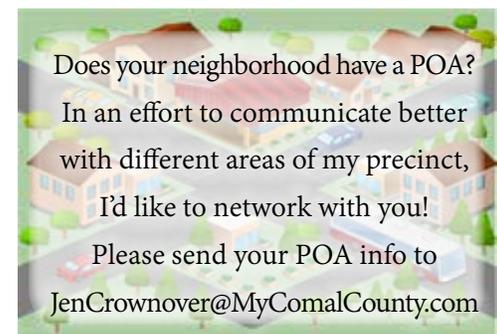


Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe to assure the survival and the success of liberty.

~John F. Kennedy

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Did you know that in **2014**, residents of **COMAL COUNTY** recycled almost **\$130,000** worth of consumables and turned in close to **13,000 tons** of brush to be mulched?

This kept roughly **120,000 cubic yards** of waste from going into our landfill...which helps extend the life of it considerably.

Did you also know that this amount of recycling saved residents nearly **\$500,000** worth of fees from actually taking these items to the landfill?



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**DEPARTMENTAL
HIGHLIGHTER**



From left to right: Rosie Miner, Janet Sweet, Dana Williams, Summer Steinbach, and Krystal Batteen

Before the internet, there was the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Office. Before you could Google getting out wine stains or find recipes for your own detergent on Pinterest, there was, and still is, the Extension Office. Their reach, however, extends far beyond your typical homemaking class.

Nestled on about 10 acres, tucked away behind the Comal County Recycling Complex on Hwy 46, you'll find the Comal County AgriLife Extension Service Office. Along with the offices and classrooms, there are horse stables, sheep and goat barns, pig barns, chicken coops, two arenas, pens, and beautiful vegetable and flower gardens.

What do they do there, you may ask? Their mission is to provide research-based educational opportunities for the residents of Comal County. These opportunities reach far and wide in the general categories of agriculture, environmental stewardship, family and consumer sciences, health, youth and adult life skills, human capital and leadership, and community economic development—and beyond!

Committed to excellence, the Extension Office adheres to strong principles including: ensuring that all residents have access to educational programs; continuing to have education as its primary mission; valuing the principles of citizens and community involvement, learning and volunteerism; emphasizing preventive education; evaluating programs and adapting accordingly; and emphasizing the concept of “helping people to help themselves.”

The Extension Office provides educational opportunities for everyone—from preschool to senior citizens—from improving their health, safety, productivity, and well-being; improving environmental stewardship and natural resources; contributing to their economic security and prosperity; making residents responsible, productive, and self-motivated youth and adults.



They also oversee the 4-H Program for Comal County, and work closely with the schools to provide curriculum enrichment programs, including the hatching of chickens in elementary classrooms and gardens in the schools.

“The 4H program in Comal County is thriving!” says program director Dana Williams. “We have 14 active clubs in our county, with two more in the chartering process. We currently reach over 450 kids and over 100 adult volunteers in our 4-H program.”

Ever wonder why your tomatoes don't grow as bountifully as your neighbor's? You can have your soil tested at the Extension Office. You can also participate in classes and workshops to brighten up your green thumb. Everything from composting, to learning about plant diseases and beneficial nematodes, you can learn it here.

The Comal County Master Gardeners and Master Naturalists work in partnership with the Extension Office as an outreach to the community through their volunteer service and educational opportunities in the community.

Trying to get your family eating better or improve your personal health habits? They have that covered, too. From meal planning on a budget, to effective time management, to dealing with diabetes, they have something for everyone.

The Extension Office also offers Childcare Conferences—both for daycares to get certified, as well as getting the proper training for teenagers to take on those summer babysitting jobs for extra money.

Have a small business, and having a hard time building a cohesive team of employees? The Extension Office can even come to you to help with hospitality and leadership training and put together wellness programs to improve your business' image—inside and out!

Managing your property? Wondering how to plan for the future? The Extension Office holds classes in Ranch Estate Management, Water Conservation and Rainwater Harvesting, and continuing education opportunities for pesticide applicator certifications.

Funding for the Extension Office is a cooperative effort between Comal County, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, and federal funds. It is open to anyone. If you don't see something in their lineup that answers a question you have, call them!



In the Rear View...

SHAWN WHERRY, FIRE CHIEF
CANYON LAKE FIRE/EMS

Law enforcement officers and Fire/EMS personnel operate in dangerous and extreme environments everyday throughout the course of their careers. This was clearly demonstrated by the results of the motor vehicle collision on South Access Rd. near the Canyon Lake Dam on Friday, April 17.

On that rainy afternoon, around 4:00 p.m., a Comal County ESD #3 Battalion Chief was traveling south on South Access Road, responding with emergency lights and siren activated to a structure fire. Reports indicated that a vehicle initially yielded the right of way to the responding Battalion Truck, but then made an unexpected left turn, which forced the passing Battalion Chief to swerve to avoid a collision.

The Battalion Truck slid from the roadway due to the wet conditions and down the embankment into the Guadalupe River. The Battalion Chief was initially trapped ten feet under water inside the Tahoe but was able to remain calm and escape the vehicle with only minor injuries.

This incident has demonstrated how dangerous our profession can be simply responding to calls and has highlighted the need to provide increased education to the public on the proper actions to take when approached by an emergency vehicle with lights and sirens activated.

The Texas Transportation Code states: *On the immediate approach of an authorized emergency vehicle using audible and visual signals, or a police vehicle lawfully using only an audible signal, an operator, unless otherwise directed by a police officer, shall:*

1. Yield the right-of-way;
2. Immediately drive to a position parallel to and as close as possible to the right-hand edge or curb of the roadway clear of any intersection; and
3. Stop and remain standing until the authorized emergency vehicle has passed.

Or simply remember this catchphrase:

WHEN YOU HEAR SIRENS AND SEE LIGHTS, PULL TO THE RIGHT AND SIT TIGHT.

A common question we receive is, "What do I do when approached by an emergency vehicle at an intersection?" Again, when you hear sirens and see lights, pull to the right and sit tight. However, if you are stopped at a stop sign or traffic light and cannot pull to the right, simply remain stopped. Sitting tight is safer for first responders because that is predictable and we can safely maneuver around stopped traffic. In this scenario emergency vehicles are able to drive into the next available lane of traffic to the left and drive around stopped traffic on the right BUT SIT TIGHT. The passing emergency vehicle may turn right in front of the stopped and properly yielding traffic. Only after all emergency vehicles have proceeded through the intersection and no additional lights and sirens are seen or heard, should you proceed cautiously through the intersection.

Fortunately, no one was seriously injured or killed in this incident and we can all utilize this as an opportunity to learn in an effort to prevent this from ever happening again.

People who work together will win, whether it be against complex football defenses, or the problems of modern society.
Vince Lombardi



Listed are a few items of public interest that the County has taken action on in the past few weeks:

- The Terraces at Canyon Lake is officially off the table. Their application for Federal Tax Credits was not chosen in their competitive category, and they have released their contract on the property located at FM 306 & 3424.
- The County has hired a Public Information Officer. Paul Anthony will start with Comal County on June 1.
- Commissioners Court will be interviewing and hiring a new Human Resources Director and a new Fire Marshal in the next few weeks.
- As the overpass project on FM 306 comes to a close, TXDOT will begin work on expanding the stretch between Hoffman Lane to the newly (almost) completed overpass at Hunter Road to 4 lanes.
- Commissioners Court entered into a contract with a company on behalf of the Comal County Historical Commission to prepare a National Registry of Historical Places nomination for the Fisher Historical District.
- The County has purchased the "TCOR" Building at 396 Seguin Ave, to eventually relocate the Elections Office. In the meantime, the current owners are leasing it back from the County until their new facility is built. Next door, the County-owned "Bock Building" has been torn down, after being deemed hazardous and irreparable.
- The County recently hired an architect to work up cost estimates for the potential of a new jail on the property adjacent to the Sheriff's Office. The County purchased the 13 acre property between the current jail and IH-35 in 2014.

Jeff Kelley's **EMERGENCY** *{management planning}*

On May 19th Comal County will conduct a joint exercise with Resolute Health, Canyon Lake Fire & EMS, Bulverde/Spring Branch Fire & EMS, The City of New Braunfels Emergency Management, STRAC (Southwest Texas Regional Advisory Council) and others. The exercise will be designed to test the ability of Emergency Management, First Responders, local Health Care and County Staff to respond to and recover from a large scale Hazardous Materials Incident with multiple injuries. This exercise will have a lot of moving parts with three locations, including a full scale element.

The exercise has been under development for several weeks and there is still much planning to take place. Comal County Emergency Management is very excited to have the opportunity to work with our first responders and local partners.

The exercise on May the 19th will help us fulfill our requirements under the EMPG (Emergency Management Performance Grant) program. Which requires that we conduct one operational based and two discussion based exercise each year at a minimum. During this performance cycle we will conduct at least five exercises.



Need to get in touch with Jen?
It's easy!

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[www.co.comal.tx.us/
Comal_County_Precinct_4.htm](http://www.co.comal.tx.us/Comal_County_Precinct_4.htm)

FACEBOOK:
[www.facebook.com/
ComalCountyPct4](http://www.facebook.com/ComalCountyPct4)

Also, there is a calendar on my website that features my Canyon Lake and Spring Branch hours. Come see me at either location if it is more convenient!

Have you ever checked the County Website for **Job Openings?**

comalcounty.iapplicants.com/

Dates of Interest:

- May 16 City/County Hazardous Materials Recycling Day
- May 19 Joint Emergency Management Exercise--County-wide
- May 25 Memorial Day--County Holiday
- May 31 Deadline for those who are over 65/disabled to make their 3rd installment/quarter payment for their 2014 property taxes
- June 2 10 a.m. Tax Sale at the Historic Courthouse, first floor courtroom
- June 15-19 Junior Deputy Camp at Church Hill Middle School
- June 30 Last day to pay 2014 property taxes in full before the delinquent roll is turned over to the collection attorneys
- July 3 Independence Day Observed--County Holiday
- July 20-24 Junior Deputy Camp at Mt. Valley Middle School
- July 27-31 Junior Deputy Camp at Smithson Valley Middle School
- July 31 Deadline for Over-65 and disabled to make their 4th and final installment/quarter payment for their 2014 property taxes

Jen's County Hours:
Canyon Lake Fire Station #1 1074 Scissortail May 5th & 19th June 2nd & 16 10a.m.-3p.m.
Bulverde/ Spring Branch Fire Station #2 2016 Puter Creek Dr May 12th & 26th June 9th & 23 10a.m.-3p.m.

Comal County Recycling Schedule ~ For more information: co.comal.tx.us/rec.html					
Mondays	Tuesdays	Wednesdays	Thursdays	Fridays	Saturdays
6:30a.m.-11:30a.m. Spring Branch Fire Station @ 281/311	6:30a.m.-11:30a.m. Garden Ridge City Hall on FM 3009 AND Canyon Lake Fire Station #2 (Oblate/Startzville)	6:30a.m.-11:30a.m. VFW in Sattler River Road @ FM 2673	6:30a.m.-11:30a.m. Mystic Shores Boat Ramp 22100 N Cranes Mill Road	6:30a.m.-11:30a.m. Bulverde at the JP #2 Building	8:00a.m.-noon at the Recycling Center
Also, you can come by the Recycling Center anytime Tuesday-Friday from 7:00a.m.-noon or 12:30p.m.-3p.m. to drop off recyclables or pick up mulch.					