

MAINSTREAM

Mayor's
Corner



Dear Mesquite Resident,

At the grocery store, in our local restaurants and while I'm running errands across the city the one question people keep asking me is, "When is I-635 going to be done?" I'm happy to say, work on the project is nearing completion, but unfortunately these last few months may turn out to be the most challenging of all.

The most recent headache came last month when the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) closed Town East Boulevard under the interstate for several weeks to do bridge construction work. The City Council and I were approached for approval of the closure, and though I did not originally want to go through with it, I was eventually persuaded to approve the closure by our area business owners and managers who said it would be better to get the project done quicker; rather than have it drag on into the fall.

Like many of you, I have been frustrated by the length of this project, but it should be finalized this summer. When it is complete, I'm sure we will all wonder what we did without it. We will once again have ready access to the mall and surrounding retail areas, and I know our restaurants along I-635 are also looking forward to traffic once again moving smoothly.

On another subject, I want to share with you recent news that I have been appointed to the board of directors for the Texas Municipal League (TML). This association will help keep me connected with other leaders in Texas so that I might bring both local and state issues to the surface in Austin.

I have also been appointed to the board of directors for the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ). As an avid supporter of our environment, I am very proud to be part of this agency. By my participation in TCEQ, I hope to stay updated on protecting our environment and to bring improved environmental awareness to our City.

In closing, I ask for your continued patience as the construction for I-635 at Town East Boulevard comes to a close. Too, I want you to know that I am proud to serve the City of Mesquite, and very much appreciate your continued support.

Sincerely,

John Monaco
Mayor

MESQUITE ARTS CENTER

A R T I V I T I E S

The following activities are funded in part by the City of Mesquite hotel-motel occupancy tax revenues. The Mesquite Arts Center is located at 1527 N. Galloway. For updates, check www.mesquiteartscenter.org.

MARCH

- 1 - 15 Mola Exhibit: Quilts of the Kuna Indians from Panama & Columbia.** The exhibit includes 47 pieces from two collectors, featuring indigenous handwork of the Kuna Indians from South America. Open Monday through Friday 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. and during performances.
- 6 The Mesquite Arts Council** presents a concert with jazz vocalist *Sandra Kaye*, pianists *Arlington Jones* and *Curt Bradshaw* and the *Mesquite Jazz Repertory Ensemble*. Performance at 7:30 p.m. 972-216-6444
- 1 - 7 Mesquite Community Theatre** presents *Don't Dress for Dinner*. Performances are held in the Black Box Theatre. Tickets range from \$8 to \$12 on Fridays and Saturdays. Tickets for matinees and Thursday night performances are \$10. 972-216-8126
- 14 The Mesquite Symphonic Band** is in concert at 7 p.m. in the Concert Hall. Tickets are \$5 adults and \$2 students. 972-216-8125
- 16 - 21 Missoula Theatre Camp** – This intensive week-long camp culminates in a full-scale musical theatre production of *The Princess and the Pea*, featuring campers as actors or assistant directors (see cover story). Ticketed performances will take place on Saturday, March 21, at 3:30 and 5:30 p.m.
- 28 The Mesquite Symphony Orchestra** is in concert with the annual *Not Just For Kids* concert, featuring the music of videogames. The performance will be in the Mesquite Arts Center Concert Hall beginning at 7 p.m. 972-216-8127

FREQUENTLY CALLED CITY PHONE NUMBERS

Main Number	972-288-7711
Animal Services	972-216-6283
Building Inspection	972-216-6212
Environmental Code	972-216-6276
Parks and Recreation	972-216-6260
Planning and Zoning	972-216-6216
Trash Collection/Recycling	972-216-6284
Street/Alley Repair	972-216-6282
Water Billing	972-216-6208
Water Leaks/Sewer Back-ups	972-216-6278

MESQUITE
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Real. Texas. Flavor.



Mainstream is an official publication of the City of Mesquite to inform and advise citizens of municipal activities.

MAINSTREAM

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Missoula Children's Theatre Coming to Mesquite

The professional acting and directing group, Missoula Children's Theatre (MCT), is coming to Mesquite to work with a lucky group of local kids to create a production of *The Princess and the Pea*.



MCT first started in the 1970s as an organized company of adults who did plays for children on make-shift stages in movie theaters in Missoula, Montana. The plays, as well as the idea of developing live theater for kids, were well received in Missoula and soon other Montana and nearby Idaho communities requested performances of their own. From there, the company began to use kids as cast members when it seemed appropriate - *Hansel and Gretel*, the dwarfs in *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, etc.

In 1972, the theatre troupe started to cast local children for on the road productions to prevent the need to travel long distances with kids in harsh winter weather conditions. The directors traveled across the state a week before the rest of the company, a bit skeptical about finding seven kids who might be interested in being in the play. When 450 children arrived at the tryout, the astonished team auditioned the huge group and cast the seven roles.

The success of on-site auditions, and especially the rewards of involving children as cast members, set the stage for today's MCT Community Theatre, and that experience is now coming to Mesquite. The call for actors is going to kids at least 5 years old to aspiring actors in high school. Those who are chosen will take part in a full-scale musical theatre production of *The Princess and the Pea*, featuring those selected in the auditions as actors or assistant directors.

Auditions will start Monday, March 16, at noon at the Mesquite Arts Center, and the performances will take place on Saturday, March 21, at 3:30 and 5:30 p.m. You can find out more about the audition process in the Activities section on page four of this edition of the *Mainstream*.

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

MARCH

- 2, 16 City Council Meeting** – All meetings are open to the public and start at 3 p.m. in the council chambers located at 711 N. Galloway Avenue.
- 14, 28 Historic Florence Ranch Homestead** is open every second and fourth Saturday from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. 1424 Barnes Bridge Road. 972-613-7547
- 28 Opal Lawrence Historical Park's S.D. Lawrence House**, open for tours, every fourth Saturday from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. 701 E. Kearney St. 972-216-6468

IN THIS ISSUE

- Income Tax Help
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- Pet Lost & Found
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John Monaco.....	Mayor
Shirley Roberts.....	Mayor Pro Tem
Greg Noschese.....	Deputy Mayor Pro Tem
Stan Pickett.....	Councilmember
Dennis Tarpley.....	Councilmember
Al Forsythe.....	Councilmember
Ted Barron.....	City Manager

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www.cityofmesquite.com

Have You Ever Wondered?



Have you ever wondered about the small black squares sometimes seen in the roadways throughout the city?

These squares in the pavement are covering portable traffic counters and classifiers. The devices are used in traffic engineering studies to determine traffic volumes and speeds. This information is instrumental in determining what traffic safety measures are needed at various roadway locations.

By sensing small changes in the earth's magnetic field due to the presence of iron in a vehicle when it passes, the devices are able to: count the number of vehicles, estimate the length of each vehicle, estimate the vehicle's speed, estimate the time and distance between successive vehicles, and estimate the length of time a vehicle is stopped above them.

In addition, due to vehicle types possessing individual magnetic signatures, the devices are able to classify the vehicles registered as motorcycles, automobiles, short trucks, medium trucks or tractor/semi-trailer combinations. The counters have proven to be more accurate and versatile than the traditional rubber road tube counters with which most people are familiar.

Owners of Lost Pets Finding Hope in City Web Site

The City of Mesquite Lost and Found Animal Web site for lost pets is proving to be a big success. Since its inception in July 2004, the Web site has had more than 5,000 submissions from people who have lost or found pets and more than 2,300 posts have been removed by owners who have presumably found their animals.

The Web site was designed by the City's Information

Technology Director. He says he averages about four posts per day to the site. Currently there are 48 posts of people reporting lost or found dogs, cats or even birds. Several people credit the service with reuniting them with their lost pets.

A link to the Mesquite Lost and Found Animal Web site is located on the City's home page at www.cityofmesquite.com.



Visit www.cityofmesquite.com

Mesquite Offers Television Recycling

The switchover to digital television has thousands of people in our area looking to update their set. If you are one of them, the Mesquite Solid Waste Division would like you to know old sets can be dropped off at the Convenience Center at 3550 Lawson Road for recycling. The cost is \$10, and the television screens and cases must be intact. However, the set does not have to work in order to be recycled.



Money Talks! Have You Heard? As Much As \$4,824 — or more — Could Be Waiting for You!

You could qualify!

Did you work in 2008? You may be eligible for the Earned Income Credit — even if you don't owe income tax.

If you worked in 2008:

- Did you have one child living with you? Did you earn less than \$33,995*? You can get an EIC up to **\$2,917**.
- Did you have more than one child living with you? Did you earn less than \$36,646*? You can get an EIC up to **\$4,824**.
- If you had no children living with you, did you earn less than \$12,880* in 2008? Were you between the ages 25 and 64? You can get an EIC up to **\$438**.

*Income limits for married workers are \$3,000 higher.

You could get a CTC refund too!

Many families that earned more than \$6,500 may qualify for the Child Tax Credit (CTC) refund — up to \$1,000 for each qualifying child under age 17.

File a Federal Tax Return to get the EIC and CTC: Get Free Help!!!

- VITA — Volunteer Income Tax Assistance — helps people fill out returns for free.
- For a site near you, call 1-800-829-1040.

Boost your take-home pay! Eligible workers with children can get some of the EIC in their paychecks. To get the Advance EIC, get Form W-5 from your employer, or call 1-800-TAX-FORM.

Income Tax Assistance

The Mesquite Public Library is ready to assist citizens needing federal tax forms or help in preparing their federal income tax returns. Copies of the most widely used tax forms and publications are available at the Main Library, located at 300 W. Grubb Drive, and the North Branch Library, located at 2600 Oates Drive. Master copies of the most frequently used forms are also available for reproduction.

American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) volunteers provide free tax preparation assistance at the Main Library on a first-come, first-served basis.

Assistance will be offered on Mondays from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. through April 9. Interested citizens should bring a copy of last year's tax return and paperwork necessary for the volunteers to complete this year's return. For more information, call the Main Library at 972-216-6220.



Flash Flooding: A Springtime Hazard

A flash flood is a rapid flooding of geomorphic low-lying areas, rivers and streams that is caused by the intense rainfall associated with a thunderstorm or multiple training thunderstorms. Flash flooding occurs when the ground becomes saturated with water that falls so quickly it cannot be absorbed. The runoff collects in low-lying areas and rapidly flows downhill with sudden rising water. Flash floods most often occur in normally dry areas that have recently received precipitation, but may also be seen anywhere downstream from the source of the precipitation (even dozens of miles from the source).



likely to avoid the flash flood. More than half of the fatalities attributed to flash floods are people swept away in vehicles when trying to cross flooded intersections. As little as 6 inches of water can be enough to carry away most SUV-sized vehicles. In the United States, the National Weather Service reports more people die yearly in floods (99 on average) than by lightning, tornadoes or hurricanes.

Here are some tips to avoid the dangers of flash flooding:

1. Get out of areas subject to flooding such as dips, low spots and canyons.
2. NEVER drive through flooded roadways! Turn around and go another way.
3. If the vehicle stalls in flood waters, leave it immediately and seek higher ground. Rapidly rising water may engulf the vehicle and sweep it away.
4. Be especially cautious at night when it is hard to recognize flood dangers.
5. NEVER allow children to play around high water, storm drains or viaducts.
6. Do not camp or park your vehicle along streams.

Flash floods are extremely dangerous because of their sudden nature. Being in a vehicle provides little to no protection against being swept away. As a matter of fact, it may even make people overconfident and less

Parks and Recreation Corner

Spring Eggstravaganza on the Go
Saturday, April 4
9 - 10 a.m. at Rutherford Recreation Center
11 a.m. - 12 p.m. at Evans Recreation Center
1 - 2 p.m. at Florence Recreation Center

Join the fun as the Parks and Recreation Department hosts the annual egg hunt. Infants to nine-year-olds can catch the bunny hopping from one spot to another on this fun-filled day. The guest of honor has planned several activities for the entire family to enjoy. The bunny and crew will be available for pictures for a small fee. Enjoy games, arts, crafts and other activities as well.



Teen Spring Eggstravaganza
Saturday, April 4
8:30 - 9:30 p.m. at Dunford Recreation Center

After the sun goes down, 10- to 14-year-olds can enjoy a night egg hunt. Bring your flashlight and join the bunny and crew for a hoppin' good time with music and light refreshments. Prizes will be awarded after the hunt.



Total Body Sculpting
Tuesdays and Thursdays, March 3 - 26
7 - 8 p.m.
Dunford Recreation Center
Ages 18+, \$39

This class features the classic weight room style of free weights and machines with a few modern additions. The instructor will teach form and focus on upper and lower body muscles with limited cardiovascular work. A \$10 discount is given if you sign up for both Everybody Step and Total Body Sculpting.