THE CITY OF CHOICE TO LIVE, WORK & PLAY!

NRH

A newsletter for the residents of North Richland Hills

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# Trail Construction Begins this Spring

Construction is expected to begin in spring 2013 on the long awaited John Barfield and Calloway Branch Trails. Both trails are a part of the 1994 Trail System Master Plan, which was developed after North Richland Hills residents identified trails as a top priority in the 1991 Park, Recreation & Open Space Master Plan. Trails previously built as part of the master plan are the North Electric Trail, Walker's Creek Trail, Cotton Belt Trail, Jo Ann Johnson Trail and Randy Moresi Trail.

Construction of the John Barfield and Calloway Branch Trails will represent the completion of the Trail System Master Plan and furthers the city's vision of providing a pedestrian and bicycle friendly community with interconnected trails, greenbelts and pathways that link neighborhoods, parks, schools and trails. The trail system also connects to the regional trail system, linking NRH to other surrounding communities.

The John Barfield Trail will begin in NRH's Little Bear Creek Park at the Keller city limit and terminate at Precinct Line Road, near the Cotton Belt Trail and Hurst city limit. This 3.49-mile, 10-foot-wide concrete trail meanders through the dense vegetation along Little Bear Creek. The trail is named in honor of John Barfield for his many contributions to the City of North Richland Hills.

Mr. Barfield dedicated major portions of the Little Bear Creek corridor, including Little Bear Creek Park, to the city making this vital trail possible. As a successful developer, Mr. Barfield has also extended his generosity to families in Africa through a non-profit organization that he started in 2005 called Help. His efforts have led to the construction of 68 water wells. Each well can provide water for up to 500

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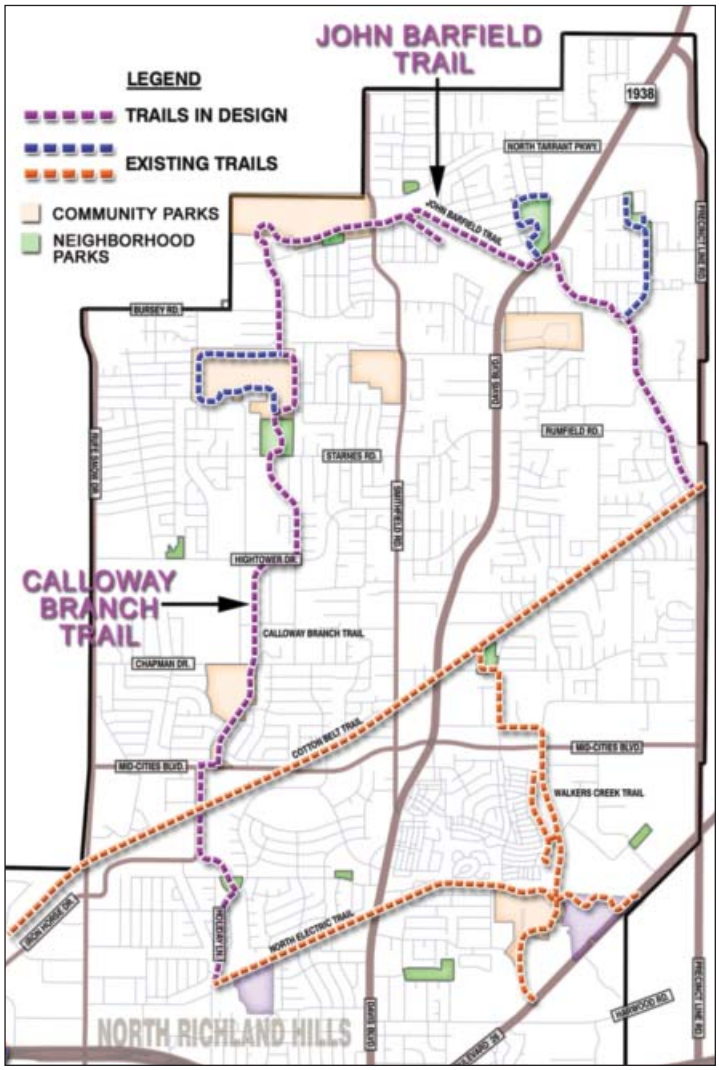


# Plans for New Municipal Complex Underway

Since the passage of the May 2012 bond election to fund a new municipal complex, city officials have been moving forward with planning and designing the new facility.

This summer, the City Council approved a contract with Brinkley Sargent Architects for engineering, design and construction administration services. The architectural design process is expected to take 12 to 16 months to complete.

The City Council also appointed a Municipal Complex Oversight Committee. This committee is charged with overseeing the project in order to ensure that the facility is consistent with the intent of the voters who approved it. The committee is made up of three council members and four citizens including: Councilman Scott Turnage, Mayor Pro Tem Tom Lombard, Councilman Tim Welch, Steve Koons, Janet Golightly, Whitney Harding and Jay Bruner.

This fall, the City Council also approved a contract with Balfour Beatty Construction. The company has extensive experience in building government facilities including buildings for the cities of Fort Worth, Dallas, and Houston, as well as Ellis County and Hays County. Balfour Beatty Construction is headquartered in Dallas and has an office in Fort Worth that will be directing this project.

The new municipal complex will consolidate City Hall, Public Safety and Municipal Court services into one campus. Currently, these city services are housed in six buildings on three different campuses, two of which are being impacted by the Loop 820 widening. The new facility will be built on a portion of the former North Hills Mall property off Boulevard 26. The 80-acre former mall site was abandoned in 2004 and the buildings were demolished in 2007.

North Richland Hills voters approved $48 million in bonds for the construction of the new municipal government complex on May 12, 2012. The bond proposition passed with 67.8% percent of the vote.

Initial estimates show that construction of the new municipal complex will cost up to $70 million. That includes land acquisition, design, construction, fixtures and equipment. In addition to the voter approved bonds, the project will be funded with compensation for city owned property that has been taken for the Loop 820 highway widening, the sale of city owned property on Loop 820 for retail, commercial or office uses, and designated capital reserves (gas leases).

A groundbreaking for the new complex is expected to take place in 2013 and construction could be completed in 2015. Watch for more information about the new municipal complex in future city newsletters.

## Citizens Civic Academy Graduates

Seventeen North Richland Hills residents graduated from the inaugural NRH Citizens Civic Academy (CCA) in November 2012. Pictured first row, left to right, are: La'Toyia Dennis, Steve Koons, Rachel Andrews, Jay Garner, September Daniel, and Vanessa Copeland. Pictured back row, left to right, are: City Councilman Tim Barth, Gary Spradling, Kyle Pekurney, Kay Schmidt, Jim Makens, Dianne Spradling, Paul Pena, Avis Crisp, Mike Benton and City Manager Mark Hindman. Not pictured is Benton Orr. CCA participants met weekly for six weeks to learn about the structure, functions, and activities of their city government. The CCA will be held annually. Watch for more information in future newsletters.

## Trail Construction Begins this Spring

*(Continued from Page 1)*

people. Additionally, John assisted in the renovation and expansion of a large hospital in Kenya.

The Calloway Branch Trail will begin in NRH's Little Bear Creek Park at its connection to the John Barfield Trail and will provide connections to Cross Timbers Park, North Richland Middle and Elementary Schools, Richfield Park, Liberty Park and the North Electric Trail. A significant portion of the Calloway Branch Trail is on-road with major off-road sections located within the parks.

Funding for the construction of both trails is provided through federal grants with a local 20% share. Both trails are expected to open in Spring 2014.

# North Richland Hills 2012 Year in Review

North Richland Hills employees worked hard during the past year to provide excellent services and programs for the community. Following is a look at some of the accomplishments and notable events of 2012.

## Construction & Development

- The city celebrated the grand opening of the new NRH Centre. The facility includes a fitness center, pool, walking track and double gymnasium; plus a banquet hall and senior center. In its first six months of operations more than 10,800 people joined the center with an average daily attendance of 1,040 people per day.
- Voters approved $48 million in bonds for the construction of the new municipal government complex to include City Hall, Public Safety and Municipal Court services. The bond proposition passed with 67.8% percent of the vote.
- After months of construction, new traffic lanes opened on North Tarrant Parkway. The project to widen and improve the roadway was a joint effort by North Richland Hills, Keller and Tarrant County.
- Quorum Architects was hired to design a new animal shelter. The new facility will include more kennel space and provide for a healthier shelter environment. Fundraising will take place in 2013 to help with construction costs.
- $NRH_2O$ Family Water Park opened for its 18th season with the addition of Sharky's Smokehouse & Grill, which offers guests a variety of made to order, fresh off the grill items. For the second season in a row, $NRH_2O$ set a new record for attendance, with more than 272,000 visitors in 2012.
- 53 solar panels were installed on the rooftops of two city buildings. This project was funded through the American Recovery & Reinvestment Act and helps to lower city utility costs and reduce the load on the electrical grid.
- The Parks & Recreation Department began planning and fundraising for the renovation of Adventure World Playground. The playground was built by the community in 1994 as a place where all children can play together, regardless of their abilities. The city is planning to renovate and update the playground in 2013.
- Floor & Décor Outlets announced that it will be opening a new 89,000-square-foot store at the northeast corner of Loop 820 and Rufe Snow Drive. The announcement signified one the largest retail leases in North Texas in 2012. The store is expected to open in the first half of 2013.

**The Richland Rebellaires performed during the grand opening of the NRH Centre in April 2012.**

## Programs & Services

- After years of preparation, the Shared Detention & Communication Services Agreement between the cities of North Richland Hills, Watauga, Haltom City and Richland Hills was fully implemented. The consolidation of jail and dispatch services has improved efficiency and cooperation between the cities, and saves taxpayers money.
- The city's good credit ratings of AA+ and Aa2 were reaffirmed by Standard and Poors and Moody's. Because of this good credit rating, the city received a very low interest rate of 2.69 percent on bonds for the new municipal complex.
- The City of North Richland Hills partnered with the National League of Cities to make free prescription discount cards available to residents. The cards help residents who are uninsured, as well as residents who have medications that are not covered by their insurance. Participants in this program have received an average savings of 23 percent off the retail price of prescription medications.
- The city partnered with utility companies to provide free energy efficiency upgrades to eligible homeowners. More than 150 families were helped by the program.
- City employees and community volunteers participated in the Neighborhood Initiative Fix It Blitz to help elderly and disabled residents with needed home repairs and yard work. 23 homes were improved during the blitz.
- The city joined communities across North Texas in the effort to combat West Nile Virus. Ground level spraying, larvicide and other tools where used to help reduce the mosquito population that transmits the virus.

# City Departments Recognized with Several Awards

Several city departments and employees were recognized for their outstanding service in 2012. Following are some of the state and national awards and honors the city received:

## City Secretary's Office

- The Municipal Records Division was presented an Exemplary Five-Star Award for Local Registrars from the Texas Department of Health. This is the 11th year they've received the Five-Star Award and the fourth time to receive exemplary status.

## Finance & Budget

- The city was awarded a Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting from the Government Finance Officers Association. Only 15% of the municipalities in Texas and only 5% of the municipalities in the United States received this award. This is the 28th year in a row North Richland Hills has received this honor.
- The city was presented a Distinguished Budget Presentation Award from the Governmental Finance Officers Association. This is the 22nd consecutive year the City has received this award.

**Jennipher Castellanos, Mark Mills and Orsheka Moore of the Budget Department.**

- The Purchasing Division earned an Achievement of Excellence in Procurement Award from the National Purchasing Institute. Only 19 cities in Texas and 52 cities in the United States received this award.

## Library

- The NRH Public Library was presented an Achievement of Excellence Award from the Texas Municipal Library Directors Association. The NRH Library was 1 of only 26 libraries state-wide to receive the award.

## Neighborhood Services

- The Texas Master Gardener Association recognized the Common Ground Community Garden as one of the best community gardens in the state.
- Neighborhood Services Director Jo Ann Stout was recognized by the National Association of Professional Women as the 2012 Executive Woman of the Year in her profession.

## Parks & Recreation

**Assistant Parks & Recreation Director Sharon Davis**

- Assistant Parks & Recreation Director Sharon Davis was named Recreational Professional of the Year at the Texas Recreation and Parks Society's regional conference.
- The NRH Centre was recognized with Innovation in Facility Design Awards from the DFW Area Parks & Recreation Directors Association and the Texas Recreation & Parks Society.
- The Park's Maintenance Division placed second in the Texas Recreation and Parks Society's Regional Park Maintenance Rodeo. Tanner Arwine, Michael Salazar and Mark Rawson also brought home individual awards.

## Planning & Development

- Mayor Oscar Trevino was awarded the Planning Advocate Award from the American Planning Association's Midwest Texas Section.
- The Greater Fort Worth Builders Association awarded the Spirit of Cooperation award to NRH Planning & Development Director John Pitstick.

## Police Department

- The Volunteers in Police Service (VIPS) Program was honored by the Texas Citizens on Patrol Association as the volunteer organization of the year. VIPS was also recognized by the International Association of Chiefs of Police with a 4th place award for outstanding law enforcement volunteer programs.
- At the annual Texas Police Games, Police Officer Tom Cleveland earned the gold medal in the Texas Pentathlon and Officer John Harding earned silver medals in two bicycle events.
- The Police Traffic Section brought home nine championship trophies from the Gulf Coast Police Motorcycle Skills Rodeo.
- The Police Bicycle Unit participated in the 5th Annual Highland Village "Fallen Heroes" Police Bike Race winning both the individual and team categories.

## Public Works

- Public Works employees demonstrated driving skills and expertise in handling public works equipment at the regional equipment Road-E-O. Chuck James won first place in backhoe operations and Robert Gomez earned third place in a grade-all operations.

# VIPS Celebrate 20,000 Hours of Service

Since hitting the streets in their blue volunteer patrol units, 27 specially trained North Richland Hills police volunteers have cumulatively donated over 20,000 productive hours in the past 5 years and are on target to hit 10,000 plus this year alone.

NRH Volunteers in Police Service (VIPS) have been honored with nine certificates of achievement for extraordinary service, six supervisor's recognition awards, a congratulatory certificate from the Senate of the State of Texas, an honorable mention award for outstanding volunteerism in police service from the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) and they were named as the top volunteer agency in 2012 from the Texas Citizens on Patrol Association.

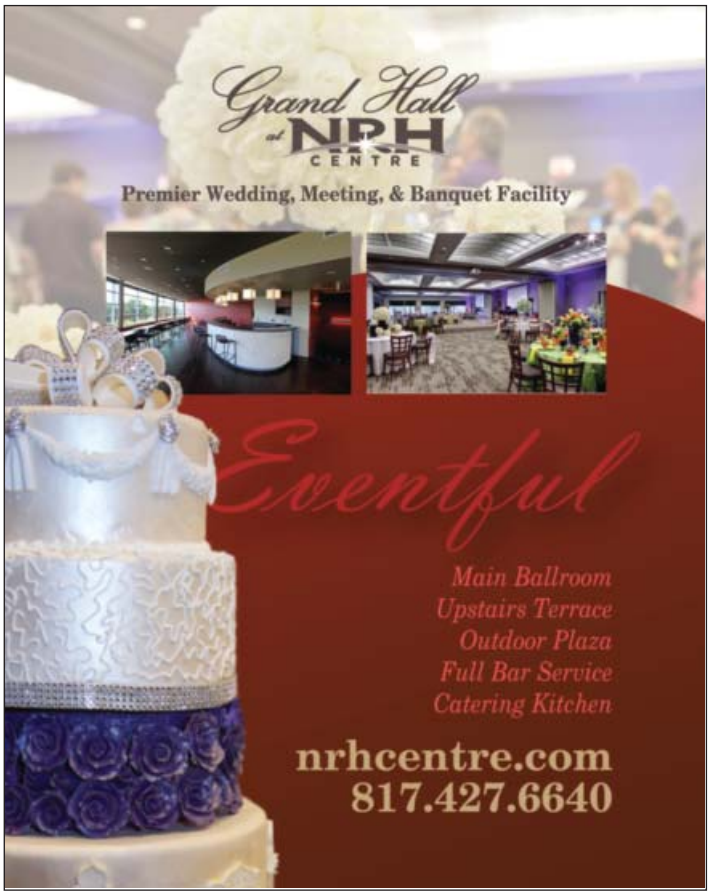
NRH police volunteers average over 40 hours a month per person with ages ranging from 45 to 79. VIPS assist the police in securing a safe environment for all who live, work and visit the city of North Richland Hills. While using their resources as an extra set of "eyes and ears," volunteers are able to work with police officers and citizens in the community to help keep crime down.

VIPS are actively assisting in every function within the Police Department by focusing on tasks and duties tailored to their specialties. Volunteers monitor recorded emergency 911 phone calls for quality assurance, scan and digitally file police documents, assist the Municipal Court in collecting fines, and assist in criminal investigations by collecting supplemental case information.

**Volunteer Don Buehrer patrols the city's hike and bike trails.**

NRH VIPS have proven to be a highly valued asset to the Police Department and the citizens of North Richland Hills. Providing excellence in customer service and giving back to the community is what drives this group of civic minded citizens to continue their outstanding achievements.

Volunteers participating in the VIPS program are required to be a Citizens Police Academy graduate and successfully pass a background check. To find ways you can get involved, contact the North Richland Hills Citizens Police Academy at 817-427-7021 or online at www.nrhtx.com/cpa and start the process to become a North Richland Hills police VIP.

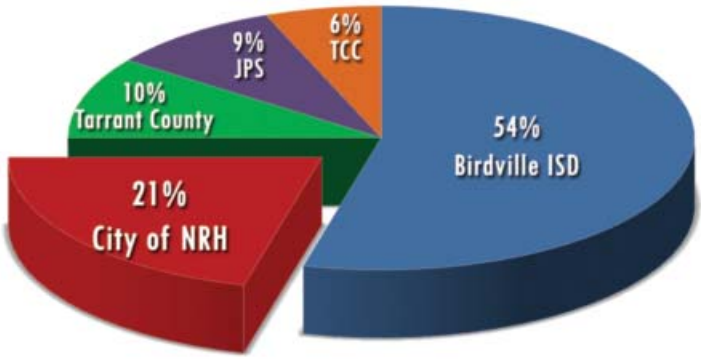


# Where Do Your Property Taxes Go?

Did you know, only 21% of your overall property tax payment goes to the City of North Richland Hills? The rest goes to the school district, county, county hospital district and the county college district. Each governmental entity adopts its own budget and property tax rate annually. Current tax rates are:

| | |
|---|---|
| Birdville ISD* | $1.435 |
| City of NRH | $0.61 |
| Tarrant County | $0.264 |
| JPS Hospital District | $0.227897 |
| Tarrant County College | $0.14897 |

Property taxes are collected in January of each year. For more information about paying property taxes, please call the Tarrant County Tax Office at 817-884-1100.




*Calculation includes applicable homestead exemptions.*
**Some NRH residents reside in Keller ISD, which has a tax rate of $1.54.*

# Council Adopts Balanced Budget, Sets Tax Rate

On September 10, 2012 the North Richland Hills City Council approved a balanced budget for Fiscal Year 2012-13 and set the city's property tax rate at 61-cents per $100 valuation. The tax rate is 4-cents higher than the previous rate of 57-cents, making this the first increase in the city's property tax rate since 1993.

All funds from the 4-cent tax rate increase will go to pay the debt for the new municipal complex that was approved by voters in May 2012. The new facility will include City Hall, Municipal Court and Public Safety services. It will be constructed on a portion of the former North Hills Mall property off of Boulevard 26. Public information distributed prior to the May election stated that a tax rate increase of up to 4 cents would be necessary for the new municipal complex. The project was approved with 67.8% of the vote.

The overall impact of the 4-cent tax rate increase on the average single family home with a taxable value of $122,598 will be $49 per year, which is less than $1 per week. 24% of property owners will see no increase in their property tax bill because they receive the senior or disabled tax freeze that was approved by voters in 2004.

The City's property tax rate is comprised of two parts: the Maintenance & Operations rate and the Debt Service rate. A comparison of the prior and current tax rates shows that the portion of the property tax rate going to Maintenance & Operations has actually decreased by 0.5343 cents and the portion going to Debt Service has increased by 4.5343 cents.

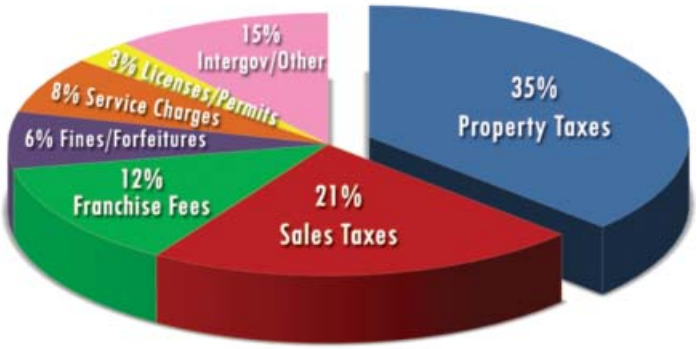
**Prior Property Tax Rate:**
35.6419 cents for Maintenance & Operations
21.3581 cents for Debt Service
57 cents Total Tax Rate

**New Property Tax Rate:**
35.1076 cents for Maintenance & Operations
25.8924 cents for Debt Service
61 cents Total Tax Rate

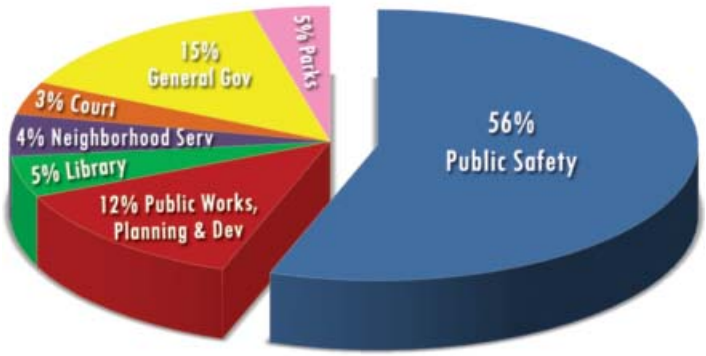
The maintenance and operations portion of the tax rate helps to fund everything from police, fire and public works to parks, library and animal control. In preparing this year's budget, city programs were again placed under a microscope to determine if they are meeting the city's goals and continue to be cost effective.

The city's 2012-13 budget is available for review on the city's website at www.nrhtx.com/budget, at City Hall and at the NRH Public Library. Questions may be directed to the Budget Department at 817-427-6052.

## FY 2012-13 General Fund Revenues




## FY 2012-13 General Fund Expenditures



# NRH Welcomes New Director of Library Services

The City of North Richland Hills recently welcomed Cecilia Hurt Barham as the new Director of Library Services. She replaces Steve Brown, who retired earlier this year after 16 years of service with the city.

Ms. Barham comes to North Richland Hills from the City of Decatur, where she served as the Library Director for seven years. Prior to her service with Decatur, she held the position of Adult Services Librarian for the City of Flower Mound, as well as the Media Librarian with the University of North Texas.

Ms. Barham brings a strong community approach to library services and has demonstrated skills in leadership, innovation, community building and technology. Under her direction, the Decatur Public Library won runner-up for the Library Journal/Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation Best Small Library in America in 2012. She was also recognized with the Award of Excellence in Libraries in 2007, 2009 and 2010 and was named the Texas Library Association's TALL Texan in 2006.

Cecilia Hurt Barham

Ms. Barham earned her Master's Degree in Information Sciences from the University of North Texas and also holds a Master of Arts in English and a Bachelor of Arts in English. She is a member of several professional organizations including the Public Library Association and Texas Library Association.

The North Richland Hills Public Library is located at 9015 Grand Ave. Hours are 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. Monday through Thursday, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Friday and 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturday. The Library is closed on Sunday.

For more information about library services, please call the Library at 817-427-6800 or go online to www.library.nrhtx.com.

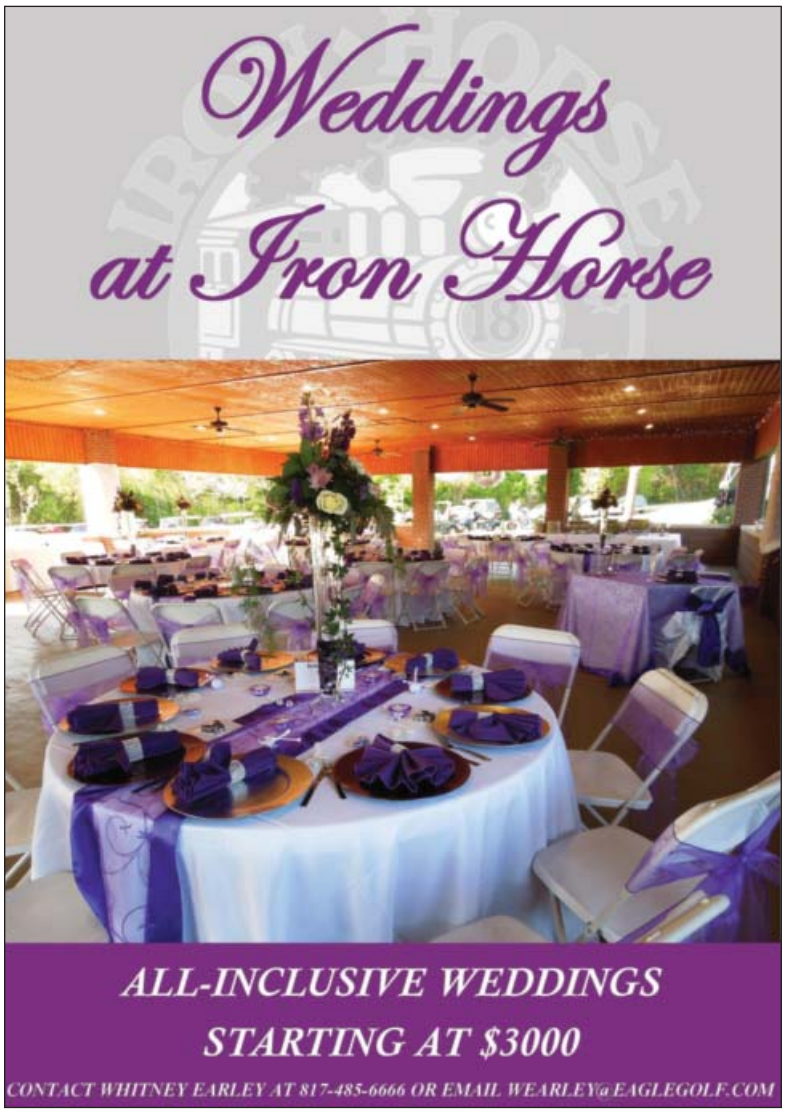
# K9 Helps Police with Drug Enforcement

The North Richland Hills Police Department recently added a K-9 program to its crime fighting efforts. The K-9 Unit includes Police Officer Tom Bulger and Breta, a specially trained drug detection dog.

The K-9 Unit received its certification earlier this year following an extensive training program and is available to assist all NRH police officers and detectives in drug enforcement efforts.

The K-9 program is funded with assets seized by and forfeited to the NRH Police Department.

Officer Tom Bulger and Breta



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# 2013 Meetings & Special Events

**January**

1 New Year's Day
2 Outdoor Warning Sirens Test
3 Planning & Zoning Work Session
5 Christmas Tree Recycling Pickup
7 Teen Court
7-11 Cooking Oil & Grease Recycling
9 Youth Advisory Committee
10 CPR Class
14 City Council Meeting
14 Teen Court
15 Keep NRH Beautiful Commission
17 Planning & Zoning Commission
17 Library Board
21 Staff Development Day, City Offices Closed
26 Polar Plunge, $NRH_2O$
28 City Council Meeting
28 Teen Court

**February**

2 Daddy/Daughter Dance, NRH Centre
4 Teen Court
4 Parks & Recreation Board
6 Outdoor Warning Sirens Test
7 Planning & Zoning Work Session
9 CPR Class
11 City Council Meeting
11 Teen Court
13 Youth Advisory Committee
19 Keep NRH Beautiful Commission
21 Planning & Zoning Commission
21 Library Board
25 Teen Court
25 City Council Meeting

**March**

4 Teen Court
6 Outdoor Warning Sirens Test
7 Planning & Zoning Work Session
10 Daylight Savings Time Begins
11-15 Spring Break Camp NRH
11 City Council Meeting
13 Youth Advisory Committee
18 Teen Court
19 Keep NRH Beautiful Commission
21 Planning & Zoning Commission
21 Library Board
21 CPR Class
23 Easter in the Park, Green Valley Park
25 City Council Meeting
25 Teen Court

**April**

1 Parks & Recreation Board
1 Teen Court
3 Outdoor Warning Sirens Test
4 Planning & Zoning Work Session
8 City Council Meeting
8 Teen Court
10 Youth Advisory Committee
10 Dementia Workshop, Library
15 Teen Court
16 Keep NRH Beautiful Commission
17 Dementia Workshop, Library
18 Planning & Zoning Commission
18 Library Board
20 CPR Class
20 Mayor's 5K Walk, NRH Centre
22 City Council Meeting
24 Dementia Workshop, Library
26 Sounds of Spring Concert Series
29 Teen Court

*Dates may be subject to change. To verify please call City Hall at 817-427-6000.*

## City of North Richland Hills

**City Council**

Mayor Oscar Trevino
Mayor Pro Tem Tom Lombard
Tito Rodriguez
Rita Wright Oujesky
Tim Barth
David Whitson
Scott Turnage
Tim Welch

**City Manager's Office**

Mark Hindman, City Manager
Karen Bostic, Assistant City Manager
Jared Miller, Assistant City Manager
Jimmy Perdue, Director of Public Safety
Mike Curtis, Managing Director of Planning & Development

**Newsletter**

Mary Peters, Public Information Officer

Residents may send their comments about this newsletter to mpeters@nrhtx.com or Mary Peters, Public Information Officer, City of North Richland Hills, 7301 NE Loop 820, North Richland Hills, TX 76180. NRH newsletters can also be viewed online at www.nrhtx.com.