

# Precinct 287 Civic Association

Organized July 1973. Serving Post Oak Manor and Willowbrook.



Fall 2024  
Volume 58, Number 3

Greetings!

I'm so grateful for the cooler weather and some rain. This is a great time to check out Prairie Lake on your bike, on foot, or with a stroller. Stop and relax on the comfortable new park seats. I was able to enjoy a moment with Kelley and her doggo, Rocky, watching the sunset. The trail maps show distances and offer fitness options, bird watching, fishing, and solace from electronic devices.

After months of frequently contacting the City of Houston about an abandoned property, figuring out it was in foreclosure, and identifying the bank lender, we finally gained a response from the bank's Property Preservation Department. The Department clipped branches and provided an initial half mow. Neighbors and the Precinct 287 Civic Association Board converged to complete the job, removing copious amounts of trash from the backyard as rats and mosquitos were spilling over into surrounding neighbors' properties and causing a public nuisance. Thanks to Nik, Krystal, and their neighbors for joining the crew as many hands make light work.

Two group homes have closed in our neighborhood. Thanks to Edith Napoleon and Barbara Beard for spending hours contacting city officials and police to establish licensing and owners' responsibilities. Both properties are now up for sale.

Thanks to those who hosted National Night Out, as well as those who attended and met their neighbors. Thank you to Monica Alzate and Caroline Burum for coordinating the signs and sign in sheets. The night was a remarkable success with more NNO hosts than ever before and real face-to-face conversations. It was an opportunity for us to feel less isolated, be known to our neighbors, and make connections.

It was great to see families dancing through the neighborhood for Halloween with their littles. There were fabulous decorations in yards as people start the

holiday season!

Thank you to those who have paid dues so far; we have a long way to go to cover security patrol for the year.

Please share with us the email addresses of newer neighbors so we can help them stay connected with quarterly newsletters.

Happy Thanksgiving,  
Alison Mitchell  
President



## Neighborhood Beautification

Photos from the abandoned property cleanup on Kinglet.





## 2024-2025 Dues

It's time to pay your 2024-25 dues if you haven't already. Dues are \$150 per year.

Payment can be made by Zelle at [precinct287dues@gmail.com](mailto:precinct287dues@gmail.com). Please include your address on the memo line.

You can also make payment by check. Please mail your check to P.O. BOX 31699, Houston, TX 77231-1699. Please include your address on the memo line.



4700 Block of Hummingbird



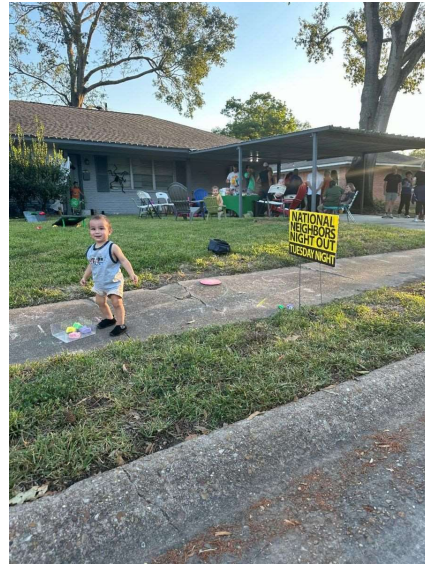
4800 Hummingbird and Kinglet



Waxwing and Woodpecker



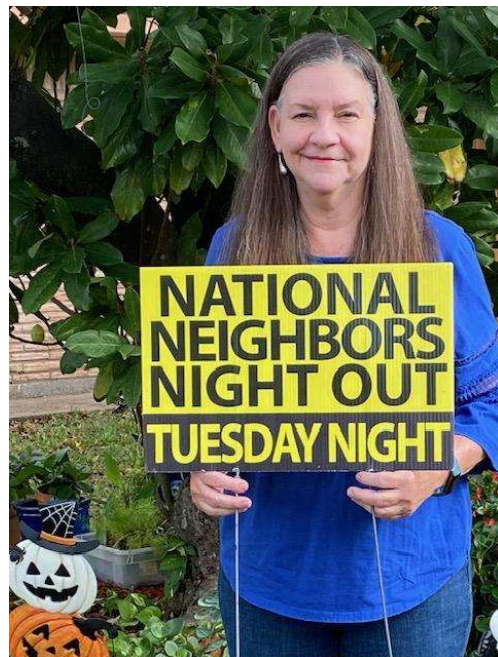
Greenwillow



4500 Benning

Thank you ❤️

Sherie Faux is our random winner for our National Night Out hosting contest. Sherie has generously hosted NNO for five years and we appreciate her community service.



**Crosswalks on Willowbend**



Discussions at the Near Southwest Super Neighborhood meeting in September about traffic calming measures on Willowbend led to improvements. The City of Houston immediately acted and three crosswalks with signs were completed on Willowbend. Thank you to the City of Houston!

You can learn more about Near Southwest Super Neighborhood (SN #38) by visiting [www.facebook.com/NearSWSuperNeighborhood](https://www.facebook.com/NearSWSuperNeighborhood).

## Fort Bend Town Hall

By Alison Mitchell

On October 28, Barbara Beard, Precinct 287 Civic Association Secretary, and I attended the Fort Bend Town Hall Hosted by Martha Castex-Tatum, the District K City Council Member and Mayor Pro-Tem. Council Member Castex-Tatum had an early reception with the Chief of Police Noe Diaz, senior officials, and constituents. We learned of the severe shortage of police officers in Houston. There are 5,200 police officers and approximately 800 civilian staff - the same amount of officers Houston had in the year 2000. Likely because of retirement and “the Blue” being a less popular profession, recruitment has been slow. The police academy has another 60 recruits coming out soon.

Due to the shortage of personnel, police are having to prioritize calls, and this may delay response time to calls. Police encouraged people to use the non-urgent line, 713-884-3131, to call in shots fired in neighborhoods so police can identify and locate the gunmen.

The town hall meeting was held in a church due to the generosity of a local pastor, who opened in prayer. Martha Castex-Tatum introduced the dignitaries, which included Mayor John Whitmire, the Chief of Police, the Fire Chief, a County Commissioner, and three City Council Members. The Director of Solid Waste Management was also present and discussed the lack of driver availability and falling behind due to mass clean up from Hurricane Beryl.

The Mayor and Police Chief arrived later due to an active crime scene from a kidnapping/domestic dispute that shutdown a highway during peak traffic. Police resolved the situation. Mayor Whitmire was very complimentary of Council Member Castex-Tatum’s work and staff and said she has a bright future in politics. Mayor Whitmore reinforced being fiscally responsible, listening to the growing needs of the city, and reviewing the budget in detail. He discussed the newly appointed Chair of

the Harris County-Houston Sports Authority, which manages the major sports arenas. The Chair will be integral in preparing to host the 2026 FIFA World Cup.

Questions were asked regarding the maintenance of fire stations and their vehicles, to which the Fire Chief, still very new to his position, struggled to answer directly and said this was a work in progress. The Super Neighborhood Chairperson was present and handing out his business cards. Often it is difficult to understand who has authority of an issue, so having access to these leaders bodes well for precinct 287.

Other discussions included cost and budget items. Of note, the electric utilities companies of Austin and San Antonio have revenue streams that help their city budgets whereas Houston does not. One question focused on progress with the back dated rape kits. DNA testing has revealed persons of interest involved in other crimes and pointed to a few inmates already incarcerated. Those unable to ask their questions due to time were able to submit their questions to District K staff or go directly to dignitaries with their questions once the meeting closed.

It was an excellent Town Hall with opportunity for everyone from the community to be represented.

---

## About Martha Castex-Tatum

Martha Castex-Tatum was the first African American female to serve on the San Marcos, TX city council, earning the role of Deputy Mayor Pro-Tem. She won the May 5, 2018, special election for City of Houston District K, a rough triangle with precinct 287 at one of its tips, stretching across southwest Houston into Fort Bend County. In January 2024, she was appointed Mayor Pro-Tem by Mayor John Whitmire.

Council Member Castex-Tatum serves as Vice Chair of the National League of Cities' Transportation and Infrastructure Services Committee. She is a member of the National League of Cities 2024 Presidential Election Task Force. As the immediate past President of the Texas Municipal League, Council Member Castex-Tatum oversees services for 1,150 member cities.

Council Member Castex-Tatum is a life member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority and holds a Master of Public Administration and a Bachelor of Business Administration from Texas State University. She is the proud mom of Jacob Paul Tatum. Her desire is to restore faith in government and foster a stronger, connected community at local, state, and national levels.

Council Member Castex-Tatum attends National Night Out celebrations, last year visiting precinct 287 and giving certificates for service in the community. She and her dedicated staff attend many community events. Her Chief of Staff, Perdita 'Didi' Chavis, attended the Willow Waterhole Greenspace Conservancy office opening on South Willow, along with several of our Civic Association board members.

Council Member Martha Castex-Tatum is Texas born and educated and is



Anthony & Patty Pizzitola  
4555 Spellman



Parry & Sydney Lauzon  
4726 Spellman



---

## September Winners

**East Willowbrook**  
Marisa & Jason Permenter  
4421 Kinglet



**West Willowbrook**  
Donna Grimes  
4838 Kingfisher



**East Post Oak Manor**  
Susan Forrest  
4506 Benning



**West Post Oak Manor**  
Victor  
4701 Benning



---

Yard of Month is awarded April through September. The volunteer committee includes Roberta Lopis, East Willowbrook; Sarah Barchas, West Willowbrook; Patty Murray, East Post Oak Manor; and Karen Richardson, West Post Oak Manor. You can nominate a neighbor for Yard of the Month by completing the form at [www.pct287ca.org/yard-of-the-month](http://www.pct287ca.org/yard-of-the-month) or by clicking the button below.

**Yard of the Month  
Nomination**



---

# Security

While our crime rates remain low, Officer Thompson mentioned at our last meeting that one step individuals can take as a crime deterrent is to install security cameras. If you have thought of installing them and wondered about the pros and cons, as well as different price points, our resident Wally Kulecz has kindly offered his expertise to help. He's knowledgeable about security DVR/NVR systems sold at Costco and Sam's Club, and standalone IP cameras from Amazon.

Mr. Kulecz has also developed a software for his personal use he is open to sharing with any other residents which is an "AI" person detector add-on for security cameras; it can be run on an inexpensive home computer for those residents on a budget. See a sample feed from his house at

[https://youtu.be/XZYyE\\_WsRLI](https://youtu.be/XZYyE_WsRLI).

You can reach Mr. Kulecz at [wkulecz@swbell.net](mailto:wkulecz@swbell.net).

---

## Our Neighborhood Railroad

Did you know the first rails in Houston were laid in 1851 near Buffalo Bayou? The railroad that parallels Greenwillow is run by Union Pacific. Trains often stop on the tracks and impede mobility on Willowbend. Here are ways to report any issues.

### **Union Pacific Emergencies**

1-888-UPRR COP (877-7267)

Emergency contact for immediate life safety concerns, vehicles stopped on railroad tracks, hazardous material releases, criminal activity in progress, fires, and other incidents requiring emergency response.

### **Notify Union Pacific of non-emergency incidents**

Visit <https://www.up.com/aboutup/contact> and select a topic or concern from the list. The options include blocked crossings, rough crossings, idling equipment, community events, transient encampments, illegal dumping, or vegetation concerns.

You will need to enter that you are a member of the general public and provide your phone number. Your name, mailing address, and email are optional.

Next you will select the railroad crossing location using the map feature.

Be prepared to provide additional required details, dependent upon the situation, such as:

- The date and time.
- How long the crossing been blocked.
- If there an alternate route available.
- Equipment IDs.
- Illegal dumping details.

- Trespasser details.
- If vegetation is obstructing a sign or tracks.
- You can also upload photos.

### **Log an alleged violation with the Federal Railroad Administration**

You may also log an alleged violation with the FRA. The advantage of the FRA complaint is that you can discuss it with Representative Al Green's constituent services.

Visit <https://railroads.dot.gov/railroad-safety/federal-railroad-administration-alleged-violation-reporting-form>.

List what type of issue (Alleged Violation, Complaint, Inquiry); the date and time of the issue; and a description of the issue. Your contact information is optional.

---

## **Resident Profile: Sue Davis**

by Susan Pitts

You may have seen Sue Davis on TV recently, cautioning viewers about fireworks safety. Through an association of over twenty years with Black Cat Fireworks and its successor Top Dog Fireworks, Sue became the “face of Houston fireworks” and is often called on to work with local media around holidays like July Fourth and New Year’s. The fireworks job is actually only a small footnote in Sue’s long career. From broadcasting the Challenger disaster live from Johnson Space Center to managing news media for local, state, and federal political candidates, Sue has had a front row seat to many significant events in Houston’s history.

Sue moved into our neighborhood in May 1989 and has lived in the same house for over 35 years. She started out at Texas A&M as a Journalism major but after taking all the Journalism classes the university offered, she then fell in love with Anthropology when it was introduced as a new degree program. She ended up with a BA in Anthropology and a minor in Journalism. She covered Houston City Hall for six years for KTRH Radio (then an all-news station) and later worked on documentaries and news programs for Houston’s Channel 8, the local PBS affiliate television station. With Channel 8, Sue traveled the world, including documentary-making trips to China, South Africa, Norway, and Austria.

Sue’s most memorable broadcast occurred at KTRH. The station had a small studio at NASA’s Johnson Space Center and reported lots of space news, including broadcasting shuttle launches live from Johnson, since JSC takes control of the mission as soon as a spacecraft clears the launch tower. Sue typically continued on-air reporting on the launch progress for about two minutes until the solid rocket boosters separated from the spacecraft. January 28, 1986, the day of the Challenger space shuttle launch, was no different from her coverage of previous launches until about a minute and a half in. Sue saw what looked like an explosion and lots of white smoke. She knew it was too early for the booster separation. The NASA spokesperson announcing the launch wasn’t saying anything at all. But this was live radio so Sue had to keep talking. “I thought the shuttle had exploded but I didn’t want to be the one to

announce that to the world without confirmation.” She described the situation as it developed, including that she saw something coming back to earth. Later, she found out that at least some of the astronauts were still alive after the explosion; one reached up to release an oxygen mask for another. Finally, the NASA spokesperson confirmed the explosion and “Even though that was what I thought had happened, I just blurted out ‘Oh, my God!’” Sue stayed on the air the rest of the day. She remembers that the monitors in Mission Control froze with the last reading before the explosion and it was eerily quiet, with everyone staring at their monitors in shock. On the air, Sue mentioned the cold, a factor later determined to have affected the shuttle’s “O rings” in a way that caused the explosion. Sue finally went home, where she remembers sitting silently in the dark. She had followed NASA events for years and knew the people involved. While broadcasting, she controlled her emotions and did her job, but once she was alone, she finally had time to process it. In those days, businesses often had KTRH news radio playing all day at work. To this day, people tell her they were listening to the radio that day and say, “That’s how I remember it, you calling it.”

Over time, the media business declined and stations stopped doing lots of news and outside programming. Sue started taking on public relations jobs for non-profit organizations, eventually leading into managing news media for political campaigns. Communications became her specialty, including working with news media, drafting questionnaires, and preparing for debates and forums. She was Communications Director for the last six successful mayoral campaigns, managing three for Annise Parker, two for Sylvester Turner, and the recent John Whitmire campaign. She served as campaign manager for Al Green in his successful Democratic campaign for Congress against Chris Bell, and also worked with Sheila Jackson Lee. Sue says each campaign is different. A big campaign will have a large staff that includes a campaign manager, consultants, communications, and in recent years, a person who focuses full time on social media. Mayoral campaigns are very intense with coverage all over the city, whereas smaller campaigns for City Council may involve a much smaller group. A well-known rule of politics is, “Don’t do something for someone; let someone do something for you,” a maxim clearly illustrated when people take selfies with a candidate. People are proud and happy when a candidate stops for a photo with them, the selfies get posted on social media, and Sue says it’s almost like an endorsement to online friends and is certainly a valuable, positive exposure for the candidate.

Sue says politics has changed a lot over the years. Back in the 60s and 70s, everybody volunteered, and friends got together to work campaigns. Now it is a business. One thing that hasn’t changed is Sue’s philosophy. She has seen up close the damage some people can do in political office and says her goal is always to help good people get elected. She only works for people she believes in and has turned down people she’s not sure of. She doesn’t prey on people who can’t win and is honest in telling candidates when she knows they don’t have a chance. Reflecting back on her career, she says what she’s liked most is working on her own and making sure good people get elected.

With all her involvement in local events, you’d think Sue might not have time for much else, but she is an avid baseball fan, volunteer, animal lover, and gardener. In conjunction with the 1994 Ken Burns “Baseball” documentary, Sue worked on a local documentary about Houston baseball for Channel 8. Her research for the documentary revealed that baseball in Houston existed prior to

the Civil War. Houston teams went through many names, but old timers still remember the Buffaloes, or Buffs as they were known, who played from 1896 until 1961 and were very popular. Sue was even able to track down some of the Buff players for interviews. The Buffs disbanded when Major League Baseball allowed the Colt 45's into the MLB in 1962. The Colt 45s became the Houston Astros when the Harris County Domed Stadium—better known as the Astrodome—opened in 1965. In addition, Sue found out Houston had a Negro League team at one time and interviewed pitcher Bill “Fireball” Beverly for the documentary. Showing how it all came together over the years was, Sue says, a fascinating project. She remains a huge Astros fan.

Another documentary Sue worked on was called “Ribbons of Life” about Harris County waterways. The documentary showed how our community built up around the local bayous and other water ways. Sue is a big fan of environmental causes. She is chair of the Board of Directors for the Houston Zoo Development Corporation, the public-private partnership created in 2002 to operate the Zoo after the City decided it no longer wanted to do the day-to-day management. Houston Mayor Turner appointed Sue to the board because of her well-known love for animals. She belongs to the Asante Society of zoo supporters and will show you the first picture on her phone is of herself with Curly the two-toed sloth. If you come to her house at any time of year, you'll see Sue's “Animal Tree,” a big white Christmas tree that stays up all year. Awhile back, Sue was bemoaning the work involved in taking down and putting up the big, heavy tree, when a friend said, “Why not just call it an animal tree and leave it up all year?” It's been up ever since, covered with 167 (and counting) different animal ornaments, including a capybara, anteater, eland, and bearded dragon. Many of her finds come from a local plant nursery, “Another Place in Time,” whose owner delights in finding animal ornaments Sue doesn't have. Sue's other main charitable interest is The H.E.A.R.T. Program (Housing, Entrepreneurship And Readiness Training), where she served on the founding Board of Directors and is still a Board Member. The H.E.A.R.T Program provides job training and jobs for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

If you went to Sue's house, you would also see some amazing plants in her yard. She works hard to plant for pollinators and hummingbirds and often grows from seeds. Sue says she loves gardening because after the intense activity of a PR campaign, it is calming and quiet. She also notes that carrying around 40 lb. bags of dirt and big terra cotta pots is super exercise. Working in the garden daily, she says you can see what you do, and she often looks out at her beautiful plant beds and thinks with satisfaction “I did that.” Sue says, “Gardeners plan. Nature laughs.” Nature presents challenges like droughts, big freezes, the 2024 derecho, and Hurricane Beryl. Still, she has at least 17 beautiful Plumeria, along with colorful Pride of Barbados, yellow Candlestick, Spooky Dianthus and many more. Hummingbirds and butterflies flock to the Rangoon Creeper and other pollinator plants on her fence line and to the feeders on her porch. Neighborhood squirrels especially love the peanuts she feeds them, and often beg at her back window.

With her work, volunteer activities, baseball, and gardening, Sue's life is a busy one. She notes that a lot has changed in the neighborhood. Many old neighbors are gone and new families are moving in. But the neighborhood is still a quiet, friendly place in a city she is happy to call home.



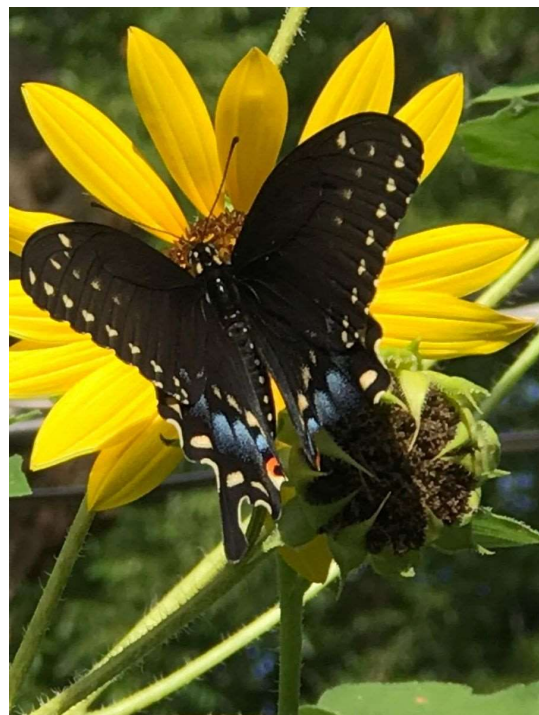
Sue and Mayor Turner with 2017 World Series Trophy



Sue and Curly, the two-toed sloth



Sue and Orbit at Comicpalooza



Butterfly in Sue's garden

## In Search Of...

### Long Time Residents & Interesting Stories

I grew up in this neighborhood, moved away, and returned 20 years ago. There have been a lot of changes over the years, families moving in and out, but this is still a quiet, safe place to raise a family. I'm looking for people who've lived in the neighborhood for many years, who have stories to tell about what it was like in the early days, or after Carla or Alicia, or anything else about the history of our area. I'd love to find the person who has lived here the longest. If you or someone you know has lived here since around the time houses were built in the 50s, I'd love to talk to you and share some of your memories. If you or someone you know hasn't lived here quite that long but have stories about

happenings here, I'd love to talk to you, too. I won't take much of your time, but your neighbors and I would love to hear all about the warm, wonderful, or crazy times you've known here in Precinct 287. You can reach me by filling out the contact form at [pct287ca.org/contact](http://pct287ca.org/contact), or by clicking on the 'Contact Us' tab on the Precinct 287 website.

Regards and hope to hear from you,  
Susan Pitts

## Beautification Volunteers

Do you love our neighborhood and the outdoors? We are in need of a beautification volunteer to head up quarterly clean up days at Prairie Lake and along S. Post Oak Rd. We are also open to other initiatives such as plantings, advocating for sidewalk repair, and repair of concrete "old style" street markers in our neighborhood. This could also be a committee of multiple volunteers. We can work with your schedule! If you are interested, email us at [precinct287ca@gmail.com](mailto:precinct287ca@gmail.com).

Thanks,  
Precinct 287 Civic Association Board

<b><u>2024/2025 OFFICERS</u></b>	
President	Alison Mitchell
Vice President	Edith Napoleon
Treasurer	Tom Hafley
Secretary	Barbara Beard
<b><u>2024/2025 AREA REPRESENTATIVES</u></b>	
W. Willowbrook	Mike Bruso
E. Willowbrook	Janeen Paprocki
W. Post Oak Manor	Terry Hawkins
E. Post Oak Manor	Susan Forrest
<b><u>COMMITTEES</u></b>	
Beautification	Caroline Burum
Deed Restrictions	Matthew Camp
Lost Pets	Terry Hawkins 832-652-0715

	tlhawk@swbell.net
Membership Database	Teresa Palmer
National Night Out	Monica Alzate
Newsletter	Jill Navarro
Security Patrol Secretary	Pat Powell
Signs	Andrew Etter
Super Neighborhood Delegate	Matthew Camp
Yard of the Month	Janeen Paprocki
Website	Caroline Lewis
*Appointed as interim until the next election cycle.	

## PICTURE YOUR AD HERE!

\$50 per newsletter.

Contact [precinct287ca@gmail.com](mailto:precinct287ca@gmail.com) for more information.

[About](#)

[Donate](#)

[Gallery](#)

[Newsletters](#)

P.O. BOX 31699  
HOUSTON, TX 77231-1699

[precinct287ca@gmail.com](mailto:precinct287ca@gmail.com)

[www.pct287ca.org](http://www.pct287ca.org)

[Contact Us](#)



Share This Email



Share This Email



Share This Email

Precinct 287 Civic Association | P.O. BOX 31699 | Houston, TX 77231-1699 US

[Unsubscribe](#) | [Update Profile](#) | [Constant Contact Data Notice](#)