Settlements

The German influence in Bulverde and its surrounding areas is clear as one encounters local settlements, architecture, and traditions, like fachwerk and Wurstfest to name only two.

But why did so many Germans find Texas attractive?

One reason was the generous Texas land policy (first established in 1836) and the promise of better economic opportunities. Letters written by early immigrants to friends and family in the Fatherland were a strong enticement as well. They described a land with a “winterless climate” and abundant fish and game. Those enticements brought the Germans to Texas, especially the Hill Country.

The Texas congress also granted immigrant agencies contracts of ten sections (6,400 acres) of land for each one-hundred families that the agent settled in Texas. So, in 1842, German nobles formed The German Emigration Company (Adelsverein) to promote immigration to Texas, gaining permission to settle colonists north of San Antonio. This agency’s efforts between 1844 and 1847 settled more than 7,000 Germans in Texas. The two largest settlements were New Braunfels and Fredricksburg.

According to the Texas State Historical Association (TSHA), “The largest

LOCAL HISTORY: THE GERMAN INFLUENCE
by D. Ellis Phelps

THE END OF THE WEST COMAL CHRONICLE
by Cassie Wedding

This is to announce that this January 2018 edition of the West Comal Chronicle will be the last. We will not be publishing the paper after this month. But don’t worry – it’s all for the good. Our aim is to seek better ways to reach area residents with library and community news. Read on!

The library has decided to work with existing publications in the Bulverde/Spring Branch area. We plan to place articles with established newspapers and magazines that already reach a large, local readership. In this way, the library will be able to reach many more people with important news and information. In a month or so, start watching for library articles to begin appearing in local publications!

We are also exploring ways to expand the library’s online presence to include some of the information we provided in the West Comal Chronicle. More and more people get their news and information from the internet, and the library is all about keeping up with the times. Providing online content, whether in the form of a blog or newsletter or a combination of venues, will give us the ability to provide more frequent and up-to-date information to our members and the community at large.

We at the library and especially the staff of the West Comal Chronicle wish to thank the loyal readers of the West Comal Chronicle. We have worked hard over the last few years to provide you with a high quality newspaper.

We also want to thank the local writers who gave their time and expertise to the paper, providing original articles exclusive to the West Comal Chronicle. In particular, we would like to show our appreciation to the following:

Park Interpreter Craig Hensley of the Guadalupe River State Park, who wrote lovely pieces on nature and wildlife and opened our eyes to the beauty that surrounds us;

Comal Master Gardener Lee Franzel, who provided welcome advice to the many amateur gardeners in the area; and

D. Ellis Phelps and Michael Varhola for the research and writing they undertook in order to provide readers with interesting information about local history, people and places.

The library is about to embark on a period of change and improvement. Along with the expansion and remodeling of the physical structure, it is time to explore more up-to-date and efficient ways of communicating with the public as well.

We are excited about all of these changes and believe they will serve the community better.

WHAT’S INSIDE:
AROUND THE COMMUNITY pg. 3
LIBRARY EVENTS CALENDAR pg. 4
PET OF THE MONTH pg. 8
BROADEN YOUR SHELF IN 2018 pg. 9
READY FOR THE NEW GARDENING YEAR pg. 10
THE NATURE OF SUBTLETY pg. 11

TURN TO PAGES 6 & 7 FOR LIBRARY EXPANSION NEWS!
GERMAN INFLUENCE CONTINUED FROM PG 1

An ethnic group in Texas derived directly from Europe [were] persons of German birth or descent.” And as of the 1990 United States census, seventeen and one half percent of the Texas population claimed pure or partial German ancestry.

Architecture

“Fredericksburg is known for its 19th-century vernacular buildings of stone and fachwerk—a traditional German building technique consisting of heavy timber framing and diagonal bracing, with an infill of limestone,” according to the National Park Service. This construction is also known as “half-timbering” and was used by immigrants as a primary building technique prior to 1870. “Often, Texas Germans covered their half-timbering with plaster and whitewash or weatherboarding…. Germanic influence is also to be seen in a wide variety of other Texas vernacular structures, including frame dance halls…barns and schoolhouses (TSHA).”

A day trip to Fredericksburg is one way to get a good look at this architectural phenomenon up close while enjoying a stroll down “the magic mile” of Main Avenue. Visitors can shop, dine on traditional German fare, visit the Marktplatz and the Vereins Kirche Museum, and enjoy an ice cream or an original brewed beer. Check out this site for more information before you go: http://www.fredericksburgtexas-online.com

Tradition

Thousands of visitors from all over the United States flood New Braunfels for one of the state’s largest festivals, and maybe the largest in honor of sausage. That’s right! You’ve heard of it: Wurstfest.

The festival was the brainchild of former New Braunfels meat inspector and veterinarian, Ed Grist, who created the first day-long festival in 1961. Wurstfest was first held on a Saturday in the New Braunfels’ National Guard Armory, with local restaurants participating by serving sausage all week. In 1978 the festival was moved to the Dittlinger Feed Mill property and a portion of the LRCA property.

Mark your calendars! From November 2-11, 2018 (dates vary annually) during Wurstfest week you can enjoy all things German, including five live music stages, including those that play authentic Alpine and Bavarian music; midway rides; food trucks; funnel cakes; unique shopping opportunities; the largest beer bottle collection in the world; and a biergarten, featuring a selection of thirty plus craft beers from throughout Texas and the rest of the nation.

Wear your dancing shoes and bring a designated driver because German beer abounds and you know you’ll want to dance! Oompah!
**Animal Rescue**

*Animal Rescue Connections* provides instructions and traps for the Trap, Neuter, Return feral cat program and furnishes speakers for HOAs and other groups. [www.animalrescueconnections.org](http://www.animalrescueconnections.org).

**Bulverde Area Humane Society** has dogs and cats for adoption, plus volunteer opportunities, at 3563 Kingsnake off TX 1863. Open Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday from 10am-1pm and Sunday from 1-4pm. See [www.bulverdeareahumanesociety.com](http://www.bulverdeareahumanesociety.com).

**ESL Classes**

*Free ESL Classes* are available at the Bulverde/Spring Branch Library. Call or go online at [www.bsblibrary.org](http://www.bsblibrary.org) for details.

**Food Pantries**

*Helping Hands Food Pantry* offers food, nutrition education, and spiritual guidance. Open 1st and 3rd Thursday of each month from 2pm–5:45pm at Rebecca Creek Baptist Church on Hwy 281 in Spring Branch. For more information, call 830-885-3945 or 830-221-5526.

*Provisions: A 25:35 Outreach* is a food pantry open Tuesday–Thursday from 9am to 3pm. At 2295-1 Bulverde Road in Bulverde, behind Wine 101.

*Hope Center Food Pantry and Outreach* distributes food every 3rd Wednesday of the month from 10am – noon at Riverside Community Church, 1100 Bulverde Road in Bulverde. Call 830-980-4673 for more information.

**Gardening**

*From Food to Fiber: Uses of our Native Plants* on Saturday, January 27 at 10:00am at the Bulverde Spring Branch Activity Center, 30280 Cougar Bend in Bulverde. Speaker: Craig Hensley, Texas Parks & Wildlife Ranger, Guadalupe River State Park. Sponsored by the Bulverde Community Garden.

**Health and Wellness**

*Wellness on Wheels* is a medical clinic available every 2nd Thursday from 1-2 pm at St. Joseph’s Church Rotary, 25781 State Highway 46 W in Spring Branch.

*New Braunfels Works* provides Job Assistance Workshops the 1st Friday of each month and computer classes and job coaching every 2nd Friday. Contact: Ines Picazo at 830-327-6007.

**Recovery/Support**

*Mental Health Crisis Number* - 1-800-325-8931

*AA Helpline 24/7* - 210-828-6235 for help and information about area AA meetings

*Alanon Helpline* - 210-829-1392 for information about Alanon or Alateen meetings.

*Dementia and Alzheimer’s Caregiver Support Group* – Meetings with trained counselors every 1st Monday from 2-3pm, at the Comal County Senior Center, 655 Landa, New Braunfels. Contact: Deanna Krawczyk (210) 663-4558.

**Jobs**

*New Braunfels Works* provides Job Assistance Workshops the 1st Friday of each month and computer classes and job coaching every 2nd Friday. Contact: Ines Picazo at 830-327-6007.

**Music and Dancin’**

Anhalt Dance Hall – Mario Flores and The Soda Creek Band will play on January 20 at 8:00 pm. On February 17, Billy Mata and Texas Tradition will perform. $15 at the door. 12 and under free. (830) 438-2873

**Recovery/Support**

*Mental Health Crisis Number* - 1-800-325-8931

*AA Helpline 24/7* - 210-828-6235 for help and information about area AA meetings

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**Seniors and Over 50’s**

*Bulverde Spring Branch Activity Center* offers free classes in exercise, yoga, health, and more. Call 830-438-311 or come by 30280 Cougar Bend in Bulverde. [www.bsbac.com](http://www.bsbac.com).

**Theater**

*Brauntex Theater* in New Braunfels - The Oak Ridge Boys, winners of Grammy and CMA awards, will perform on Friday, January 19 at 8pm. Come here John McEuen & Friends on Saturday, January 20 at 7:30 pm. John McEuen was a founding member of the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band. Call 830-627-0808 or go to [www.brauntex.org](http://www.brauntex.org) for tickets and information.

*S.T.A.G.E.* – GEEZERS, a comedy/drama by Tommy Lee Johnston, will be playing from February 15 through March 4. Opening night is a benefit for Friends of the Village of Bulverde. For tickets and information see [www.stagebulverde.org](http://www.stagebulverde.org) or call 830-438-2339.
Library Events - January - February

All library classes and events are FREE unless otherwise noted.
NOTE: If you registered for a class and need to cancel, please do so by clicking the link to unregister in your confirmation email or call the library.

Thursday, January 11
Cookbook Demo and Lunch Potluck Club
11:30am - 1:30pm
Pick a recipe from January’s cookbook, For the Love of Soup by Jeannelle Mitchell and come to the Potluck Club to share your dish. Please sign up at the library Printing Station where you can choose a recipe and get it printed. First timers, just show up and check it out. On the sign-up sheet, put “1st timer” next to your name.

Bluebonnet Bunch - Homeschoolers AND Afterschoolers
3:30pm - 5:00pm
Bluebonnet Bunch is a book club for children, grades 3 through 5. Registration is required.

Learn about Goodreads
6:00pm - 7:45pm
Goodreads helps you keep track of what you’ve read and make lists of what you want to read. Bring your laptop or use one of ours. Registration is required.

Friday, January 12
Sparkly Clay Snowman for Adults and Teens 13+
3:00pm - 4:30pm
Come make and decorate a clay snowman with hat and stand. Registration required.

Monday, January 15
Learn about Goodreads
10:30am - 11:45am
Goodreads helps you keep track of what you want to read. Bring your laptop or use one of ours. Registration is required.

Tuesday, January 16
Make Ahead Meals for Adults and Teens 13+
6:30pm - 7:45pm
Come sample some make-ahead recipes – great for streamlining your meal prep. Registration required.

Saturday, January 20
Hatha Yoga
10:00am - 11:15am
This weekly class taught by Christiane Govan offers fundamental poses in a flowing style, linking several poses together to create strength, flexibility, endurance and balance. Please bring a yoga mat, towel and some water. Registration is required.

Make Ahead Meals for Adults and Teens 13+
3:00pm - 4:30pm
Come sample some make-ahead recipes – great for streamlining your meal prep. Registration required.

Tuesday, January 23
Start Your Year Off Write – Ages 15+
6:00pm - 7:45pm
Sheri Hunt, author of The Oldest Sin in the Book and Journeys In and Out, will speak on Creating Stories through Character Development and Infusing Action. Learn how to make your stories become those that cannot be put down. Registration required.

Wednesday, January 24
Lunch and Learn - History of Comal County
12:00pm - 1:30pm
Bring your lunch and learn something new about the history of Comal County from Myra Lee, who wrote a local history column for the Herald-Zeitung. View a presentation about the history of New Braunfels and Comal County as seen through the eyes of a native daughter. Registration required.

Thursday, January 25
Bluebonnet Bunch - Homeschoolers AND Afterschoolers
3:30pm - 5:00pm
Bluebonnet Bunch is a book club for children, grades 3 through 5. Registration is required.

Facebook for Beginners
6:00pm - 7:45pm
Learn how to use Facebook during this hands-on class. We will cover the basics from creating a Facebook account to connecting with family and friends. Registration required.

Wednesday, January 31
Genealogy Workshop - Census Records
1:00pm - 2:30pm
Learn how to understand census records and what valuable clues they might contain. We will touch on census records from Ancestry Library Edition as well. Bring your laptop or email bethanie@bslibrary.org if you need to use one of ours! Registration required.

Young Naturalists - Rock Your World!
3:30pm - 5:00pm
Join Ranger Craig as we chip into the world of rocks and minerals. From local limestone to igneous rock deep under the earth, we’ll discover how rocks form, what they are made of and even break open a real geode. Registration required.

Thursday, February 1
Cookbook Demo and Lunch Potluck Club
11:30am - 1:30pm
Please sign up at the Printing Station where you can choose a recipe and get it printed. We will demonstrate a technique out of the cookbook at 11:30am and share the dishes we have made from our chosen recipes.

Beginning Excel
6:00pm - 7:30pm
Instructor Dick Crail will be returning to teach an Excel Class. In this course you will learn how to create spreadsheets, use formulas, create and manage data lists and create charts. You must have basic computer skills to participate. Bring your own laptop with Excel already downloaded. If you do not have a laptop please contact Bethanie at (830)438-4864 or bethanie@bslibrary.org to arrange to have one in the class. Please bring a flash drive to take info home. REGISTRATION REQUIRED.

Friday, February 2
Tax Aid Prep by VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance)
10:00am - 5:00pm
Call Bethanie Corder at the library at 830-438-4864 to make an appointment for the Vita Tax Aid Help.

Saturday, February 3
Hatha Yoga
10:00am - 11:15am
Please bring a yoga mat, towel and some water. Registration is required.

Tuesday, February 6
Start Your Year Off Write – Ages 15+
6:00pm - 7:45pm
Multi-published author Allison Pittman will take participants through the search for an agent from cyber space to writers’ conferences, offering advice gleaned from her 12 years of experience in the publishing world. Registration required.

Wednesday, February 7
Card Making with Minnie
12:00pm - 1:30pm
Stop by and make some cards just in time for Valentine’s Day. Or just make some everyday cards with Minnie. You don’t need to bring anything but yourself! Registration is required for supplies count.

Friday, February 9
Tax Aid Prep by VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance)
10:00am - 5:00pm
Call Bethanie Corder at the library at 830-438-4864 to make an appointment for the Vita Tax Aid Help.

Mixed Media Heart Art for Adults and Teens 13+
6:30pm - 7:45pm
Make a mixed media heart box using gathered objects. Bring anything you want to add to make your box personal. Registration required.

Tuesday, February 13
Unceasing: A Parent’s Guide to Conquer Worry and Pray with Power by Susan Macias will teach an introductory class on Scrivener and Marketing Your Book before and after Publication. Registration required.

Wednesday, February 14
Hatha Yoga
5:00pm - 6:15pm
This weekly class taught by Christiane Govan offers fundamental poses in a flowing style, linking several poses together to create strength, flexibility, endurance and balance. Please bring a yoga mat, towel and some water. Registration is required.

Beginning Excel
6:00pm - 7:30pm
Instructor Dick Crail will be returning to teach an Excel Class. In this course you will learn how to create spreadsheets, use formulas, create and manage data lists and create charts. You must have basic computer skills to participate. Bring your own laptop with Excel already downloaded. If you do not have a laptop please contact Bethanie at (830)438-4864 or bethanie@bslibrary.org to arrange to have one in the class. Please bring a flash drive to take info home. REGISTRATION REQUIRED.

Friday, February 22
Tax Aid Prep by VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance)
10:00am - 5:00pm
Call Bethanie Corder at the library at 830-438-4864 to make an appointment for the Vita Tax Aid Help.

Mixed Media Heart Art for Adults and Teens 13+
6:30pm - 7:45pm
Make a mixed media heart box using gathered objects. Bring anything you want to add to make your box personal. Registration required.
Ongoing Programs at the Library

**Mondays**

**Toddler Storytime**  
10:30am-11:30am

**Greatful Threads Quilt Group**  
1st Monday  
10am - 4pm  
Please register.

**FOL Meeting**  
2nd Monday  
1:30pm – 3pm

**BARLD Meeting**  
2nd Monday  
5pm – 6:30pm

**Watercolor Basics for Adults & Teens 13+**  
4th Monday  
6pm-7:45pm  
Registration required.

**Tuesdays**

**Beginning French**  
9:30am -11am

**Intermediate French**  
11am -1:30pm

**Hill Country Christian Writers**  
6pm – 7:45pm

**Family Lego Night**  
6pm - 7:30pm

**Watercolor for Adults & Teens 13+**  
2nd Tuesday  
3pm-5pm  
Registration required.

**Wednesdays**

**Beginning Spanish**  
9:30am – 10:30am

**Intermediate Spanish**  
10:30am – 12pm

**Preschool Storytime**  
10:30am -11:30am

**The Art of Storytelling – Adults and Teens 13+**  
1pm-3pm  
Registration required.

**English as a Second Language**  
6pm-7:30pm  
No registration required.

**Thursdays**

**English as a Second Language**  
6pm-7:30pm  
No registration required.

**Cookbook Demo & Potluck Lunch Club**  
1st Thursday  
11:30am – 1:30pm

**Learn Adobe Dreamweaver Basics**  
1st Thursday  
2pm – 3:45pm

**The Doc Moore Storytelling Guild**  
3rd Thursday  
6:00pm - 7:45pm

**Watercolor Calligraphy for Adults & Teens 13+**  
4th Thursday  
1pm-3pm  
Registration required.

** Saturdays**

**Walk-In Computer Help**  
11am – 12pm

**Anime Club for Teens**  
2pm – 3:30pm

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**BALLOT-BY-MAIL APPLICATIONS AVAILABLE**

Applications to submit a mail-in ballot for Comal County elections in 2018 will be accepted starting January 1. The deadline for the Elections Office to receive an application for the March 2018 primary election is Friday, February 23.

“Voters who are disabled or at least 65 years old can submit an annual application to automatically receive a ballot by mail for each election that occurs in 2018,” Jaqua said. “Other residents can apply on an election-by-election basis no later than 11 days before Election Day.”

Aside from age or disability, residents may qualify to receive a mail-in ballot if they are in jail or expect to be absent from the county at the time of the election.

Applications must be received by the early voting clerk of the county where a resident is registered to vote. They are available for download at the Comal County Elections Office website, [www.votecomal.com](http://www.votecomal.com), and can be submitted by mail or common or contract carrier to 396 N. Seguin Ave., New Braunfels, TX 78130.

Applications can also be submitted by fax to 830-608-2013, or by email to jaquac@co.comal.tx.us, but a hard copy must be received by the Elections Office within four business days; otherwise, the application will be rejected.

If you have questions, please call 830-221-1352.

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**VOTER REGISTRATION CARDS IN THE MAIL**

The Comal County Elections Office have mailed out new voter registration cards to all registered voters in December 2017.

The cards, colored yellow, are valid from January 1, 2018 through December 31, 2019, and replace the current blue cards, which expire at the end of 2017. The cards can be used to confirm registration at the polling place in upcoming elections.

“We encourage all registered voters to check their cards when they receive them and make sure their information is correct,” said Elections Coordinator Cynthia Jaqua. “If you need to make a change to your card, please note it on the back, sign it and return it to the Elections Office.”

Anyone who has moved, changed their name or has been registered but does not receive a card by the end of December should contact the Elections Office at 830-221-1352 to make sure they are on the list of registered voters for the upcoming 2018 midterm elections.
WHAT’S HAPPENING?

More than 12,000 square feet added to the building:
- Dedicated teen and children’s spaces
- Adding a 3000 square foot meeting space
- Additional smaller meeting and study rooms
- Bigger Butterfly Garden space
- More parking

WHEN WILL THIS HAPPEN?
Construction is projected to begin in Spring 2018 and be complete by Summer 2019

WHY NOW?
- Major population growth expected in our area
- Already at capacity for materials
- Meeting and study room capacity not meeting needs

WHAT IS OUR FUNDING PLAN?
- Library Trustees borrowed funds to pay for planning and construction
- Committees were formed to raise $750,000 for furnishings and equipment

Committee Goals:
- Naming Rights committee—$500,000
- Grants committee-$150,000
- Special Fundraisers—$100,000

Our Friends of the Library have already committed $50,000 toward the new meeting room kitchen naming opportunity. They and the Library Foundation will be primarily responsible for grant writing for additional funding.

Our staff is working hard on special fundraising opportunities which will include recognitions for various amounts of giving.

CHILDREN

Children will gain the most from the renovations. Currently, the children’s collection is restricted by the existing space, and outside of the small family room, they don’t have their own special area to run around and make noise without disturbing other library visitors. The expansion will give children & teens a 4,500 square feet space to expand their collection and provide them the freedom to be a child.

MEETING SPACES

The library will expand from 2 study rooms to 6. These rooms will allow patrons seeking to study, tutor others, or hold small meetings in peace to do so, free from distracting noise, enabling all patrons to more peacefully co-exist in the library. The library’s large meeting room will expand from 1300 sf to 3000 sf, offering greater gathering and meeting spaces to help anchor our community.

To see more photos and updates, visit http://libguides.bsblibrary.org/expansion, follow us on Facebook (@bsblibrary) or stop by the library.
EXPANSION

EXPANSION/RENOVATION TIMELINE

Feb. 2018 - June 2019—Expect construction and renovation to take anywhere from 15-18 months. Our hope is to complete the project before summer of 2019. Meeting spaces will be limited. Staff will be relocated from the administrative area to other areas of the library and temporary walls will block most of the existing entrances. During the initial phase of the project, we hope to complete the site work which will expand the existing parking areas and create a road which will encircle the building. Programming will be limited at the library but our programming teams are working hard to try to provide continued services to the community. Larger Summer Reading programs will be at Arlon Seay on Wednesdays. All of our library materials will still be available in the library although access to the building will change depending on the phase of the construction/renovation. We expect to know more about the phasing after the Contractor joins the project and more about programming possibilities in the coming months.

TEENS

Teens can look forward to a space just for them with an enhanced young adult collection, fun seating for socializing or studying, and a gaming area. The dedicated area will open up new doors for teen programming and learning.

WAYS TO GIVE:

• Brick Pavers—$50-$250—We have space at both the front pathway or by the Veteran’s Memorial. Take a stroll in the courtyard and see who is paving the way to the future.

• Donations over $100 will receive an invitation to a preview party—see the new library before anyone else!

• Donor Wall—$1000—Donate $1000 or more to receive a plaque displayed on the new donor wall!

• Bookshelf End Panels—$5,000—A small plaque will be placed on the end panel of a bookshelf with your name on it!

• Donate online—A link to donate online will be located on the library’s website, bsblibrary.org.
Check out these books selected by the BSBL book clubs! If you are interested in joining a club, the Second Tuesday Evening Book Club is open for new members. It meets every second Tuesday from 6:30pm to 7:45pm. The book selected for February by the Second Tuesday club is Bossypants, by Tina Fey. What do you have to do to join an open-for-new-members book club? Just show up! If you can, read the book listed for the club for that month. Just look on the library website under Classes and Events > Book Clubs. If you are not ready to join a book club, check out these book descriptions. You may find one you’d like to read. Book clubs generally choose popular books that most people will enjoy. Note: The Third Tuesday book club has disbanded.

For the February meeting, the BSBL book clubs have selected the following books:

**Before We Were Yours**, Lisa Wingate – novel
This is a story about children taken from their parents through kidnapping or subterfuge and then placed for adoption, for a price. The plot is based on actual incidents and is an indictment of people who prey upon the vulnerability of children or their parents. The book is written from two viewpoints. The first takes place in the present and centers on Avery Stafford. She is the daughter of a politician and has been raised to be obedient to the family’s needs and wishes. The other viewpoint belongs to a twelve year old girl named Rill. The time is 1939. Rill lives in a boat on the Mississippi River and helps take care of her four younger siblings. When Rill’s parents are at the hospital awaiting the birth of a new baby, Rill and her sisters and brother are gathered up by the “authorities” and taken to an orphanage of sorts. The book has alternate chapters telling the two stories - one of a woman looking into a mysterious past, and the other of a child looking ahead to an uncertain future. They are interwoven beautifully and create a drama that is both bleak and optimistic.

**The Memory Keeper’s Daughter**, Kim Edwards – novel
This book came out in 2004, and quickly became a number one NYT bestseller. Fourteen years later, it still draws readers and crops up on book club reading lists. The story is gripping. During a blizzard in 1964, a young doctor decides to spare his wife by spiriting away her Down’s syndrome daughter shortly after birth. The daughter’s fraternal twin is a healthy boy. The young husband’s secret yields grave consequences for his family over the next 20 years. Author Kim Edwards creates a gripping family drama that lends itself to heated book club discussions.

**The Snow Child**, Eowyn Ivey - novel
This debut novel by young writer Eowyn Ivey was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in 2012. The story takes place in 1918 in Alaska, which even now is a brutal place to homestead. It is especially tough for recent arrivals Jack and Mabel, a childless couple running from their East Coast lives and struggling to reconnect with each other. After the season’s first snowfall, they glimpse a little blonde girl running through the trees. This girl, who calls herself Faina, appears to be the embodiment of a Russian folk tale that Mabel has read. The couple comes to love her as their own child. The reader, along with Jack and Mabel, is kept guessing whether Faina is real or imaginary. But in this beautiful, violent place things are rarely as they appear.

Some information for this article was obtained from Amazon.com and the Huffington Post.
Clubs and Meetings

Do you have a special interest? Would like to explore a new one? Then check out these groups. If you would like your club listed, email us about it at news@comalchronicle.com.

Book Clubs

History Book Club meets on the 3rd Thursday of each month from 1-3pm at Mystic Shores Community Center. Contact: Dennis Deeny at vatrading@msn.com. Emailed Dennis

The 2nd Tuesday Evening Book Club meets every 2nd Tuesday at 6:30pm at the BSB Library.

Gardening

The Bulverde Community Garden Committee meets on the 2nd Monday of the month at 5:15 pm at the BSB Activity Center. The Bulverde Garden Club meets the 2nd Tuesday of each month at 10 am. For location, contact Lorelei at 830-885-4318 or lorelei@gvtc.com.

Native Plant Society of Texas/Lindheimer Chapter meets on the 3rd Tuesday of the month at 6:30 pm at the GVTC Auditorium. Texas Master Naturalists/Lindheimer Chapter meets on the 3rd Thursday of the month from 6:30-8:30pm at the Tye Preston Memorial Library. Open to the public.

Hobbies

The Bulverde Quilt Group meets at Bulverde United Methodist Church on the fourth Wednesday of each month from 9:30 am – 1:30 pm. Contact: Sherry Sorbera at sorbera@gmail.com.

Comal County Beekeepers Association meets the 1st Thursday of every month at the EMS station at 353 Rodeo Drive, Spring Branch (830) 438-5643.

Guadalupe Valley Amateur Radio Club meets on Saturdays at 7:30am at Granzin’s BBQ, 660 W. San Antonio in New Braunfels. Contact: David Schreiter, 830-914-6270 or 210-392-0676.

Greatful Threads Quilt Group. They meet every 1st Monday of the month from 10am-4pm at the BSB Library. Call 830-438-4864 to register.

Local Government

The Bulverde Planning and Zoning Commission meets at 6:30 pm on the 1st Tuesday of the month at City Hall. The public is welcome. 830-438-3612. The Bulverde City Council meets on the 2nd Tuesday of each month from 6:30pm to 8pm at Bulverde City Hall, 30360 Cougar Bend, Bulverde. The public is invited. 830-438-3612.

Service Clubs

The Bulverde Men’s Lions Club meets 7-9pm every 2nd and 4th Thursday of the month at the Bulverde Community Center at 1747 E Ammann Rd. The Spring Branch-Bulverde Lions Club meets 7:30-9pm every 1st and 3rd Wednesday of the month at the Bulverde Spring Branch Activity Center.

Toastmasters

Col. Jack Wallace Toastmasters meet the 2nd and 4th Mondays of the month from 6:30pm to 7:45 pm at the BSB Library.

Web Design

The San Antonio Web Spinners, an Adobe User Group, meets 2:00pm - 3:45pm on the 1st Thursday of the month at the Bulverde/Spring Branch Library.

Writing

Canyon Lake Area Writers (CLAW) meet the first and third Tuesday of each month from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. at Tye Preston Memorial Library. Hill Country Christian Writers meet weekly on Tuesdays from 6:00pm - 7:45pm at the BSB Library.

BROADEN YOUR SHELF IN 2018!
by Lacee Sowell

Do you enjoy reading? Are you looking to challenge yourself in 2018? The Bulverde/Spring Branch Library invites you to participate in the 2018 reading challenge: Broaden Your Shelf.

Participation is simple. Thirteen themes (one per month plus a bonus) have been selected to help you explore topics, formats or genres you wouldn’t normally try. Each month, select a book from one of the given categories and read it. Upon finishing, go to bsblibrary.readsquared.com and log the book in the appropriate category box. That’s it!

A monthly drawing will be held each month for all the entries submitted during that month. At the end of the year, those who have read one book from each of the 12 main categories (the bonus does not count) will be entered into a grand prize drawing for some awesome prizes.

One book a month not enough for you? That’s okay! You can read more than one book from each of the categories and log it for extra entries throughout the year.

Need suggestions for what to read in a specific area? We’ve got you covered! Book lists with suggestions for each category are available on the ReadSquared website for both adults and teens.

The following are this year’s themes. Paper lists and bookmarks can be picked up at the library, but the list can also be found online at bsblibrary.readsquared.com. Good luck to those who choose to participate!

1. A book set during WWI – 2018 marks 100 years since the war’s end.
2. Memoir/Biography
3. Book about animals/pets/wildlife
4. Book about fixing something
5. Book from your childhood – May be a picture book
6. Book that intimidates you
7. Book recommended by a librarian/staff
8. Book you have been meaning to read but haven’t
9. Book you’ve seen the movie for but have never read
10. Book chosen by spouse, relative, friend or child
11. Author’s debut novel
12. Science Fiction novel

BONUS: Book by a local author

by Lacee Sowell
READY FOR THE NEW GARDENING YEAR
by Lee Franzel, Comal Master Gardener

Now is a good time to do some gardening jobs to start the new season. The following gardening chores are a good place to start.

Trim Oak Trees
The cold months are the very best time to prune your oak trees. Live oaks and red oaks are most susceptible to oak wilt. Trimming in January or February gives the best assurance to avoid spreading the disease. Cuts can easily be painted with black latex spray paint. It’s not necessary to buy special pruning paint. Hardware aisles have devices on long poles to hold the can to spray high without climbing. Comal County has a brush recycling facility that takes tree trimmings for a nominal cost and free on Saturday mornings.

Add Soil
Our Hill Country landscapes are known for thin soil. Plants do a lot better when they have good soil depth. A pickup truck is a handy way to haul good soil from a materials yard, where they will load it for you. Back home, scooping the soil downhill from the truck bed into a wheelbarrow is a good way to avoid having to pick up material off the ground. “Topsoil” sounds good but it is much better to buy “contractor’s mix” that has compost mixed in. For a vegetable plot, buy “garden mix” with manure compost, sand and other organic material in the mix. Buying the right kind of soil is much easier than adding amendments yourself to topsoil, which is just plain dirt.

Mulch
Winter is a great time to add a layer of mulch to beds and gardens. Free mulch may be picked up in a trailer or pickup at the recycling center. The mulch at the recycling center is made of coarsely ground up tree trimmings. A materials yard is a good place to buy double-ground mulch if a finer texture is desired, or for colored mulch. For smaller areas, bagged mulch is available at big box stores.

Vegetables
Plant onions around or after January 15. Green transplants are available now. They’re preferred over the dry round “sets” for our area. Only buy “short day onions” which is assured if buying locally and not mail-ordered. Texas 1015Y is a Vidalia-type sweet onion that does very well here. For a red onion, Southern Belle Red is excellent. Onion plants are very cold-hardy and don’t have to be protected in our area. The target date to plant potatoes is President’s Day, February 19 this year. Buy “seed potatoes” at a nursery, cut so that two or more eyes are included in each piece. Potatoes will sprout before frosty days end and should be covered since the foliage will get nipped. However, some frost damage is tolerated by the plants, and the crop will produce from mid-May into early June. Red new potatoes are a treat.

Tomatoes
Watch for tomato transplants to show up in nurseries in February. It’s much too early to plant them in the ground, but many gardeners like to grow them in a sunny window. Repot into a larger container with a good soil mix and a little slow-release fertilizer such as Osmocote. On a nice sunny day, the plants can be taken outside, bringing them back in at night. Keep tomatoes watered and above 50º. By March 1, many plants will already have blossoms and even have baby tomatoes. They are ready to be planted into the garden at the end of March. Getting a head start on the season produces the earliest tomatoes for those willing to make the effort. The best all-round variety is Celebrity. I also like Early Girl, Large Red Cherry and have had great success with the heirloom Black Krim last year.

Good luck with your gardening in 2018 and keep an eye out to join gardening talks by Comal Master Gardeners and other speakers!

WHERE CAN I PICK UP THE WEST COMAL CHRONICLE?

You can always find the paper at the Bulverde/Spring Branch Library. Plus, we distribute on the second Thursday of each month to the following locations:

- 46th Street Pizza
- BSB Activity Center
- BSB Chamber of Commerce
- Bulverde City Hall
- Bulverde Post Office
- Bulverde Tax Office
- Bulverde/Spring Branch Library
- Family Fitness
- HEB
- The Loft Coffee House
- McDonalds on Hwy 46
- Pet Galaxy on 281
- Popcorn Friday
- Spring Branch Animal Hospital
- Struttys on Hwy 281
- Walgreens on 46
MASTER GARDENERS DONATE RECORD AMOUNT TO LOCAL FOOD BANKS

Comal County’s Master Gardeners have donated a record 6,100 pounds and counting of produce to area food banks in 2017.

The total shatters last year’s record of about 5,200 pounds, said Sam Norris, who coordinates the efforts of the Comal Master Gardeners, a group whose members volunteer their time growing food in the demonstration garden at the Comal County office of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service.

The Master Gardeners donate to five area food banks – two in New Braunfels, and one each in Bulverde, Spring Branch and Canyon Lake.

“Most of these smaller food banks do not get fresh produce, so this is a big help for the people they serve,” Norris said. “It’s a great feeling to be able to do so much for fellow Comal County residents in need.”

Master Gardeners volunteer in the Extension Office garden three days each week, and donate food as it’s ready to pick, usually every week, Norris said. Donations range in size from 5-10 pounds up to 100 pounds or more. Produce grown in the garden includes tomatoes, potatoes, carrots, squash and much more.

Comal County provides space for the garden as well as office services for the gardeners, said Troy Lupeke, extension agent for agriculture and natural resources. The garden was established in 2011, and since then the Master Gardeners have provided over 24,000 pounds of produce for local food banks.

“Part of our mission is to educate the community on the fun and importance of growing your own food, and the Master Gardeners are a perfect fit with that,” Lupeke said. “We’re proud to help them provide food to so many county residents.”

THE NATURE OF SUBTLETY
by R. Craig Hensley, Park Interpreter/Naturalist
Guadalupe River State Park/Honey Creek State Natural Area

Having spent a good deal of my life intimately surrounded by the wonders of the natural world, I have developed an appreciation for the range of expression demonstrated by the plants and animals I have become enamored with. There are those sights that most of us are immediately struck by: the bright red flash of a male cardinal glistening in the sunrise, singing its “pretty, pretty, pretty” as if bragging about its colorful self; the blizzard of Crayola Crayon colors that is a male Painted Bunting; the striking orange and black of the monarch butterfly, warning of a bad taste left behind should a bite be taken; or the bold red, black and yellow pattern of a coral snake announcing that nothing good can come of messing with this venomous beauty.

Then there are those creatures that show beauty without being outwardly striking: grasses, sedges, lichens, and, perhaps my favorite, sparrows. Mind you, I am not talking about the House Sparrow, but instead those native, small brown birds or, as some of my birding acquaintances like to say, “LBJ’s” or “little brown jobs.” Indeed, sparrows for the most part lack striking patterns of bright colors. Even those with noticeable patterns exhibit those patterns with various shades of browns and blacks.

And as with grasses, it is not until one stops and really looks that you begin to appreciate the delicate and subtle beauty of the sparrows’ colors and patterns, the very things that make it possible to distinguish one species from another, albeit with much gnashing of the teeth and the occasional swear word.

During much of the year this part of Texas is home to but a few species of native sparrows – the Lark, Chipping, Field and Rufous-crowned Sparrows. Each species nests here. Often unnoticed they raise young out in our fields and woodland edges, singing subtle but beautiful songs that often blend in with those of the more demonstrative and persistent songs of mockingbirds, cardinals and the like.

Yet it is during the winter months that sparrows take center stage in the bird world, although it is an Off Off Broadway kind of stage, where the little brown birds blend in with dry, brown grasses and piles of brown brush, both habitat and bird fading into the background of everyday life. And, no doubt, like a few Broadway settings, it is within that setting of brown that real jewels can be discovered.

When one discovers that a single sparrow contour or body feather is comprised of rich patterns of three or more colors, real beauty exists. When each is blended with the others, that which is beautiful individually becomes collectively beautiful yet so subtle that it blends into the background.

I am fortunate to see the subtle beauty of our grassland sparrows, from the bluestem-loving LeConte’s and Grasshopper Sparrows to the brush-hugging Lincoln’s and Song Sparrows, pairs of birds that are challenging to identify without taking the time to learn the subtleties of color and even behavior. Holding them in my hand as I place a band on them has taught me this, just as studying the difference between two similar wildflowers or trees, or a myriad of Nature’s other look-alikes, has.

As we embark on this new year, I would invite each of you to get outdoors and enjoy the beauty that surrounds you, whether it is at the Guadalupe River State Park or any other Texas State Park, your local park or even your backyard. In each of these settings you will discover that Nature easily reveals the bold and beautiful. But it will also reveal the subtle beauty of Nature if only you will take the time to slow down and not just look, but see what surrounds you. You will not be disappointed.

If you would like to learn more about the subtleties of our wintering sparrows, plan on joining me for a Lunch and Learn class on Sparrow Identification on Wednesday, February 22nd beginning at noon at the Bulverde/Spring Branch Library, followed by an out-in-the-field experience the following day, Thursday, February 23rd from 9 a.m. to noon at the Guadalupe River State Park.

On a personal note, this is the last article I will be writing for the wonderful publication as the Library embarks in new directions. I want to thank the Library staff and volunteers, and particularly Cassie Wedding, for giving me this opportunity to share my love of the natural world. I hope each of you that has read one or more of these pieces has found something of value. Thank you and be sure to visit your Guadalupe River State Park!
HIGHLIGHTS FROM CHRISTMAS AT THE LIBRARY

December 2 - Learn About Pinterest Clay Ornaments

December 15 - Candy Making Demo

December 7 - FOL Holiday Tea

December 9 - Polar Express

December 22 - Night Before Christmas

Solution to Word Labyrinth #1468

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