

April, 2007



City Lights DeSoto, Texas

A publication of the City of DeSoto Community Relations Department



Council Corner - A Message from Carl Williams "Become a Part of City Government"



Based on the title of this article, one might think that you are being asked to seek employment with the City of DeSoto or to run

for a position on the City Council. While both are certainly possible if you so desire, they are not the only ways you can become a part of the city government in DeSoto. There are many, many ways you can participate.

A great way to get to know your city government is by participating in the DeSoto Civic Academy. This free, ten-week program gives participants

hands-on knowledge about how the city operates by showcasing a different department each week. There is also a Citizens Police Academy that goes in-depth into the operations of our Police Department.

I would also encourage you to get involved in your neighborhood's Homeowners Association. DeSoto's HOAs are active partners with the city, reporting code violations and serving as crime watch groups as well as being a great way to get to know your neighbors.

Volunteers are the life-blood of our city and we are always looking for people who would like to serve on the city's standing boards and commissions. I served on the Planning & Zoning Commission and

the board of the DeSoto Economic Development Corporation before running for City Council and found both experiences very rewarding. Each year in August, the city holds a Board & Commission Fair which is an opportunity to find out more about the volunteer positions the city has to offer. In most cases, you need only have the desire to serve and have been a DeSoto resident for the preceding twelve months.

Probably the most important way to "become a part of city government" is to exercise your right to vote. We constantly hear about voter apathy in the media. Its even been said that more people vote for American Idol each year than voted in the last presidential election. We have a chance in DeSoto to be the exception rather than the rule.

Our municipal election day is Saturday, May 12, 2007. I challenge DeSoto residents to become registered voters and to make your voice heard through your vote. We will be electing a new Mayor and Councilmembers in Place 3 and 5 on May 12th. If you don't know the candidates, I urge you to attend the Candidate Forum hosted by Concerned DeSoto Citizens on April 14th at 10 a.m. at City Hall or the Candidates on the Move event sponsored by the DeSoto Chamber on April 19th at 6:30 p.m. in the Civic Center.

I'll see you at the polls!

**Carl Williams
Councilmember
Place 7**

Guests are Needed for DeSoto Dining & Dialogue Dinner Event on May 5th

DeSoto has much to offer its residents: beautiful homes, rolling hills and good people, it is a virtual paradise. But like most other cities in America, DeSoto is at risk. What is this trouble in paradise? It is the cultural and racial divide that separates Americans.

Many feel this divide is the single most pressing matter plaguing our communities. Some have chosen not to deal with the problem by relocating to a city less diverse. But this is, at best, a temporary fix. For it is estimated that by the year 2050 there will no longer be a minority population, and diversity will be the rule in most cities. Racial issues are not easy to discuss. But it is a conversation we must engage in if our cities are to be all they can be.

DeSoto now has a vehicle to make this conversation possible. It is called DeSoto Dining & Dialogue. The program, originally organized by Mayor Michael Hurtt, is now run by a volunteer group of DeSoto citizens as an independent non-profit organization. The group seeks to bring DeSoto citizens from different cultural backgrounds together over dinner, for the purpose of encouraging cross-cultural communication.

Dinner tables involving 8 to 10 people are held three times a year. They start at 6:00 p.m. and end at 9:30 p.m., in homes, churches, and restaurants all over the city on the same night. Registered participants are assigned a dinner location.

Anyone who lives or works in DeSoto can participate in the program by agreeing to be a guest at the next dinner scheduled for Saturday May 5, 2007. Guests need only bring an open mind and a willingness to share ideas and experiences. To balance the tables and enhance the experience, we need male and female guest of all ethnicities and ages. High school students can receive community service hours for participating.

Trained facilitators will provide structure to the evening and use techniques designed to minimize debate and maximize sharing and understanding. We also need hosts who will agree to welcome a group of 8 to 10 people into your home or other location and cover the cost of the meal.

By participating in DeSoto Dining and Dialogue, we are starting the conversation that transforms DeSoto into the consummate American city;

- A city where diversity is not only in the

- workplace, but a place where diversity works
- A city where cultural differences are not only tolerated but respected
- A city where the flag is not just waved but its principles are lived out
- A place where family values are not only preached but where every family is valued

DeSoto Dining and Dialogue was the cornerstone program that qualified the City of DeSoto for the All-America City Award. If you would like to be a part of this award-winning program, please call Kathy Maples Jones at 972 230-9648 or go to the DeSoto Dining and Dialogue website at desotodininganddialogue.org and download a guest registration form to attend the May 5th dinner. **Registration forms must be received no later than April 20, 2007.** Together with DeSoto Dining & Dialogue we are making DeSoto a one of a kind city where the American dream is a reality.



Did You Know.....?

That smoke detectors save lives. Recently a fire in a single family residence in west Oak Cliff proved fatal for two people. The cause of the fire was probably a carelessly discarded cigarette. The one fact that most likely led to the deaths of the two people inside was the lack of a working smoke detector in the house. To help you avoid this same terrible tragedy just follow these tips to help save your life and property from fire:

- For minimum protection, install a smoke detector outside each bedroom or sleeping area in your home.
- Keep your bedroom doors closed while you are asleep.
- Install detectors on every level of your home.
- Keep your smoke detectors properly maintained. Test them once a week to ensure they are working properly.
- Every spring and fall when you change your clocks, remember to change your smoke alarm batteries. Only use the batteries recommended on the detector.
- Develop a fire escape plan and review the plan with all members of the family frequently. Be aware that children and elderly people may need special assistance in a fire.
- Establish a meeting place outside the house for all members of the family to ensure that everyone gets out safely. When fire occurs, get out of the house and use a neighbor's telephone to notify the Fire Department.

Last month, two people were killed in a fire in Lancaster. This fire most likely started in a gas appliance. Copper tubing has been used to connect natural gas appliances to residential house piping for a number of years. As recently as 1989, some codes approved the use of copper tubing for interior distribution of natural gas. However, tests have shown that the copper tubing will slowly weaken from corrosion, a chemical reaction that causes the inside wall of the tubing to slowly flake off as natural gas is used by the appliance. These flakes may cause blockage in the gas control, resulting in an appliance not operating properly.

More importantly though, when the inside wall of the copper tubing slowly weakens, there is the potential for a gas leak, fire or explosion. Experience has shown that most failures with copper tubing have occurred at "flared" connections in the tubing.

The flared connections are commonly used to connect copper tubing to gas appliances, valves, or other fittings. A flared connection is made by inserting a "flaring tool" into the end of the copper tubing, and applying mechanical force with the flaring tool. The end of the tubing is expanded and reshaped (flared) to match the connecting point of the appliance or valve. By necessity, the flaring process stretches and thins the wall of the copper tubing, making it more susceptible to corrosion failure when exposed to natural gas over time.

These flared fittings are considered to be potentially dangerous. If your home utilizes copper tubing for the distribution of natural gas or to connect an appliance to the house piping, you may be at risk of a gas leak, fire or explosion. For maintenance purposes, a qualified plumbing or heating professional should be contacted to inspect your natural gas tubing, especially the flared connections, and replace any tubing or connection where erosion is discovered.

Copper tubing connection from the house gas piping to a gas burning appliance such as a furnace, water heater, gas dryer or gas fireplace should be replaced, as needed, with stainless steel appliance connectors designed and approved for natural gas. If you have questions regarding copper tubing in your home, please call Jack Thompson, Building Official for the City of DeSoto at 972 230-9621.

CITY CALENDAR

April

- 2 Park Development Corp. Meeting - 6:30 p.m. - City Hall
- 3 City Council Meeting - 7 p.m. - City Hall
- 5 Keep DeSoto Beautiful Board Mtg. - 6:30 p.m. - City Hall
- 7 Easter Egg Hunt - 11am to 1pm - Town Center
- 10 Planning & Zoning Commission Mtg. - 7 p.m. - City Hall
- 14 City & DISD Candidate Forum - 10 a.m. - City Hall
- 14 Auditions for DeSoto Star Search 9 to 4pm Corner Theatre (reservation required)
- 14 Annual Clean-up Kick-Off
- 17 City Council Meeting - 7 p.m. - City Hall
- 19 Candidates On The Move - 6:30 pm - Civic Center
- 23 DEDC Board Meeting - noon - City Hall
- 24 Planning & Zoning Commission Mtg. - 7 p.m. - City Hall
- 28 HOA Involvement Workshop—9 a.m. - City Hall
- 28 DeSoto Star Search Show—7:30 p.m. - Corner Theatre - tickets \$10 at door

May

- 1 City Council Meeting - 7 p.m. - City Hall
- 3 Keep DeSoto Beautiful Board Mtg. - 6:30 p.m. - City Hall
- 7 Park Development Corp. Meeting - 6:30 p.m. - City Hall
- 8 Planning & Zoning Commission Mtg. - 7 p.m. - City Hall
- 12 City Election Day
- 15 City Council Meeting - 7 p.m. - City Hall
- 22 Planning & Zoning Commission Mtg. - 7 p.m. City Hall
- 28 DEDC Board Meeting—City Hall noon

April is Severe Weather Awareness Month

Tornadoes can occur at any time of the year in Texas, but they happen most often in spring and summer. Storms are most likely to strike in the late afternoon and early evening hours. The Governor's Division of Emergency Management and City of DeSoto Emergency Management Officials urge citizens to monitor TV and radio broadcast for storm information, as well as NOAA weather radio.

A TORNADO WATCH is issued when severe weather is expected along with large or multiple tornadoes. It means WATCH the sky. A TORNADO WARNING means TAKE ACTION because a tornado is on the ground. Seek shelter immediately. A tornado warning usually covers one county or a portion of a county and generally lasts for an hour or less.

When a tornado is sighted, the most important rule is to *get low and stay low*.

- Seek shelter in an interior room on the lowest floor of the home, such as a bathroom, closet or room without windows.
- In an office building, go to an interior room or hallway on the lowest floor.
- Leave a mobile home and take shelter in a nearby building. If no building is nearby, lie flat in a ditch or ravine.
- Never stay inside a car. Leave the car and lie flat in a ditch or ravine. If a building is nearby, take shelter inside. Never try to outrun a tornado in your car.
- At school, follow plans and go to a designated shelter area, such as an interior hallway on the lowest floor. Avoid auditoriums, gyms and areas with wide, free-span roofs.
- When shopping go to interior rooms or halls on the lowest floor of a shopping center. Do not leave the shopping center to get in your car.
- If you are in open country, take cover on low, protected ground.
- Avoid areas near exterior glass or doors, areas along exterior walls, or rooms with wide expanse roofs – such as auditoriums, cafeterias and gyms.

For more information contact DeSoto Emergency Management at (972) 230-9680 or visit GDEM's Web site: www.txdps.state.tx.us/dem.



Economic Development Corner - A RE-CAP OF ACTIVITIES FOR FY 2006-07

The City of DeSoto continues to reap the benefits from the completed re-construction of I-35E, Belt Line Road, and the more than \$4.3 million of road infrastructure improvements in the Eagle Business & Industrial Park. As evidenced by the increased interest in business opportunities available in our city by manufacturers, retail developers and other commercial establishments, DeSoto is poised for significant growth which will create new jobs and expanded shopping and commercial services conveniences for our citizens.

This past year, the DeSoto EDC worked with Quorum Equities Group, LLC to support the development of a proposed \$40 million medical office park at US Hwy 67 and Wheatland Road. At full build-out, this multi-phase development would include a long-term acute care hospital, a medical office building, medical office condos, and three commercial pad sites which could eventually house a hotel, restaurants, and a bank. Existing industries continue to thrive in DeSoto's Eagle Business & Industrial Park. DIAB, Inc. and ZEP Manufacturing, with support from the DeSoto EDC, have grown their operations, resulting in expanded facilities, new inventory and additional employees. To support further growth of existing industries, the DEDC has partnered with the DeSoto Chamber of

Commerce in creating the city's first industrial appreciation event and hosted The Corporate Roundtable in October, 2006. The DEDC and Chamber have also developed a new BREP (Business Retention and Expansion Program) for our local industries and are currently conducting written surveys and personal interviews of targeted industries to gain more insight with respect to opportunities and ways the city could best serve the needs of these very important corporate citizens. Results of the survey will be discussed and distributed to industry guests at the next Corporate Roundtable scheduled for April, 2007.

Several key commercial development projects continue to reshape DeSoto in the I-35E, Belt Line Road, and Hampton Road areas. Holiday Inn Express & Suites broke ground during 2006 and plans to open their \$3.3 million, four-story 87-room hotel at I-35E and Wintergreen Road in the spring of 2007. Wal-Mart opened their new super center on Belt Line Road in the spring of 2006, bringing with it new opportunities for nearby development. Plans are currently underway for a new 37,000 to 60,000 square foot shopping plaza, which will bring additional retail and restaurant choices to



DeSoto.

The DeSoto EDC is supportive of the City of DeSoto with regard to strategic endeavors related to the potential Town Center project and the redevelopment of the central business corridor along Hampton Road from Pleasant Run Road to Belt Line Road. The DEDC has funded a retail study which will provide potential key retail matches for the developers of this project, as well as for potential tenants for currently vacant retail properties within the city. The DEDC continues to work diligently with developers to develop a new retail power center along I-35E, which would be a significant destination-shopping complex with a primary anchor and other retail and eating establishments.

If you have any questions related to economic development in the City of DeSoto, please contact the DeSoto Economic Development Corporation at 972-230-9611.

Debris Clean-up Following a Major Storm Can Be Costly to the City if Not Handled Properly

Spring is here and as weather patterns change, conditions are right for tornadoes. Many remember the devastating tornado that hit DeSoto and Lancaster in 1994. With the anniversary of that tornado coming up on April 28th, the City of DeSoto would like to make residents aware that how we react to a disaster situation can have a significant impact our city.

Should an F-5 tornado hit DeSoto, the resulting property damage would be devastating. Mounting a clean-up using city staff and resources will be extremely costly. If we were to experience a tstorm that results in the Governor issuing a disaster declaration, the City can seek financial reimbursement for the clean-up and removal of debris from the Federal Emergency Management Administration or FEMA. However, in order to receive reimbursement from FEMA for all expenses that are incurred by our city, there are certain

guidelines that must be followed. Failure to do so can result in reimbursements being disallowed.

If the unthinkable happens and we are faced with cleaning up after a major disaster, we as a community, must dispose of the resulting debris in a way that is acceptable to FEMA. If your home or business sustains damage, as you begin the major task of cleaning up, you will be asked to make separate piles in your front yard for carpet, metal, brush, sheet rock and construction debris. Major appliances such as washers, dryers, stoves and refrigerators should also be placed in separate piles and the Freon must be removed from refrigerators. It is extremely important to separate hazardous materials such as paint, pesticides, chemicals, Freon, and oil from other piles of trash or debris.

You will be asked to separate debris because some items such as metal and appliances can be

recycled while others such as hazardous materials must receive special handling. Brush also needs to be separate because it will be taken to a designated site where it can be burned or chipped. These measures follow FEMA guidelines and benefit DeSoto because they divert large amounts of debris from our landfill and qualify the City for reimbursement of removal and disposal costs.

Emergency Preparedness is a top priority for the City of DeSoto. We hope that we will never have to follow this plan. However, it is also our hope that by making residents aware of the guidelines for debris removal should the City be required to implement the plan; it will be easier for residents to follow since it will not be new information. If you have questions regarding the removal of storm debris or any aspect of our Emergency Management Program, please call the City of DeSoto at 972 230-9600.



Mark your calendars for Saturday, June 2, 2007 because Creekfest is back! Also, back by popular demand are the Mighty Marvelous 4 who will perform at 7:30 pm ending a great day of entertainment on the Amphitheater Stage. Toad Holler Creekfest is a full day of family fun at DeSoto Town Center featuring children's activities sponsored by Hampton Road Baptist Church, vendors, art shows, food and much more. For more information call Carolyn Campbell at 972 230-9651.



Household Hazardous Waste Event Set for April 28th

The City of DeSoto will host a Household Hazardous Waste Collection Event on Saturday, April 28th from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at the Westmoreland Pump Station, 620 N. Westmoreland Road. If you have household hazardous waste that cannot be discarded along with the regular trash such as paint, oil, fertilizer, acid, gasoline, or pesticides, you can bring it to the event with a voucher. Vouchers can be obtained from the City of DeSoto Action Center located in City Hall or by calling 972 274-CITY. We have a limited number of vouchers available. Only DeSoto residents will be allowed to participate and you will be asked to show proof of residency in order to obtain your voucher. There is also an event at the Gospel Lighthouse on April 14th and DeSoto residents may participate in this event as well.

DeSoto Police Sponsor Senior Citizens Crime Prevention Symposium On May 9th

The DeSoto Police Department will host it's annual Senior Citizens Crime Prevention Symposium on Wednesday, May 9, 2007 from 7:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. in the DeSoto Civic Center. It will feature a variety of personal safety and home security tips. Representatives from the DeSoto Fire Department, DeSoto Senior Center and AARP will provide additional information on wellness and financial security. A complimentary lunch is included for all participants. If you would like to attend this free symposium, please call Officer Rodney Sneed of the Interactive Community Police Unit at 469 658-3054. Registration is limited to the first 200 applications received from seniors citizens aged 55+.

The City of DeSoto Arts Commission is proud to present the **5th Annual DeSoto STAR SEARCH!** April 28, 2007 7:30 p.m. DeSoto Corner Theatre DeSoto Town Center 211 E. Pleasant Run

Join us for this "just for fun" talent show featuring local performers competing for cash prizes. Celebrity judges are recording artists, Cavin Yarborough and Alisa Peoples along with Mayor Michael Hurtt. Tickets are \$10. Call 972 230-9648 for more information.

BSW Juneteenth Celebration Sponsored by the cities of DeSoto, Lancaster, Duncanville & Cedar Hill
Sat. June 16, 2007 At Valley Ridge Park 2850 Park Ridge Dr.
For info call the host, City of Cedar Hill at 972 293-5288

The DeSoto and Lancaster combined Fireworks Extravaganza will return to Grimes Park in DeSoto on July 4, 2007. Watch the next edition of CityLights for details.

Voters Will Consider Amendments to the City Charter at May 12th

The DeSoto City Charter contains a provision requiring that this document be reviewed at least every five (5) years. In compliance with this provision, the DeSoto City Council appointed a 21 member Charter Review Commission in November.. This Commission met several times to review the entire Charter and brought fourth their recommended revisions to the City Council in a joint meeting on January 30, 2007. Based on the recommendations from the Charter Review Commission, the City Council has called a special election for May 12, 2007 to consider amendments to the Home Rule Charter for the City of DeSoto. Here are the propositions to be considered by voters:

PROPOSITION 1

Shall Article XI, Sections 3, 4, 6, 10 and 11 of the DeSoto Home Rule City Charter regarding franchises and public utilities be amended to comply with state law?

PROPOSITION 2

Shall Article II, Section 2 of the DeSoto Home Rule City Charter be amended to clarify the composition of the Boards and Commissions of the City?

PROPOSITION 3

Shall Article IV, Section 7 of the DeSoto Home Rule City Charter be amended to clarify the number of signatures required on a petition for recall of a City Councilmember?

PROPOSITION 4

Shall Article VIII, Section 1 of the DeSoto Home Rule City Charter be amended to authorize the expenditure of more funds on a bond project than were approved by the voters upon a vote of 5 of the 7 City Councilmembers after a public hearing with prior notice to the public?

PROPOSITION 5

Shall Article II, Section 1 of the DeSoto Home Rule City Charter be amended to eliminate term limits for the

Mayor and City Councilmembers?

In addition to the Charter Election, voters will be asked to cast ballots for candidates for Mayor and City Council Places 3 and 5 during the May 12th City Election. In order to vote in the election, you must be a registered voter in the City of DeSoto. Voter registration applications are available at City Hall and the deadline to submit your completed application to Dallas County Elections is April 12, 2007.

Early voting for the May 12th election takes place in the DeSoto Library Assembly Hall from April 30th through May 8th. When you come to vote, please remember to bring your Voter Registration Card or another form of picture identification that indicates your current address. Taking advantage of the early voting option saves time and allows you to avoid the long lines on Election Day. Check the city's website at www.ci.desoto.tx.us for listings of other early voting locations in Dallas County. For more information on the City Election, please contact Anell Shipman, DeSoto City Secretary at 972-230-9646.

Two Opportunities to Meet the Candidates

Concerned DeSoto Citizens will sponsor a *Candidate Forum* on Saturday, April 14th at 10 a.m. at City Hall. This forum is also televised live and rebroadcast on Timer Warner Cable Channel 16 at 2 p.m. daily until election day.

The DeSoto Chamber of Commerce will sponsor *Candidates On The Move* at the DeSoto Civic Center on April 19th at 6:30 p.m. Attend one of these events and meet the candidates for city council and school board positions.