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*A publication of the City of DeSoto Community Relations Department*



## Council Corner.....A Message from Carl Williams

### **Are You Exercising Your Citizenship?** A Quality Response

The term *citizenship* has several definitions. One definition of citizenship is; *membership in a community.*

Community is defined as a nation, state, county, city or neighborhood. A second definition is; *the quality of an individual's response to membership in a community.* The former is easy to accomplish. One simply has to decide where they would like to live and establish residency. It is the latter that I would like to explore because it requires commitment and action.

A person or family typically chooses a community based on a number of factors such as affordability, proximity to churches and schools, quality of schools, crime rate, services, cleanliness and overall "drive through" appearance. The one factor that is generally low on the list, if it's there at all, is *the opportunity for community involvement.* It is this factor, in my opinion, that has the greatest impact on the betterment of a community. That is certainly the case in DeSoto.

The *quality response* on the part of the citizens of DeSoto was recently exhibited in the fall of 2007. The city had at least one opening on every board and commission that serves this city and multiple applicants for each opening. My sincere appreciation goes to those selected and those who applied. However, service

on a city board or commission is not the only *quality response* that you, as a citizen of DeSoto, can make. DeSoto has a very strong network of neighborhood associations. Are you a member? If not, join yours. If you don't have one, start one. Your neighborhood will be the better for it.

There are also civic, social, and fraternal organizations such as Rotary Club, Lions Club and many others. Join one. The school district also offers a myriad of opportunities for volunteerism and service. Then there is the electoral process. The most basic response in this process is simply voting. Voting, in every election, whether it's a national, state, county or local election, especially *local* elections. The truly committed response is to run for an elected position on the City Council or DeSoto School Board. At this point, I would like to express my appreciation to all the committed individuals who filed for elected positions on the City Council and School Board in the upcoming May election. My sincere appreciation also goes to those who have most recently served these two entities. Mayor Pro-Tem Thelma Clardy and Councilman Virgil Helm on the City Council both gave six years of tireless service. I'd also like to recognize School Board Chairperson, Dr. Janis Pettis-Ingram for her 12 years of tireless service.

Over the years, there are hundreds of citizens who have given quality responses to the DeSoto community to make it a better community for all. You are probably one of them. No? You can be, TODAY.

### **Carl Williams, City Council, Place 7**

### **Give Us Your Saturday Morning and We'll Help You Improve your Neighborhood**

Information is a key element in effective involvement. The city will host the third annual HOA Involvement Workshop on Saturday, April 19, 2008 from 8 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. to provide you the information you need to make your neighborhood a better, safer place to live.

Consisting of two general sessions and one break-out session, this free workshop will provide information on organizing a Community Emergency Response Team, neighborhood security, code enforcement, beautification/curb appeal tips and the city's Capital Improvement Plan. Members of all registered DeSoto homeowner's associations are encouraged to attend whether your association is new or well-established. We'd also like you to attend if you are considering starting an association in your neighborhood.

To register or for more information, please call Tracie Hlavinka at 972.230.9689 or by e-mail at thlavinka@ci.desoto.tx.us.



*The Annual*  
**NATIONAL  
DAY OF  
PRAYER**

*First Thursday of May*

The DeSoto Ministerial Alliance invites you to attend the National Day of Prayer observance on Thursday, May 1, 2008 in the Council Chambers at DeSoto City Hall from 7 to 8 a.m. This event will be filled with prayer for our nation, governmental leaders, churches, and families.

The annual National Day of Prayer was established by federal law in 1952 when the United States congress passed a joint resolution which was signed by President Harry Truman. The law, amended in 1988 and signed by President Ronald Reagan, specifically designated the first Thursday in May as the official National Day of Prayer.

## Do You Feel Safe in Your Home?

Feeling safe in our homes and businesses is of paramount importance to all of us. Here are some suggestions to enhance that peace of mind and the feeling of being secure:

- Install good locks on all exterior doors and windows.
- Have plenty of exterior lights including motion detector lights.
- Use interior lights on timers when you are not at home.
- Install an alarm system with sensors on all exterior doors and windows. Consider having smoke detectors, heat detectors and carbon monoxide detectors connected to your alarm panel as well.
- Placing sensors on gun cabinets and safe closets can also enhance your feeling of security.

If it makes sense to have an alarm system, then it should make sense to have it monitored 24 hours a day, seven days a week by your local 911 emergency center. Alarm monitoring is now being offered as a fee based service by the City of DeSoto for \$25 per month. No long-term contract is required. When your alarm is monitored by your local 911 center, they will immediately dispatch police when the call is received without the delay of routing it through a third party monitoring company.

There is a cost associated with having your monitored system reprogrammed to be monitored by DeSoto's 911 Call Center. As a result, the city will waive the first three months of their monitoring fee to help offset any cost you may incur to have your system reprogrammed.



**There is no faster response to your alarm system than the response provided by your city. For more information on the City of DeSoto Alarm Monitoring Program, please contact 972.230.5248.**

## CITY CALENDAR

### April

- 1 City Council Meeting - 7 p.m. - City Hall
- 3 Keep DeSoto Beautiful Board Mtg. - 6:30 p.m. - City Hall
- 5 Annual Clean-up Kick-Off - Service Center
- 7 Park Development Corp. Meeting - 6:30 p.m. - City Hall
- 8 Planning & Zoning Commission Mtg. - 7 p.m. - City Hall
- 12 Auditions for DeSoto Star Search 9 to 4p.m. Corner Theatre (reservation required)
- 12 Household Hazardous Waste Disposal Event - 9 a.m. - 1 p.m. - Pump Station
- 12 CDC Candidate Forum - DeSoto ISD Board Room - 10 a.m. - noon
- 15 City Council Meeting - 7 p.m. - City Hall
- 19 HOA Involvement Workshop - 9 a.m. - City Hall
- 22 Planning & Zoning Commission Mtg. - 7 p.m. - City Hall
- 24 DeSoto Chamber Meet the Candidates Event - Senior Center 6:30 - 8:30 p.m.
- 26 DeSoto Star Search Show—7:30 p.m. - Corner Theatre - tickets \$10 at door
- 28 DEDC Board Meeting - noon - City Hall

### May

- 1 National Day of Prayer - City Hall - 7 a.m.
- 3 Mother/Son Black & White Ball - Civic Center
- 5 Park Development Corp. Meeting - 6:30 p.m. - City Hall
- 6 City Council Meeting - 7 p.m. - City Hall
- 8 Keep DeSoto Beautiful Board Mtg. - 6:30 p.m. - City Hall
- 10 City Election Day
- 13 Planning & Zoning Commission Mtg. - 7 p.m. - City Hall
- 15 Police Memorial - Police Station - 9 a.m.
- 20 City Council Meeting - 7 p.m. - City Hall
- 26 Memorial Day Holiday - City Offices & facilities closed
- 27 DEDC Board Meeting—City Hall noon
- 27 Planning & Zoning Commission Mtg. - 7 p.m. City Hall

## DeSoto Police Ask You To Be The Force Multiplier

DeSoto Police need your help as they try to answer the question: *How do we make DeSoto the safest community in America?* One answer is to enlist the help of citizens like you. You know who lives next door, across the street and behind you. You know the cars your neighbors drive because you see them daily and you know when an unfamiliar car who doesn't belong is driving up and down your streets and alleys. You are the eyes and ears of your neighborhood and DeSoto Police want you to be their "force multiplier" by reporting suspicious activity. Since the inception of the 911 system, you have been told not to call "911" unless it's an emergency. However, as the "force multiplier" DeSoto Police are encouraging you to call 911 when you witness suspicious activity. Police are much more likely to catch a criminal in the act if a citizen calls in a description and location of the suspicious activity. With your help, the word will spread throughout the criminal community that doing illegal activity in DeSoto is not safe because citizens will report them.

To provide more information on this program, DeSoto Police produced a video on the "Force Multiplier" concept which is available for viewing on the city's website at [http://desoto.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?view\\_id=5&clip\\_id=547](http://desoto.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?view_id=5&clip_id=547) and is also playing on Timer Warner channel 16. You can also call the police department at 469-658-3000 for more information.

# Code Enforcement.....It's Eveyone's Job

Code Enforcement.....It's everyone's job. This is the message the City of DeSoto is sending to residents. The city has two dedicated code enforcement officers to cover more than 16,000 households and numerous commercial properties, but they have also enlisted the entire DeSoto police force to help. Problems must be identified before they can be addressed. City staff needs you to report problems in your neighborhood. The information below comes from a complaint report which tracks code enforcement issues reported by citizens, code enforcement officers and police.

### High Grass & Weeds

Our area experienced record rainfall during the summer of 2007 resulting in a record growing season. Code enforcement mounted a public information campaign to encourage residents to report problems with high weeds at vacant houses in their neighborhoods. Information was printed in the city newsletter and code enforcement officers informed homeowners associations of the procedures they follow to resolve high weed complaints. This effort, combined with stepped up enforcement by police, resulted in the number of high weed complaints received in 2007 climbing to 3,925 from a total of 3,057 in 2006. Such a significant increase in complaints seems very negative except when you consider that more than 25% of those complaints were generated by citizens who are watching and reporting problems. They are making an impact on the appearance of their neighborhood.

### Posting of Illegal Signs

It is illegal to erect or affix a sign in the right-of-way (the area from the curb to the sidewalk), in the median (the area in the middle of a street), on trees, public fences, buildings or utility/telephone poles. This includes garage sale signs.

Police and code enforcement officers routinely remove illegally posted signs during the course of their normal patrols. This stepped up enforcement is making an impact. The complaint report indicates that the illegal sign problem has been virtually eliminated. In 2006, there were 228 complaints and in 2007 that number fell to just 22.

### Bagging Trash

City of DeSoto Ordinance, Article 13.800 Garbage, Trash and Refuse, Section 13.807 Containers states: "Residential customers shall utilize a plastic refuse bag that is designed and sold for the purpose of placing garbage, trash, or refuse in it for disposal." All trash must be placed in a 20-to-30 gallon plastic refuse bag, with at least a 2-mil strength/thickness rating. In 2006, the city received 53 complaints on residents who had not bagged their garbage. As a result, we stepped up public information on the bagging requirement and complaints were



reduced to 42 in 2007. In comparison, these numbers are small, but bagging garbage can have a huge impact on the appearance of a neighborhood. When garbage is placed loose in cans or other containers, this causes problems for our solid waste contractor, Duncan Disposal. Workers must pick up the can and dump it in the truck rather than grabbing a bag and tossing it in. When emptying the cans, garbage that is not bagged can miss the truck and be scattered along the alley or street.

### Fencing

A poorly maintained fence is an eyesore and can be a safety hazard. Fences are not required on residential property. However, if you have a fence, City Ordinance requires that it be maintained at all times. It is unlawful to allow your fence to lean or to have missing, loose or broken slats or panels. The fence is not allowed to have any symbols, writings or other graffiti except for signs which pertain to the address or occupancy of the property. It is also prohibited to have fence made of barbed wire, hog wire, or chicken wire or to have an electric fence.

If you have a swimming pool, a fence, structure or gate is required to completely surround the swimming pool to



prevent small children from inadvertently wandering into the pool. This fence, structure or gate cannot be lower than six feet in height, and may not have any openings that will allow a four-inch diameter sphere to pass through. All

gates should have a self-closing and self-latching device designed to keep gates closed and locked at all times.

Eyes and ears program volunteers work with code enforcement and police officers to identify problems with fences in neighborhoods. Increased enforcement has resulted in greater public awareness and fence complaints fell from 670 in 2006 to a total of 581 in 2007.

### We Need Your Help!!

The statistics indicate that increased awareness results in a decrease, for the most part, in code violations. Please help us help you. If you notice a code violation in your neighborhood, we urge you to report it by calling the City of DeSoto Code Enforcement Department at 469.658.3075 or by logging on to the city's website at [www.ci.desoto.tx.us](http://www.ci.desoto.tx.us), and clicking on the red Citizen Assistance button on the left hand side. There you will be prompted to enter your concern or complaint directly into the city's computerized tracking system.

**Code enforcement.....it's everyone's job!**

## Next Citizen Police Academy Begins April 22nd

Applications are currently being accepted for the 33rd DeSoto Citizen Police Academy which begins April 22nd. The Academy meets every Tuesday from 6 to 9 p.m. for seven weeks. Sessions cover procedural police issues, jail and dispatch, use of force and criminal investigations. DeSoto residents 21 years and older are encouraged to attend this free, fun and educational program. For more information, contact Officer Cindy Mendez at 469.658.3055 or e-mail at [cmendez@ci.desoto.tx.us](mailto:cmendez@ci.desoto.tx.us).

**Mother/Son Black & White Ball**  
**Saturday, May 3rd, 7-10 p.m.**  
**DeSoto Civic Center**  
**\$30 per couple,**  
**\$15 each additional child**  
**Tickets go on sale April 14th**  
**Call 972 230-9651 for info.**

## The BSW Juneteenth Celebration Will Expand to Two Days of Activities in DeSoto

On June 13th and 14th, 2008, the Best Southwest Juneteenth Celebration returns to the city where it got its start. Educating our communities on the history and importance of Juneteenth is a focus of this year's event. As a result, local visual artist, Rhonda Haugabook and Fruits for the Soul Artisans will present **Juneteenth - An Evening of Storytelling**. This special performance, made possible in part by an arts grant from the DeSoto Arts Commission, is scheduled for Friday, June 13, 2008 at 7 p.m. in DeSoto's Corner Theatre. It will bring to light what life was actually like for the liberated slaves and their descendents, highlight the efforts of Al Edwards who worked diligently to make Juneteenth a statewide historical holiday and celebrate the living legacy of a proud and determined people. Tickets are \$10 and can be reserved by calling 972.291.9874. The annual Tea Cake and Sweet Potato Pie Cook-off will also take place on Friday, June 13th at the Civic Center.

DeSoto will host the Saturday event at Moseley Park, located at 1300 Honor Drive. To kick off the day, the planning committee is organizing the **BSW Juneteenth Celebration Parade** at 3 p.m. We are inviting churches, scout troops, sports association and anyone who loves a parade to call 972.230.9648 to request an application to participate. Other activities on Saturday the 14th begin at 4 p.m. and will include a 3 on 3 basketball competition, a toddler pageant, children's activities, swimming at Moseley Pool, vendors, food and family fun.



You can also expect a great entertainment line-up. Gospel music is the theme and the entertainment committee is looking for the best gospel choirs to perform. If you would like to help with the planning, can suggest a great choir or just want more information on the event, please call special events coordinator, Carolyn Campbell at 972.230.9651.

Would you, or someone you know, like to receive an e-mail notification when new information is posted to the city's website? It's easy, just sign up for **Notify Me** on DeSoto's website at [www.ci.desoto.tx.us](http://www.ci.desoto.tx.us). You can register to receive a notice when the latest version of the City Lights Newsletter is added or each time a new City Council Meeting agenda is posted or to see the newest job postings. You can also receive a notification when the Weekly DeSoto News Flash is available. Just click on **Notify Me** and follow the prompts or call 972.230.9648 for more information.

The City of DeSoto Arts Commission  
is proud to present the

## 6th Annual DeSoto's STAR SEARCH!

April 26, 2008 7:30 p.m.  
Tickets ~ \$10 seating limited

## DeSoto Corner Theatre

Got talent? Do you sing, dance or tell jokes?? Here's your chance to perform and compete for cash prizes. Take part in DeSoto's very own, just for fun talent show. Auditions for kids aged 8-13, teens aged 14 - 18, adults & seniors will be held on April 12th. Audition fee ~ \$5 per act. Call 972.230.9648 to reserve an audition time, request show tickets or for more information.

## Toll Tags Are Now On Sale at DeSoto City Hall

The City of DeSoto is now selling Toll Tags from the North Texas Tollway Authority. These tags are available at City Hall through the DeSoto Municipal Court window. You can also fill out the application online at [www.ci.desoto.tx.us/court](http://www.ci.desoto.tx.us/court) and then pick up your Toll Tag at the Municipal Court window in City Hall. The cost for the Toll Tag is \$40.00 for up to three vehicles. Payments must be made by credit card only.



The Toll Tag can be used anywhere in the state of Texas. Please call DeSoto Municipal Court at 972.230.9674 if you have any questions or need further information.

## DeSoto Police Present Senior TRIAD Symposium May 14th

The DeSoto Police Department will present the 10th Annual Senior TRIAD Symposium on Wednesday, May 14th from 9 a.m. to noon at the DeSoto Civic Center. Residents 55 and older are encouraged to attend this free educational symposium. Topics include personal safety, financial security and health and wellness issues that affect seniors. Lunch is included.

To reserve your spot or for more information, please call Officer Cindy Mendez at 469.658.3055 or by e-mail at [cmendez@ci.desoto.tx.us](mailto:cmendez@ci.desoto.tx.us).