

# South Austin AARP

## Chapter 2426

Website: [www.southaustinaarp.org](http://www.southaustinaarp.org)

August 2021

**Wednesday**  
**August 18, 1:00 p.m.**  
**Project Connect**  
**Jackie Nirenberg**

**Message from the President**  
*Crespin Guzman*

In November 2020, Austin approved Project Connect, a major transit expansion plan that includes light rail, new MetroRapid services, improved Metro Rail service, a new commuter rail line, Park and Ride facilities and more. Nine months later, there have been many developments. Come learn the latest about the most transformative initiative for Austin in decades.

Jackie Nirenberg is Director of Community Engagement at the Austin Transit Partnership, the newly formed agency charged with implementing Project Connect, Austin's transit expansion program. Jackie served as community engagement manager for Capital Metro for six years and led the public participation effort for Project Connect. Before joining CapMetro, Jackie was a Senior Consultant for local public involvement firm, Group Solutions, where she led engagement efforts for on a number of public projects, including the Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan and the Travis County Redistricting Plan. She is a 2019 Transportation for America Fellow and has been twice been a featured presenter at the North American Conference of the International Association for Public Participation. Jackie holds a Masters in Journalism from the University of Texas at Austin and made the city her permanent home in 2003.

**The August Program will be via Zoom on computer or phone.**

**Please watch for an email giving instructions on how to join the meeting.**

**Please note that the August newsletter is being mailed or emailed only to those who are current with their 2021 AARP Chapter 2426 dues payments.**

### **There is Good News and there is Bad News!**

Being a perennial optimist, I want to share the good news first. AARP national says we can look forward to beginning our in-person local activities like meetings, projects and events probably by September 2021 or next month!

**The Bad News** is that the constraints to do this begins with following local rules **on COVID 19 conditions, City of Austin Stage 5 and in accordance with AARP guidance like only 6 people/members can meet at any one time.** Furthermore, the local chapters are asked to provide documentation on attendees of such activities via a form provided to us. Interestingly enough, each one of our last two Board of Directors meetings have not been in compliance with said guidance. Consequently, I intend to return to having virtual Zoom Board meeting for August and beyond as necessary. Our programs will continue to be via Zoom.

Until there is really good clarity on the allowances by the local rules along with AARP guidance, the Chapter is going to have difficulty returning to the use of City owned facilities for all its activities, including BoD meetings. My contacts with a library and SASAC on Monday about meeting facilities all came up empty. Until further notice public access and quantities of participants may be subject to even further restrictions. We need to be patient and realistic about this and make the most of what we can do via Zoom.

**My policy for the Chapter will continue to be: Better Safe than Sorry!  
Stay safe.**

## From Where I sit

*Nancy Crowther, AARP Chapter 2426*

*Vice-President*

I certainly appreciate the continued dedication and communication with chapter 2426 members. I am also impressed with the work of the Board and Committee Chairs who have been working to keep our chapter rolling. We are all frustrated that we haven't be able to get together and have our membership meetings. At an abundance of caution, the membership we serve are the most vulnerable group to be severely impacted by COVID. We have to do our best to keep you informed with AARP and the chapter news. I have run into a few chapter members who ask, "when are we going to get back together?" So many protocols, virus stage changes, rules and safety is the number one priority. I will say that I can't wait to see Rita Rubish's reaction when she sees how many tabs, I have collected for Ronald McDonald House! Meanwhile as I read my daily news, I am always looking for items of interest for our members to be involved in. Here is this month's interest list: APD, Aging, and saluting the ADA! Enjoy!

### **Austin Police Department News (and a cool app for your phone)**

The Austin Police Department (APD) has launched a new [Find Your District Representative](#) function on the [APD website](#) and within the department's new app, [Atlas One](#).

District Representatives (DR) have a wide array of responsibilities, and their key focus is building community partnerships across the city, facilitating outreach to individuals experiencing homelessness, and educating the public on crime prevention strategies that enhance public safety and reduce fear.

District Representatives specialize in community engagement and intentionally work on short- and long-term challenges in specific areas of Austin to build trust and improve the quality of life.

Although the DR Unit was reduced in size January 2021, the officers continue to enhance patrol, and foster better community relationships.

"District Representatives are important to Austin because building and maintaining positive communal relationships is vital to having an accountable and transparent police department. APD recognizes and values that relationship, which is why APD has dedicated

the DRs to meet this demand," Interim Police Chief Joseph Chacon said.

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Additionally, the APD District Representatives day-to-day operations are centered on:

- Handling service calls
  - Assisting other City departments in homeless encampment clean-ups
  - Resolving community issues and complaints at the neighborhood level
  - Virtual community engagement meetings
  - Providing FREE home security surveys
  - Public service announcements
  - Monitoring and responding to community /social media posts
  - Creating/tracking Directed Patrols requested by community members
  - Rapidly responding and addressing community issues
  - Facilitating the formation and development of stakeholder groups across the city
  - Handling City Council "Citizen Assistance Forms" (CAFs)
- The APD District Representatives are a critical unit within the Austin Police Department, and we want to remind the community that they are here to provide support. We encourage community members to reach out and meet your neighborhood's District Representative.

### **From The Health and Human Services notices: Members Sought for the Aging Texas Well Advisory Committee**

If you're interested in issues that impact older adults and the Aging Texas Well initiative, you may want to apply to be a member of Aging Texas Well Advisory Committee. The Texas Health and Human Services Commission executive commissioner will appoint members to the committee to serve a term expiring Aug. 31, 2023.

Applications are due by 11:59 p.m., Aug. 16.

HHSC will consider applicants' qualifications, background and interest in serving on the committee and will try to choose committee members who represent the diversity of all Texans. For this reason,

HHSC considers applicants' ethnicity, gender and geographic location.

Please review the [linked application letter](#) to find out who the committee is seeking as representatives and if you qualify.

After reviewing the application letter, and verifying you meet the qualifications for at least one category, [click on the application linked here](#) to apply to be on the committee.

It is preferred that you submit your application electronically, but you may submit the application by email, mail or fax. Here are the addresses:

Email: [HHS\\_Appointments@hhs.texas.gov](mailto:HHS_Appointments@hhs.texas.gov)

Attn: ATWAC

Mail:

Texas Health and Human Services Commission

4900 N. Lamar Blvd.

Mail Code 0223

Austin, TX 78751

Attn: Susanna Sparkman

Fax: 512-206-3984

Attn: ATWAC

An Aging Texas Well Advisory Committee member must regularly participate in committee meetings and may also have to participate in subcommittee meetings, projects and presentations. Committee meetings will be held in Austin about once every three months or at the call of the presiding officer. *To the extent permitted by the current state budget, a committee member who receives services from HHSC or is a family member of a client may be repaid for their travel expenses to and from meetings if money is available and in accordance with the HHSC Travel Policy. Other committee members aren't paid to attend or travel to and from committee meetings.* For more information about the committee [visit the committee website](#) or contact Olivia Burns.

For more information about the application process, contact Susanna Sparkman.

And...

### **Members Sought for the Sickle Cell Task Force**

If you're interested in issues related to sickle cell disease and sickle cell trait, you may want to apply to be a member of the Sickle Cell Task Force. The Texas Health and Human Services Commission executive commissioner will appoint members to the task force to serve a term expiring Aug. 31, 2023 unless otherwise designated.

Applications are due by 11:59 p.m., Aug. 13.

HHSC will consider applicants' qualifications, background and interest in serving on the task force and will try to choose task force members who represent the diversity of all Texans. For this reason, HHSC considers applicants' ethnicity, gender and geographic location.

Please review the [linked application letter](#) to find out who the task force is seeking as representatives and if you qualify.

After reviewing the application letter, and verifying you meet the qualifications for at least one category, [click on the application linked here](#) to apply to be on the task force.

It is preferred that you submit your application electronically, but you may submit the application by email, mail or fax. Here are the addresses:

Email: [HHS\\_Appointments@hhs.texas.gov](mailto:HHS_Appointments@hhs.texas.gov)

Attn: SCTF

Mail:

Texas Health and Human Services Commission

4900 N. Lamar Blvd.

Mail Code 0223

Austin, TX 78751

Attn: Susanna Sparkman

Fax: 512-206-3984

Attn: SCTF

A Sickle Cell Task Force member must regularly participate in task force meetings. They may also have to participate in subcommittee meetings, projects and presentations. Task force meetings are held about once every three to four months in Austin or at the call of the presiding officer. *To the extent permitted by the current state budget, a task force member may be repaid for their travel expenses to and from meetings if money is available and in accordance with the HHSC Travel Policy.* For more information about the committee [visit the committee website](#) or contact Aimee Millangue.

For more information about the application process, contact Susanna Sparkman.

**Happy 31<sup>st</sup> Anniversary of  
the Americans with  
Disabilities Act  
1990-2021**

**Legislative**  
*Mary Ragland*

**Why Get the COVID vaccination?**

Texas AARP Volunteer Martha Smith explains why she got the COVID vaccination at <https://www.facebook.com/AARPTexas/videos/338211101320695>

Copy the link and paste into your browser.

**Why Did State Representatives leave Texas?**

Texas State Democratic legislators have left the state and flown to Washington DC to try to persuade congress to pass the For the People Act and to avoid losing a vote on SB 1 and HB 3 that would impose stricter voting laws on Texas voters. These bills would impose restrictions on many Texas voters over age 50. AARP Texas provided written testimony on SB 1 and HB 3 outlining how they would harm older voters' right to vote:

"The right to vote is among the most basic of all civic and Constitutional rights. AARP favors laws and policies that encourage and do not hinder electoral participation.

AARP is concerned that SB 1, (87-1) could impose a heavy burden and result in disproportionate and unnecessary risks of disenfranchising older voters in Texas. Specific concerns include restrictions on voting by mail (VBM) and on providing assistance to a voter. As one of the long-standing categories of eligible people to vote by mail, many Texans aged 65 and older have come to favor and rely on this option as it is a more convenient and safe method to cast a ballot. Additionally, there are many older Texans who need assistance if they choose to vote in person. The following are the specific portions of the bill that deal with these provisions.

- Article 4 states that an application for VBM must be submitted in writing and signed by the applicant using ink on paper, and that an electronic signature or photocopied signature is not permitted. This requirement does not consider voters with a neurological condition, such as Parkinson's or MS, or other physical conditions that prevent one from being

able to sign a document by hand. This would exclude many voters.

- Article 4 also states that an application for VBM must include the applicant's drivers' license or last four digits of their Social Security number. This information is required again on the carrier envelope. This provision gives the Early Voting Ballot Board further reasons to possibly reject a VBM ballot and could delay a person being able to vote. As this information is already provided upon registering to vote, this provision is redundant and cumbersome.
- Article 5 states that a person who simultaneously assists three or more voters by providing transportation to the polling place must complete and sign a form. Long-term care facilities and group homes for the disabled may take several residents over multiple days to the polls. Requiring a form each time is cumbersome.
- Article 5 also states that a person who assists a voter in completing their ballot must fill out an additional form. Current election law already requires an assistant to swear an oath that they are not influencing the voter. This additional form is redundant and cumbersome."

**Travel**  
*Mario Macaluso*

Hi Fellow-Travelers

At the present time we are still eagerly waiting to travel again. I urge you to continue to be patient and very hopeful as we set money aside to sign-up for our marvelous day-trips. Let us continue to keep safe and healthy and let us not forget to see our doctors for our scheduled visits.

"Make friends with the doctor, for he is essential to you....for from God the doctor has wisdom." (Sirach 38)  
We will travel again!  
Warm greetings!

**Volunteer Hours**  
*Ed Gonzales*

**May: 137 hours**

**Year to Date: 2689 hours**

**Please send or email your number of volunteer hours. Look on the last page of the newsletter for the form.**

## Roll and Stroll

*Pat Thomas and Deborah Fennell*

We still are not able to gather as a group to explore Austin via CapMetro. We hope within the next six months we will see a resolution to the COVID crises. I do wish to bring to your attention the progress made on Waterloo Park. You may remember two years ago we tried to peak at the progress of this beautiful new park near 15<sup>th</sup> St. Well the good news is that the park is close to announcing an opening celebration in August. Please take a look now at the amphitheater and the headline performances currently scheduled. Someday we will again explore the beauty of Austin.

[Moody Amphitheater at Waterloo Park | Austin, TX](#)

### Community Service – Commentary by Pat Thomas

As an AARP member you have a voice to make beneficial changes relating to the cost of prescription drugs. This article is a discussion on why drugs are so very expensive. When we are ill and prescribed a medication it can be an unpleasant costly surprise. **This article entitled "Too Much Money for the Medicine" by Katherine Malmo is a condensed version of an article published in Curetoday.com.**

Newer cancer therapies easily cost upward of \$100,000. Why so much? Who sets the prices and what can patients do if they can't afford them?

In 2010, David Mitchell got out of bed and immediately fell to the floor with pain so excruciating he was unable to move. A few days later he was diagnosed with multiple myeloma. Multiple myeloma is incurable but treatable, and Mitchell had surgery to stabilize his spine and started an expensive drug therapy. For over five years, he took Revlimid (lenalidomide) manufactured by Bristol Myers Squibb (BMS). **Each capsule currently sells for \$833 — and cost less than \$1 to make.** Now he's on a four-drug combination that costs \$900,000 per year. Mitchell founded a patient organization focused on lowering drug prices through policy changes. "We have laws and policies in the United States that literally prohibit the government from using its purchasing power through Medicare (the largest payer of medications) to lower drug prices. Consequently, we have a system in which the drug companies have all of the pricing power, and we have none of the purchasing power." The U.S. government negotiates prices for nearly everything from aircraft carriers to copy paper. Why not for the cost of

lifesaving drugs for millions of Americans? Because of the Medicare Modernization Act. Passed in 2003, this act includes a noninterference clause that states that the secretary of health and human services cannot intervene in negotiations between drug companies and insurance companies' pharmacy benefit managers. "Medicare needs to buy the drug for all beneficiaries who need it and pay whatever price pharmaceutical companies set," According to Dr. Vincent Rajkumar, professor of medicine at Mayo Clinic "That's the recipe for the problem we have right now." For many new drugs, there are no alternatives. These monopolies should be temporary and only until generic competition enters the market when patents expire.

**"This monopoly is completely a function of our laws and the policies that have been purchased with billions of dollars in lobbying and campaign contributions by the drug companies through the years," Mitchell says.** Rajkumar agrees and noted that pharmaceutical companies and their trade organizations spent \$220 million on lobbying in the U.S. in 2018.

#### How Can We Fix the Problem with Medicare Negotiation?

Medicare must have the ability to negotiate. One study found that if Medicare negotiated prices to those secured by the Veterans Administration hospital system, there would be savings of \$14.4 billion on just the top 50 dispensed oral drugs.

**"The first step is to curb the drug companies' unilateral pricing power,"** Mitchell says. "And then to ensure that we make adjustments downstream, like with the pharmacy benefits managers (PBMs) who work for insurance companies and do all of their work in secret. There's no transparency whatsoever. It's wrong that I can't know if the preferred drug on a pharmacy plan formulary is the best drug for me, or if it's the least expensive drug among equally effective options"

To read the complete article go online to [Curetoday.com](#) and view the article entitled "Too Much Money for the Medicine" by Katherine Malmo.

## 2021 Officers *And Committee Chairs*

#### Officers

President:	Crespin Guzman	737-222-8155
Vice President	Nancy Crowther	512-808-7486
Secretary:	Ed Gonzales	512-444-3335
Assistant Secretary:	Marilyn Totten	512-280-8030

Treasurer: Bill Nicholson 512-481-8464  
 Assistant Treasurer: Rosie Perez 512-440-7050  
 Board of Directors (in addition to officers):  
 Wanda Hasley 512-280-9276 and Marie Martinez 512-276-4771

**Committee Chairs**

Community Service: Pat Thomas 512-441-1485  
 Deborah Fennell 512-282-9931

Greeters: Marilyn Totten 512-280-8030  
 Health: Laura Dutton 512-740-9370  
 Gail Glick 214-808-6622

Hospitality: Connie Flores 512-536-0694  
 Legislative: Mary Ragland 512-280-2661  
 Membership: Joann Cepero 773-710-2053  
 Newsletter Editor and Web Manager:  
 Diane McGowan 512-923-3218

Program: Randy His 512-663-8196  
 Phone Committee Chair:  
 Elaine Benton 512-799-2224

Sunshine: Kathryn Stone 512-441-6038  
 Travel: Mario Macaluso 512-432-5255

Bill Nicholson, Treasurer  
 12512 Gun Metal Dr.  
 Austin, TX 78739

**Chapter 2426 Memories**

**Who remembers who is in the picture and where this Roll and Stroll was in March 2016?**



**Chapter 2426 Treasurer's Report**  
*Bill Nicholson*

BALANCE SHEET as of July 31, 2021

Assets

Chapter Checking Account \$ 3,440.82  
 Travel Checking Account 25.00  
 Savings Account 25.00  
 Total Assets 3,490.82

Liabilities 0.00

Net Worth \$ 3,490.82

REMINDER - DUES FOR THE CALENDAR YEAR 2021  
 The dues is \$10.00 and is payable to South Austin AARP Chapter 2426. Payment is to be mailed with a *Member Renewal* form to the Treasurer during this pandemic time. Be sure to put your National AARP membership number where indicated on the form. A payment will be acknowledged by either email or postal mail.

**MEMBERSHIP LIST CHANGES**

Changes in your mailing address, telephone number and email address or changing to dues exempt status upon attaining 85 years old are to be submitted to the Treasurer on the *Membership Renewal* form. The *Membership Renewal* form can be found on the last page of this newsletter.

MAILING ADDRESS TO PAY DUES AND SUBMIT THE MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL FORM  
 South Austin AARP Chapter 2426

**When and where was this day trip?**



**CIVIC AND/OR COMMUNITY SERVICE BY  
SOUTH AUSTIN AARP CHAPTER 2426 VOLUNTEERS  
PLEASE EMAIL THIS INFORMATION TO ED GONZALES**

**Edgonzales7@gmail.com. If you do not have email,  
mail to: Ed Gonzales, 710 Kinney Avenue, Austin, TX 78704**

*Note: You do not have to email the form. You may list the category and the hours  
for that category and the total number of hours.*

**Name** \_\_\_\_\_ **Address** \_\_\_\_\_ **Phone** \_\_\_\_\_

Category	Hours	Category	Hours
AARP Annual Day of Service		Fundraising for Community Service	
AARP Driver Safety Program		Health & Wellness	
AARP Tax Aide		Long-term Care/Nursing Home Support	
Hunger		Independent Living/ In Home Care Giving/Home Repairs	
<b>Advocacy/Legislation/Information/Referral Services</b>		Independent Living: Transportation Services	
<b>Education/Scholarships or other</b>		All Other Volunteer Areas	
Subtotal		Subtotal	
			<b>Total Volunteer Hours</b>

**South Austin AARP Chapter 2426  
Annual Membership Renewal - 2021**

**PLEASE PRINT**

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_ National AARP Member No. \_\_\_\_\_  
 Birthday (Month and Day) \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_ Anniversary (Month and Day) \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_  
 E-mail Address (Print Clearly) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Dues are \$10.00 by cash or check                      Dues are waived if you are 85 or older: Yes \_\_\_\_\_  
 Complete and mail this renewal with your payment to (checks should be made payable to South Austin AARP Chapter 2426).

*South Austin AARP Chapter 2426, Bill Nicholson, 12512 Gun Metal Dr., Austin, TX 78739*

Please check any committee(s) on which you are interested in serving:

- |  |   |   |                                      |
|--|---|---|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Program         | <input type="checkbox"/> Membership       | <input type="checkbox"/> Hospitality    | <input type="checkbox"/> Telephone   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sunshine        | <input type="checkbox"/> Legislative      | <input type="checkbox"/> Community Serv | <input type="checkbox"/> Health Care |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Travel (ad hoc) | <input type="checkbox"/> Public Relations | <input type="checkbox"/> Newsletter     |                                      |