



Rick Greif's

# RickRealtor News

*"Insider Tips For Healthy, Wealthy & Happy Living..."*

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Austin, Texas

## Inside This Issue ....

How to Protect yourself  
On the Road ..... 1

More Thoughts on  
Driving ..... 1

Weird Things to do  
In Austin ..... 2

Free Swimming at  
Barton Springs Pool ..... 2

New Credit Card  
Protections..... 3

Five Spices to  
Boost Your Brain ..... 3

The Back Page  
By Rick Greif  
Reverse Mortgages ..... 4

Texas has the 15th Largest  
Economy in the World..... 4



## How To Protect Yourself And Others On The Road

Could you pass a written driver's test – **today**? The results of an online GMAC Insurance survey showed that nearly 1 in 5 licensed drivers – 38 million Americans – probably wouldn't! Here's what you should do to brush up on the Rules of the Road and make yourself safer.

**Take the National Drivers Test.** Go to [www.nationaldriverstest.com](http://www.nationaldriverstest.com). Answer the 20 questions from state exams and study up on the ones you missed. You also can download it to Facebook and challenge your friends.

**Review Local Traffic Laws.** Many states post them on a .gov website.

### Avoid these top driving mistakes that cause crashes:

- Multi-tasking while driving. Say "no" to texting, phone calls and eating!
- Following too closely. Leave at least two seconds between you and the car ahead. (Tailgating can trigger Road Rage—another danger!)
- Failure to yield on a left turn. Check for cars or people in your path.
- Incorrect merging. Merge carefully but *don't* stop.
- Backing up. Don't rely on the mirrors. Look over your shoulder.

**Consider a refresher course.** AARP offers an online Driver Safety Course geared to drivers 50 and older. Plus, taking it may qualify you for a car insurance discount.

### Keep your brain sharp by subscribing to a computer driving program.

CogniFit sells a Senior Driver program that starts with an assessment of 10 cognitive abilities essential for safe driving, including visual scanning and response time. It's probably good for everyone!

**Get help from your car.** The next time you're car shopping, look for a model that offers new "smart" technologies such as Distance Control Assist (which applies the brakes when you're following another car too closely); Blind-Spot Detection (which alerts you about vehicles in your blind spots); and Night Vision Systems (which give you a vision of the road ahead with a infrared beam).

## More Thoughts on Driving ...

If all the cars in the United States were placed end to end, it would probably be Labor Day Weekend.

**A careful driver is one who honks his horn when he goes through a red light.**

The best car safety device is a rear-view mirror with a cop in it.

**Drive carefully! It's not only a car that can be recalled by it's maker.**

Americans will put up with anything provided it doesn't block traffic.

**Some days you're a bug ... some days you're a windshield.**

## Austin Area Trivia

### Designated the "Weiner Dog

**Capital of Texas,"** Buda attracts visitors & participants from across the nation for its Weiner Dog Races each April. The local Lions Club, which sponsors the races, made a "dachumentary" about the event.

### A hippopotamus made news in

**Hutto in 1915**, when it escaped from a traveling circus and spent several days in a nearby creek before it was captured. Local school athletic teams subsequently became known as the Hippos. Today, dozens of concrete hippos can be found around the city, celebrating Hutto's official designation in 2003 as "The Hippo Capital of Texas."

### Founded in 1850, Waxahachie

takes its name from an American Indian word that means "Buffalo Creek."

Texas is the state with the **most**

**Dairy Queen restaurants:** more than 600.

### Nature provides Austin residents with a rather large swimming

**hole.** The Barton Springs Pool, covering three acres, is fed by natural springs and maintains a constant temperature of 68 degrees.

### The official state mammal of Texas

**is the armadillo**—an armored, cat-sized animal that eats insects and is related to the anteater. An interesting bit of trivia about the armadillo is they always have four babies! They have one egg which splits into four and they either have four males or four females.

### ~ Blast From Austin Past ~

Armadillo World Headquarters opened 40 years ago on August 7, 1970.

~\*~

## Weird Things to Do in Austin

Residents of Austin, Texas like to say "Keep Austin Weird," but many visitors don't know just how weird Austin can get. Hidden among more conventional tourist sites like the capitol building and LBJ presidential library is an increasing number of weird and idiosyncratic attractions, which help make Austin what it truly is.

### The Museum of the Weird

Located behind the Lucky Lizard curio shop on Austin's famous sixth street, The Museum of the Weird is a collection of the weird and disturbing. The museum includes such traditional freak show fair as a Fiji mermaid and a frog with teeth, shrunken heads, a preserved two headed cow, and a fortune telling machine (reminiscent of the one from Tom Hanks' movie Big). In addition, the Museum of the Weird has pictures and posters of several oddities, most curiously a football team on which every player had 6 fingers on a hand. The back of the museum includes several live lizards. To walk through the museum costs \$3 per person or is free with a purchase from the Curio shop. This is a great infusion of the weird into downtown Austin.

### The Museum of Ephemerata

Even more weird is the Museum of Ephemerata. Tucked into a house on the outskirts of Austin, the Museum of Ephemerata contains an "impermanent" collection, which consists of weird and man-made phenomena which can be classified as ephemeral or impermanent. There is also always a temporary exhibit, with items on loan, which moves in and out. The most recent exhibit, on "monstrosities" included everything from GMO suicide corn to a cup broken over Lon Cheney's head (along with some more typical monstrous fair). The curators, who live in the museum, will gladly take you on a guided tour at any time that you show up, and only ask for a donation between 10¢ or \$3.

### The Cathedral of Junk

Perhaps the crowning achievement among the weird of Austin is the Cathedral of Junk. Austin resident Vince Hannemann built this piece of sculpture in his backyard, entirely from "junk" or things that had been discarded. It is a large two story structure that visitors can walk through or climb on and has been deemed structurally sound by the city of Austin. Using such building materials as broken dishes, AOL CD's, skis, and purses, Hannemann constructs what can surely be called a cathedral, complete with shrine. The Cathedral of Junk is available for parties and can be toured any day by appointment. A donation box is located next to the front gate.

## FREE Swimming at Barton Springs Pool

**Did you know?** ... Every morning between 5 AM and 9 AM and every evening between 9 PM and 10 PM there is no charge for swimming at Barton Springs Pool at Zilker Park.

There is no lifeguard on duty between 5 AM and 8 AM.

For the evening swim, the best time to get to the swimming pool and find a convenient parking spot is about 8:30 to 8:45 PM. When the lights at the entrance flash on at 9 PM that is the sign that pool admittance is now *free*.

During the summer, there is usually local music on the night of the full moon and the pool area is full of Austinites howling at the moon during free swim between 9 PM and 10 PM.

**2101 Barton Springs Road—512-476-9044**  
**24-Hour Pool Info Hotline 867-3080**

## September Trivia...

- September 3, 1894 was the **first Labor Day** celebrated as a legal public holiday.
- September is **National Chicken Month** and **Cholesterol Awareness Month** in America.
- September 12th is **National Chocolate Milkshake Day**
- The 4th week of September is **National Dog Week**
- September 5th is **National Cheese Pizza Day**.
- September 9th is **National Teddy Bear Day**.
- September 19th is "**Talk Like A Pirate Day**" around the world... an **International** event. Arrrgh!



## That's Funny

### How true is this real estate ad?

"Nice 2-bedroom home. The owner has noted that termites have done some damage. Selling house 'as is.' Don't wait. This wonderful property will not last long."

### Did you hear about that new restaurant on the moon?

Great food, but no atmosphere.

## Quotes:

My doctor gave me 6 months to live, but when I couldn't pay the bill, he gave me 6 months more.  
—Walter Matthau

The best way for a person to have happy thoughts is to count his blessings and not his cash.  
—Anonymous

Without courage, all other virtues lose their meaning.  
—Winston Churchill

What fools indeed we mortals are  
To lavish care upon a Car,  
With ne'er a bit of time to see  
About our own machinery!  
—John Kendrick Bangs

If everything comes your way, you are in the wrong lane.  
—Author Unknown

## What You Should Know About New Credit Card Protections

You'll have more credit card protections effective August 22 as the third phase of the Credit Card Act of 2009 goes into effect. Here's what changes you should expect from your credit card company, and three things you should watch out for:

- **They can no longer charge "inactivity" fees.**
- **They can't charge penalty fees** that are greater than your minimum payment.
- **They can't charge more than one penalty fee** based on a single late payment or other violation.
- **They won't be able to charge more than \$25 if you pay late** unless one of your last six payments was late (then your fee may be \$35) or the company shows that the late-payment costs it incurs justify a higher fee.
- **If they have increased rates since Jan. 1, 2009**, they have to evaluate the reasons for the increase and, if appropriate, reduce the rate.

Be aware, however, that credit card companies aren't totally limited. Read your mail carefully to see if they're doing any of the following:

- **Increasing your rates** as long as they give you 45-days notice and you've had the card for more than a year.
- **Reducing your credit limit** and closing your account without advance notice. These actions can negatively affect your credit score.
- **Raising other fees and adding new ones.** Twenty-four percent of issuers are now charging annual fees. You'll also see checking account fees, transfer balance fees, cash advance fees and foreign transaction fees.

## Five Spices To Boost Your Brain

By "spicing up" your life, you can be helping your brain. Recent studies have shown that spicy food can preserve brain function and help prevent disease. Add these five tasty spices to your diet to reap the benefits:

1. **Turmeric.** Called the "ultimate health spice," turmeric contains curcumin and is an ingredient in curry. Studies show that it may help prevent Alzheimer's and lessen the pain of rheumatoid arthritis. Sprinkle it on your veggies or mix a spoonful in a warm glass of water and drink it.
2. **Ginger.** This spice may make you smarter if combined with ginkgo biloba. It also may help treat Parkinson's disease and migraine headaches. Try drinking it as a hot tea.
3. **Garlic.** You already love this one, but did you know garlic increases blood flow to the brain? In a 2007 study, garlic helped fight brain cancer cells.
4. **Saffron.** A saffron extract has been found to be effective in treating people with depression.
5. **Cinnamon.** Eating it helps with blood sugar control, but just smelling it boosts brain activity. It also speeds the way your brain processes *visual cues*. Chew some cinnamon gum before your next bike ride.

### Financial Tip

Do you realize how much money you spend on things like coffee or going out to lunch? Annual costs are surprising. For example, if you have 5 lattes a week at \$3 each, you're spending \$780 a year! Is it worth it ... or could you put some of that money to better use?

### It's Cool To Use Coupons

Guess who's using coupons now? *Everybody!* According to a Harris Interactive survey, 6 out of 10 adults with an income over \$100K have redeemed at least one coupon in the past 6 months from online sites like [www.coupons.com](http://www.coupons.com)

### Vaccination Reminder

If your family spends lots of time outdoors, make sure you're protected from bacteria found in soil that can cause tetanus. Because immunity decreases over time, older children need the **Tdap** vaccine and adults need a booster shot every 10 years.

### Looking Forward to Fall...

*Delicious autumn!*

My very soul is wedded to it, and if I were a bird, I would fly about the earth seeking the successive autumns.



-George Eliot

THANK YOU for reading my **RickRealtor News** personal newsletter. I wanted to produce a newsletter that has valuable content and is fun to read. Your constructive feedback is always welcome.

AND...whether you're thinking of buying, selling or financing real estate, or just want to call and say "Hi," I'd love to hear from you...

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## The Back Page....

By Rick Greif

### HUD Reverse Mortgages are on the Rise.

A growing number of senior homeowners are using HUD reverse mortgage loans to supplement their retirement. Basically, this program is designed to allow seniors to stay in a home they may have a strong emotional attachment to, but need to borrow against their equity to live the rest of their lives comfortably without selling it.

Homeowners 62 and older who have paid off their mortgages or have only small mortgage balances remaining are eligible to participate. Senior homeowners can receive payments in a lump sum, on a monthly basis (for a fixed term or for as long as they live in the home), or on an occasional basis as a line of credit.

Unlike ordinary home equity loans, a HUD reverse mortgage does not require repayment *as long as the borrower lives in the home*. Lenders recover their principal, plus interest, when the home is sold or refinanced by the heirs. The remaining value of the home goes to the homeowner or to his or her survivors. If the sales proceeds are insufficient to pay the amount owed, HUD will pay the lender the amount of the shortfall. The Federal Housing Administration, which is part of HUD, collects an insurance premium from all borrowers to provide this coverage.

The size of HUD reverse mortgage loan is determined by the borrower's age, the interest rate, and the home's value. The older a borrower, the larger the percentage of the home's value that can be borrowed. For example, based on a loan at today's low interest rates, a 65-year-old could borrow up to 60 percent of the home's value, a 75-year-old could borrow up to 70 percent of the home's value, and an 85-year-old could borrow almost to 80 percent of the home's appraised value --- up to the FHA loan limit for each city and county.

With a HUD reverse mortgage, you remain the owner of your home just like when you had a forward mortgage. You are still responsible for paying your property taxes, home-owner insurance and for normal maintenance and repairs. You must first meet with an independent reverse mortgage counselor (at no cost to you) before applying for a reverse mortgage.

### Texas Has the 15th Largest Economy in the World!!

Even in the middle of "The Recession," Texas is faring well compared with the rest of the nation, racking up an ever-growing list of accomplishments.

Texas has four cities in the **Milken Institute's Top Five Best Performing Cities Index**, four among *Forbes'* list of top ten "**Cities Where the Recession is Easing**," and four in last year's **Top Ten in Homebuilding**.

Texas is home to three of the top five most resilient major metro areas for employment, with McAllen first, **Austin third**, San Antonio fifth and El Paso and Houston not far behind in the top 15.

These accomplishments are because Texas' major cities have chosen comparatively stable industries — Houston is the nation's energy hub, **Austin leads in education and technology**, and San Antonio dominates the health care and education sector in addition to military spending.