

The Shade Tree

OUR NEIGHBORHOOD. OUR COMMUNITY. OUR HOME

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COMMUNITY

More Than Free Stuff: The Magic of Buy Nothing

By Leah Greenfield Fritz, "Buy Nothing Northeast Dallas" Group Admin

"Have you tried looking on Buy Nothing?" That was the question my friends kept asking me back in 2019. I was pregnant with my second baby and searching for a few items I'd only need temporarily (why did we already get rid of our bassinet?!). Paying full price felt expensive and wasteful, and I was tired of scams on Facebook Marketplace. A Buy Nothing group sounded too good to be true.

I jumped onto Facebook, the main platform for the organization, only to discover that our neighborhood didn't have a group yet. At the time, I did not have the bandwidth to start one, but in 2021, mid-pandemic, I teamed up with a few wonderful neighbors to launch **Buy Nothing Lake Highlands**. We quickly grew so large that by 2024, we split into two smaller groups. Our neighborhood is now in the group **Buy Nothing Northeast Dallas**, covering MPUM, Merriman Park, Ridgewood Park, and University Terrace.

The **Buy Nothing Project** was co-founded in 2013 by Liesl Clark and Rebecca Rockefeller, in Washington State. The project is a collection of community-based networks where neighbors give away items they have in abundance. The focus is always on valuing connections over things. Neighbors are encouraged to let items "simmer" (don't give your gift to the first person who comments; instead, give others a chance to respond), treat each other kindly, and extend grace when arranging pickups. According to their website, the project has grown to over 14 million members across 50+ countries, with 162,000 metric tons of items, worth \$360M, shared through the platform every year.

Beyond the wonderful items I have received (artwork and jewelry made by group members, homemade sourdough bread, perfect shoes borrowed from an event!), my favorite part is the community.

Kristi, on Arboreal Dr., puts it well: "I realized I had so much more satisfaction knowing a neighbor loved my item than from any amount of money I might make selling it. I also love the flexibility of choosing the recipient. It does not have to go to the first "want", and things can simmer for those who aren't on social media all the time."

Christine, from an adjacent neighborhood, adds: "Everyone is so kind. When I picked up a TV stand, another member showed up to help load it into my car. This group is a blessing!".

Jerri, another member chimed in: "I could not believe this site, it was like I was borrowing from my Mom's closet again (which we did my entire life)."

I also want to highlight my amazing co-admin, **Haley, on Edgerton Dr.** You may have seen her fun seasonal skeletons that she keeps in fashion with items she receives from the community! Of Haley, Jerri wrote: "I never expected the sweetest friend to bring her husband all the way from across town to help me move a heavy TV, and she just smiled and said, 'You're welcome!'"

Haley herself says: "In a world driven by consumerism and lacking in community, it's so refreshing to find a micro-community with a very different perspective. What I love most are the people and friendships I've made. There's no better feeling than knowing you've made a difference in someone's day through an act of kindness. AND... with the added bonus of keeping items out of landfills!"

We hope you'll join us if you haven't already! Search "**Buy Nothing Northeast Dallas**" on Facebook to find our group. The Lake Highlands Buy Nothing group also graciously invites us all to their giveaway events at the Audelia Library, which are held 2-3 times a year. They are a wonderful way to meet neighbors, pass along items that no longer serve you, and maybe bring a few treasures home. We hope to see you there! [CLICK HERE TO JOIN](#)



Group Admins Leah Greenfield Fritz and Haley Groski



Leah's daughter, Elise, at the Buy Nothing giveaway event in April

Snow Days & Memories Made

Submitted by Brooklyn Abbott

January's winter storm brought snow-covered streets, school cancellations, and a rare chance for our neighborhood to slow down and simply enjoy being together. Across MPUM, neighbors bundled up for sledding, snowball fights, long walks, and impromptu hangouts that turned an icy week into something pretty special.

One standout gathering spot was the home of the **Juergens family**, who generously opened their doors to what felt like half the neighborhood for days on end. Kids played, parents gathered, food and drinks were shared, and strangers became friends. What started as a snow day quickly turned into a multi-day block party on Winchester and a reminder of what makes this neighborhood so special.

One especially sweet moment from the weekend was a surprise celebration for **Jerry's 98th birthday**, when more than 30 neighbors gathered together in the snow to sing "Happy Birthday." It was a simple but memorable moment that perfectly captured the warmth and connection of the week.



The Juergens Family sleds down Winchester St

A huge thank you to the Juergens and to everyone who helped turn a winter storm into a week full of connection, laughter, and community memories we won't soon forget.

Welcome Kits, Warm Wishes

From Your Community Captains

One of the sweetest things to come out of MPUM this past year has been our **New Neighbor Welcome Kit** program. Thanks to our amazing **Community Captains**, new neighbors are being greeted with a warm welcome shortly after moving in, helping turn unfamiliar streets into friendly faces a little faster.

Each kit includes a welcome letter, cookies, neighborhood and association information, local Dallas resources, the latest edition of *The Shade Tree*, local business partner flyers, and often a few extra personal touches from the Community Captain delivering it. Best of all, the contents are donated, making this a simple, meaningful, and low-cost way to build connection in our neighborhood.

The program has also been a reminder that small gestures matter. A handwritten note, porch drop-off, or batch of homemade cookies can go a long way during life's big moments — welcoming a new baby, celebrating a graduation, recognizing a birthday, or supporting a neighbor through loss. This is how we can all create community in small ways.

Have ideas on how to help spread kindness on your block? Reach out to the Community Captain on your block, email info@mpum.com, or simply start with a small gesture of your own.



COMMUNITY

Together for Hotchkiss

By Ayesha Yerra, MPUM Neighbor, Hotchkiss PTA and SBDM Member

Thank you to everyone who has been volunteering time, donating resources, attending meetings, supporting events, and believing in the future of **LL Hotchkiss**. The momentum surrounding our school is because of families, neighbors, educators, and community members investing in positive change for our children and neighborhood. Every contribution, whether through donations, sponsorships, volunteering, or simply spreading the word, is helping move our school forward.

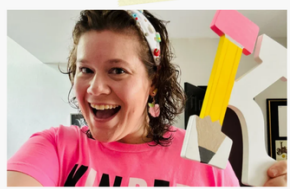
We are excited to officially share that the PTA now has a full board for the 2026-2027 school year, and the energy around campus continues to grow. Our recent auction **raised more than \$10,000** in just 14 days during our startup phase, showing just how much excitement and support already exists for Hotchkiss. As we continue building partnerships and expanding outreach, we look forward to creating even more opportunities for students, families, and the school community.



Hotchkiss PTA raises over \$10K at their first annual **Hawk's Night Out** event thanks to these MPUM community members and Hotchkiss moms **Brooklyn Abbott, Ayesha Yerra, Jenn Carter, Lisa Matter and Adrian Carter.**

There are also several exciting campus improvements already underway. One project we are especially excited about is the completion of the new community garden, which will include a special opening celebration before the school year begins. In addition to the garden, bond-funded updates already in progress will bring new windows and other facility improvements to the campus. With more than **\$30 million in district bond funding planned**, families will continue seeing meaningful progress across campus in the years ahead.

Academically, the campus is also moving in a strong and positive direction under the leadership of the new principal and teaching staff. There is a clear focus on improving student achievement, strengthening programs, and creating a supportive learning environment where students can succeed and grow.



We also want to give a special shoutout to Hotchkiss kindergarten teacher **Katherine Hobbie** for the incredible support, encouragement, and positive influence she brings to her students and so many MPUM families. Thanks to the votes and support of students, neighbors, parents, and the community, Ms. Hobbie was recently named a finalist for the **America's Favorite Teacher** award. She's always #1 in our hearts!

Kindergarten Teacher **Ms. Hobbie**

If you have younger children at home and are even considering Hotchkiss for your family, now is the perfect time to get involved. Whether through the PTA, SBDM (Site-Based Decision-Making) Committee, volunteering, sponsorships, or donation matching programs, there are so many ways for neighbors to support the continued growth of the school.

If you would like donation information or need our EIN number for matching programs or sponsorships, please contact **fundraising@hotchkisspta.org**. For general PTA, SBDM info, or ways to get involved, please reach out to **info@hotchkisspta.org**.

At the heart of all of this is one shared goal: **building a strong neighborhood school and an even stronger community**. Hotchkiss is becoming more than just a school. It is becoming a place where families can grow together, children can thrive from Pre-K through eighth grade, and the community can continue building something special for generations to come.

Congrats Yard of the Month Winners!

Check out the winning yards that wowed the Dallas County Master Gardeners. Each month, a winner is chosen by The Dallas County Master Gardener Association and receives a **\$50 gift certificate from sponsor Brumley Gardens** to keep the blooms going. Think you have what it takes? See the guidelines at **mpum.com** and get growing!

Send your June nominations to **info@mpum.com** today!



DEC 2025: Jeff Place & Erwin Latief at 7329 Wild Valley



APRIL 2026: Tyler & Caitlin Lynch at 7224 Fenton Dr



MAY 2026: Glenn and Denise Raggio at 7242 Walling Ln



MERRIMAN PARK-UNIVERSITY MANOR

MPUMNA Board of Directors: Meet Your New Co-VP!

At our May 7 All-Neighborhood Meeting, more than 50 neighbors gathered for the annual MPUM Neighborhood Association Board elections. We're excited to welcome **Edie Díaz** as our new Co-Vice President alongside the returning board members, who were all re-elected by the neighborhood. Thank you again to Andrew Mungul for his service and leadership over the past year as Co-VP. With a continued focus on connection, transparency, and engagement, this year's board is committed to serving, supporting, and strengthening MPUM together.



EDIE DÍAZ
Co-Vice President

For ten years, Edie and her family, Eric and Elliot, have loved being part of the vibrant MPUM neighborhood. Edie treasures the strong sense of community, neighborly support, and shared focus on our children's wellbeing. Active in L.L. Hotchkiss Elementary's PTA and SBDM, Edie feels grateful to help the neighborhood school thrive. With degrees from Michigan and Chicago and a professional background in public policy, academia, nonprofits, and government, Edie is passionate about strengthening our neighborhood. She looks forward to connecting with neighbors during her daily walks and chatting about ways we can make MPUM even better together.



TYLER LYNCH
President



CLAYTEN GOUWS
Co-Vice President



DREW ALLEN
Treasurer



GRETCHEN SELLER
Secretary



BILL HAUGHTON
President Emeritus

CONTACT US! If you ever want to get in touch with the MPUMNA Board with questions, suggestions, volunteer opportunities, or just to say hi, please email info@mpum.com.

2026 Annual Dues Update

We are excited to share our progress on the 2026 MPUM Neighborhood Association dues. We've had a fantastic response so far, with **235 households** already contributing to the Merriman Park University Manor Neighborhood Association. Our goal is to surpass the number of last year's contributing households, which was 287 in 2025.

Special Recognition: Premier Patron Households

A huge thank you goes out to our **67 Premier Patron Households**. Your \$150 contribution provides vital support for our community investments. We'd like to recognize the following neighbors for their generous support:

- | | | |
|-------------------------|---------------------|------------------------|
| Alan McCoy | Gretchen Wilhelm | Kristi Bernstein |
| Albert Porter | Hayden Stringer | Kyle Meyers |
| Alek Kaknevicus | Ian McGinley | Lacey Most |
| Andrew Mungul | Ilise Lipton | Laura Pajela |
| Angela Juergens | Jacob Batsell | Lisa Matter |
| Ann Sappington | Jaime Eduardo Duque | Luke Hesse Fritz |
| Bethard Hearne | James Deer | Margaret Tuttle |
| Blake Holcomb | Jan Muffley | Mark and Lisa Roberts |
| Brenna Rivas | Jean Smith | Mark German |
| Carl Kinchen | Jeanna Camp | Anonymous |
| Carrol Bennett | Jeffrey Place | Michael and Lisa Locke |
| Chuck Deschryver | Jenny Riecke | Michael Mamer |
| Codi Knight | Jered Batten | Nina Hall |
| Cynthia Watkins | Joe O'Connell | Patricia Cathey |
| David Larlee | John Johnstone | Richard Hoffman |
| Donald Kubala | John Osborne | Rick Urias |
| Dottie & Robert Giesler | Julie Boyd | Scott Sellers |
| Drew Allen | Justin Parker | Sonya Wright |
| Edward Juckniess | Karthik Yerra | Stewart Ball |
| Emily Hemlock | Kevin Gunn | Suzanne Bryant |
| Evan McDaniel | Kevin Ragsdale | Teresa Grafton |
| Gordon Cathey | Kristen Anderson | Travis Coker |
| | | Tyler Lynch |

Haven't paid your dues yet?

It's not too late! Your dues and donations support things like landscaping and maintenance at the neighborhood entrances, neighborhood events like the block party, safety initiatives like VIP, and communication efforts like this newsletter!

2026 Membership Tiers:

- Standard Dues: \$50
- Senior (65+) Household: \$25
- Premier Patron: \$150

Dues are a once-a-year voluntary payment. Additional donations are always welcome. The more we raise, the greater the impact (and the more fun stuff we can do)! Thanks for your support in making MPUM a great place to live.

PAY NOW! 3 Easy Ways to Pay:

- Online: Visit mpum.com and click on the "Pay Dues" button
- Scan a QR Code: PayPal (or any major credit card) and Venmo options
- By Check: Send to "MPUM" at P.O. Box 821733, Dallas, TX 75382



Stay Connected Get the latest news from the Neighborhood Association and connect with neighbors.



MPUM Emails | The Neighborhood Association sends out a monthly digital newsletter "The MPUM Monthly" with regular updates and announcements. Email info@mpum.com to subscribe.



MPUM WhatsApp Community | This is a private group for neighbors to connect and share updates, safety alerts, recommendations, and event reminders in real time. Email info@mpum.com for a link to join. Only confirmed MPUM residents are permitted.



Facebook | Follow the MPUM page for occasional Neighborhood Association posts and announcements. Join the "MPUM Parents" Group to connect with other parents in the neighborhood.



MPUM Website | Check out the new site at mpum.com where you can learn more about the Neighborhood Association, pay dues, make donations, view an event calendar and more.

NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

A Note from the President...

Dear Neighbors,

What a wonderful first full year for our 2025-2026 Executive Team! There are so many neighborhood accomplishments to highlight over the past year but, before we do that, an important thank you and a welcome. **Andrew Mungul** served as one of our Vice Presidents this last year and made representing our neighborhood a priority for him; often coming directly from the airport after a business trip, always with a smile and an insightful perspective, he served us all well. Thank you, Andrew! Welcome, also, to **Edie Diaz!** She has bravely signed on to serve in one of the Vice President roles this year and we are ecstatic to have her - welcome, Edie!

2025 was an important year for us as a Neighborhood Association. We welcomed a new board, changed our dues structure, and launched our Community Captain Program. All were a resounding success. Thanks to the new dues structure and incredible support of our neighbors, we saw a major increase in contributions and financial stability this year, putting the association in a stronger position than we have been in for years. After operating at a deficit in 2025 and seeing reserves dip in recent years, the Association now has a projected surplus budget for 2026.

Our community continues to put on great events, welcome new neighbors, and make MPUM an amazing place to call home. All of this is possible because of each of our neighbor's willingness to lean-in to our community (and to pay their dues! Have you paid your dues yet?!) If you are wondering "what's next?" for us, it's the **Block Party on May 30!** Come out and say hi, meet your neighbors, and get special cups if you are a Premier Patron member. Hope to see you there!

We are very thankful to call MPUM home and get to work for the good of the neighborhood. With everyone's help, it will be an even better year!

With thanks,

Tyler Lynch
MPUMNA President

VIP Volunteers Are Needed Now!



A Message from Your VIP Team Lead, Gordon Cathey

For many years, MPUM has had an active team of Volunteers in Patrol (VIP) working closely with the police and assisting in reducing random crime in our neighborhood. The team has gone up and down in size through the years, and it is now in need of more members to conduct patrols. Those who would steal from us or threaten our families are active 24/7.

The news media have reported that the Dallas Police Department has been adding new officers and moving closer to returning to the department's full force. While this is good news for the neighborhoods throughout Dallas, it still does not mean DPD no longer needs our help. They will always rely upon our neighborhood VIP to watch our streets.

We VIP patrollers serve as extra eyes and ears for the police. We are trained by DPD in the best ways to observe, record, and report suspicious people and activities within Merriman Park-University Manor. Our training ensures that our patrols are easy, completely non-confrontational, and yet effective in reducing random crime. We take our role in helping to protect our neighbors very seriously, and we understand the need for us to patrol and for you to join us.

Please volunteer as a VIP patroller. Send an email message to vip@mpum.com stating your desire to join our team. We will answer any questions you may have about the patrols and assist you with your application process.

And thank you to all of the current VIP volunteers who dedicated their time to train and continue to help keep our neighborhood a safer place to live.



Coyotes in the Neighborhood: What You Should Know

From City of Dallas Wildlife Investigator, *Jacqueline Sutherland*

At the all-neighborhood meeting on May 7, we heard from a City of Dallas Wildlife Investigator about coyote safety protocol. Here's what we learned.

Seeing a coyote in the neighborhood can feel alarming, especially if you're walking pets or out with kids. The good news: **coyote attacks on humans are very rare**, and coyotes are generally shy animals that prefer to avoid people. Still, as sightings become more common across Dallas neighborhoods, it's important that we respond the right way.

The City of Dallas recommends a strategy called "**hazing**" to help keep coyotes wild and discourage them from becoming comfortable around people. Hazing simply means making a coyote feel unwelcome so it learns to avoid our neighborhood. Think of it as training them to stay away!

If You See a Coyote:

- **Do not run**
- Stand tall, wave your arms, and make loud noises
- Yell firmly and maintain eye contact
- Use whistles, air horns, pots and pans, or clap loudly
- **A favorite recommendation from Investigator Sutherland:** carry a half-gallon jug filled with rocks during walks or VIP patrols and shake it loudly if you encounter a coyote
- Spray water or toss small objects near (not at) the coyote to scare it away
- Continue until the coyote fully leaves the area

Experts say consistency matters. If coyotes are ignored or accidentally fed, they can lose their natural fear of humans.

Help Prevent Coyotes from Returning:

- Never leave pet food outside
- Secure trash cans tightly
- Clean up fallen fruit and bird seed
- Keep small pets supervised outdoors
- Walk dogs on a short leash, especially at dawn and dusk

Removing food sources is one of the most effective ways to reduce neighborhood activity.

When to Report a Sighting

All coyote sightings should be reported to the City of Dallas coyote hotline at **469-676-9813**. Frequent reporting will trigger additional investigation from the City of Dallas. Sick or injured coyotes should be reported through **311**.

The most effective solution is community-wide awareness and action. When neighbors work together to remove attractants and consistently haze coyotes, it helps reinforce an important message: **neighborhoods are not places coyotes should feel comfortable.**

For more information, visit the City of Dallas wildlife resources at BeDallas90.org.

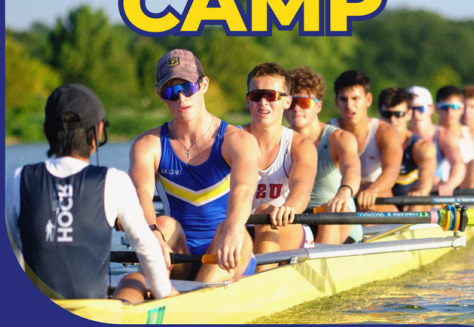


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MPUM Neighbor **Johnny Pineda** owns and operates **Greener Works Landscape**. They work on everything from small, neighborhood gardens to sprawling lawns and commercial spaces.

Johnny graciously volunteered his time and expertise to fix the sprinkler leak at our Fenton entrance and is assisting with other irrigation repairs. Please give him a big THANK YOU next time you see him in the neighborhood!



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The **MPUM VINO Our Neighbors** wine group brings neighbors together each month to socialize over food, wine, and great company. Wine is optional, the real focus is building community and having a good time with fellow MPUM neighbors.

Want to join? Email vino@mpum.com with your name and address. You will need to confirm this info to join the WhatsApp group as well. Cheers!

Would you like to advertise in the next neighborhood newsletter?
Please email info@mpum.com for details!



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MPUMNA BLOCK PARTY MAY 30 - 5-9PM

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MPUM Moments ICYMI

Would you like to be featured in the next neighborhood newsletter? Please email info@mpum.com with your photos!



The MPUM entrances showing off for Summer! Thanks again to Beautification volunteers **Dottie & Robert Giesler, Kristen Anderson, Bill Houghton** and **Debra Hale** for keeping our neighborhood looking fresh & fantastic.



Over 50 neighbors gather at the **MPUMNA All-Neighborhood Meeting** on May 7 at White Rock Fellowship Church for a 2025 year in review, Board elections, Wildlife Investigator demo, and more.



Margarita Social at **The Rosenstock's** house over Cinco de Mayo weekend.



Dog friends **Ruby, Drummer, Jojo, Lulu, Dolly Parton, & Daisy** out for a stroll with their humans.



Members of the **MPUM Book Club** meet on the first Tuesday of every month. Want to join? Check out the "MPUM Book Club" group in WhatsApp.