

## COMMUNITYNEWS

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NEWS IN BRIEF

## AUSTIN

## Program helps kids' access to YMCA

The YMCA of Austin and Capital Metro are teaming up to launch the Free Ride to the Y, campaign, coupling a new YMCA student membership for ages 12-18 with CapMetro's Kids Ride Free program on its buses and trains for all K-12 students.

The Y's student membership features a reduced monthly rate of \$25 and no joining fee. Financial assistance is available.

With a Y membership, young people have access to eight area YMCA of Austin facilities plus more than 2,500 Y's nationwide.

Central Texas K-12 students, with valid ID, and MetroAccess customers younger than 18, are able to use all CapMetro service free of charge. Students without a valid ID, can visit CapMetro's transit store to obtain identification.

For more information: [austinyymca.org/student-membership](http://austinyymca.org/student-membership).  
Courtesy of YMCA of Austin

## AUSTIN

## State funds to address road safety

More than \$5.5 million of Austin-area safety-related projects were awarded by the Texas Department of Transportation's 2020 Highway Safety Improvement Program this week to significantly reduce traffic fatalities and serious injuries.

Safety lighting will take place on Slaughter Lane from South First Street to Brandt Road, on Howard Lane from Interstate 35 to Dessau Road and on Cameron Road from I-35 to Rundberg Lane.

Signal improvements will include converting a pedestrian hybrid beacon to a full signal at South Congress Avenue and Alpine Road and new signals at South Congress and Ramble Lane, at Burleson Road and Metropolis Drive and at Quicksilver Boulevard and Bluff Springs Road.

For more information: [austintexas.gov/transportation](http://austintexas.gov/transportation).

From news reports

## SMITHVILLE

## Pre-JUNETEENTH event Sunday

A Pre-JUNETEENTH Celebration will take place from 1 to 3 p.m. Sunday at the Smithville Recreation Center, 106 Royston St.

The event will include speakers on topics such as impacts and actions on the COVID-19 pandemic, what affect the pandemic has had on children's social development and making high speed internet a priority. The event is free for the first 100 guests to RSVP by calling 832-921-9756. Donations should be made payable to Joshua Equal Urban Development Services, P.O. Box 1531, Bastrop, TX 78602.

Courtesy Smithville Area Chamber of Commerce

## Eateries happy mask mandate lifted



Restaurants in Pflugerville have been updating their face mask rules following the CDC's announcement of easing the mask-wearing guidance for fully vaccinated people. BRONTE WITTPEN/AUSTIN AMERICAN-STATESMAN

Rebecca Macias  
Austin American-Statesman  
USA TODAY NETWORK

Restaurants and businesses in Pflugerville have been updating their face mask rules following the CDC's latest guidelines for those fully vaccinated for COVID-19.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention announced last month it is easing the mask-wearing guidance for fully vaccinated people, allowing them to stop wearing masks indoors, in crowds and in most indoor settings.

Jermaine Dumes, co-

owner at Down South CaJún Eats, said he thinks this is a step in the right direction.

"From all the restrictions - close downs, to-go only and curbside pickup - and all the things we've tried to roll with, I think this has been something we've all been waiting for," Dumes said. "I believe people will adapt to the news and lifting the restrictions. Although it will probably take some time, I'm excited."

Dumes said the restaurant has dropped its mask requirement for customers, but will allow them to wear one if they choose.

"Since we're an outdoor venue, moving forward we'll probably stop wearing masks, but we're not there yet," Dumes said. "We are all so used to it now that I think it will be a big change for us."

Pflugerville resident Nyja Anderson said she wears her mask when picking up her food at restaurants like Down South CaJún Eats.

"I think it really just is up to the person, so I'm comfortable wearing it even though I'm fully vaccinated," Anderson said. "I think I'm doing it more for employees behind the counter just to make sure everyone else is safe."

At the wine and craft beer bar Three Legged Goat, co-owner Jim McDonald decided to lift mask requirements for both guests and staff.

"Once we stopped wearing our masks, people would come in and see me, my wife or my son without our masks and they would take their mask off, but people would still be coming in with a mask on," McDonald said. "Now that most everyone who wants to be vaccinated has been and we're on the other side, we felt like we should make it (wearing a mask) voluntary. No one should feel weird about it, nobody is shunning you. It's been over a year and we feel like we're trained to wear masks so when we heard the new guidelines from the CDC, it was exciting and a surprise."

McDonald said he plans to leave it optional for employees to choose to wear their mask or not.

"Being a small family-owned business, some employees include myself, my wife and my son as well as others, but my family is all vaccinated and my son will still choose to wear a mask anyway," McDonald said. "We want our business to be a space where you have the right to choose what you're most comfortable with."

Denise Stokes, co-owner of Pflugerville Nutrition, said it also will no longer enforce customers wearing masks inside the business.

"The staff at this time will continue to wear masks for the safety of our customers and family members that have not been vaccinated," Stokes said. "We will continue to monitor the situation."

However, not all businesses are ready to lift their mask requirements.

Blanca Rodriguez, of Stylin' Salon and Spa said it is keeping a masking requirement for now.

"Because so many people still have not been vaccinated, we're just keeping the masks, as of this time, until things play out a little bit," Rodriguez said.

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## CAPITOL COMPLEX MILESTONES



Jason Beiter, right, vice president at JE Dunn Austin, speaks as leaders from the Texas Facilities Commission celebrate the completion of three construction milestones at Austin's new Capitol Complex: the completion of the site excavation, the relocation of over 27 utilities, and the completion of a new Central Utility Plant. The state is implementing Phase I of the Capitol Complex master plan that aims to save Texans millions in tax dollars by centralizing state agencies on one campus. BRET BROOKSHIRE