

TARRANT COUNTY

NEWS & INFORMATION



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Courthouse West Entry Dedicated



Photography by
Charles Davis Smith

A ribbon-cutting was held recently to dedicate the restoration of the west entrance to the 1895 Courthouse. No debt was issued for the \$10.5 million project, which was financed exclusively through non-debt capital funds in the annual budgets over four years. Not only were the steps and porch restored using granite from the same quarry the stones were excavated from in 1895, but several other features were financed. The price includes the demolition of the old Civil Courts building, utility connections with the Administration Building across the street and a 45,000 gallon cistern that collects rain that will be used to irrigate the Courthouse lawns. The portico on the west end of the 1895 Courthouse was removed in 1956 to allow for it to be connected to the old Civil Courts Building. It has been a long-time Tarrant County goal to restore the west entrance.

Holiday Feasting, The Safe Way

The holiday season usually includes special foods, and no one wants to get sick from eating them. With that in mind, here are a few tips to keep harmful bacteria from spoiling those special foods:

- Buying and storing – Place purchased meats in separate plastic bags so that drippings won't contaminate other foods. Minimize bacterial growth on stored foods by keeping the refrigerator temperature at 40 degrees and the freezer temperature at zero degrees.
- Before food preparation – Most packaged meats come with thawing and preparation instructions. Follow them! Also, clean all surfaces to be used before any food preparation, including utensils and cutting boards. Wash your hands, too, and be careful to keep uncooked meat juices from contaminating any other foods.
- The inside temperature of the meat matters – Cooking times and oven temperatures can vary, but each meat must reach a specific internal temperature for safe consumption. Inexpensive meat thermometers are available at most grocery stores. Some temperature guidelines:
 - o Turkey and ground poultry should reach 165 degrees.
 - o Ham, pork, ground meats, beef, veal, lamb steaks, roasts and chops should reach 160 degrees (medium) or 170 degrees (well done).
 - o Whole poultry and thighs should reach 160 degrees (medium) or 170 degrees (well done).
- Keep hot foods hot, and cold foods cold – Keep cooked foods at 140 degrees to minimize bacteria. Holding cold foods at 40 degrees retards bacterial growth.
- Do not leave any foods uncovered at room temperature for very long – The longer any food item is allowed to sit out, the more time bacteria has to develop in or on it.
- Storing and reheating – If leftovers won't be completely eaten within a day or two, freeze them in sealed containers. To kill any possible bacteria, reheat leftover hot food to 165 degrees before serving.

Courthouse Tours

Tarrant County Historical Commission will host free public guided tours of the historic 1895 Courthouse before the Parade of Lights on Sunday, November 22, from 3:30 to 5:30 p.m.

Strategies seek to mitigate E. coli in Trinity River watershed

Tarrant County's stormwater team will be implementing strategies to help mitigate Escherichia coli (E. coli) bacteria in the Trinity River watershed. Activities include education and outreach to citizens and county employees, maintain websites with valuable information on pollution control, monitor areas of potential impact, and regulate and prosecute violators under Texas Health and Safety Codes, if necessary.

The Clean Water Act requires "states to identify uses for the state's surface waters such as aquatic life, recreation and sources of public water supply." Various segments of the Trinity River and its tributaries were identified as having levels of E. coli bacteria.

In September 2013, the Environmental Protection Agency and the Texas Commission of Environmental Quality approved a regional North Texas watershed Implementation Plan for Total Maximum Daily Loads for Bacteria in the Greater Trinity River Region.

Some potential sources of E. coli in the watershed range from malfunctioning onsite sewage facilities, industrial/ commercial illicit discharges, discharge from construction sites, pet waste, livestock and wildlife waste, illegal dumping of all kinds and stormwater runoff from parking lots or contaminated properties.

Tarrant County is one of many stakeholders sharing responsibility for portions of the Lower West Fork Trinity River. This segment consists of approximately 259 square miles and encompasses parts or all cities of Arlington, Bedford, Colleyville, Dallas, Dalworthington Gardens, Euless, Fort Worth, Grand Prairie, Haslet, Hurst, Irving, Keller, Kennedale, North Richland Hills, Richland Hills, Southlake, and the town of Pantego. Tarrant County's responsible areas lie in the urbanized unincorporated sections.

To find out more, or to learn what you can do help reduce E. coli contamination and any forms of pollution in Tarrant County, please go to our website at www.tarrantcounty.com/ehealth or call 817-321-4988. To view the Implementation Plan go www.nctcog.org/envir/seecclean/wg/tmdl/TMDLI-Plan.asp