

## One Day Back in 1610

The Onebranch Interactive Library is a place for parents and other patrons of learning to play and participate in promoting the potentiality of young people ~

by Lisa Westbrook

Actually, it was January 7, 1610, and Galileo was looking at the sky. We know this because he decided to record his

all three points were to the west of Jupiter. The next night was cloudy, but then on the fourth night, he looked at Jupiter again. This time he only saw two points of light, this time to the east of Jupiter. He continued to watch Jupiter for the next few nights and on the 13th of January he saw four points of light, one point to the east of Jupiter and three points to the west of it.

He was able to see, in only 7 days of observations, that these points of light were going around Jupiter, being the first to discover that Jupiter has moons, more than one!

Parents can help their children become active learners in their environment by participating with them in recording observations from

In the summer of 2001, my two boys and I started keeping a journal of things we saw in our neighborhood. We went on nature walks and were surprised to find that a flock of white-winged doves inhabited our neighborhood. We made a note of the trees they frequented, noticing that they often roosted in large numbers in a big oak on the east side of our property, but that they built nests on the west side, in smaller trees, the cedar elms and the younger live oaks.

We had the privilege of watching new chicks grow and fly from the nest and then were surprised to find that they often met their mother at dusk in the same tree where they were born.

**Parents can help their children become active learners by participating with them in recording observations from nature.**

nature. Our own observations may not lead to such discoveries as moons around Jupiter, [or maybe they will!] but they can help us engage our kids in science and nature inquiry and may strengthen a child's positive experiences of childhood.

To see this cycle of events was pure joy, and inspired us to check out bird books from the library and learn as much as possible. We even noticed that the mother would not fly directly to the tree if we were out-

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Jupiter and Io [PhotoDisc]

observations. He let us know that it was an hour after sunset and that he could see the planet Jupiter. He also noted points of light that he saw, apparently grouped near it. To the east of Jupiter, he saw two points of light, and to the west he saw one point of light.

What can we learn from recording our own observation from nature? Let's look more closely at what happened to Galileo in the days following January 7th.

His curiosity compelled him to look at Jupiter the next night, and again he saw three points of light grouped near it. But this time, to his surprise,

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## Out-of-Print Treasure Hunt

Look for these out-of-print treasures in your local library or in used bookstores or shops

1. **An Eye for Fractals** by Michael McGuire
2. **Mathematics for the Nonmathematician** by Morris Kline
3. **The Oak Tree** by Laura Jane Coats
4. **Pioneer Astronomers** by Navin Sullivan
5. **A-Z of Companion Planting** by Pamela Allardice
6. **Fathering the Next Generation: Men Mentoring Men** by William J. Jarema
7. **Asimov's Chronology of Science and Discovery** by Isaac Asimov
8. **The Illustrated Almanac of Science, Technology and Invention: Day by Day Facts, Figures, and the Fanciful** by Raymond L. Francis

## Summer in Texas

### Explore Your World ~ Close to Home

**B**udding scientists and writers ~ Why not practice your observation and writing skills this summer by recording data about the things in your area and choosing to research and investigate something you've been wanting to know more about? If you live in or visit Austin this summer, one idea is to spend some time learning about bats. If you can plan to be near the Congress Avenue Bridge at dusk, you can see Austin's Mexican free-tailed bat colony flying up from the bridge. Maybe you have heard how many thousands of pounds of bugs they eat every night? You can do an online search about bats and check out resources from the library. Here's a few we enjoy:

1. E 599.4 - *Bats - Strange and Wonderful* by Laurence Pringle
2. E Fic Can - *The Bat in the Boot* by Annie Cannon
3. VHS 599.4 Se *The Secret World of Bats* videorecording
4. VHS 599.4 Ve *Very Elementary Bats*

You could also write about places you visit that are close to home. In Austin, you can go online to [www.austinmetro.com](http://www.austinmetro.com) and look for

the 101 Things to Do in Austin link to get a few ideas. If you get a chance, go with your parents to see *Winged Migration*, the documentary film about bird migration by Jacques Perrin, playing in July at the Doobie Theater. You can see the video trailer at [www.sonyclassics.com/wingedmigration/home.html](http://www.sonyclassics.com/wingedmigration/home.html)

Look in your own neighborhood and see if you can identify plants, birds, insects, squirrels, and other wildlife. You can make your own booklets of your findings and musings and show them to your parents to teach them what you learn. Or you could make up your own guessing game, a poem, or a riddle and try them out on your friends.

#### Note to Parents:

You can help your young observers improve their observations, vocabulary, and writing skills by getting involved with them in learning about their environment. In these hectic and tight economic times, teaching your children to explore their world, to discover nature around them, and to learn to observe and describe what they see can happen in your own neighborhood.

**LeAnne Hunt** is an Austin-based freelance writer who works for the Austin Public Library.

## One Day in 1610

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side watching it, even if one of the young chicks was already waiting in the tree. She would circle around. Then we would go inside and watch from the window, and only when she felt no one was watching would she go to her chick in the tree.

We have continued watching these birds and have come to love them. We watched through the fall of 2001, when the leaves falling from the cedar elm were like tears, through the cold winter, when the leaves were bare and the birds didn't come around for awhile.

Right before spring, the birds spoke to us in a special way: landing on a bare tree that looked like it would never bloom again. Then about ten days into spring, late, and taking a little longer to be happy, the buds finally came to break the silence and grace us with beauty again. We saw these things and faithfully recorded them on our calendar, and it was encouraging to see the resilience of nature beckoning us to also grow.

Now we are in summer of 2003 and the white-winged doves are mating and making new nests. My boys feed them under the oak, chase away the crows and play in the rock pile by our door. We made a note in our journal of the rainstorm that gave the earth around us a drink and wait to see what the rest of the summer will bring.

# Teacher in the Trenches

by Sherry Hammons

As another school year ends, teachers find themselves at a crossroad.

Many school districts are cutting back on administrators and teaching staff and hiring teachers with less experience in an effort to cut back on expenses. The expectations are so high that many teachers and children are suffering burn out. There are more teachers on prescription drugs for stress

and more children diagnosed with ADHD, ADD or LD than ever before.

There seems to be a never-ending stream of knowledge filtering down from those in charge of curriculum legislation, those who most likely have never spent more than five minutes in a classroom. It is not wrong to have high goals, but the goals should be developmentally appropriate

for the children who are being expected to assimilate them.

Teachers are deluged with workshops and objectives to meet with no time to plan or implement the new information. Technology is really a buzz word for letting the children use center time to practice math facts or reading comprehension via the computer on any one topic.

Educators would like to see more quality and less quantity in the classroom.

Teachers need real support and access to educational tools that would benefit the children they educate.

And more than ever we need to work together to facilitate learning opportunities, both during and after school hours, and make sure both children and their parents have access to the information they need.

**Sherry Hammons** is a first-grade teacher and president of OneBranch.org

## Texas Student Challenge Project

### Webmastering and Multimedia Students in Grades 11-12

Let the last few years of high school be a time to increase your skills and develop your portfolio, while sharing essential knowledge with your community. Get involved in the Onebranch Interactive Library development project, a non-profit initiative to promote essential knowledge



Prototype for interactive border

and facilitate inspired citizens in Texas. Visit us online to see where we will showcase student multimedia presentations that explain basic concepts, and make basic knowledge more accessible to the community (and to your parents!) Interested students with subject interests in math and science, technology, journalism, poetry and art, call Onebranch.org at (512) 335-4180 or email us at [studentprojects@onebranch.org](mailto:studentprojects@onebranch.org), putting your area of interest in the subject of your email.

### Volunteer Mentors Wanted

Retired master teachers, instructional specialists, principals, computer programmers and librarians are wanted to share technical expertise and serve as mentors on student projects. For more info, contact Lisa Westbrook at (512) 335-4180 or email us at [volunteers@onebranch.org](mailto:volunteers@onebranch.org).

## When Did it Happen?

Test your chronological knowledge of events in history from the mid-1400s through the early 1700s.

1. When was Copernicus born?
2. Who was born in the same year as Galileo: Kepler, Newton, or Shakespeare?
3. What year did Galileo begin making astronomical observations?
4. In what year was the beginning of the year changed from March 25 to Jan 1?
5. What year did Albert Gerard use brackets and other abbreviations in mathematics?
6. When did William Oughtred propose the symbol "x" for multiplication?

Find out more about events from the mid-1400s through the 1700s by reviewing the "Early Modern Chronology" at [www.columbia.edu/~tdk3/chronology.html](http://www.columbia.edu/~tdk3/chronology.html)

7. What was the purpose of the library of the American Philosophic Society, begun by Benjamin Franklin in Philadelphia in 1743?

If you don't have time to go to Philadelphia, you can find out by taking the virtual tour at: [www.computer-chair-traveler.org/index\\_1.html](http://www.computer-chair-traveler.org/index_1.html) and clicking on *Historic Philadelphia*.

8. What did Eratosthenes look into when attempting to calculate the diameter of the earth? A mirror, a telescope, or a well

Find out more by reading Kathryn Lasky's captivating book, *The Librarian who Measured the Earth*.

(1)1473 (2) Galileo and Shakespeare were both born in 1564 (3) 1609 (4) 1622 (5) 1629 (6) 1630 (7) to promote useful knowledge (8) a well

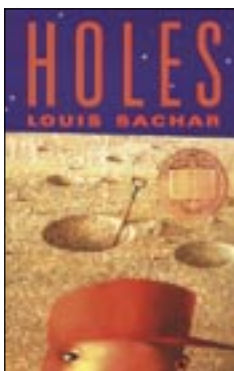


# Youth Book Review

by Laurel Cummins age 12

**F**or a great summer read, you should try Louis Sachar's *Holes*. When first hearing about or seeing the book, you probably will not be compelled to read it because the story line is rather out of the ordinary. However, if you choose to read it you will find that it is a thrilling, wonderful book from the first to the last page.

This book is about Stanley Yelnats, a boy whose family is cursed by an unkept promise by his great-great grandfather. When Stanley is charged for a crime he did not commit, he is sent to



is more to this camp than meets the eye, and together with a new friend, Hector, he works to unravel a mystery that brings him more

Camp Green Lake, a camp located on a dry lake where every day for 18 months boys must dig a 5-foot hole. It doesn't

take long for him to realize that there

adventure and more danger than he ever imagined.

I highly recommend this book for children and adults alike. Sachar takes what seems to be a strange story and turns it into what can only be called a work of art. Since the story jumps between Stanley's adventures and what went on at the lake in the past, it may seem as though the book may not be leading anywhere at times. But if you read carefully, then you can see how the author swiftly and perfectly aligns the story together to create a true masterpiece. This book is sure to delight generations to come.

Happy reading!

## Youth Nature Activity

### Grow green onions on your patio

This is a fun project that is easy for even young children to do. You may want them to

decorate the pots before they plant in them. When they see the new growth, they might even be willing to eat them!

**Materials** - green onions, scissors, small clay pot, dirt, spoon or small shovel, watercolors, water.



**1** **Gather** green onions and other materials.



**2** **Cut** off some of the green part to use in a summer recipe.



**3** **Place** several of the white roots in a clay pot with dirt.



**4** **Decorate** the clay pot with watercolors if you like.



**5** **Water** and place in a sunny spot to grow.



**6** **Share** the green tops with your parents in a summer snack.

# Technology is Here, What's to Fear?

by Rhonda Waites

Recently, I completed a class at Texas Women's University titled Advanced Computer Technology for Education. This has been by far one of the most informative, difficult, and time-consuming courses I have ever taken in my teacher preparation coursework! Or my entire life!

Although it was difficult, I learned an incredible amount of information about using technology in education. I was forced to research and use the technology that is out there. I was introduced to how web pages are made and required to make not only one, but several.

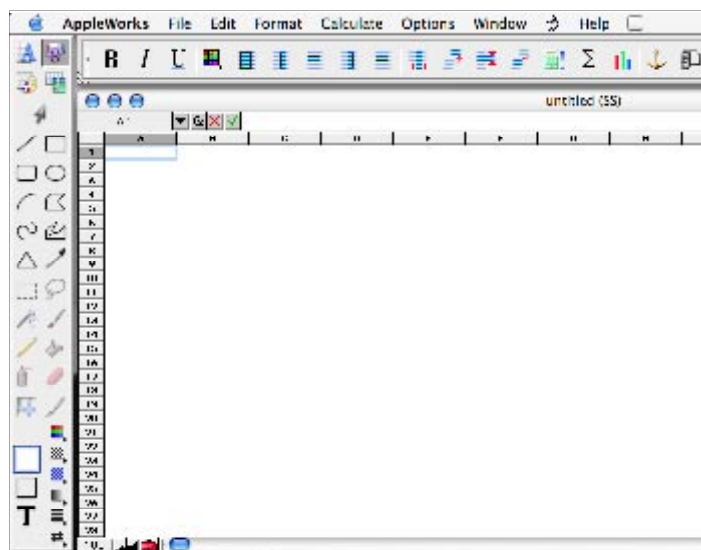
I was forced to use html code and also to use web-page-making software. I made self-grading worksheets, used databases and word programs, did tons of research on the internet and learned the value of using this technology in the classroom.

Technology is here to stay and, as teachers, we need to get over the fear of using what is available. Most classrooms are equipped with computers and have internet access, but the curriculum does not always utilize them often enough and teachers are not allowed enough time to fully incorporate them into the lessons.

Teachers are stressed to the max with time constraints and testing, and computers can be a time-

saving tool. Computers can aid in keeping up with grades and student assessment and progress. One way to use this technology is making self-grading worksheets using spreadsheet software. All computers have spreadsheet programs. Electronic work-sheets can be

Students can focus on learning basic spreadsheet skills, and children as young as kindergarten can utilize the templates to put them to use effectively. The article mentions specific uses for and gives examples of spreadsheets being used in the classroom:



**A spreadsheet from AppleWorks**

customized for virtually any lesson plan.

In the article, "Spreadsheet Magic", Pamela Lewis talks about how to incorporate the use of spreadsheets into the everyday classroom curriculum. She states, "Students learn across the curriculum as they use computers." In her opinion, "it is easier to stimulate their interest and they stay on task better when they learn on computers." Plus, "they take pride in a professional looking finished product." [Learning & Leading with Technology 30(3):36-41(Nov. 2002)]

patterns

- Adding - children practice using manipulatives and then do math problems on spreadsheet

- Understanding fractions - spreadsheets can emulate fraction bars; students fill in fractional parts of cells with color to see fractional parts of a whole row

- Seeing patterns - multiplication tables can be organized, hundreds charts can be filled in etc...

- Using formulas - students begin to understand abstract concepts as they enter formulas

Lewis' article has examples and pictures to show how the spreadsheets are being used and gives proof that the spreadsheet is a valuable tool for the classroom.

I encourage educators to jump in and get their feet wet! Yes it is difficult, but the time savings alone is worth the effort. Take the bull by the horns and teach yourself and your students how to utilize all the available resources.

- Counting - first and second grade can find clip art and insert it into cells for counting; students become aware of

## Parents and Learner Teachers!

If you are interested in learning more about learning, check out what educators have to say about Generative and Transformative Learning

Here's a few sites to get you started:

1. [www.joanwink.com/3perspectives.html](http://www.joanwink.com/3perspectives.html)
2. [www.ed.psu.edu/nasa/genetxt.html](http://www.ed.psu.edu/nasa/genetxt.html)
3. [www.it-consultancy.com/extern/culture.html#two](http://www.it-consultancy.com/extern/culture.html#two)
4. [www.21learn.org/arch/articles/pacemarshall.html](http://www.21learn.org/arch/articles/pacemarshall.html)

Look for more about Generative and Transformative Learning in our fall newsletter.

# A Reader's Journey Through Life's Stories

by Lisa Westbrook

For the past several years, I have been drawn to reading about people and their life journeys. Why are these kinds of books so rewarding? For me, it helps to read about the struggles and triumphs of others. We are all on a kind of journey, and the pain or joy of that journey can be transmuted by the decisions we make along the way. So when I read about the choices of others, I get perspective on managing my own life.

A couple of years ago, I read John Vernon's *A Book of Reasons*. After reading it, I found myself wondering how I sometimes come up with reasons that justify my opinions but don't support my growth. Then I read Scott Carrier's *Running After Antelope*, followed by Bruce Feiler's *Walking the Bible*.

I can't tell you why I was drawn to these books. But in the pages of each lived individuals drawn to far places to discover a part of themselves. Each learned something unexpected along the way. Sometimes it's little details I find delight in, such as finding out from Feiler's journey that oleanders grow by the Jordon River. Each journey offers surprising detail about our inner and outer world, and a unique perspective to ponder.

I was talking to a friend of mine recently about the things we read.

We decided that what we read doesn't have to fit what we already know, and that we can gain perspective from other's life stories, even if they are very different from our own. Many of the journeys that compel us can be taken without leaving the country or chasing after antelope. Then Kay Redfield

me see that if we want to understand our world and our place in it, we need some time, quiet time, to think about it, and not be so busy in it.

Have we become too attached to some of our reasons for living the way we do? Does everything we do have to fit what we've been taught? Do our traditions allow us to

her belief in the importance of role models and in spending time thinking about how to contribute our gifts to society. Here's what she says about the influence of her mother, her father, and grandmother, "The content of my conscience came from my mother's concern for other people and the state of the world and from my father's insistence that the only thing worth doing is to add to the store of exactly known facts. But my strength of my conscience came from Grandma, who meant what she said. Perhaps nothing is more valuable to a child than living with an adult who is firm and loving - and Grandma was loving."

**How attached have we become to our ideas? When we think of tradition, are we stuck with what we know?**

Jamison's book *An Unquiet Mind* found its way to my desk. Her memoir of her struggle with manic-depressive illness both intrigued and disturbed me. It underscored how important inspiration is for active minds. It made

learn lessons from others and share what we know?

It is the heat of the summer, but right now, I am in the middle of reading the autobiography of Margaret Mead, *Blackberry Winter*. Mead's book explicitly describes

## Thinking about college?

Read this book. In *Breaking Through* by Francisco Jiménez, the author shares the story of his teenage years, which includes how he overcomes the barriers to pursuing an education while working as a migrant worker in the 1950s in California. School counselors might want to share this book with students who have decided that they can't go to college for financial reasons. Students will be inspired to search out possibilities after reading this book.

Books that prepare students for AP examinations can help all students to understand specific strategies for increasing academic performance.

And if you are in advanced placement courses, check out books to help you prepare for AP examinations in your AP subject area. Do a title search

on AP at your library, or look for AP books used online.

## Here are a few books for AP English students:

1. *Cracking the AP English Lit Exam 2002-2003* (Princeton Review) by Douglas McMullen and Douglas McMullen, Jr.
2. *Barron's How to Prepare for the AP English Advanced Placement Examinations*, 7th ed., by George Ehrenhaft, Max Nadel, and Arthur Sherrer, Jr.
3. *AP Success English Language and Composition*, 3rd ed., by Margaret C. Moran and W. Frances Holder

In the article "The 100 Best High Schools in America", *Newsweek*, June 2, 2003, reports that "Admissions deans say that AP is a better predictor of college success than the SAT and that they look for students who've pushed themselves."



# Recommended Summer Reading

***Longitude*** by Dava Sobel

John Harrison wanted to be able to measure longitude. He tried and tried his whole life. Finally, in 1735, after abandoning his first four tries, he developed an accurate way to measure longitude with an instrument he produced called a chronometer. Dava Sobel's account of his trials and difficulties will inspire the inventor in you to wake up and look at your world.

***The Bondwoman's Narrative*** by Hannah Crafts

This 1850s account of a female slave and her journey to freedom was recently uncovered, researched and authenticated by Harvard scholar, Henry Louis Gates, Jr. It tells of her desire to expand her mind, how she learned to read and how she worked to survive the many hardships and trials she encountered as a slave, a fugitive, and a prisoner before her final deliverance as a free woman.

***Lust for Life*** by Irving Stone

From the coal mines in the Borinage to the Cornfields in Arles, this biographical novel takes us through the captivating life and times of Vincent Van Gogh. Throughout his short life, he wrote hundreds of letters to his brother Theo, first to find what he must do and then to express what he saw in the nature around him.

***First you Build a Cloud*** by K.C. Cole

Author of *The Universe and the Teacup: The Mathematics of Truth and Beauty*, K.C. Cole brings the understanding of the cosmos closer to all of us. Her ability to make difficult concepts understandable provides just the right amount of gravity. Just wait until you read what she says about electricity, and why we can't stump our toe in mush!

***Sparks of Genius - The Thirteen Thinking Tools used by the World's Most Creative People*** by Robert and Michele Root-Bernstein

This book doesn't just help you think, it tells you ways lots of creative people think. In one anecdote, the authors describe the scene when Helen Keller receives the "ah ha" about the concept of jumping while visiting a friend's dance studio. After gently placing her hands on a dancer's hips, and feeling the dancer jump, she gets a feeling for the concept, and shortly after remarks, "jumping... how like the mind it is."

***Best Practice - New Standards for Teaching and Learning in America's Schools, 2nd ed.*** by Steven Zemelman, Harvey Daniels, and Arthur Hyde

This book is so empowering to teachers and so full of information about how to engage student and parents in education that we are sorry it took us so long to read

it. From close inspection into classrooms that work, from inquiry science, to engaging parents in learning about what their kids need to know, this book is just plain useful.

***Real-Life Homeschooling: The Stories of 21 Families who Teach Their Children at Home*** by Rhonda Barfield

Don't let this book scare you if your kids attend public school - this book is loved by teachers and parents of public school children as well. The reason is that all of us who have kids spend some time at home with them, and we can learn something from others who spend lots of time at home - thinking of opportunities for learning. The more good ideas we have, the more opportunities to participate and encourage the development of our children. Whether you would ever even consider homeschooling your own children or not, we challenge everyone to take a peek inside this book.

***Say Goodbye to Whining, Complaining, and Bad Attitudes in You and Your Kids!*** By Scott Turansky and Joanne Miller

We thought whining was a way of life, and firmness had to be harsh. That was before we read about honor-based parenting. This book pays for itself again and again.

***Parenting the Strong-willed Child*** by Rex Forehand, Ph.D., and Nicholas Long, Ph.D.

This book has just recently been revised with entirely fresh and positive approaches to dealing with a strong-willed child. We couldn't find anything we didn't like about this book. We especially liked learning about the skill of attending to positive behaviors and how we can avoid reinforcing negative ones.

***Because of Winn-Dixie*** by Kate Camillo

This Texas Bluebonnet winner is perfect for reading out loud, and might just make you smile with its simple message of thoughtfulness, played out by a 14-year-old girl and her dog Winn-Dixie, who together befriend and unite the lonely people in a small Texas town. (Youth fiction)

***Out of the Dust*** by Karen Heese

Many teachers have already read this fictional account of a young girl who survived the dust bowl of the 1920s, but if you haven't, don't put it off any longer. It is a great example of resilience through hard times, and the prose will keep you reading until the last page. (Youth fiction)

***Mole Music*** by David McPhail

David McPhail is a good example for the idea that picture books aren't just for kids. See for yourself in this lovely story about a mole who after much practice learns to play the violin and shares his music with the world. (Picture book)

# Austin Local Interest

## Mayor's Reading Club chooses Louis Sachar's Holes

Now a major motion picture, read our student review of the book and find out more at the Austin Public Library. Read about the author at [http://www.cityofaustin.org/library/mbc03\\_author.htm](http://www.cityofaustin.org/library/mbc03_author.htm).

## Want to know what's going on at the Austin Public Library this summer?

Be sure to pick up their newsletter *The Bridge* at your local branch. There you will find out about summer reading programs available through all their branches and technology workshops available through their Wired for Youth centers. Or search online at [www.cityofaustin.org/library](http://www.cityofaustin.org/library).

## Where to take used ink cartridges? - to the Library

The Austin Public Library has been part of a recycling program with Megabyte Express since April 2003. How many of us are still tossing our used ink cartridges? Let's all help raise awareness by telling others they can drop off their used cartridges in the recycling bins in any of Austin's 22 public libraries. If you are wondering what else you can recycle, check out the

link on Austin-based Ecology-Action.org's website, <http://www.ecology-action.org/what.shtml>.

## Write a 1-3 page story

Be part of the project, Writing Austin's Lives, a citywide community project sponsored by the University of Texas Humanities Institute in cooperation with the Mayor's office, APL, AISD, and the The Story Circle Network. Find out more at [www.utexas.edu/cola/depts/huminst](http://www.utexas.edu/cola/depts/huminst).

## Building Austin's library collection

If you have been thinking about buying a book, VHS, or DVD to donate to the Austin Public Library, consider purchasing one of Annenberg's educational DVDs.

They recently produced their *Mechanical Universe* series on DVD. The entire series includes 52 half-hour programs on 12 DVDs. To find out more, visit the website, [www.learner.org](http://www.learner.org) or call 1-800-LEARNER.

## Sharpen your journalistic skills

Austin Youth can sharpen their journalistic and technology skills by joining the team of youth writers at [www.austinyouth.org](http://www.austinyouth.org).

## Sharpen your knowledge of Austin-area plants

Pick up and peruse the free guide to native and adapted landscape plants put together by [www.growgreen.org](http://www.growgreen.org) in co-

operation with the Texas Cooperative Extension and the City of Austin. You might also enjoy Austin-based Treefolks' guide to growing Texas trees. Find out more at their website [www.treefolks.org](http://www.treefolks.org).

## Join our Advisory Board and help make a difference!

### Yes, I'd like to be considered for a seat on the OneBranch.org advisory board

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

email \_\_\_\_\_@\_\_\_\_\_

I am a:

☐ Parent: Ages of children \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Teacher: Grades and subjects taught \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Student: Grade and special interests \_\_\_\_\_

I am most interested in seeing these benefits in my community (check all that apply)

☐ Sharing expertise

☐ Engaging parents in afters-school learning events and tutoring

☐ Participating in workshops

☐ Engaging students in community projects

☐ Sponsoring teachers as mentors

☐ Collecting materials for local libraries

☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

Clip and mail this application for consideration to  
**7920 San Felipe, Suite 1703, Austin, TX 78729**

## OneBranchNewsletter

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