



Photo credit: Amy Weiss

PAT BRODNAX

Managing Director & Director of Education

Save Our Springs Alliance

1999 - Present

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When I moved to Austin in the late 1980s, it was a laid-back college town. The music scene was unrestrained, Whole Foods was a tiny health food shop and Barton Springs was our local swimming hole where we went to rejuvenate and bask in the sun. We were blissfully unaware that our quality of life could be at risk.

That changed one day in 1990 when a massive development was proposed for the banks of Barton Creek. It was the largest slated development Austin had ever seen, pushed by the nation's largest and worst water polluter, the Freeport McMoRan mining company.

Austin was called to action to defend Barton Creek and Barton Springs. More than 800 people testified into the night for their beloved waters, convincing Austin's City Council to deny the proposal and the Save Our Springs (SOS) movement was born, leading to the voter-approved Save Our Springs Ordinance in 1992 and to 30 years of advocacy for Barton Springs, the Edwards Aquifer and the Hill Country.

Most everyone in the city knew about the Save Our Springs movement then and fiercely worked to protect the springs. However, throughout the years, due to extreme growth and change, the threats to our home waters grew. Along with more development, Austin also lost that strong sense of place and connection to the springs. Newcomers are simply not as educated as they need to be about our fragile aquatic ecosystems.

As Save Our Springs Alliance's Managing Director and Director of Education, I see this as our new call to action. The success of the SOS movement continues to depend on our legal and advocacy efforts, but now, more importantly, it requires us to educate Austin's new citizens and the next generation. SOS Alliance is responding to this challenge by expanding and enhancing our educational mission mostly through our premier educational program, Barton Springs University (BSU).

BSU is a year-round endeavor that includes snorkeling eco-tours, hikes, kid's camps and Barton Springs 101 classes. The program culminates each September with a full day of BSU at Barton Springs Pool, featuring outdoor presentations and experiential learning activities taught by the foremost water experts and professionals in our area. More than 1,000 high-school students, their teachers, college students and the public attend.

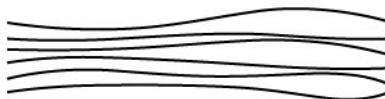
Our goal is to educate new citizens, re-engage long-time citizens and inspire our young people to become the next generation of environmental stewards and activists. BSU gives us all an opportunity to learn what we must do as a community to protect and sustain our local watersheds. You can learn more at bartonspringsuniversity.org.

PAT BRODNAX CONT'D

When I think back to when my son was young, gleefully learning to swim and explore in that cool, clear water, and now see my granddaughter, Juniper, donning her mask and snorkel, discovering the wonderful underwater world of Barton Springs like her father did, I am reminded of how life was then and now— and how it should always be in our unique city.

Barton Springs is my sanctuary, the place that will heal and comfort me for the rest of my life. My hope is that every Austinite will always have the opportunity to experience this natural treasure, learn about it and then act to protect it. It is our responsibility as a community to build on the passion and awareness from over the years, carry it over to each new generation and protect the soul of our city forever.

BARTON CREEK



TIME STREAM