

community *focus*

Dove Springs kids name park

By Sheryl Kennedy
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While millions of voters turned out to select the next president of the United States in November, thousands of students from five schools in the Dove Springs community cast their votes for an issue closer to home.

"I think it's good that we (kids) can select the name for our park," said Rebecca Trant, 10, a fifth-grader at Widen Elementary School.

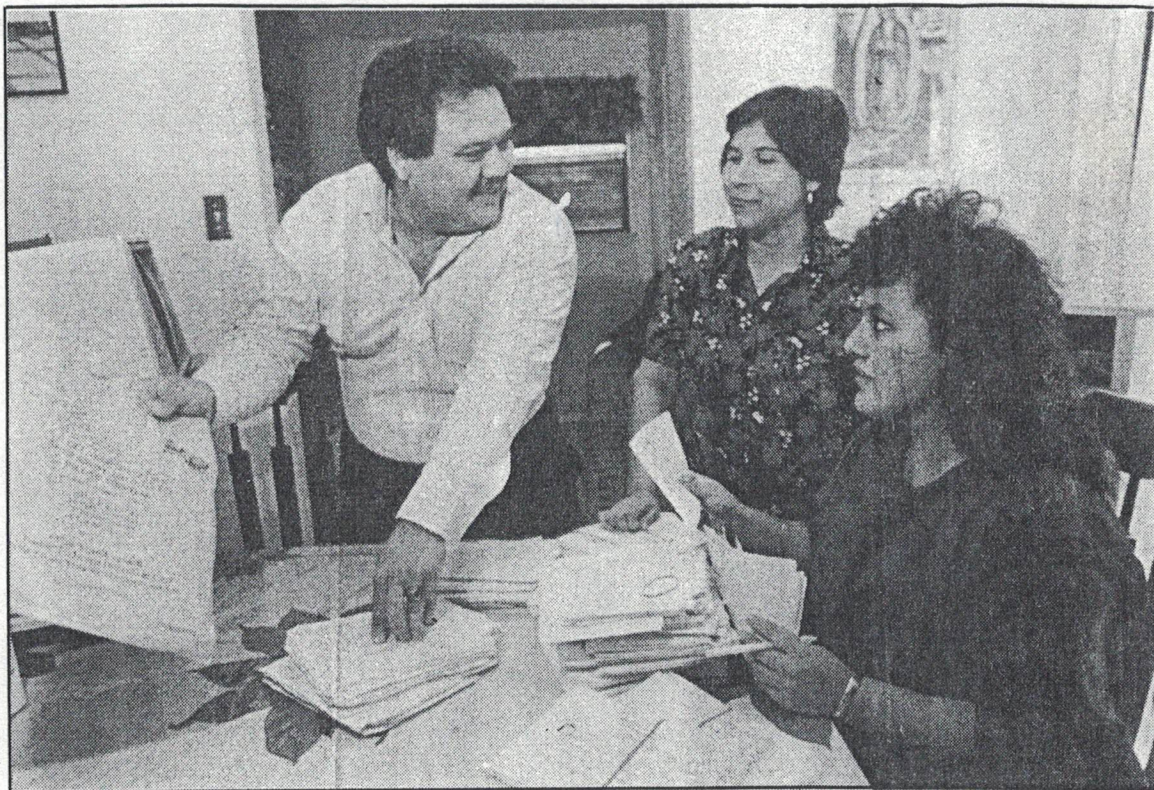
"So many times adults pick things for kids without even asking us what we think or want... that's not the case with our park."

Young voters from Houston Elementary, Langford Elementary, Palm Elementary, Widen Elementary and Mendez Middle School checked off ballots for a name for the 25.5-acre park before school closed for the holidays.

It was an eighth-grade or younger election. No adults were allowed.

"We thought it was a good way to build a sense of pride in our children and also a way to make them feel a part of the park," said Cristina Chavez, who has fought hard for the park.

A 20-member committee of PTA members, neighborhood association members and residents selected the choices that would appear on the ballot — Cristina Chavez Park, Dove



Staff photo by Kevin Virobik-Adams

Victor Aquino, left, Cristina Chavez and Ofelia Maldonado examine ballots.

Springs Park and Williamson Creek Park.

The name that was selected by the children will be announced at the Jan. 26 meeting of the Austin Parks and Recreation Department Board.

"I picked Cristina Chavez because she was the one who thought of the idea to even get a park, and she worked really hard for it," Rebecca said.

Jarvis Gooden, 12, had a different choice.

"I chose Williamson Creek because it was unique, and there is a creek that runs near the park once it's built. It may not win, but that's my pick," said Jarvis, a fifth-grader at Houston Elementary School. "But it really doesn't matter which name wins. I'm still going to use the park."

Sherrita Neal, 7, said she was pretty certain of the name she wanted to pick.

"I checked off Dove Springs.

I like the name for the park. Once you hear the name you know the area and where it is. I'm sure it will win," said Sherrita, a second-grader at Widen.

"I've heard lots of people talking about the election, and they said they voted for Dove Springs," said Fernando Moreno, 8, a second-grader at Widen. "I picked Dove Springs because I like the name. But all the names are OK. Getting the park is the most important thing."