

LIFE & ARTS

Austin American-Statesman statesman.com ■ austin360.com

MONDAY, DECEMBER 8, 2008 ■ SECTION E

IN STEP Ballet Austin gets ready for first 'Nutcracker' production at Long Center
■ Tuesday, Life & Arts

GO GREEN? How eco-friendly is your Christmas tree? ■ E6



Where there's smoke, there's neighbor's backyard fire pit

I have a neighbor who built a fire pit into his backyard patio. He has already burned several fires. On one mild evening, I had my windows open and the smoke from his fire started filling my house. I sent him an e-mail explaining that smoke from his fire was coming into my house. He put the fire out. Since then, on several cooler evenings I have not had my windows open but still have to breathe smoky air every time I go outside. I really don't want to get the police involved. Is it legal to burn fires in an outdoor fire pit in Austin?

— A.R.
Outdoor fire pits are illegal within Austin city limits without a permit, according to

statesman.com/lifeguide

Find more tips and ideas on the Life Guide blog.

Austin Fire Department spokeswoman Michelle DeCrane. Cooking fires and fires contained in chimineas (tall, enclosed structures with a chimney made from metal or clay) are allowed, but not flat pans

with mesh wire tops.

If there is smoke or smoke odor in your house or yard, call 911, says DeCrane, and the Fire Department will respond. If you have ongoing problems with your neighbor, consider contacting the Dispute Resolution Center at 971-0800.



PETER MONGILLO
QUESTION EVERYTHING

mas, we are searching for vintage-type Christmas tree tinsel made of foil. It was available during the 1960s. Vermont Country Store offers a 'metallic' tinsel, but it's aluminum and has a fly-away characteristic — not what we want.

— K.E.
Visit the Famous Christmas Store, 5339 N. Interstate 35, 452-1935, where you'll find German-made lead icicles, the heavier strands of tinsel that you are talking about. A 1-gram package (about 300-400 strands) is \$3.99. To avoid lead poisoning, wash your hands after handling the tinsel, and don't let your kids or pets try to eat it. Wires on Christmas lights contain a small amount of lead as well.

Why do they turn the lights on in the University of Texas football stadium in the middle of the day, or at night when there's an away game?

— R.C.
It's not normal policy to run the lights in

Give your wish list a workout

Here are nine gifts guaranteed to work up a sweat of anticipation for any fitness junkie

Athletes (and the rest of us) love to get faster, stronger and more powerful. To do that, we need the right stuff.

Gadgets, gear and guidance, books, bottles and blinkies: It's all part of our never-ending quest to improve performance.

Got a fitness junkie on your holiday gift list? Listen up.

We've rounded up some of our favorite products, from basics such as water bottles and blinking lights to exotics, like a top-of-the-line heart rate monitor and a stylin' pair of sunglasses.



PAM LEBLANC
FIT CITY

loaded onto your computer with the separate FlowLink. There, you can track your progress at www.PolarPersonalTrainer.com.

SIGG water bottle
\$24.99 for 1-liter version
Whole Foods, REI, Whole Earth Provision Co.

A rugged, modern-day version of the canteen, this sleek, leak-proof aluminum bottle comes in several styles and sizes. All feature a special interior coating that is taste-neutral and hygienic. These Swiss-made bottles work as well with carbonated drinks, wine or fruit juice as they do with water. Completely recyclable. Don't freeze or microwave.



ToughGirl running skirt

\$90
Betty'sport, Rogue Equipment, Bicycle Sport Shop

Running skirts are all the rage these days. The latest version by SkirtSports



Ken Hively LOS ANGELES TIMES

The Killers' — Ronnie Vannucci, left, Dave Keuning, Brandon Flowers and Mark Stoermer — annual custom is to put out a yearly Christmas single. This year the band also gave fans a new CD.

New 'Day & Age' for evolving Killers as band changes sound, facial hair

By August Brown
LOS ANGELES TIMES

LOS ANGELES — When the Killers' singer Brandon Flowers crossed the lobby of the Roosevelt Hotel in Hollywood before a recent taping of "Jimmy Kimmel Live," he displayed the first sign that the band was beginning anew: He lacked a mustache.

The Killers with M83

When: 8 p.m. Feb. 3
Where: Theatre at the Frank Erwin Center
Cost: \$32-\$36
Information: texasboxoffice.com