

Life & Arts

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Section E

COMMENTARY



Larry Kolvoord AMERICAN-STATESMAN

My laundry is clean breeze-scented, but the fragrance doesn't come from a box of dryer sheets. It comes from billowing under the sun in my Austin yard.

The Earth is on the line

Listen up, homeowners associations. Clotheslines are an ode to nature, not an eyesore.
In fact, I'd like to get a rebate from the city for my solar-powered dryer.

By Denise Gamino
AMERICAN-STATESMAN STAFF

I bask in the eternal sunshine of the spotless laundry. I sleep on sun-drenched sheets, wear sun-dried clothes and rub my hands on sun-kissed towels. I own a clothes dryer, but it's plastered with dust and every sassy bumper sticker I can't get away with putting on my car.

Most mornings, I'm in the backyard by the live oak hanging wet dry goods on the clothesline. Birds serenade me. Breezes caress me. Butterflies visit me. I wouldn't give up this gig if you paid me.

Hanging laundry the old-fashioned way is like gardening, except that you poke hands into sky instead of dirt. You get it started, and nature takes care of the rest. There are no roses or spicy

On statesman.com: Do you hang your laundry, and do you think everyone should have that right? How else do you honor Earth Day? Sound off at [statesman.com/talkofaustin](#).

peppers to enjoy in the end, but you get to feed your senses and carry a little secret sunshine wherever you go.

That lucky ol' sun perfumes my laundry with the scent of fresh air. When I'm trapped inside a building all day, I catch a breath of nature's fragrance in my clothes when I stretch or move about. Each time I smell that aroma, my mind's eye sees clouds in a cornflower-blue sky or an expanse of green grass and trees.

Wearing sun-scented clothing is my way of

bringing the outdoors indoors. It's the best defense against canned air.

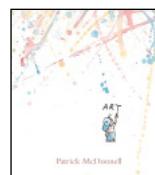
But, believe it or not, sunshine is illegal for some people.

They live in subdivisions that have outlawed the sun, at least when it comes in contact with wet laundry. Apparently, group-think aesthetics equate clotheslines with — the horror! — open garage doors. Tacky, tacky, according to the New World Order in which Stepford uniformity trumps free-spirited individualism.

Today is Earth Day, so let's celebrate by airing out this laundry debate.

An electric clothes dryer is one of the highest energy-users in a home, up there with the water heater and refrigerator. A dryer costs about \$80 a

See **CLOTHESLINES**, E4



Art

Patrick McDonnell
Little, Brown,
\$14.99

Cartoonist's 'Art' is childish (but in a wonderful way)

By Cathy Crane
SPECIAL TO THE AMERICAN-STATESMAN

Patrick McDonnell's first children's book, "The Gift of Nothing," featured Mooch (a cat) and Earl (a dog), two characters from his widely acclaimed comic strip "Mutts." The illustrations were his familiar black-ink drawings, often restrained to a fraction of the page. It spent three weeks on the New York Times best-seller list.

McDonnell's new book, "Art," is about a boy named Art, who loves to make art. The illustrations flow off the pages and the colors dance in rhythmic celebration. There are no edges, no frames, no boundaries in sight. You get the sense that McDonnell had a wonderful time writing and drawing the book. He's quick to confirm.

"Art" is about a little kid who likes to draw and

Patrick McDonnell

What: Reading and signing (and maybe some drawing, too)
When: 3 p.m. today
Where: Book People, 603 N. Lamar Blvd.
Information: 472-5050

makes messes and I think it's pretty autobiographical," he says by phone from his New Jersey studio. "It's just the joy of making art, which I do every day, and something I've been doing since I was Art's age. (The book) uses the primaries, red, yellow and blue, and my desk and my clothes —

See **ART**, E11



Like the title character in his children's book, Patrick McDonnell, creator of the comic strip 'Mutts,' was drawn to his craft at an early age.

INSIDE
Don Giovanni

Both local and imported talent shines in Austin Lyric Opera's upcoming production of Mozart's finest work.

E3

IN GARDENING CORNER



Please don't forget the daisies

Underappreciated Texas-grown natives are stalwart performers through heat and drought. **Back page**