

Issue 15
Fall 2021

East Texas

Learning to Live in Un-Livingston
The Haunting at The Carriage House on Milam Street

Table Settings
The holidays are coming ... is your table ready?





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FROM THE EDITOR



Fall is approaching in East Texas! With each passing day, you can feel the atmosphere begin to change as the temperatures cool and the leaves start to drop. Fall has been associated with celebrating the cycle of life as vibrant, warm summers give way to the inevitable grip of winter, and people have always found a reason to celebrate life even as the leaves die around us and the days grow shorter and colder. This is why some of our most cherished holidays and traditions take place during this time, from delving into the macabre on Halloween, remembering our departed loved ones on All Saints Day and Día de los Muertos, giving thanks for our life on Thanksgiving, or celebrating the promise of hope and renewal that Christmas and Hanukkah bring.

As new COVID strains continue to have a terrible impact on our communities in East Texas and beyond, it is more important than ever to carry on celebrating life and the gifts that we've all been given. A community is defined as people living in the same place and having particular characteristics, attitudes, interests, and goals in common, and if there's one thing our East Texas towns demonstrate better than most, it's a sense of community.

One of the most valuable aspects of community we can cling to during this season of change, especially during this pandemic when many of our community members have been touched by loss and are hurting and in need of comfort and support, are our traditions. Traditions bring us together, overcome differences and strengthen our relationships. Traditions are something that cost nothing to share with others and should be celebrated and maintained.

Whether it's carving pumpkins, sharing a spooky story and handing out candy on Halloween, bringing out your best china to have a beautiful Thanksgiving dinner, putting up Christmas decorations, or simply sharing a recipe you tried out with an old friend or neighbor, do your part this fall to keep our cherished traditions alive. Call a friend you haven't talked to in a while, invite someone who might otherwise be alone on the upcoming holidays to join you and your family, or even start a new tradition. It is our job to pass on our traditions for future generations and show others that, in spite of troubles and loss, there is so much we can share and truly so much to be thankful for!

~ Debbie Dickerson
East Texan editor

On The Cover



Table Settings – The holidays are coming ... is your table ready? See full story on page 46.

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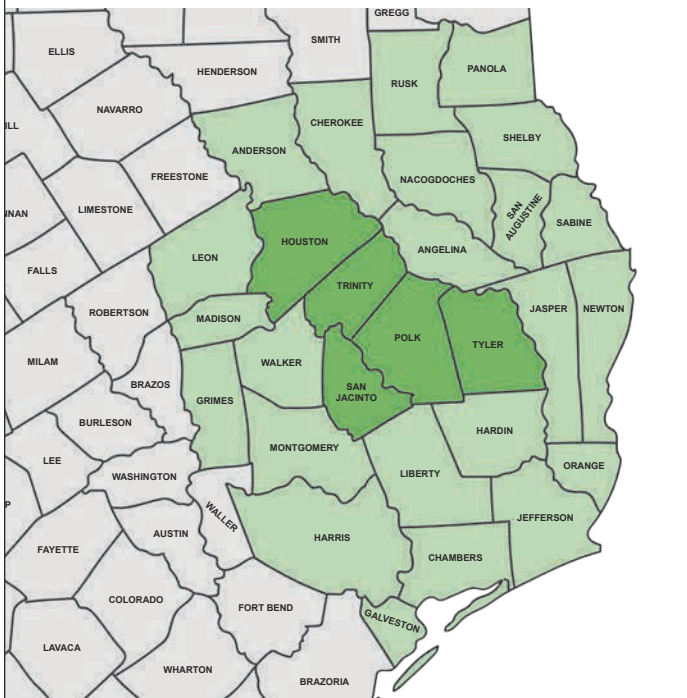


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REALIZING A LONGTIME DREAM





Story and photos by Jennifer Birdwell

Realizing a longtime dream, Brit and Regan Wiegand, along with Regan's parents, Greg and Lisa Pearson, opened Long Branch steakhouse, bar and catering location on Highway 59 Livingston.

"My family settled in Livingston when I was in the fourth grade and we all love it here," said Regan, a graduate of Livingston High School, Class of 2005. She was active in two main sports, playing varsity softball and volleyball at LHS. She was also senior class and honor society president.

Regan later received a degree in hotel/restaurant management from the University of Houston at age 20. Since the Pearson family had been cooking for years, she decided to follow that path and learned the different avenues and industries. She took a casino and gaming management class and found a love of casinos. While attending college, she worked for Pappas Restaurants.

"I was recruited to work for Pappas Burger so I could play on their softball team," Regan said. "They had an intramural league where employees of all Pappas restaurants compete against each other. I worked as a server until I graduated college."

Harrah's Casino in Bossier City was her first job after graduation for a program in which college students are trained in management. "It was a very long hour, crazy lifestyle."

During her year with Harrah's, Regan helped to open a bar with Country Music Television (CMT). While she knew they wanted her to manage the bar, the expected 4 p.m.-2 a.m. lifestyle may not have been the best fit, but provided valuable experience. "Thinking back to the management that I worked for while at Harrah's, they were mostly workaholics. Occasionally, there would be someone who likes to have fun, but the ones who were 'eye on the prize' didn't enjoy it as much. Looking back and watching different managers, you learn what you do and don't want to do. That has been the biggest thing with opening this restaurant, besides being safe, we told every person that the No. 1 thing, the No. 1 rule is to have fun with it. We don't want it to be a job that you dread coming into.

Britt and Regan Wiegand are pictured with their children Carter, Blaine, Hadley, and Brooklyn. The Wiegand's and Regan's parents Greg and Lisa Pearson opened Long Branch steakhouse, bar, and catering on Highway 59. The restaurant fulfills a dream and allows them to bring years of cooking, catering, and hospitality experience to their new steak house in Livingston.

"When I left Harrah's, I decided to move back to Houston. My old concept leader heard I was coming back and reached out to me and brought me back to Pappas, where I worked at their Greek Restaurant, Yia-Yia Mary's, which is the Pappas family flagship restaurant. I loved working there. I started out as floor manager and moved into the kitchen. In Pappas Corporation, they have a position called the No. 2, which is the assistant to the general manager. I was working for Yia-Yia's up until I was having foot problems, which required surgeries, so I moved over to the main office."

Regan met Information Technology Manager Brit Weigand while in the main office and they married in Jamaica in 2012. Brit worked for Pappas for 20 years, working his way up through a variety of jobs including server and bartender. In the main office, Regan was a training specialist for "front of house," which included new computer systems or rollouts of service standards.

"I found the office setting wasn't my cup of tea; I really missed the restaurant. The advantage was that I did a lot of new store openings and had the experience of opening the different restaurants including Pappasitos, Pappadeauxs, and Pappas Bar-B-Q."

Brit and Regan have four children. Carter and Blaine are both in college, Hadley is in the third grade and four-year-old Brooklyn attends pre-Kindergarten.



“When I had my older daughter, Hadley, I stayed home a couple of years. Carter and Blaine were active in school and during this time, we were catering events. It’s the biggest thing for me and Dad to cater weddings and Go-Texan events.”

Brit has been working at 7D Ranch Texas in Navasota for four years, a performance and event center with cabins and includes high-fenced hunting.

“Brit can cook, I love doing the cooking, but he’s always ready to step in,” Regan said. “When Covid hit, the value of houses skyrocketed, we wanted to wait to move back to Livingston after Blaine finished his senior year of high school, but since he wouldn’t be able to attend school in person, we made the move and he finished his senior year at Livingston High School. In addition to making meals at home, my seven-year-old plays travel ball. She has a busy schedule that includes cheerleading, gymnastics and loves her Wednesday night youth group at First Baptist Church.”

Opening the Restaurant

“We’ve been talking about this for 14 years. We already knew that we wanted to do this business. With the state of the economy and Covid, we looked at the building. We already had a name and everything mapped out, we just needed a commercial location. We came and looked at the building and Charlie and Nancy Stovall are just so sweet and helpful, but we wanted to wait with the uncertainty

of the presidential election and the pandemic. Businesses were operating at 50% capacity and we didn’t want to open a restaurant at the time, so I started doing at-home meals. When I came up with this idea, I shared it with Brit, Mom, and Dad and they all thought it was a great idea. I started putting out a weekly menu and it grew. People were looking for healthier lunches, so after the new year, I added lunches. It was much bigger than I ever planned - I loved it.” Regan would prepare up to 100 servings. “I delivered to people who had surgery, I have a customer whose kids live out of town and contacted me to deliver meals locally to their home.”

Some customers would reach out and have her prepare every dinner. “I started cooking for the chamber of commerce and more catering jobs came from this service. People from out of town visiting the lake would contact me to cater parties.”

She first decided to do the at-home meals as extra income to stay busy. She thought it would be a way to help with family meals, as well as neighborhood and close friends who were moving back. “I was surprised by how many teachers became customers. I envisioned friends who had late baseball practices on one night of the week and they might want to pick up a meal to help save time. It started with the classics: chicken spaghetti, meatloaf, country-style ribs — then I started throwing in fish and Mediterranean dishes and everyone loved the new items. “We plan to incorporate some of these dishes into the lunches at





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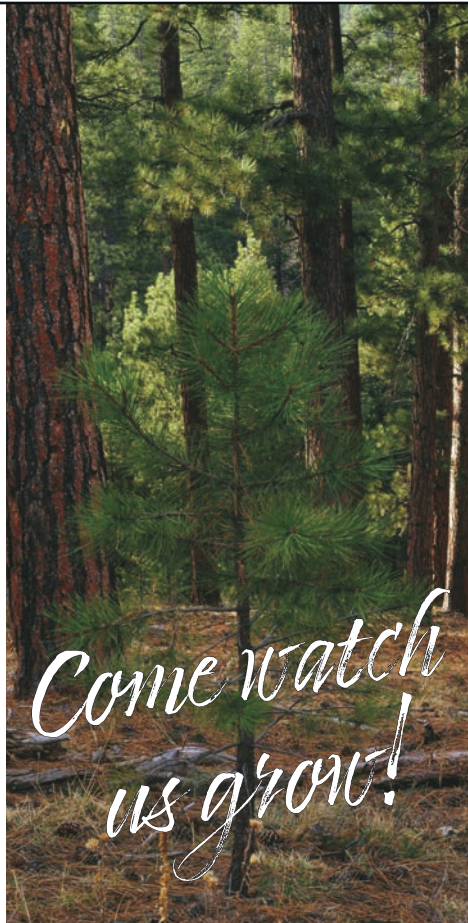
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The perfect place for a family gathering. The main dining area of the steakhouse seats 130. The banquet room accommodates 100 for private parties, meetings, and events. The Long Branch menu offers steaks and seafood, burgers, sandwiches, salads and even features appetizers of grilled quail and crab cakes.



the restaurant. One of the favorites was Mediterranean chicken with olives, artichokes, and mushrooms. We already have grilled salmon and blackened tilapia on the menu. We added some of our most requested wedding catering favorites: sautéed zucchini and squash, and twice-baked potatoes.”

After purchasing the building in early April, the hopes were to open in June, which Regan felt was a lofty goal. They labored to get the business prepared while continuing with plans for

improvements. In anticipation of the wedding catering business, a second kitchen area will be utilized to prep for catering. There is also a catering trailer and storage area for wedding catering equipment.

The main dining area seats 130. The banquet room accommodates 100 for private parties, meetings, and events. Bookings are already beginning to fill for Christmas parties. Once that is posted on Facebook that they would open a steak house, reactions and comments “just erupted.” She decided to add grilled quail and

D 2021

BRANCH



crab cakes as appetizers. In addition to steaks, they have burgers, sandwiches, and a salad bar.

“We are starting to get requests for wedding catering for events scheduled in 2022. We picture as we get bigger to have a wedding catering manager and a catering group. We are so impressed with our new staff. They have continually offered their help to get everything set up and it’s just awesome. We feel every position is equally important throughout the restaurant. Without one, you can’t be successful.”

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FLIPPING THE SWITCH

Story by Debra Jenke

Are we really back to where we were 18 months ago—school closings, mask debates, social distancing...weren't we beginning to emerge from that? We now have a continuously changing economy in a continuously changing world. What does that mean for higher education and more specifically, for community colleges? Shouldn't there be a consistency that faculty and students alike can depend on? We know that as COVID 19 emerged, for many families with members attending community college, it became a choice between paying the rent and buying groceries, or paying tuition and buying books.

We know that COVID 19 changed education and how classes are delivered. On-line classes were already being delivered, but as classrooms emptied during the pandemic, on-line course delivery became the single delivery method. Students and faculty who believed on-line was not for them had to adjust quickly to on-line as their only option. Yes, you can learn in your pajamas, from home. Yes, you can teach in your pajamas from home (a jacket and scarf over lounge pants works just fine—trust me, I know).

The pandemic has produced new trends, on-line learning being just one of them. There is synchronous on-line learning where the entire class and instructor are logged in at the same time. I refer to it as being “beamed” to my students. Then there is asynchronous learning, where the students have assignments and assessments but access them and their lectures (either through typed notes or videos) in prescribed time/learning blocks

Living near the Gulf coast, many of us were prepared. We weren't necessarily prepared for a pandemic, but we've taught through Hurricanes Rita and Ike and know that as storms roar through the Gulf of Mexico, we had best be prepared to “flip the switch.” Flipping the switch means being ready to flip from a classroom setting to an on-line setting with very little time.

Even before the pandemic, 8-week courses were emerging as a popular trend. There are still the traditional 16-week semester courses, but what if students can complete courses in a more compressed time frame? We know it can happen, because summer courses are roughly 6 weeks long. We can think of 8-week courses as summer school, plus two weeks. The 8-week model is not for everyone; it is a lot of information to process in a short amount of time, and classes move very quickly. Students and faculty alike say it means more focus time, but faster completion time. Many say it is easier to remember course material, and easier to review the material in a compressed time frame; their instructors send constant reminders to keep students on pace. On the flip side, there is not a lot of margin for error. It means there is little to no time for personal issues, such as illness or childcare arrangements, to distract course work.

Want a really compressed time frame? Mini-mesters are the ticket. Many colleges offer a December mini and a May mini. Why not knock out a course in a three-week time span between semesters? Want something in-between? There are hybrid courses which are part face-to-face, or traditional learning setting, and part on-line. This gives the best of both worlds for those students (and faculty) not quite ready to go fully on-line.

Colleges across the nation are realizing that more than course delivery is pandemic-affected. There is more need for food pantries to serve the needs of students and their families. There is a need for increased counseling services as many students (and faculty) struggle with increased stress. Open Educational Resources provide free, on-line textbooks as financial relief. There is now increased need for financial aid as families struggle with job losses while in school.



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Once colleges adjusted their course delivery methods and addressed how to serve the needs of students, what can colleges now provide for the jobs sector? We know that some vocations will remain in high demand, and that community college can help students get training, certificates, and degrees toward those vocations.

In the corporate sector we will need Bookkeepers, Information Technology, Computer Use Support Specialists, and trained Office and Administrative Support teams. In the health care sector there will be demand for Medical Assistants, Nurse Aides, Phlebotomists, Electrocardiogram (EKG) technicians, those trained in CPR, and Licensed Vocational Nurses (LVN) and Registered Nurses (RN). In the transportation sector we will need freight movers (forklift operators) and those with a CDL license.

Esther Campbell, Senior Director of Workforce and Continuing Education at Angelina College states "Workforce education college training programs allow individuals to not only gain tangible skills and knowledge to move into new or advanced roles, but the individuals in these programs acquire relevant skills that help keep them competitive in the ever-changing job market and economy. If an individual wants to jump into a new career, workforce training could be the way to go. Angelina

College offers workforce education training programs for various industries, such as allied health, business, protective services, risk management and safety, and transportation."

She further relates "Community colleges provide opportunities for students that might not otherwise find the right fit. With reduced tuition costs and flexible class schedules, community college is a great fit for nontraditional students, which includes individuals over the age of 25, single parents, adults that work and are financially responsible for their family, and students for whom English is a second language."

Adult Education and Literacy programs will flourish for college preparatory classes, as well as ESL classes, and GED tutoring and testing. Randy Roberts, Director of Angelina College Adult Education and Literacy Program states "Whether it is for GED, ESL, TSI support, or a scholarship for an in-demand occupation, our free College and Career courses can help!"

Opportunities abound. Financial aid incentives abound. There is a post-pandemic world waiting on educated and trained personnel. Angelina College can assist you or your friends and family members with getting started. They have locations in Livingston (936-633-4570) and Lufkin (936) 633-5455 and are waiting to assist you toward a brighter future. ■

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LAKE LIVINGSTON

Growth along the shore



Story and photos by Emily Kubisch-Sabrsula

Following the submersion of several abandoned river towns across Polk and surrounding counties in the mid-1960s, the damn built to hold the 85,000 acre Lake Livingston promised to bring recreation and wildlife viewing opportunities to the area. As the Trinity River filled the basin, residents & businesses built miles of bulkheads, and even though cow pastures and timberlands had been traded in for deeper waters, aquatic life avoided the impounded lake.

Seeing the need to give the state's second-largest lake a helping hand, Texas Parks and Wildlife (TPWD) along with Friends of Reservoirs and their non-profit, Reservoir Fisheries Habitat Partnership, helped provide the initial funding to create Friends of Lake Livingston (FOLL) in 2013. Since its formation, their organization has grown to include help from local and state-wide groups who all have a stake in improving the lake.

With 2020 plantings continually being postponed due to covid-related restrictions and unpredictable rainfalls, Friends of Lake Livingston, The Piney Wood Lakes & Heartwood Chapters of the Texas Master Naturalist Program, and TPWD Inland Fisheries met at the end of July for their first planting of 2021. With a hearty

group of 15 volunteers being ferried by pontoon to a sandbar in Carolina Creek, in just three hours, over 800 aquatic plants made it into the muddy ground. The majority of plants included colonies of American Water Willows, with experimental plantings of bulrush, spike rush, buttonbush, and bald cypress trees.

With all plantings and projects receiving approval through the Trinity River Authority (TRA) and TPWD, all plants used are native to Texas and are strategically chosen to help ensure natural lake health, with hopes of preventing non-native species from taking hold. By reducing sediment and increasing water clarity through plantings, volunteers also hope to extend the lake's current life expectancy of 100 years.

Everyone involved in the project bears the title of volunteer, but plenty of members also wear other hats, including teacher, retiree, and even high school student.

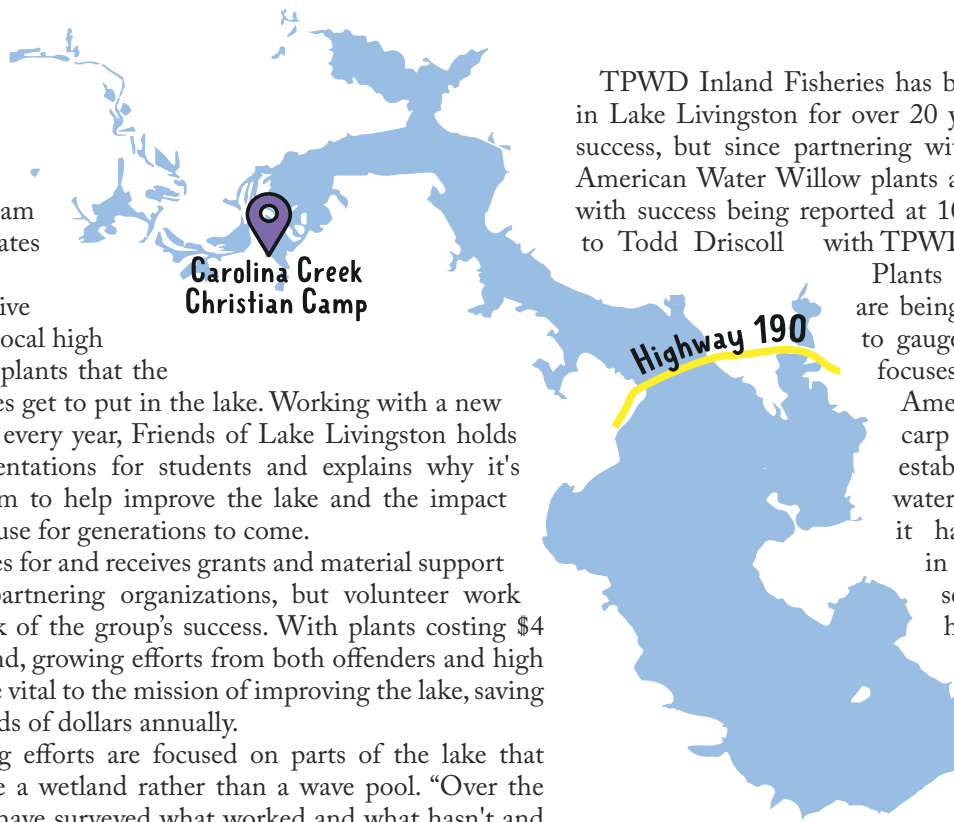
All plants used are grown with the assistance of a few groups, including offenders involved in the Horticulture Program through The Texas Department of Criminal Justice's Ellis Unit in Huntsville. The program, led by Lee College Instructor Scooter Langley, gives offenders the opportunity to go through the Texas Master Naturalist training themselves, with participants often gaining skills that they

can put on job applications after completing their sentences. Those who finish the program also have lower rates of recidivism.

On their respective campuses, several local high schools also grow plants that the students themselves get to put in the lake. Working with a new group of students every year, Friends of Lake Livingston holds conservation presentations for students and explains why it's important for them to help improve the lake and the impact they'll have on its use for generations to come.

The group applies for and receives grants and material support through several partnering organizations, but volunteer work makes up the bulk of the group's success. With plants costing \$4 each on the low end, growing efforts from both offenders and high school students are vital to the mission of improving the lake, saving the group thousands of dollars annually.

Current planting efforts are focused on parts of the lake that function more like a wetland rather than a wave pool. "Over the last few years, we have surveyed what worked and what hasn't and have adopted methods for success. We concentrate now only on very sheltered creek inlets. We also focus a lot above Hwy 190 where the lake acts like more of a wetlands which is prime territory for these aquatic plants," stated Scott Ball, a board member with Friends of Lake Livingston who helps coordinate planting locations. Once the plants are in the ground, sometimes in up to six inches of water, volunteers have to make sure they are viable, learning over the years that heavy waves can easily remove colonies and that without fencing, deer tend to snack on the native aquatic greenery.



TPWD Inland Fisheries has been trying to establish plant life in Lake Livingston for over 20 years with little initial long-term success, but since partnering with FOLL in 2013, over 35,000 American Water Willow plants at 20 sites have been established, with success being reported at 10 of the sites in 2020, according to Todd Driscoll with TPWD's Inland Fisheries.

Plants like native Hyssops and Lilies are being introduced into projects slowly to gauge potential success, with current focuses on the adaptable and resilient American Water Willow. With grass carp avoiding the willow, which can establish itself in up to four feet of water and emerges above the waterline, it has proven to be instrumental in helping retain sediments and securing shoreline (or littoral) habitat for more submergent plants that have a hard time taking root in the Trinity River and its tributary's turbid waters. These harsh conditions can be magnified by the lake's majority bulkheaded shores which contribute to wind and wave

action that prevents life from taking root.

These littoral habitats aren't just for plants though- popular sportfish face lower survival rates without these vegetative areas to reproduce, feed, and escape from predators. "Without productive littoral habitat, survival of hatched bass, crappie, and sunfish is extremely low. This is why current abundance of these species is low in Lake Livingston," Discoll stated in an email interview regarding fish





Volunteers from two local Texas Master Naturalist Chapters learn more about the native plants they'll be putting along the banks and the benefits they provide to the lake and it's inhabitants.

Located near the Northern end of the Lake, Carolina Creek is one of several tributary creeks that drain into Lake Livingston. The site was chosen in part because it is better protected from wind and wave action than the predominantly bulkheaded southern half of the lake, making it an ideal location for the water willows. Carolina Creek Christian Camp is a sponsor of Friends of Lake Livingston, and also arranges for permission of land and boat use for FOLL.





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While grass carp won't touch American Water Willow, White Tail Deer make a feast of the plant, so volunteers fence off starting colonies to give them a chance to establish rhizomes to give the small plants a fighting chance.

populations in the lake. While the lake doesn't currently cater to all species, populations of Blue Catfish and White Bass, species that are pelagic, or more water-oriented, are still prevalent, along with a variety of baitfish.

Driscoll, who has become personally involved in helping the project over the years, reflected on the scope of the growing improvement work in the lake. "TPWD is proud and has been inspired by the work of Friends of Lake Livingston. Trying to increase the amount of vegetative habitat in Lake Livingston is a project large in scope, and FOLL has taken a leadership role with these efforts and have integrated themselves within the community. They work with 8 independent school districts and numerous other partners, including the Texas Department of Criminal Justice. TPWD is very appreciative of their work, and we encourage others to get involved with this volunteer group."

With more success being found through trial and error, Friends of Lake Livingston, its partnering Texas Master Naturalist Chapters, and other volunteers hope to continue their work of making Lake Livingston more hospitable to everything from plants to fish & birdlife, while also creating better recreational opportunities for those who live on and travel to the lake. Future plans include obtaining riparian plants to help with erosion control around the lake.

For more information on the ongoing project, future plantings, or to get involved with Friends of Lake Livingston as a volunteer or sponsor, please visit www.friendsoflakelivingston.com or check their Facebook page.



Emily Kubisch-Sabrsula, photographed above planting along the banks of Carolina Creek, is a member of the Piney Wood Lakes Chapter of the Texas Master Naturalist Program based out of Polk County.

EDUCATION



Center High School Distinguished Event: Center High School 2021 graduates stand with SFA representatives and Center ISD superintendent. From left, back row, are Kayden Davis, Jayla Moore, Ivan Jimenez, Arturo Hernandez, Cale Henson, Jase Bird, Superintendent Dr. Brian Morris; and, front row, are Autumn Hughes, SFA Dual Credit Coordinator Courtney Branton, SFA President Dr. Scott Gordon, SFA Coordinator of Academic Partnerships Ryan Brown-Moreno, and Zachary Denby.

SFA Distinguished High School Program

College expands partnership with 12 East Texas schools

Story by Christine Broussard

Top-ranking graduates from high schools partnering in Stephen F. Austin State University's new Distinguished High School Program will be automatically eligible for scholarships worth up to \$20,000, among several other benefits.

Students from SFA's partner schools will automatically receive scholarship money for up to four years based on their class rank. Of those who apply to SFA from distinguished program schools, students ranking in the top 10% of their class will receive \$5,000 per year, and students ranking in the 11-25% of their class with a 3.0 GPA or higher will receive \$3,000 per year. Submission of a scholarship application is not required.

"At SFA, we are fully committed to student success and access, meaning we are constantly seeking new and innovative ways to ensure Texans have affordable access to higher education," said SFA President Dr. Scott Gordon. "Our newly introduced Distinguished High School Program recognizes hardworking high school students by



Nacogdoches High School seniors Ronald Castillo, left, and Oscar Tinoco, right, will be among the first students to benefit from Stephen F. Austin State University's Distinguished High School Program. Photo by Josh Edwards/The Daily Sentinel



helping them obtain their college degree in a more timely and affordable manner. We are thrilled to offer this new program.”

Seniors ranking in the top 30% of their class are guaranteed admission to SFA, and the \$50 application fee is waived for every student graduating from a partner school.

Benefits also include additional financial aid assistance to students with high financial need; a special, tailored campus visit; and an assigned admissions counselor to serve students throughout the college-enrollment process.

Currently, SFA has named 12 partner schools in East Texas and a total of 18 throughout the state.

Students from distinguished program schools applying as first-time freshmen at GoApplyTexas.org also should submit official SAT/ACT scores and high school transcripts to the SFA Office of Admissions. For more information about applying to SFA, visit sfasu.edu/apply or call (936) 468-2504. ■

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- Livingston High School
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“My whole life, I prayed, and I wished for this to happen. I prayed for it every night, and every time I’d blow out my candles on my birthday cake, I’d wish for it. In my heart of hearts, this is exactly what I always wanted.”



Laci Kaye Booth

HOMETOWN GIRL IS WELL ON HER WAY



Story by Emily Banks Wooten

"It's finally time to tell y'all what I've been working so hard on."

The self-titled debut collection of Livingston's own Laci Kaye Booth was released in August and is available on all digital platforms.

"Creating this music has been the biggest thrill of my life and I believe taking these past two years to just work and write has only made me a better writer, artist and human. I hope that y'all enjoy it as much as I've enjoyed creating this."

"Debut Collection" includes eight songs, all written or co-written by Laci. They include: Used to You, On the Fence, Treasure, Broken Heart Still Beats (featuring Charles Kelley), Shuffle, If He Would've Stayed, Visions and Heart of Texas.

"My whole life, I prayed, and I wished for this to happen. I prayed for it every night, and every time I'd blow out my candles on my birthday cake, I'd wish for it," Laci said. "In my heart of hearts, this is exactly what I always wanted."

The same day "Debut Collection" dropped, Laci was named a "Highway Find" on Sirius XM Satellite Radio's The Highway channel. Highly-anticipated by country artists and fans alike, a "Highway Find" is a new country music talent that the channel wants to spotlight and bring to the attention of its listeners.

The first single released from the collection was "Treasure," a song with an upbeat tempo, some syncopated lyrics and a Latin flair from the Spanish guitar sound.

"Shuffle" was the second track released. It's a fun song that features a number of all-female song titles that Laci grew up listening to.

Of her budding career, "I tell people it's like second nature. I never remember a time when I didn't want to do it," Laci said to radio and

television personality Bobby Bones recently while a guest on his nationally syndicated show.

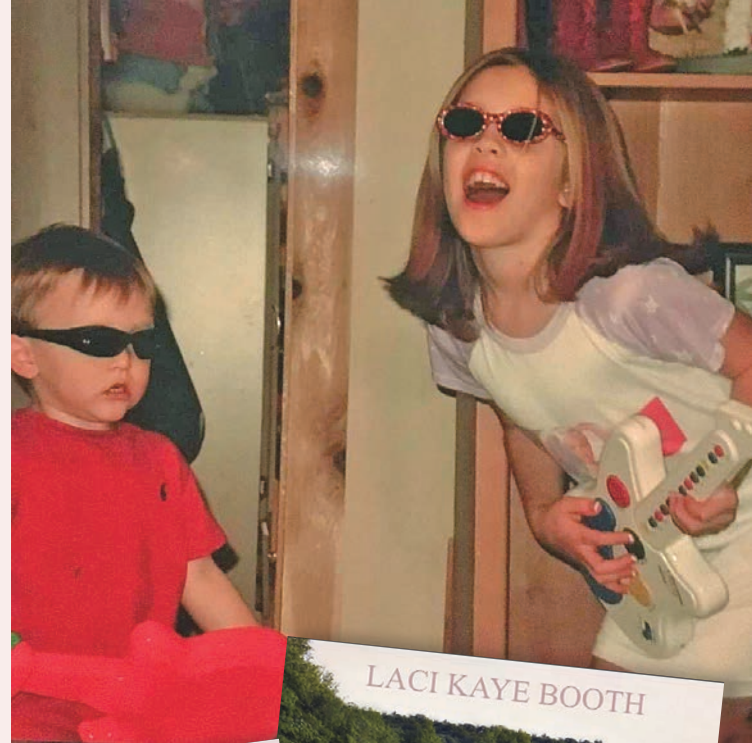
While she's always been considered a star in her little hometown of Livingston, Laci rose to national fame and recognition in 2019 as a top five finalist on the 17th season of American Idol. She's definitely been a busy young woman since Idol wrapped.

"She signed with Red Light Management after American Idol and she's been living in Nashville full time since October 2019," Priscilla Cockrell, Laci's mother, said.

"Her producer is world-renowned Dann Huff. He plays guitar. He played guitar for Michael Jackson and Celine Dion and every country artist known to man. Now he produces. He showed her music to Big Machine Label Group who signed her. Big Machine has fewer artists—Florida Georgia Line, Danielle Bradbery, Tim McGraw, Carly Pearce—but they have four or five different labels. Laci's actually the only female act on her label. There's Lady A but they're a trio.

"Big Machine's a big radio label, really good with radio. That's one of the reasons she signed with them," Cockrell said, adding, "She signed a double publishing contract with Big Machine and Universal Nashville. That's why she's been writing so much.

"She's written over 300 songs since she's been in Nashville and because of COVID she's been doing a lot of Zoom writes. Just about every song she's written has been with other writers—Jessie Jo Dillon, Nathan Chapman, Sara Haze. I know not everyone may be familiar with these names but if you're in Nashville, these are the people you want to write with. She's even written with Richard Marx and with Charles Kelly from Lady A. These are big names in Nashville," Cockrell said.



“I miss so much about East Texas. I miss the food, the pine trees, the space, the lake and the people. East Texas will always have a huge part of my heart.”



If you follow Laci on social media, then you know that she's scheduled to play the Stagecoach Festival April 30, 2022 in Indio, Calif. The three-day festival features some newcomers as well as some big-name artists.

"Can't believe I'm playing @Stagecoach with these incredible artists," Laci recently wrote on social media.

"She was supposed to do this last year and it was cancelled because of COVID. She's very lucky they put her back on the schedule because they didn't put everyone back on," Cockrell said.

"Laci calls her sound dreamy country. That's the thing she tells them when she first goes in. 'I'm dreamy country,'" Cockrell said.

"When I first moved to Nashville, people in the industry would ask me what my style of music was. I knew it was different than regular country but I didn't know how to describe it. I came up with "dreamy country" mainly because I was raised on old-school country music but I was influenced so much by Stevie Nicks and Norah Jones at a very young age. I think that really had a lot to do with my sound," Laci said, when asked how she came up with that characterization. "Ethereal lyrics with a country melody, or a dreamy vocal singing a country song, are some things that you'll hear on this new collection of songs.

"My biggest music influences are George Strait, Stevie Nicks, Lee

Ann Womack, Norah Jones, The Chicks ... the list can go on and on. I have my parents to thank for raising me on such incredible artists," Laci said.

"She's looking forward to touring. The COVID delays may have been a blessing in disguise," Cockrell said, commenting that it allowed Laci so much time to focus on her songwriting. "She writes so fast. I don't know if that's normal in Nashville.

"She's loving it. Of course, she hates being away from her family. We see each other once a month—either I fly her home or we go out there. We don't go a month without seeing each other," Cockrell said.

Her brother, Luke, recently moved in with her. He moved to Nashville to attend Belmont University.

When asked if there's anything, other than family, that she misses about East Texas, Laci said, "I miss so much about East Texas. I miss the food, the pine trees, the space, the lake and the people. East Texas will always have a huge part of my heart."

"She wants to be an entertainer, not just a singer/songwriter. She eventually wants to be Entertainer of the Year," Cockrell said.

Sounds like she may be well on her way. ■





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SMALL TOWN BITES
Kingwood



Photo by Emily Banks Wooten

EATING GOOD AT BILL'S CAFE



Story by Emily Banks Wooten

Not too long ago when a friend recommended a place to eat called Bill's Cafe, he raved over the sirloin steak for two, highly recommending it and stating that there's even enough left over to bring home.

Of course I did what I always do when someone recommends a place to eat. I Googled it. Although there was no website, I was able to glean enough information through my search that the place seemed familiar to me. I felt like I'd been there before. "I'll know for sure when I get there, but I think I was there a long time ago with my Daddy," I told my friend. As Daddy's been gone nearly 20 years, it definitely would have had to have been a long time ago.

I couldn't help but grin one subsequent Saturday afternoon when my husband, daughter, mother and I walked in. It was the same exact place and had changed very little, except for maybe a few more caps hanging on the walls. Some would call it a joint or a dive. Some might call it an institution. The menu itself says, "Serving the World Since 1945." Located in an area long referred to as "Blackcat Ridge," Bill's Cafe is something of a diamond in the rough that's known for its steaks, burgers and barbecue.

The menu, an 8 ½ x 11 sheet of paper slid into a zip-top bag, is folksy and entertaining, offering an apology for the wait. "We are here to serve you as fast as we can. We are working out of the original 1945 kitchen (with a few modifications), so things are a little slower at times due to the high volume of people we can seat. We are sorry for the wait, but we are not a fast food restaurant chain."

And once you're clear on that, you can amuse yourself with "Bill's Answers to the Top 10 Questions," also found on the menu:

Yes, sit wherever you want.

Yes, this is all we have on the menu.

Yes, restrooms are outside, at back of restaurant.

No, we don't have baked potatoes.

Yes, all of our food is good.

Yes, this is all the seating we have.

Yes, there is a waitress outside.

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Photo by Emily Banks Wooten

No, we don't have chicken fried steak and never did.
Yes, we only serve cold beer.
No, we don't know when your food will be ready.

And speaking of seating, that, too, is interesting. The cafe itself is a little on the small side, with table seating for about 30 and counter seating for about 10. However, there's plenty of outdoor seating, with all of the tables under cover.

Bill's Cafe offers a number of appetizers, all priced per piece, which made us chuckle as we'd never seen that before. There were fried mushrooms, cheese sticks, cheddar or crab-stuffed jalapenos, broccoli cheese bites, chicken wings, fried zucchini sticks, fried mac and cheese bites and fried pickle chips. The prices ranged from 25 cents to 75 cents per piece depending on what you choose. Knowing that our daughter is a huge mac and cheese fan, we decided to try the fried mac and cheese bites which were 40 cents apiece. We ordered eight, two for each of us. They were excellent and were served with some ranch dressing for dipping.

I don't eat steaks frequently but ever since hearing my friend go on about that sirloin for two, I couldn't quit thinking about it. Hubby wasn't in the mood for a steak that day as he had his sights set on barbecue, so when Mother said she couldn't remember the last time she'd had a good steak, I knew what was in our future.

When it came time to order our meal, my husband ordered the barbecue plate. You could choose brisket and/or sausage and select two sides. He ordered the brisket plate with a side salad and onion rings. The plate came with pickles, onions and a slice of white bread. While he said the brisket was good, he thought it had way too much barbecue sauce on it and said that he would have preferred the sauce on the side. He loved the onion rings, however.

Our daughter ordered a hamburger dry, with lettuce, tomato, bacon and pepper jack cheese and potato chips on the side. Although she ate many a ketchup-slathered hot dog as a toddler and young child, for some reason she's never cared for any type of condiment on her hamburgers or cheeseburgers.

Mother and I ordered the sirloin for two which comes with side salads and a choice of two sides. We ordered our steak medium rare and selected sweet potato fries and fried okra for our sides. When our steak arrived, we were speechless. This thing was huge. I really don't know if I've ever seen a steak so large. It was approximately eight by fourteen inches in size. And I'm being completely serious. It was seasoned perfectly and cooked exactly medium rare. We enjoyed it until we were miserable and then we asked for a box to take the remainder home.

The adults enjoyed cold bottles of beer that Saturday afternoon. There was a decent selection from which to choose. Soft drinks and iced tea are the other choices of drinks. According to the menu there's a \$2 charge for set-ups, also for bringing in your own wine or beverages.

"Have your next party with us. We know some darn good bands," the menu also states.

Bill's Cafe is located at 22845 Loop 494 in Kingwood. It is open from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. and from 4 p.m. to 9 p.m. Tuesdays through Fridays and from 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. on Saturdays. The telephone number is 281-358-6198. ■

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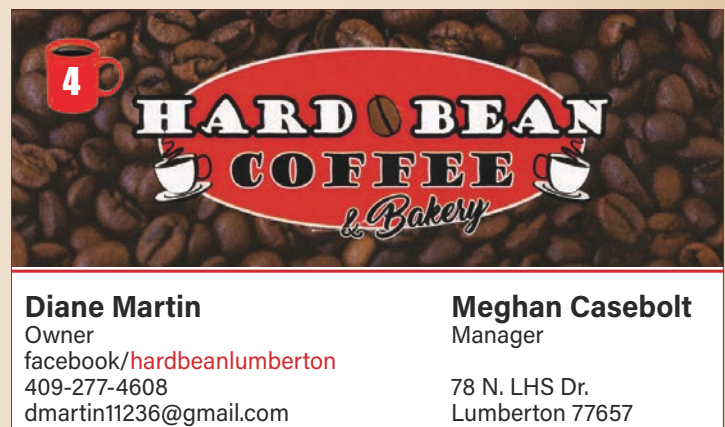
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Learning to Live in Un-Livingston

The Haunting at The Carriage House on Milam Street

Story and photos by Joshua Grant

"We ask only to be reassured about the noises in the cellar and the window that should not have been open" – T.S. Eliot

It has long been my dream to own and live in a historic home. The kind of 'white picket fence' Americana charm that has been collectively hammered into our psyche by quaint Norman Rockwell paintings and once wholesome television shows. Of course, living in a historic home has its definite perks: notoriety, better built, curb appeal, and the oft-surreal feeling of knowing you're living in a space where generations of families have passed their lives creating wonderful memories and enduring unspeakable pain. You're not simply living in an historic home; you are living in that home's history.

After living overseas for several years, I moved back to the States and settled in Houston. Now, I've never been, nor am I now, a city slicker with some masochistic penchant for traffic, smog, crime, and general chaos that, in my estimation, seems to pervade city living. With the arrival of COVID-19 and the work-from-home norm that ensued for me and many others, it was the perfect time for me to load up my proverbial wagon and stake my claim on my dream home far removed from the concrete jungle.

They say home isn't a place, it's a feeling, and that feeling is what I found in Livingston, Texas. I viewed a gorgeous Victorian home with a detached carriage house in Livingston's Historic District which was owned by a wonderful woman who had grown up in the home. Her mother had taught piano lessons in the home for years to many of the town's now middle-aged residents, so as is bound to happen in a small town, everyone knows the home or has some connection to one of the previous owners. Other quaint Victorian houses lined the street, the town was brimming with smiling faces, friendly hellos, and an old-world charisma that time hasn't touched. Needless to say, I purchased the house and moved away from the urban sprawl as quickly as possible.

Upon purchasing the house and walking into my 'new' home for the first time, I was met with that musty damp air, teeming with history, and I thought to myself in a superficially, abstract sort of way that this house must have residents that didn't and probably never intended to move out. I was purposely trying to fool myself out of knowing, while at the same time acknowledging, that I wasn't alone. Fool myself or not, the feeling of being in someone else's space was hair-raisingly palpable. As much as I'd like to disregard the obvious in this situation, this type of feeling did not come as a shock walking into an historic home. Rather, that is to say, not yet...

“The memories and energies of this house undoubtedly live on, and if you are willing and open to listening, she will speak to you. If you’re not open and willing to listen, she’s going to talk to you anyways, so it’s better just to open your mind and pay attention before she gives you a helpful, physical nudge to remind you...the past lives on and its residents never left.”

It was my plan to turn the detached carriage house into an Airbnb and invite guests to come fall in love with Livingston the same way I had. My first few weeks in the home were demanding with furnishing and decorating the carriage house, so I had very little time to sit and really observe what this old home had to say. Mom and dad were gracious enough to lend me a hand with moving as well, that is until mom entered what was to become my son’s bedroom and was lent an unwelcomed and unseen hand on her leg. She had been touched! She, having somewhat of a sixth sense about these things, had tried to warn me that this house had spirits, so it’s only apt that she was the first to be reached out to by this house’s unseen residents...literally. Needless to say, mom hasn’t been back into the room.

The home at times feels heavy. The kind of feeling you get when you’re somewhere you know you’re not supposed to be, or when someone is glaring holes through you from behind and it takes everything you have not to turn around and look or sidestep it into another room to perceived safety and solitude. It’s not always like that, but it has become more frequent and more apparent. Not in a threatening or menacing way, but certainly uncomfortable at times.

I have recently started doing some renovations in the main house, as are necessary in these older homes. After all, this is my home for now and I want to make the space reflect my tastes and personality. One of my first projects was to remove some of the old drywall which had begun to crack with the shifting, rich East Texas soil. The home had been built using stunning virgin cypress shiplap, and I intended to expose this house’s inner beauty. As it happens, I opened up Pandora’s paranormal box when I opened up the walls. The more layers of drywall and generations of wallpaper I pulled off the wall, I could feel the history being pulled back like layers of an onion. The oldest wallpaper had to be over 120 years old. Perhaps in a sign of approval, or a demonstration of vehement disapproval, the energy of this house amplified significantly.

I began to feel myself being watched more consistently. The hairs on my arms and neck raised more frequently, and the desire to look over my shoulder has become increasingly necessary. What used to be sanguine nights at home watching my favorite series on TV or reading a book have become nights of hearing footsteps in the foyer, knocking on the walls, and the bone-chilling anxiety of wondering if when you open your eyes, you’re going to get a glimpse of something you wished you hadn’t. Darting shadows from my peripheral have become an everyday occurrence, and just when I work up the fortitude to turn my head to look, there is nothing.

You begin to question your own sanity, or wonder if the move and operating an Airbnb has been more stressful than initially realized. Or maybe my growing anxiety was fueling the ever-increasing activity I was experiencing; I had heard of poltergeist type activity being fueled by emotions and anxieties. But these experiences didn’t have all the trappings of a poltergeist-type haunt. It had touched

my mom, and I was hearing it and feeling it regularly. This felt more intelligent, more deliberate.

The Airbnb had up until recently been a nice respite from the uneasiness of the main house. I hadn’t experienced anything in the carriage house that would lead me to believe the spirit or spirits had somehow impishly followed me there to have a good laugh at scaring the life out of me. I was soon to realize that the spirit aimed to make an appearance to my Airbnb guests as well.

A woman, her daughter, and her infant granddaughter were visiting from South Texas as guests in the Airbnb. They were, by all accounts, wonderful guests, and very much enjoyed their stay here. However, the mother would later recount to me before they checked out that they had experienced a slew of activity that sounded eerily similar to that taking place in the main house. “Is this place haunted?”, the daughter asked. Without wanting to add levity to the situation, I simply asked “what makes you say that?”. She went on to recall that the night they checked in, the first words out of her mother’s mouth when they walked through the door were “we’ve got company”. I chuckled internally, but felt the corners of my mouth lift slightly in a mildly satisfied and validated grin. The mother interrupted with, “my daughter was not a believer like me, but she is now”. She explained how her daughter was laying on the pullout couch in the living room downstairs watching tv, when she reached over to pat her baby and felt the cold touch of a hand wrap around her arm. “It was a full hand”, she said, “I could feel fingers and everything”. The mom expounded, “she thought it was me coming to check on the baby, but I was upstairs asleep”. The mom continued, “but we’ve both heard walking up and down the stairs several times”. At this point, I smugly let out an affirmative “as a matter of fact, it is haunted”, and went on to explain my own experiences in the main house. They left satisfied guests and never felt like the presence was malevolent or meant harm in any way...just very present and unmistakable.

I, on the other hand, also began having experiences in the Airbnb shortly after their departure. I was upstairs vacuuming the bedrooms, and had turned the vacuum off because I heard the screen door to the front door of the Airbnb close. Not a slam, but a notable shut. No sooner had the door shut did I hear a very audible female voice saying “hello?” come from downstairs. I hurried downstairs thinking it was my next guest arriving early, or perhaps my elderly neighbor had come over to gab as my wonderful neighbors are wont to do. There was nobody. I looked outside in case my neighbor was calling out over the fence. Again, nobody. I made my way back upstairs to wrap up the vacuum cord and made it halfway down the stairs when I yet again heard another “hello?”. The same voice, same intonation. But this time, I was close enough to the source to be certain it was coming from inside the Airbnb where I was sure I was alone. Or was I?

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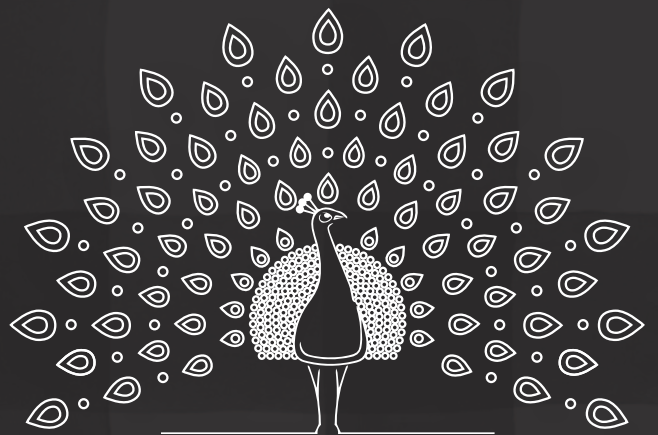
Not even a few days later as I was changing sheets in the Airbnb after the departure of a few wonderful guests, the atmosphere in the primary bedroom began to grow heavy and tense. I had never been anxious in the Airbnb, but the energy had a certain animosity to it. Again, I couldn't say it was malicious, but it certainly had my attention. I knew I was being watched as I cautiously continued to put the fresh pillowcases on the pillows. I didn't want to turn around because I just knew I would see something. I did a sort of do-si-do with the bed to get to the side so as not to have to raise my head. However, no sooner had I gotten to the other side of the bed did I see it out of the corner of my eye. My head jerked around almost involuntarily to meet it head on, despite my desire to keep my eyes averted. And there she was. The first actual full manifestation of a spirit I have ever seen in my life, and God willing, the last. I stood there frozen from head to toe out of sheer trepidation for what seemed like an eternity. In actuality, it was probably one to two seconds before I found myself bolting down the stairs and out of the Airbnb, but not before getting a good hard look at the woman I believe has been skulking about the property between the veil. She was stern, almost angry looking. An older woman, with visible wrinkles highlight by small lensed glasses and a tight Edwardian bun, a grayish, calf-length form fitting dress complete with a belt which held in a crisp white shirt lined with dainty frills around the V-cut collar and mid-arm length sleeves. She was almost what one could call translucent just around her edges, but otherwise as clear as you or me.

What her intent was, I didn't stick around long enough to find out. She didn't speak or move. She simply stood there in seeming disapproval, or so I gather from the stern glower on her face. I quickly called my neighbors, who have become dear friends of mine, to come sit with me inside the Airbnb so I could finish cleaning. In true small-town fashion, four of my neighbors showed up to give me a helping hand and take an interest in my story. Despite whatever troubles, supernatural or otherwise, my neighbors have made living here thus far a truly rewarding experience. But what I've learned is this: this house has a history. I do not own this house; I am simply a caretaker. One day I will pass on or move away from here, but my own energy, at least in part, will have left its mark on this house as well. Given what I know about the history of the house, I have an idea of who the lady might be, but that's her story to tell, not mine. The memories and energies of this house undoubtedly live on, and if you are willing and open to listening, she will speak to you. If you're not open and willing to listen, she's going to talk to you anyways, so it's better just to open your mind and pay attention before she gives you a helpful, physical nudge to remind you...the past lives on and its residents never left. We invite you to come stay a few nights with us at The Carriage House on Milam St. in Livingston and see if you are lucky enough to catch a glimpse of our former residents. As Halloween draws nearer and the veil between the spirit world and ours becomes thinner, who knows what awaits me and future guests. Either way, you're sure to love it here! They seem to...enough to still be here. ■





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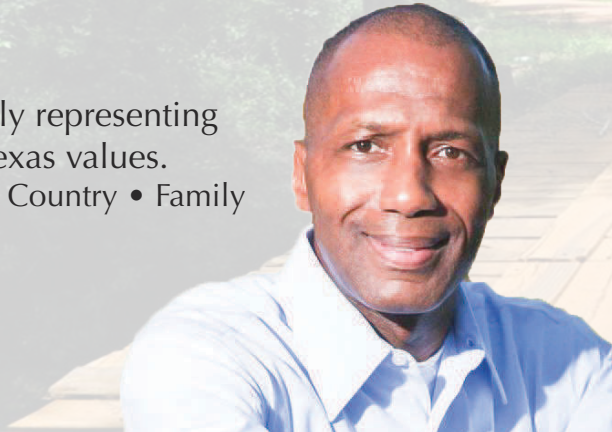
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FEATURE



TABLE SETTINGS

The holidays are coming...is your table ready?

Story by Julie Mayes Hamrick

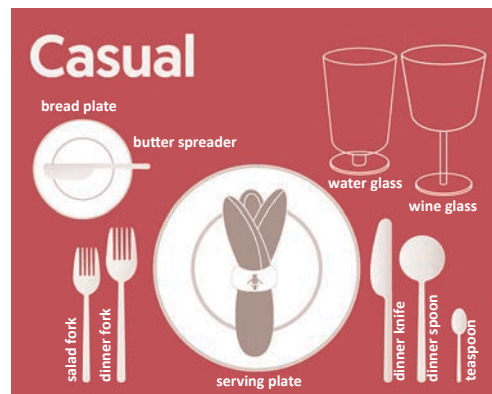
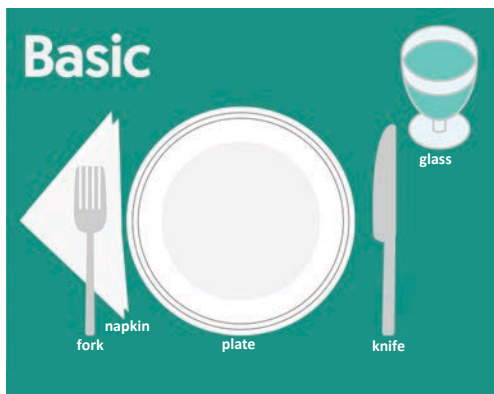
As with everything in this day and age, the vast choices when it comes to table settings are almost overwhelming. Whether 2021 will be your first holiday dinner in your home, or you are a grandmother seasoned in use of your beloved “good china”, you need only to type in “table setting ideas” on the Pinterest application to find new ideas and tips to make your table beautiful every day! Be it a simple dinner at home, or a special occasion, assuming you have a menu, a headcount, and a table that will seat your guests, the first thing to think about when planning the service of a meal is the type of dishes you plan to use. Table settings are the heart of a great meal. What would the “Be Our Guest” musical number from Disney’s *Beauty and the Beast* be without the spinning plates, high-kicking forks and twirling napkins? As the host Lumiere said in that show, “Try the grey stuff it’s delicious, don’t believe me? Ask the dishes!”

With the recent pandemic’s cancellation of kids’ after school events, and the closing of restaurants, we have found ourselves gathered at home around the table with family at mealtime far more than in past years. This has left us scrambling not only for recipes, but also clean plates upon which to present our culinary creations. A family meal can be so much more meaningful with just a little bit of effort. If, that is, anyone remembers how to properly set a table! My sweetheart claims to remember by holding up his two hands, and using his thumb and forefinger to make a “b” with his left hand and a “d” with his right, reminding him his drink goes on the right and his bread plate on the left. In my younger years, I belonged to a women’s volunteer organization in Houston that housed a lovely tea room. On my volunteer day, I would drop my kids at preschool and head to the Junior League to begin folding napkins and setting tables for huge luncheons we would throw in the tea room to make money for charity. Anyone who has set that many tables that many times will never forget the order of silverware next to a plate. However, if you need a primer, it’s not that difficult. (See illustrations below.)

If you were lucky enough to have had a good old southern wedding, you probably registered for your favorite china at the local gift shop and were showered with gifts of individual pieces or place settings from your wedding guests, and you still have it somewhere. It was gifted in all sizes of individual boxes, and over the years, you may have even purchased a china cabinet to display it. However, it seems that many brides today forego registering for fancy dishes, and even if they do register and receive a set of fine china, it sits in boxes in a closet, unused. What a travesty!

Personally, I love dishes, and I love using them. While some may call me a dish hoarder, I like to think I have been blessed in acquiring some pretty nice sets with good stories of origin. I received a complete service for twelve of two different patterns of china when I got engaged and registered at Livingston Drug Store, like most girls in my town in the eighties. My ex-husband and I could not agree on one pattern, so I registered for two. That alone is an interesting story of origin. Every time I look at the pattern he chose, the cobalt-rimmed Noritake *Valhalla* I roll my eyes at the masculinity of it. But I have made up for that first set many times over. I first added to my number of sets with inheritances. I always volunteered to take the dishes that nobody else really wanted. I found joy in setting tables with dishes inherited from loved ones, wondering about the negotiations that took place over the plates of my late uncle, an attorney, or the parties that must have been thrown with the thirty-six place settings of the beautiful Lenox Mansfield that belonged to my husband’s Brigadier General Grandfather in Washington D.C. I started new collections of my own taste, falling for the whimsy of Mackenzie-Childs pottery, and developing a craving for the lovely *Courtly Check* pieces that resulted in driving six hours from my sister’s home in Westchester County, New York to the Finger Lakes in the northern part of the state, where the beautiful Mackenzie-Childs company is headquartered, to attend their Barn Sale. My sister and I stood in line for hours with carts and carts of the pottery to get that discount!!

My coup d’état came when on a European vacation, I convinced





my family to rent a car to make the drive from Paris, France to the village of Limoges, which is known for its porcelain production. Oh! The countless shops full of china we found there. I will never forget finally coming across the place that produced the pattern I wanted (Royal Limoges' *Faberge Eggs*). The French apparently did not hold Limoges china in nearly as high esteem as Houston, Texas department stores, as there were literally chickens running around outside the shop in between stacks of milk crates full of beautiful plates. After losing my mind inside the store, I cradled my precious purchases in the tiny rental car all the way back to Paris. On the flight home, I let my then-husband handle the two kids, because of course, my lap was reserved for my new china! It is my pride and joy, so elegant, and the center of my formal Easter table every year. But the chicken memory is the best part.

Even if you have never received a gift of china from your grandmother, as a wedding gift, or otherwise, it is easy enough to pick up beautiful dishes at reasonable cost today to help prepare your table for the upcoming holidays. Sadly, it seems that many of those gifted with older sets of china these days do not recognize the sentimentality of using dishes that sat at a table attended by older relatives. Or perhaps the prospect of finding cabinet space for piles of breakables that will not be used regularly overwhelms young homeowners. For whatever reason, more and more full sets of beautiful china patterns are turning up at local resale shops and present a great opportunity for you to become the proud owner at a fraction of the cost of a new set.

A few years ago, while exploring a hot, dusty local flea market, I came across a box filled with disgustingly dirty dishes which I immediately recognized as worthy of a good scrubbing. Imagine my excitement when the owner said I could take the whole box for \$25. I came home and started washing, squealing with delight as the lovely pink floral pattern appeared from underneath the grime. After a quick rinse, I found I was the proud owner of a complete service - twelve place settings and serving pieces in a beautiful Noritake pattern, *Dresgay*.

I was hooked. I soon realized, dishes bring me joy. It just seems that whatever I'm serving, it's better when it's served on a pretty plate. I began paying attention to local garage sales and Facebook Marketplace offerings. This was when I realized there is a whole generation that has simply forgotten the art of table setting and the joy of pretty china! It seems every little junk shop or estate sale always has a set of dishes that is being cast out, at a mere pittance of their value. You never know what you will find at your local resale shop. On special days, you may come across a single piece of a coveted pattern.

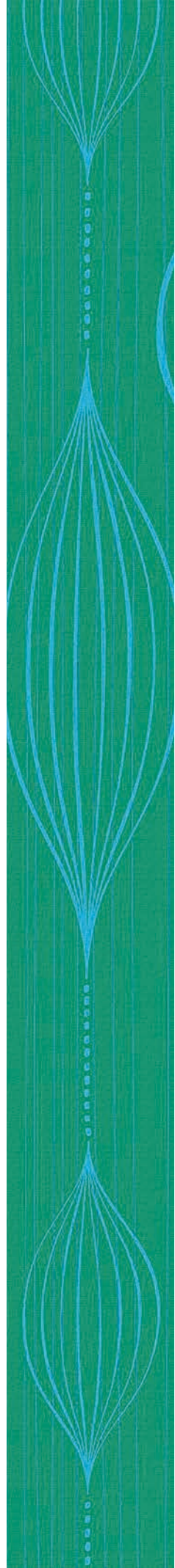
I recently found a Lenox *Brookdale* salad plate for 50¢ at Seniors Center Resale Shop in Coldspring. It pairs nicely with my Lenox *Mansfield* pattern inherited from grandfather.

Over what has now been years of searching and collecting, I have educated myself about the different types of collectible dishes, such as depression glass, Fenton glass, McCoy pottery, Fiesta ware, bone china, and even Pyrex, the old colorful bowls that are seriously sought after today. (We will save that addiction for a different article.) I have learned the manufacturers of dishes, and I can spot and estimate the value of a set of grandmother's china set aside in a garage sale almost immediately.

Although most new brides are not registering for fancy floral china, almost everyone has a good set of plain white dishes. I group my Wedgwood *Gold Chelsea* or Sheffield *Bone White* with colorful napkins, placemats or floral arrangements in countless ways, depending on the season. I use my sets

From top to bottom:

Royal Limoges Faberge Eggs, Royal Albert Lady Carlyle, Wedgwood Kutani Crane, Wedgwood Renaissance mixed with cobalt Noritake Valhalla





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of pale colored depression glass (I have yellow, blue, green, and my favorite color, pink), for springtime, and my Indiana Glass Company *Ruby Red* for Christmas).

It has been fun learning about the various types of plates and bowls that good manufacturers produce in each pattern. An estate sale I visited in San Antonio once yielded twelve place settings of a beautiful Wedgwood pattern, *Appledore*. Incredibly, each place setting consisted of fifteen different pieces. It would be almost impossible to fit the entire place setting of all fifteen pieces at a place at once, and I cannot imagine the meal that requires that many plates and bowls! Yet I know, if I need a set with unusual pieces, I have one!

I have found dinnerware sets that my mother used in the seventies, and grabbed them for sentimental reasons. The passing down of dish sets in the family is such a beautiful pastime. The most precious set currently entrusted to me belongs to my sweetheart, and will go to his daughter some day. When he was eight years old, he saved up fifty dollars and bought his single mom a complete set of beautiful Mikasa *Manor House* china for Christmas. I look at it and think about his family using it on their table in New Jersey in the sixties.

Of course, if I ever see a pattern that is predominantly pink, well, I have to have it. One of my lawyer buddies, who hails from Mississippi and thus appreciates the beauty of southern table settings, once made a stop in Louisiana just for me on his way home for a visit to pick up a set of Royal Albert's *Lady Carlyle*, a burst of pink delight that I had been eyeing on Facebook Marketplace for quite some time. My sweetheart gifted me the matching tea set of the same beautiful pink pattern when we found it while junquing in Florida last year. I love the pink so much, it has been proudly displayed since springtime in my kitchen hutch,

though it is about time to pull out the Wedgwood *Kutani Crane*, with its beautiful fall tones, to replace the summery pink and start getting the house in the autumn mood.

Collecting different styles and patterns has also given me great versatility when setting a table. It is fun to pick up rogue pieces to layer with other patterns. For instance, at Christmastime, I use my basic Ten Strawberry Street *Red* rimmed dinner plates, and alternate patterns of salad plates throughout the season, including Lenox *Holiday*. This mixy-matchy style proves to be the most interesting and regularly generates table conversation about the varied pieces. My annoyingly cobalt wedding dishes are instantly improved with the addition of blue and white plates of various styles, such as Wedgwood's *Renaissance*.

So as we gather around the table more often these days, why not look around for some interesting dishes that bring joy to your table? It really does not take much time to make an ordinary table special. Unpack your wedding dishes, and take a look at your album where you recorded who gave you those cups and saucers. Pull out those inherited dishes, and talk to your kids about the earlier tables on which they were used. Or, head on down to your local resale shop and check out affordable pieces that might mix or match with what you already have. Start thinking now about your holiday tables! There is nothing like a beautifully set table during the holiday season to fill your dining room with anticipation of the fabulous meal to come! ■

Contributor Julie Mayes Hamrick was born, raised and first married in Livingston, Texas, became a Junior League member, a mom of two, and an attorney in Houston, Texas, and now practices law in Polk County when she is not scouring Lou's Estate Sales throughout the Piney Woods for old dishes.

MacKenzie-Childs Courtly Check



RECIPE





Maple Pecan SWEET POTATO SLICES

Story by Barbara White, photos by Amy Holzworth

A platter of these easy-to-make roasted potato slices make a good side dish for almost any autumn meal. I prefer the potatoes unpeeled, but if you don't care for the potato skins, go ahead and peel them. The brown sugar can be omitted if you want a little less sweetness. They won't be as caramelized, but they will still be delicious.

Ingredients:

2 lbs. sweet potatoes, scrubbed clean, sliced crossways into 1/2-inch slices (no thinner than that or they might cook too quickly and burn)
2 tablespoons melted butter
Salt and pepper to taste
1/4 cup maple syrup
1 tablespoon brown sugar
1/2 cup roughly-chopped pecans

Directions:

Preheat oven to 450 degrees and line a rimmed baking sheet with foil.

Toss the sweet potato slices with the melted butter, salt and pepper and spread out in a single layer on the baking sheet.

Bake the sweet potatoes for approximately 20 minutes, until the bottoms begin to brown.

Combine the maple syrup, brown sugar and chopped pecans.

Flip the sweet potato slices over and then divide the maple syrup mixture evenly over each slice, keeping most of the mixture in the center so it stays on the potato and doesn't run down the sides.

Bake for another 5 minutes or until the syrup mixture is bubbly.

(Serves approximately six people as a side dish.)





The gift that keeps on giving

Story by Barbara White

It is one of my favorite photos of my mother. She is curled up in an overstuffed, moss-green armchair, one with a lace doily on each arm and a larger one draped over the headrest. She is knitting. The room is illuminated only by a lone floor lamp beside the chair, its shade slightly tilted. It is impossible to tell what she is thinking, but her mind is clearly not on her knitting. I suspect she is wondering if she married the right man or if she should consider smothering him in his sleep.

I've got a pretty good idea of what is going on beyond the camera's view. The man she married, who would eventually become my father, is experimenting with the angle of the lamp shade, checking his light meter, making the appropriate changes to the aperture of the camera and otherwise being just a wee bit annoying to my mother who, in addition to wondering about the state of her marriage, might also be thinking of a million other things she would rather be doing.

The photo was taken sometime in the mid-1940s, a couple of years before my older sister came along, so it was just the two of them. The newlywed was indulging her husband in one of his favorite hobbies, photography, giving him something to focus on while experimenting with various lighting and camera settings.

I love the photo not only because of the images it conjures up in my own mind, but because it reminds me of one of the few times I

gave someone the perfect gift, something for which I am not well known.

More about the photo later. First, let me first explain why, in my search for a perfect gift, I often come up empty-handed.

Let's pretend just for fun that this is October and I am preparing my Christmas gift list. While we're at it, let us also pretend that I would actually be preparing my gift list in October. Anyway, you are on that list.

If you are a small child, the choices are easy because you want everything. Some children's letters to Santa are longer than a CVS receipt. And most children truly appreciate what they get, sometimes for as long as 10 minutes.

Assuming you are an adult, I want to give you something from the heart, something meaningful. Failing at that, I begin to search what is left of my memory for something that you might have said in the past that gives me a clue as to what you might want or need.

That, boys and girls, is how casually mentioning that your feet were cold back during last February's big freeze magically gives birth to a pair of microwavable slippers nine months later. It is a fact of life.

Suffice it to say that many of my gifts, while having initially taken root in the heart, move the recipient to think of three little words: Church Yard Sale or, worse yet, Hefty Cinch Sack.

But let's get back to that perfect gift.

Like most really good ideas, it came out of the blue. Well, actually,

it came off a shelf in the hallway closet of my parents' house, barely missing my foot.

My future dad was into using 35-mm slide film at the time the photo of my future mother not minding her knitting was taken. That photo was among dozens of slides arranged in neat rows in a wooden cigar box that ended up sharing space inside a slightly larger box with several reels of home movies. During one visit, while moving that box for the umpteenth time while looking for something else, I dropped it, revealing both its contents and a great idea for a gift for my aging mother, who had outlived my dad by many years.

Remember that scene from the movie "Christmas Vacation" when Chevy Chase's character, trapped in his own attic, gets all misty-eyed watching old home movies? Our home movies were not like that. The only tears our home movies would generate would be those created by excessive yawning. The film reels could stay in the box.

Ahhh, but the slides! Those snapshots of a time when my folks were just people, not parents, images that had not seen the light of day in decades, they could be turned into actual photographs that could be easily viewed by my mother. My mom would love that!

I could practically hear the crack of the bat. I hit it out of the park!

So there it was; that once-in-a-lifetime perfect gift that I gave that one time, the one that made both the giver and the recipient happy. I actually enjoyed turning those 35-mm slides into photos and arranging them into an album. I even enjoyed wrapping the album, and if there is anything I hate worse than selecting gifts it is wrapping them.

I had an unusual feeling as I watched my mother unwrap her gift – unusual in that I normally experience a little dread at this point in the gift-giving process. That good feeling persisted as she pulled the album out of the box and opened it to the first page. It was a photo taken at my Aunt Martha's wedding; my mother was a bridesmaid at her sister-in-law's nuptials. It went uphill from there.

On subsequent visits, I noticed the photo album had not been shelved in the hall closet but was still within easy reach of my mom's favorite chair, the overstuffed, moss-green armchair with the doilies having been replaced several times over the years.

The whole album is now in my possession, but that one photo will always be my favorite. Yep, it was the perfect gift. I'm still enjoying it. ■



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HOLIDAY



CHRISTMAS COOKIE EXCHANGE

By Kelli Barnes

Christmas comes but once a year...but doesn't the year seem to go by so much more quickly than in the past? Also, do you have trouble getting into the spirit of things? Remedies for this problem come in many forms and can vary from person to person, and year to year.

A Christmas cookie exchange, when done correctly, can be just the thing to bring Christmas spirit to an individual, an office group, or family. Just listen to this testimony:

"Thank you for putting together the cookie exchange," said one recent participant. "They are beautiful and smell wonderful! It seems like Christmas now."

The following is a step-by-step plan for organizing your cookie exchange.

- Spread the word you are having an exchange and make the deadline to sign up no later than November 30. It is important the cookies are ready to be enjoyed no later than the end of the first week of December.
- December 1, send out these instructions to participants:
Make a half dozen cookies per participant, and don't forget to include yourself in that number.
Seal cookies in a secure container for freshness. No need to bag separate or special. They will be included in one big special container for each participant.
Have your cookies ready by a set date, time, and location for pickup.
Cookies will be delivered back to the same location the very next day.
Print your recipe on a sheet of 8.5x11 plain paper...one for each participant and have ready when your cookies are picked up.
- When the exact number of participants are secured, find appropriate containers, and buy wax paper to line each one. We used beautiful Christmas hat boxes from a local hobby shop, large enough to fit six dozen decorated cookies for our twelve participants.
- Make sure your date and location work out in your best interest, as you will be the one responsible for pickup, organizing during the night, and then delivering. For example, in an office setting you will want to pick up and deliver on a workday. A church group may have pick up on Saturday and deliver on Sunday.
- The same day you pick up all the cookies from participants, make sure you have a clean, spacious location to set out all your containers, line them, and then carefully and strategically place six of each cookie in each container, getting the lids secure as soon as possible. It is a good idea to wear gloves for this, to ensure cleanliness.
- Organize the recipes in packets and deliver to participants the very next day along with their container of cookies.
- Enjoy a variety of beautiful, fresh Christmas cookies and treats...just the thing to jump start your holiday season.

May your holidays be merry and bright, and include special moments, time with family and friends, and special treats, bringing to mind all your best Christmas memories. ■



OUTDOORS

Silver Bullets



Story by Matt Williams

Just when you thought the list of invasive pests to sneak into Texas couldn't get any longer, it did.

Silver carp, a prolific variety of freshwater carp native to China, were recently discovered in Choctaw Creek in Grayson County. The creek rises about 15 miles downstream from Lake Texoma near Sherman and runs northeast about 38 miles before dumping into the Red River along the Texas/Oklahoma border.

In June, Sherman bow fisherman Stephen Banaszak arrowed two of the carp, including a 13 pounder. TPWD fisheries biologist Dan Bennett of Pottsboro said the fish were turned over to TPWD and

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, who identified them as silver carp. On July 19, Banaszak turned in an even bigger fish arrowed from Choctaw. That one weighed nearly 21 pounds, Bennett said.

Although this marks the first time silver carp have been found in Texas, Bennett says the fish were documented back in 2019 in other areas of the Red River, including just downstream from Lake Texoma in Oklahoma waters.

Silver carp aren't the first invasive Asian carp species that have been found in Texas, either. Bennett said bighead carp — a cousin to the silver carp — were documented several years ago in the Red River and tributaries downstream of Lake Texoma. Bigheads also have been identified in Big Cypress Bayou downstream of Lake O'

TPWD concerned about recent discovery of invasive silver carp below Lake Texoma dam



Silver carp congregate in massive schools. The fish are prone to jump when startled, often in large numbers. This can pose a dangerous threat to boaters, fishermen and other recreational users. The invasive carp were recently discovered in Choctaw Creek, about 15 miles downstream from Lake Texoma. (Photo courtesy of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service)

the Pines and Sulphur River downstream of Lake Wright Patman.

Like the bighead, the silver carp is a peculiar-looking fish with a scaleless head, low-set eyes, upturned mouth and no teeth. As juveniles, both can easily be mistaken for shad or minnows.

How'd They Get Here

It's anybody's guess as to how long the lowly-looking silver carp have been finning around in Choctaw Creek. Or how many. But

there is little doubt how they got there.

Silver carp are among several invasive carp species purposely imported from Asia into the U.S. in the 1970s to help clean up nuisance algae blooms and aquatic vegetation in aquaculture facilities, farm ponds and sewage lagoons.

Subsequent flood events flushed the fish out of private ponds and aquaculture facilities into creeks, canals and other waterways. The fish since have infiltrated major river basins like the Mississippi,

Ohio, Missouri, Illinois and Tennessee, the maze of tributaries that feed them and invaded numerous reservoirs by way of lock/dam systems that allow boats and barges to travel between river pools.

Live bait releases and intentional stockings also are believed to contributed to the spread of an invasive species known to reproduce rapidly, grow beyond 60 pounds, damage fragile aquatic ecosystems and threaten valuable sport fish populations.

Silver carp also can spell trouble for recreational boaters, jet skiers, water skiers and fishermen. That's because they are prone to jump several feet out of the water when startled, often in schools numbering into the hundreds. Run face first to a 10-20 pound fish in a boat speeding along at 30 m.p.h. and the consequences won't be pretty.

The fish have been found in at least two dozens states including Texas and bordering states of Louisiana, Arkansas and Oklahoma. Bennett feels certain the fish found their way into Choctaw Creek by way of the Red River.

"They came down the Mississippi River drainage, hitting tributaries and now they are slowly making their way up the Red River," he said. "I anticipate that all the high river flows we've seen since 2015 have facilitated their migration upstream."

Thankful for Dams

To date, invasive carp have not been documented in any Texas reservoirs. Even though the fish are knocking at the backdoor of Lake Texoma, fisheries experts believe the non-navigational dam has been successful at stopping them in their tracks thus far.

"We are fortunate in the regard that we don't have navigational locks for barge traffic that would enable the fish to move upstream from dams on their own," said Craig Bonds, TPWD inland fisheries director.

What scientists are concerned about are tailrace cast netters who might mistake juvenile silver carp for shad and transport them upstream them to the lake, or a different water body, to use as bait. While there are already state laws in place that prohibit the transport or possession of live invasive carp, one careless or ignorant fisherman could do a wealth of damage in short order.

This is especially true on Texoma, which supports valuable populations of striped bass, largemouth bass, smallmouth bass and blue catfish. The lake's striped bass fishery alone is believed to generate more than \$25 million annually for local economies.

Bonds said the river-fed lake sets up perfectly for the current-loving fish to make annual spawning runs upstream, which could allow numbers to swell in a hurry. Plus, the fish are planktivores that



As juveniles, silver carp (pictured here) and bighead carp can easily be mistaken for shad. (Photo courtesy of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service)

feed almost continuously on plankton that is vital for shad and early growth of juvenile sport fish.

That's a bad thing. In theory, the forced competition for the same food source could reduce baitfish biomass and lead to negative impacts to the sport fish populations that feed on them.

"My concern is that they will be moved upstream above the dam and into a system that has enough river miles above the reservoir for them to be able to spawn," Bonds said. "Texoma is a prime candidate for that. They could impact shad populations and indirectly do harm to a prized striped bass fishery and other sport fish populations. We don't want to see what happened at Kentucky Lake and other places happen to our valuable reservoir fisheries in Texas."

Silver Bullets

Bennett cited the possibility of collisions between leaping fish and boaters, fishermen or other recreational users as another potential problem that could arise if silver carp become established in Texoma or any other Texas reservoir. Located just north the D/FW Metroplex, Texoma is a hotbed for anglers and weekend pleasure boaters.

"It could definitely be a problem," Bennett said. "These fish (silver carp) are jumpers. They would definitely create a recreational risk of people getting injured out there. The bow fisherman that shot the fish in Choctaw Creek told me they jumped into the side of his boat and busted some of his night lights."

Lance Freeman knows all about what can happen when the water's surface erupts with silver bullets.

Freeman is a 26-year-old bass angler from Eddyville, KY. He grew up fishing on Kentucky/Barkley reservoirs along the Tennessee and Cumberland rivers. He's been running a commercial fishing operation targeting silver carp since they infiltrated his home waters in significant numbers in 2015.

Early on Freeman and his crew were netting 300 days year using gill nets 1,200 feet in length. He's sold fish for human consumption, lobster/crawfish bait and to protein markets for use in dog food, cat food and fertilizer for as much as a quarter to as little as eight cents per pound.

Daily catches upwards of 10,000 pounds are common, but Freeman has made much bigger hauls. His record day catch is 26,000 pounds. Freeman estimates he and his crew have removed 10-12 million pounds of silver carp from the two lakes.

"We've made a dent in them, but they aren't under control by any means," he said. "We've had them for a while, but they got in here big time in 2015 when we had a high water flow at just the right time. It was the perfect storm for them to spawn and the population exploded."

Freeman claims he has seen 8-10 pound silver carp in massive schools more times than he can remember. He said things can get pretty bizarre — and dangerous — when hundreds of fish breach the surface around a moving boat.

"I've got videos where there are so many that you couldn't see another boat 40 feet away," he said. "It doesn't happen every day, but it's pretty intense when it does. When one gets excited they all get excited. I've been hit and knocked out of the boat before. I know of a water skier that got knocked out on a competition ski course near Paducah. Think about it. Eight pounds of anything thrown at you is going to hurt, especially if it hits you going 30 miles per hour. ■

Matt Williams is a freelance writer based in Nacogdoches. He can be reached by e-mail, mattwillwrite4u@yahoo.com.

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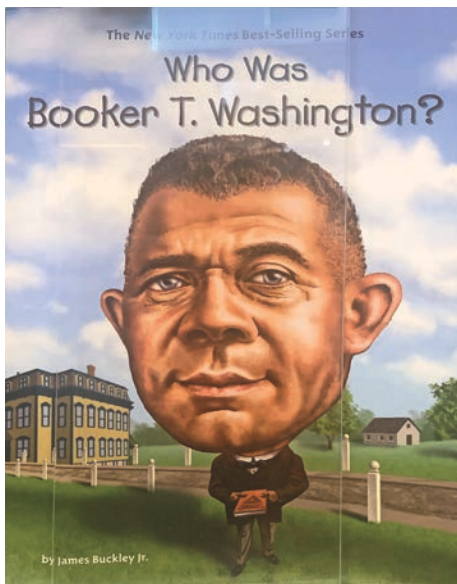


SHOP EAST TEXAS

Can you believe this is our fourth holiday season together? The East Texan magazine began in the Spring of 2018. Let's remember all our past shopping locations too, as we prepare to shop local for the 2021 holiday gift buying season.

H-Wines, Montgomery | Trinity Florist & Gifts, Trinity | Home Grown, Livingston | Bella's Gifts from the Heart, Crockett
Wishing Well Antiques & Gifts, Lufkin | Ivy Rose Boutique, Trinity | KraZee Korner This & That Vendor Mall, Huntington
Country to Classy Boutique, Woodville | Poulands The Everything Store, Diboll | Sullivans Hardware & Gifts, Woodville
Center of Attention, Lumberton | The Way You Live, Trinity | Décor and More, Corrigan | Bombshell Boutique, Hudson
Paradise Gardens, Coldspring | His and hers Merchantile-Antiques, Burke | The Print Shop, Livingston | Country Chic Shoppe, Onalaska
Doretta's Lair Art Studio, Woodville | Black Raven, Alto | Suzie Q's Blessings from Above, Groveton | Junction Antique Mall, Nacogdoches
White Peacock Olive Oil & Vinegar Co., Lufkin | Layered Home, Lufkin | House of Traditions, Nacogdoches | Spruce, Lufkin
Good Golly Miss Molly, Livingston | Pappy's Hobby Shop, Woodville | The Very Thing, Hudson | Gokey's Old Town Emporium, Goodrich

Please send your suggestions for unique shopping venues in our 28-county region to kelli@polkcountypublishing.com and we will visit them for our upcoming magazines. We want to support our small retail businesses.



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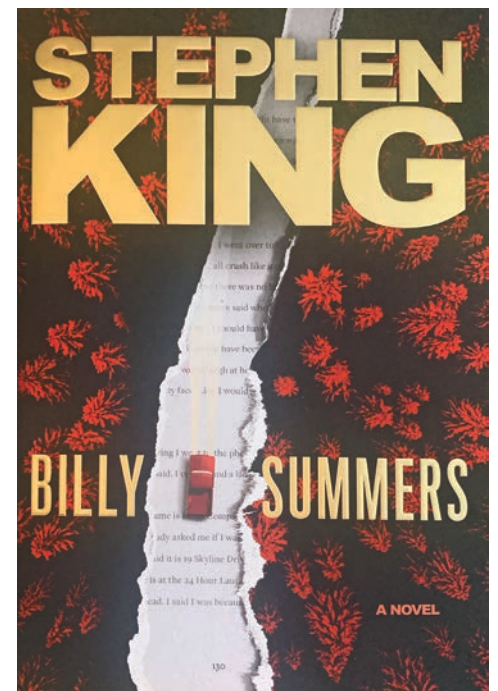


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Absolute Fiction



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Happy Camper
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Livingston

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Crockett

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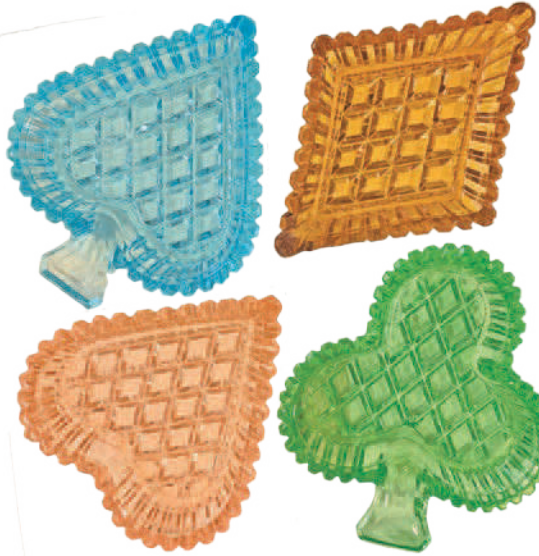


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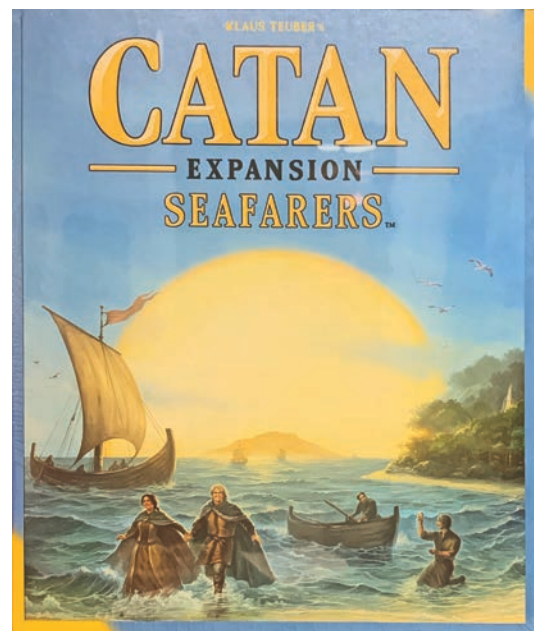
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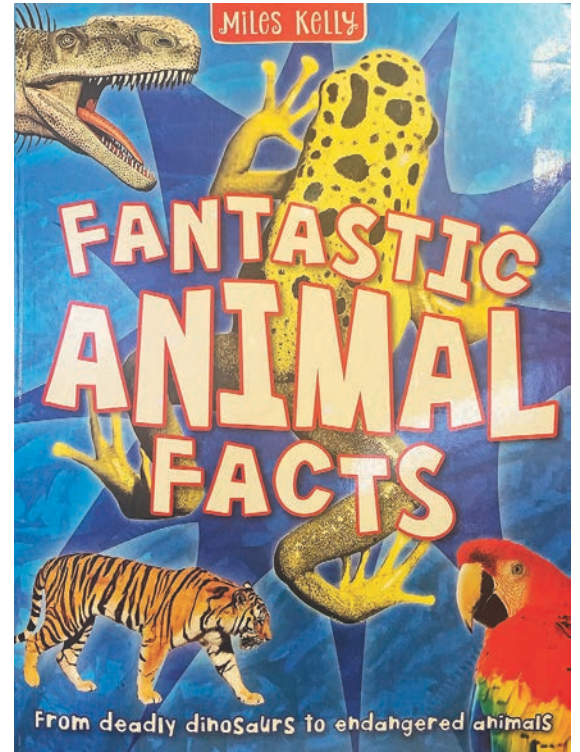


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CALFENNDAR

OCTOBER

Woodville

Tyler County Fair
SEPTEMBER 29-OCTOBER 2

Humble

Pollinator Festival/Mercer Botanic Gardens
OCTOBER 1-2

Montgomery

Montgomery County Quiltwalk/Community Center
OCTOBER 1-2

Jasper

2021 Fall Butterfly Festival
OCTOBER 2

Huntington

2021 Catfish Festival
OCTOBER 2

Huntsville

2021 Fair on the Square/Wine Knot
OCTOBER 2

League City

Galveston County Fall Fest & BBQ Cook-off
OCTOBER 2

Houston

The Temptations and the Four Tops at the Arena Theater
OCTOBER 3

Center

East Texas Poultry Festival
OCTOBER 7-9

Lufkin

Rhonda Vincent and the Rage at the Pines Theater
OCTOBER 8

Winnie

Larry's Old Time Trade Days
OCTOBER 8-10

Conroe

Cajun Catfish Festival 2021
OCTOBER 8-10

Grapeland

Crockett-Mission Tejas Trail Run
OCTOBER 8-9

Mineola

League of Arts Annual Quilt Show
OCTOBER 8-9

Canton

Canton Main Street Festival
OCTOBER 9

Edom

Edom Arts Festival 2021
OCTOBER 9

Sulphur Springs

Indian Summer Festival 2021
OCTOBER 9

Crystal Beach

CT's Texas Slam and Fun Fest
OCTOBER 9

Lindale

Harvest Hustle 5K Run
OCTOBER 9

Longview

Longview Walk to End Alzheimer's
OCTOBER 9

Tomball

Zomball in Tomball/Railroad Depot
OCTOBER 9

Marshall

2021 Fire Ant Festival
OCTOBER 9

Houston

Bayou City Arts Festival 2021
OCTOBER 9-10

Crockett

2021 Gun Show/Crockett Civic Center
OCTOBER 9-10

Houston

Wings Over Houston Air Show/Ellington Field
OCTOBER 9-10

Houston

Amy Grant at the Arena Theater
OCTOBER 10

Gilmer

2021 Jeep Rodeo/Barnwell Mt Rec Area
OCTOBER 14

Tyler

88th Annual Texas Rose Festival
OCTOBER 14-17

Jefferson

Texas Sounds International Country Music Awards
OCTOBER 14-17

Trinity
Davy Crockett Shootout Concert/Trinity County
Fairgrounds
OCTOBER 15-16

Rusk
27th Annual Rusk County PRCA Rodeo
OCTOBER 15-16

Trinity
6th Annual Pumpkin Patch/Downtown
OCTOBER 16-31

Mt. Pleasant
Uncorked Food and Wine Festival
OCTOBER 16

Palestine
Old Town Palestine 5K/10K
OCTOBER 16

Livingston
Trade Days at Pedigo Park
OCTOBER 16-17

Coldspring
Wolfcreek Car, Truck, and Bike Show 2021
OCTOBER 16-17

Sugarland
Alice Cooper at Smart Financial Center
OCTOBER 18

Gilmer
84th Annual East Texas Yamboree
OCTOBER 20-23

The Woodlands
The Doobie Brothers/C W Mitchell Pavilion
OCTOBER 21

Houston
2021 International Quilt Market/G R Brown
Convention Center
OCTOBER 21-25

Huntsville
SHSU Homecoming Weekend featuring Cody
Widner
OCTOBER 22

Groveton
2021 Fall Jam Fest/Stonewall Studios
OCTOBER 23

Palestine
36th Annual Cars of Palestine Car Show
OCTOBER 23

Waxahachie
TCR Festival/Celebrating 50 years of Texas Country
Reporter
OCTOBER 23

Gilmer
The Fabulous Blackwell Quartet/Civic Center
OCTOBER 23

Sulphur Springs
World Championship Hopkins County Stew
Festival
OCTOBER 23

Golden
Golden Sweet Potato festival
OCTOBER 23

Kountze
4th Annual Big Thicket Hogs and Strings Music
Fest and Cook-off
OCTOBER 23

Colmesneil
Harvest Festival and Pumpkin Patch/Victory Camp
Colmesneil
OCTOBER 23

Spring
Los Lobos at Dosey Doe-The Big Barn
OCTOBER 24

Jasper
Little Anglers Big Bass Showdown/Sam Rayburn
Lake
OCTOBER 24

Tyler
Lone Star Gun and Knife Show/Harvey Convention
Center
OCTOBER 24

Sugarland
Pat Benatar at Smart Financial Center
OCTOBER 25

Longview
Harvest Festival and Livestock Show
OCTOBER 27-30

Rusk
Scare on the Square 2021
OCTOBER 29

Jasper
Trunk or Treat 2021
OCTOBER 30

Crockett
HC Courier Chili Cook-off at American Legion Post
134
OCTOBER 30

Galveston
Moody Garden Festival of Lights
OCTOBER 30-NOVEMBER 10

CALFENNDAR

Mt. Pleasant
Everything Texas Ranch Run
NOVEMBER 30

Palestine
Wiggy Thump Festival 2021
NOVEMBER 30

NOVEMBER

Groves
2021 Groves Pecan Festival
NOVEMBER 4-7

Lindale
Vintage Market Days/Pickers Pavilion
NOVEMBER 5

Houston
Enrique Iglesias and Ricky Martin at the Toyota Center
NOVEMBER 5

Winnie
Larry's Old Time Trade Days
NOVEMBER 5-7

Beaumont
SETX Nutcracker Market/Ford Park
NOVEMBER 5-6

The Woodlands
Chris Stapleton at C W Mitchell Pavilion
NOVEMBER 6

Carthage
Texas Hill Country Gospel Jubilee
NOVEMBER 6

Conroe
Conroe Music and Arts Festival 2021/Heritage Palace
NOVEMBER 6-7

League City
Longhorn Open Air Museum/Butler Longhorn Museum
NOVEMBER 6

Jefferson
Fall History, Haunts and Legends/Tourism Visitor Center
NOVEMBER 6

Montgomery
Oil Man Texas Triathlon
NOVEMBER 7

Houston
Alabama 50th Anniversary Tour/Toyota Center
NOVEMBER 7

Corsicana
Navarro County Pro Rodeo/Expo Center
NOVEMBER 11-13

Humble
Houston Gem and Mineral Society Show/Civic Center
NOVEMBER 12-14

Nacogdoches
Heart of Texas Corvair Reunion/Fredonia Hotel
NOVEMBER 12-14

Mt. Pleasant
Deck The Halls/Mt. Pleasant Civic Center
NOVEMBER 12-13

Winnaboro
Winnaboro Art and Wine Festival
NOVEMBER 12-13

Kilgore
A Very Derrick Christmas Lighting
NOVEMBER 13

Tyler
East Texas Bridal Expo on the Bricks/Liberty Hall
NOVEMBER 13

Mt. Vernon
Old Fashioned Downtown Christmas Festival
NOVEMBER 13

Henderson
Heritage Syrup Festival/Depot Museum
NOVEMBER 13

Palestine
2021 Fall Foliage Driving Tour
NOVEMBER 13-28

Nacogdoches
Merry Christmas Market/Main Street
NOVEMBER 13

Beaumont
Annual Holiday Tree Lighting Festival/Fire Museum of Texas
NOVEMBER 13

Livingston
Trade Days at Pedigo Park
NOVEMBER 13-15

Houston
The Gypsy Kings at the Arena Theater
NOVEMBER 14

Lufkin
Ruthie Foster at the Pines Theater
NOVEMBER 18

Canton

2021 East Texas Fiber Festival/Civic Center
NOVEMBER 19

Palestine

Polar Express Train Ride/Texas State Railroad
NOVEMBER 19-DECEMBER 16

Carthage

G&S Gun Show
NOVEMBER 20

Canton

Canton Lighted Christmas Parade
NOVEMBER 20

Cedar Park

Cedar Park Music and Arts Festival 2021
NOVEMBER 20

Beaumont

Annual Christmas Tour of Homes/Beaumont
Botanical Gardens
NOVEMBER 20

Lufkin

Straight No Chaser/Temple Theater/AC
NOVEMBER 21

Longview

2021 Longview Gun Show/Cobb Convention
Center
NOVEMBER 21

Nacogdoches

Santa Claus Live Christmas Present Giveaway
2021/Main Street
NOVEMBER 22

Lindale

2021 Lindale Turkey Trot
NOVEMBER 25

Houston

O'Reilly Auto Parts Autorama 2021/G R Brown
Convention Center
NOVEMBER 26

Marshall

Wonderland of Lights Opening Ceremony
NOVEMBER 27

Beaumont

Cody Johnson at Ford Park
NOVEMBER 27

Marshall

Wonderland of Lights 2021
NOVEMBER 27-DECEMBER 23

DECEMBER

Canton

First Monday Trade Days
DECEMBER 2-5

Lufkin

A Christmas Carol/Temple Theater
DECEMBER 2

Spring

Mickey Gilley and Johnny Lee at Dosey Doe the
Big Barn
DECEMBER 2

Jacksonville

2021 Christmas Parade/Downtown
DECEMBER 2

Henderson

Christmas Parade and Tree Lighting
DECEMBER 2

Jasper

Annual Christmas Parade/Downtown
DECEMBER 2

Tyler

Christmas in the Park/Childrens Park of Tyler
DECEMBER 3

Galveston

Dickens on the Strand
DECEMBER 3-5

Humble

Home for the Holidays Gift Market/Humble Civic
Center
DECEMBER 3

Longview

Historic Longview Farmers Market
DECEMBER 4

Jefferson

5th Annual Historic Jefferson Wassail Walk
DECEMBER 4

Katy

Texas Heritage Festival 2021
DECEMBER 4

Nacogdoches

Lighted Christmas Parade/Downtown
DECEMBER 4

Mineola

Mineola League of Arts Christmas Bazaar
DECEMBER 4

CALENDAR

Colmesneil

Birthday Party for Jesus/Victory Camp Colmesneil
DECEMBER 4

Jasper

Annual Christmas Expo/Country Club Park
DECEMBER 4-5

Willis

Breakfast with Santa Winter Festival/Historic Hill House
DECEMBER 4

Sugarland

Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons/Smart Financial Center
DECEMBER 4

Palestine

Christmas Parade of Lights/Palestine Visitor Center
DECEMBER 4

Longview

Christmas in the South/Gregg County Fairgrounds
DECEMBER 4

Rusk

Jingle Jog 1 Mile Fun Run and 5K
DECEMBER 4

Greenville

Crystal Gayle/Municipal Auditorium
DECEMBER 4

Stafford

Fort Bend County Nutcracker Market
DECEMBER 4

Waxahachie

Waxahachie Christmas Market/Civic Center
DECEMBER 4-5

Marshall

Charles Dickens: A Christmas Carol/Memorial City Hall
DECEMBER 5

Humble

Rock and Roll Christmas Parade of Lights
DECEMBER 5

Baumont

Baumont Symphony "Holiday Extravaganza"/Julie Rogers Theater
DECEMBER 5

Kilgore

90th Annual Christmas Parade
DECEMBER 7

Jefferson

Jefferson Gun and Knife Show/Tourism and Visitors Center
DECEMBER 11-12

Marshall

Texas Bigfoot Film Festival 2021
DECEMBER 11

Sugarland

Lindsey Buckingham at Smart Financial Center
DECEMBER 11

Palestine

Whiskey and Wine Swirl/Palestine Visitors Center
DECEMBER 11

Tyler

Holiday in the Garden and Bazaar/Tyler Rose Garden
DECEMBER 11

Tyler

International Christmas at Liberty Hall
DECEMBER 12

Lufkin

Celtic Angels at the Pines Theater
DECEMBER 17

Longview

Classic Arms-Longview Texas Gun Show/Cobb Convention Center
DECEMBER 18-19

Lufkin

"Prancer" at the Pines Theater
DECEMBER 18

Galveston

Santa Hustle Half Marathon and 5K kids dash
DECEMBER 18-19

Sugarland

Sara Brightman at the Smart Financial Center
DECEMBER 18-19

Houston

The Little Mermaid/Hobby Center for the Performing Arts
DECEMBER 18

Houston

Wings and Wheels/1940 Air Terminal Museum
DECEMBER 18

Sugarland

Mannheim Steamroller/Smart Financial Center
DECEMBER 26-27

JANUARY 2022

Galveston

25TH Annual Townes Van Zandt Wake/Old Quarter
Acoustic Café
JANUARY 1

Houston

2022 Houston Boat, Sport & RV Show/NRG Center
JANUARY 7-16

Crockett

Classic Cars at Smitty's BBQ
JANUARY 7-8

Houston

2022 Bridal Extravaganza Show/G R Brown
Convention Center
JANUARY 8-9

Kilgore

Bluegrass and Bluebell Acoustic Jam
JANUARY 8

Spring

Marshall Tucker Band at Dosey Doe/The Big Barn
JANUARY 12

Beaumont

Southeast Texas Boat, Sport & RV Show/Ford Park
JANUARY 14-16

Galveston

Galveston Island Winter Beach Blast
JANUARY 14-16

Longview

The Music of Sam Cooke/Belcher Center
JANUARY 15

Spring

The Kingston trio at Dosey Doe/The Big Barn
JANUARY 15

Galveston

Yaga's Chili Quest and Beer Fest 2022/The Strand
JANUARY 15-16

Houston

28th Annual MLK Grand Parade/Midtown
Neil De Grasse Tyson at Jones Hall
JANUARY 17

Lufkin

Escape to Margaritaville/Temple Theater
JANUARY 20

Spring

Jim Stafford at Dosey Doe/The Big Barn
JANUARY 20

Conroe

Houston Money Show/Lonestar Convention Center
JANUARY 21-22

Tyler

East Texas Gem & Mineral Show/Tyler Rose
Museum
JANUARY 21-23

Longview

2022 Herp Show Longview/ Longview Exhibit
Center
JANUARY 22

Orange

CeCe Winans at the Lutcher Theater
JANUARY 22

Houston

2022 Houston Auto Show/NRG Center
JANUARY 25-29

Corsicana

Asia at the Palace Theater
JANUARY 27

Tyler

2022 East Texas Boat and RV Show/Cobb
Convention Center
JANUARY 28

Humble

2022 Humble BBQ Cook-off//Civic Center
JANUARY 28

Lufkin

The Pines Presents: Brit Beat/Pines Theater
JANUARY 29

Stafford

Sugarland Home and Garden Show/Stafford Center
JANUARY 29-30

Katy

2022 Katy Home and Garden Show
JANUARY 29-30

Galveston

A Night at Gilley's starring Mickey Gilley and Johnny
Lee/Galveston Island Conv. Center
JANUARY 29

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